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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

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[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio]

Thank you. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Today, I rise to tell the story of one of my constituents: Yahya Obed. Mr. Obed was born in Yemen and came to the United States when he was eight years old. His childhood dream was to become a pilot and he knew and felt that in the United States, all things are possible and his dream could come true.

Mr. Obed's dream did come true. He's been a federal employee for 14 years, has two children, and a mortgage for his home in the Morris Park neighborhood of the Bronx. He studied hard, got his pilot's license, and is now an air traffic controller supervisor at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City.

I spoke with Mr. Obed today over the phone.



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He and his air traffic controller -- He and his air traffic controllers like him across the country missed their first paycheck this past week.

He was telling me about how stressful his job is. Every single day, air traffic controllers have thousands of people's lives in their hands, with weather changes, flight delays, staffing complexities, and a myriad of other issues, their days almost never go exactly to plan. His job is to find solutions, analyze and adapt in real time to keep people safe in one of the busiest air spaces in the United States and the world.

And it is terrifying to think that almost every single air traffic controller in the United States is currently distracted at work because they don't know when their next paycheck is coming.

Federal workers' jobs are stressful enough.

The rise in New York City's cost of living is stressful enough.

The fact that Mr. Obed's family cannot be reunified due to fears over the Muslim ban is stressful enough.

His several-thousand-dollar-a-month Bronx mortgage is stressful enough.

The anti-immigrant sentiment of this Administration is stressful enough.¹

And the truth of this shutdown is that it's actually not about a wall; it is not about the border; and it is certainly not about the well-being of everyday Americans. The truth is, this shut down is about the erosion of American democracy and the subversion of our most basic governmental norms.

It is not normal to hold 800,000 workers' paychecks hostage.

It is not normal to shut down the government we we don't get what we want.



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It is not normal for a public servants [sic] to run away and hide from the public that they serve.²

And it is certainly not normal to -- to starve the people we serve for a proposal that is wildly unpopular among the American people.

Each and every member of this Body has a responsibility to this nation and to everyone in the United States of America, whether they voted for us or not.

And this President shares in that responsibility as well, which means he has a responsibility to my constituent Mr. Obed. President Trump has a responsibility to all air traffic controllers, FDA inspectors, TSA workers, and he has a -- and he has a responsibility to maintain the basic functioning of the United States government.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I yield my time.

¹ An epistrophe

² An anaphora