

ISRAEL AND U.S. MUST FACE  
COMMON THREATS TOGETHER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Israel has always been surrounded by threats. Since it was established, Israel has survived Arab armies waiting at its borders to destroy the Jewish state. It has persisted in the face of suicide bombers and terrorist onslaughts like no other country in history. Recently the threats to Israel have increased and become even more dangerous.

Iran's Supreme Leader has stated clearly that he wants to destroy Israel. Thanks to the nuclear deal made by the administration, it is only a matter of time before the mullahs in Iran develop a nuclear weapon.

The Iran deal will go down in history as one of the administration's worst foreign policy mistakes. This Neville Chamberlain deal ensured that Iran gets to keep enriching uranium. It does not have to dismantle any of its nuclear infrastructure. So, in 10 years, Tehran just has to flip a switch to get a nuclear bomb, and Israel is the first target. Tehran wants to put the entire Middle East under its thumb.

Iran continues to defy U.N. security resolutions on ballistic missiles. Since the nuclear deal was signed, Iran has conducted three ballistic missile tests. Some of the previously launched missiles were even marked in Hebrew with the words "Israel must be wiped off the Earth."

There is more. Iran has announced that it would give \$7,000 to families of Palestinians who murder Israelis and an additional \$30,000 to every family whose home Israel demolished due to the family's involvement in terrorism.

The Iranian mullahs have hate and murder in their souls, and they want to eliminate Israel. The fact that the administration gave a \$100 billion signing bonus in sanctions relief to a regime that consorts with North Korea and sends terrorist proxies to do its bidding is a really bad foreign policy.

There is more. Iran has sent Hezbollah to go after Israelis around the world. Hezbollah now has an estimated 150,000 rockets and missiles in its stockpile. That is enough to rain down thousands of rockets a day on Israel for months.

In fact, Iran has transferred new game-changing advanced weapons to the terrorist group Hezbollah. This includes antiship cruise missiles, air defense systems, and precision-guided surface-to-surface missiles.

Then there is Hamas in the south. In Gaza, Israeli officials now believe that Hamas has completely replenished all of its rocket supply that Israel destroyed 2 years ago.

Hamas is building a sophisticated network of tunnels under the Gaza Strip for the purpose of securing arms and supplies. This tunnel network has only one purpose: to strike at the heart of the Israeli population centers.

More. Since September, Palestinian lone-wolf terrorists have carried out hundreds of vicious attacks against Israeli citizens. These terrorists will do anything to kill. They ram vehicles into civilians, shoot indiscriminately, and stab anybody in the way.

Immediately following the first attack, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas proclaimed: "We welcome every drop of blood spilled in Jerusalem. This is pure blood, blood on its way to Allah."

This latest wave of attacks has killed 34 people and injured 400. Among those killed were two Americans, and one of them was a citizen of Texas, Taylor Force. These terrorists are only happy when they have destroyed Israeli and American families wherever they find them.

ISIS, which is even more brutal than al Qaeda, controls large parts of Syria. These terrorists no doubt view Israel as a threat and will likely turn to attacking the Jewish state in due time.

Those who threaten Israel, Mr. Speaker, threaten the United States. The same terrorist groups that want to destroy Israel want to destroy the United States. The same Iran that calls Israel the "Little Satan" calls the United States the "Great Satan."

Mr. Speaker, Israel is a bright star, the lone star of liberty, freedom, and democracy in the Middle East. The villains that want Israel destroyed are picking a fight with the wrong folks. They will lose that fight because Israel and the United States will work together, no matter who the enemy is, for liberty, justice, and freedom not only for Israel, but for the United States.

And that is just the way it is.

DR. KENT SCRIBNER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VEASEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, before I get into my remarks, I want to share a story about a conversation that I had with one of my colleagues here on the House floor. It was a colleague from Arizona.

I asked the colleague: How is the new superintendent that is coming to the Fort Worth Independent School District, Dr. Scribner?

The colleague told me how lucky we were to be getting Dr. Scribner from the Phoenix Independent School District because he has done such a remarkable job there and that the community was really saddened, but happy for him that he was given the opportunity to come and work in one of Texas' largest independent school districts.

I want to rise today to lend my unwavering support for a respected educator that has made a mark very quickly in the Fort Worth community, and that is Dr. Kent Scribner.

Dr. Scribner is a dedicated educator who is leading, again, one of the larg-

est school systems in the entire State of Texas. But recently he has come under attack from centralized forces in Austin that don't believe in local control and, by the way, would like to actually take money out of the Fort Worth ISD and let that money be used for poor-performing schools in the form of school vouchers.

What Dr. Scribner is under attack for from Austin is by trying to protect transgender students. Under the guidelines issued by Dr. Scribner, transgender students are allowed to use the bathroom and locker room of their choice.

Teachers are to address them by the pronoun that reflects the student's gender identity. Staff are to protect a student's privacy about decisions to transition from one gender to another. An employee who does not comply with these rules could face discipline.

It also protects other students. It says that students who do not feel comfortable using a bathroom with a transgender student are provided a reasonable and safe accommodation for them as well.

These guidelines, unlike it was first reported, were not developed in isolation. The Fort Worth School Board has been working on these policies since 2014 and drafted a new set of guidelines last summer.

Instead of condemning Dr. Scribner, we should applaud his leadership because it encourages an environment that protects our children's safety. Dr. Scribner has children, also, I want to make clear, in the Fort Worth Independent School District, and I doubt that he would want to subject his children to an environment that he didn't feel was safe.

Many transgender students simply cannot use the restroom or locker room of the gender they were assigned at birth. Asking transgender students to use a separate restroom, like a faculty restroom, singles them out and increases the risk of bullying. Transgender students should not also have to face bullying from government officials.

Allowing transgender students to use the correct restroom is just telling them that they can use the restroom like anyone else. Doing otherwise would tell them that they are unwelcome at the school they attend. Restricting restroom access for transgender students goes against the consensus of medical professionals and mental health experts.

The guidelines that Dr. Scribner has issued are similar to those adopted by hundreds of school districts around the country. Let me just also tell you that Dr. Scribner has a lot of good backup in what he is doing. These best practices are supported by the Child Welfare League of America, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, and the Texas Council on Family Violence.

Dr. Scribner's leadership is especially commendable at a time when we are

seeing a dramatic increase in hateful, discriminatory, and anti-LGBT legislation across the United States. It is imperative that we stand together to ensure that no one is discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

That is why I am a proud sponsor and a proud cosponsor of the Quality Act and I am also a member of the Quality Caucus. I wholeheartedly believe that preventing this type of discrimination only makes our country a better place.

The fight for LGBT equality has seen tremendous progress, but we still have a lot of work to do to make sure that all of our students feel safe in school.

I am honored to stand in solidarity with Dr. Scribner. I ask my colleagues to stand with me as we support the rights of all Americans.

#### OPIOID ADDICTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, opioid addiction has proven to destroy hope, it destroys opportunity, and it is destroying families.

Certainly we see this across the country, but we are also seeing the devastating effects of addiction in Tennessee. Tennessee has the second highest rating nationally for opioid addiction.

As many States are exceedingly aware, drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in this country. As we started working on this issue in the Committee on Energy and Commerce, so many people did not realize that prescription drug abuse is the leading cause of accidental death in our country, with over 18,000 fatalities last year. Addiction does not care about race, gender, or politics. It is an issue that affects all of us, and it affects the people that we are here to serve.

Together many of us—families and those that we love in our communities—are working to find solutions that will combat this epidemic and help remedy those who are suffering from addiction the most. Just this week—and you can look at the bills that have been on the agenda and have passed the House; many of these are being done with bipartisan support—there have been 15 amendments to these bills. They have all passed by voice vote.

What the bills will do is streamline the burdensome bureaucracy which currently debilitates finding a solution for this crisis.

I commend my colleagues for focusing on this issue and for saying: What do we do to get to the root cause of this problem and put the tools in place so that, at the local, State, and Federal levels, this can be addressed and it can be solved?

One of the things that we have done is to improve the situation with the

VA and the oversight mechanisms that they have to make certain that our veterans are being protected and that the issues of addiction are being appropriately addressed and dealt with.

Earlier this year we achieved a success that is one way that the Federal Government can help in the work that our State legislators are doing. In my State of Tennessee, State Senator Dr. Joey Hensley and State Representative Barry Doss have been the leaders on these issues for our general assembly.

The legislation that I authored along with Congressman TOM MARINO was signed into law and ensures access to proper medication for patients with legitimate needs while allowing us to continue battling the drug diversion and abuse problem that exists here in our country. It will enable our local and State officials to move forward, address the pill mills, and, at the same time, make certain that patients with needs have access.

The legislation is called the Ensuring Patient Access and Effective Drug Enforcement Act of 2016. What it will do is to combat the inappropriate use of prescription drugs by bringing greater clarity—something that is needed in so many laws and rules—but bringing greater clarity and transparency to the requirements needed for safe and secure distribution of medications.

Mr. Speaker, the people battling addiction are moms and dads, brothers and sisters and children, neighbors and friends. They are saying: We need your help. Our healthcare professionals and our pharmacists have said: We need clarity. That is what we in the House are seeking to do this week.

□ 1030

#### 2016 CALL TO ACTION: COMBATING OPIOID ABUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. GABBARD) for 5 minutes.

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, in the United States, 2.1 million people suffer from dependency and addiction to prescription opioid drugs. Eighty percent of the world's pain pills are consumed in the United States, but we only have 5 percent of the world's population. This is an epidemic that reaches every corner of our Nation, transcending regional, State, community, and neighborhood lines. More people died from drug overdose in 2014 than ever before. Over 60 percent of those deaths involved the use of an opioid. Seventy-eight Americans die every single day from an opioid overdose. There are more people dying from prescription drug overdoses than from car accidents.

This week, the House is considering 15 bipartisan measures that seek to address some of the widespread problems that have caused and perpetuated this national crisis; but as we look at treatment options and support for those who are dealing with this addiction, it

is important that we actually focus on the root cause of the problem.

We have seen for decades major pharmaceutical companies that have misled the FDA, doctors, and patients about the safety and risks of opioid dependence on commonly prescribed prescription drugs in their efforts to sell more drugs. Three top executives from Purdue Pharma even pleaded guilty to criminal charges.

Just last week, the LA Times revealed how Purdue Pharma has made over \$31 billion off of OxyContin, America's best-selling painkiller, by advertising the drug's 12-hour pain relief. Investigations have found that for many people the drug actually doesn't last for 12 hours. In fact, it wears off hours earlier for most people. This often leads to "excruciating symptoms of withdrawal, including an intense craving for the drug."

Despite multiple complaints from doctors, sales representatives, and independent research showing that many patients don't experience this 12-hour pain relief, the company has continued to market the drug's 12-hour relief and is even encouraging doctors to prescribe stronger doses when patients complain about its shortened effects. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, more than 7 million Americans have abused OxyContin.

Many abusers then turn to heroin, which is made from the same poppy plant and has the same effect. After people are addicted to opioid prescription drugs, they turn to heroin when they can't get their hands on those pills. To give you some context, one 60-milligram pill costs, on average, around \$60. To get the very same amount of heroin, you will pay one-tenth of the price.

The problems created by companies like Purdue are felt deeply by families all across the country. It is happening to our police officers, to teachers, to nurses, and to others in our communities who all share the same stories. They used to take prescription drugs, but now they inject heroin. In my home State of Hawaii, the rate of pain medicine abuse is more than 10 percent above the national average. According to the Hawaii State Department of Health data, opioid-related deaths have increased 133 percent from 2000 to 2016.

Veterans, people who have served our country in uniform, have been disproportionately impacted by this epidemic. I have heard from some of my friends and fellow veterans of how, during their visits to the VA in their seeking treatment, even after telling their doctors "I don't want drugs," they received prescriptions for those drugs. Up until recently, the VA prescribed opioids almost exclusively to veterans who were experiencing chronic pain.

Prescriptions for opiates spiked by 270 percent over 12 years, according to the 2013 analysis by the Center for Investigative Reporting. This led to addictions and to a fatal overdose rate