jobs and provide a better quality of life for the people that we represent. Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. I hope that in the coming weeks and months we will continue to discuss this issue and, hopefully, our friends on the other side will listen to our concerns.

Again, it’s the challenge of establishing a balance between development and the environment and the conservation, and I think the American people are looking for answers to those issues and to those concerns.

Mr. TONKO. Built on 40 years of success then, we want to defend people of all ages from the most young to the most senior in our society. They have experienced and lived the benefits of soundness of policy that came via the Clean Air Act, a bipartisan effort that was initiated by a Republican President. And so it defies logic to move forward with a plan that will take us backward. So we have to thwart that effort and call it for what it is, check it at the door, and say, Look, it is a life-threatening, health-threatening, toxic-poisoning situation that would reduce jobs, denounce innovation in our society, in our economy, and really take us backward.

I think this House ought to be about moving us forward, creating jobs, enhancing the public health standards and embracing the quality of innovation in our society that really builds the magic in our economy, that digs deep into the pioneer spirit that is uniquely American. And we can make it happen simply by saying “no” to those agents that want to roll back progress and defeat us with their dirty air act.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back and thank you for the opportunity for all of us to express our concerns about those who are advancing a dirty air act.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to protect the Clean Air Act. Since the passage of our skies have grown cleaner and our economy has become stronger. Thanks to the Clean Air Act, the United States has made significant gains in public health, a cleaner environment and a stronger, more sustainable economy.

Air pollution is costly. It increases asthma attacks, heart attacks, strokes, respiratory diseases, and lung cancer, and causes premature deaths, hurting our families and deranging our economy. The dangers from air pollution are particularly acute for children and seniors.

It is well established that cleaner air and a healthier population go hand in hand. In fact, according to the American Lung Association, in 2010 alone, the Clean Air Act saved over 160,000 lives. Cleaner air also helps build a stronger economy. In addition to keeping workers on the job, cleaning up air pollution can create new jobs—designed and implementing pollution controls, installing and operating new equipment, and building cleaner facilities.

The draft bill from Representative UPTON would return us to a Dirty Air Economy, an economy dominated by big polluters willing to pour pollution into our communities in order to help their companies. Erasing the Clean Air Act may be good for corporate profits but it’s bad for our national interest. The truth is that we can have clean air and a strong economy at the same time. The last 30 years have proved it. Since the passage of the Clean Air Act, the United States has reduced air pollution by 50 percent, while growing our economy by over 200 percent. The legislation, in conjunction with additional protections passed by both parties, has made our country a healthier, cleaner place to live.

A new study by scientists at the University of Rochester and Clarkson University found that the air quality in Rochester, New York improved markedly in recent years and that public health may well improve as a result. Falling levels of air pollutants given off by cars, trucks and power plants has resulted in far fewer irritants in the air that could worsen asthma and lead to serious respiratory disease. The decline is in part due to the tighter federal rules on diesel fuel and engines that went into effect in 2006 under a Republican Administration. Like others have pointed out before, clean air standards have always been there and should continue to be, a bipartisan concern.

I have the privilege to represent the good people living in Tonawanda, New York—a city that has a staggering and urgent air pollution problem. These hard working Americans are the first to suffer from the highest concentration of air pollutants in the state of New York. In 2007, a study found that the people of Tonawanda’s risk of developing cancer are 100 times that of the New York State guideline.

During my time serving the 28th District of New York, I have received multiple letters from the people of Tonawanda telling me about how their family and loved ones have developed cancer, asthma and other illnesses due to the extremely poor air quality in their community.

Today, I would like to share the story of Ann, a woman who has lived in Tonawanda for 16 years. Ann’s mother moved to the city to fulfill the American dream of owning her own home. Ann’s mother cultivated her own garden in her yard, spending her free time outside gardening and breathing in what she thought was fresh, New York air.

Sadly, Ann lost her mother to cancer at the young age of 67, just nine years after moving to Tonawanda and breathing the dirty air. Ann can’t help to think that if only her family knew what toxic, cancerous chemicals the local facilities were pumping into the air, they could have protected the health of their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of upholding the Clean Air Act and supporting the Environmental Protection Agency in its work to protect the American people against dangerous corporate polluters. I rise in support of improving our national health and economy, while reducing our dependence on oil. And I rise in support of Ann and the people of Tonawanda who are facing the devastating consequences of air pollution every day.

The choice is simple. When it was passed in 1970, the Clean Air Act was enacted with strong bipartisan support. Like today, we had a divided government, with both parties coming together to enact a law that would protect public health and the environment, as well as our economy.

We must reject any effort to repeal our valuable protections, and recommit our pledge to the American people to work toward a cleaner, healthier, more prosperous future.
Zambia, all with that mentality of helping other people.

But the Peace Corps volunteers are people like that who spend at least 2 years in service to their country. And sometimes when they are in those foreign countries, they stick out. They are noticeable among the people who live in that country.

Because of that, occasionally, more often than it should be, they attract crimes that occur against them. That is the issue, Mr. Speaker, I want to address tonight.

Over the last 10 years, 1,000 Americans, mainly women, have been sexually assaulted, raped or assaulted in some other way, in a foreign country representing the United States in the Peace Corps.

Between 2000 and 2009, the Peace Corps themselves say there were over 221 rapes of volunteers, over 150 major sexual attacks, and 700 other sexual assaults. Sexual assault is anything from groping to fondling to conduct that is offensive to that Peace Corps volunteer. Once again, 1,000 crimes against Peace Corps volunteers. Recently, the Peace Corps has announced that there is an average of 22 rapes a year against American Peace Corps volunteers.

This is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about real people. They are real stories and they are real victims, and I want to mention just a few of those tonight in the limited time that I have.

The first of those is a person that I have gotten to know personally. A wonderful person, Jess Smocek.

She joined the Peace Corps in 2004. On her first day as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bangladesh, a group of men started sexually groping her as she was just walking home that she was supposed to live in, but no one really did anything. She told the Peace Corps staff over and over again that she felt unsafe in Bangladesh in the situation she was in, but nobody did anything.

Months later, she came in contact with some men who kidnapped her. They beat her and they sexually assaulted her, but they weren't through. They abandoned her and threw her in a house where she was staying without her knowing and they took her up because they seemed to be more worried about the officials in Bangladesh and what they thought might happen to their relationship with the United States than they did about caring for this victim of crime. Jess says that the Peace Corps blamed her for the conduct of others. They blamed her for being a sexual-assault victim.

Mr. Speaker, a rape victim is never to blame for the crime that is committed against her. It is the offender that is talking to blame. And we need to understand that these precious people who go overseas and represent us, when a crime is committed against them, we take their side. And we don't assume they did anything wrong, because they didn't. They were just a victim of crime, and the criminal is the one that should be held accountable for that conduct. Rape is never the fault of the victim. It's always the fault of the perpetrator.

But Jess got no satisfaction from the Peace Corps, according to her. When she got home, she was told to tell other people that she was coming back to the United States for medical reasons, to have her wishes pulled out. Her case and a few others were brought to light recently by "ABC News" and "20/20," bringing her story and others. There are more, and I will try to cover as many as I can in the time that I have.

Another woman was sent to Romania, a Peace Corps volunteer. She was constantly harassed, both physically and verbally. She couldn't walk to her house where she was staying without verbal assaults and objects being thrown at her. She was spat on, she was punched, and rocks were thrown at her and her life was threatened several times. This took place on a weekly basis. They told her that a young American woman would stand out, and that she was going to continue to be a victim.

She was fondled over 10 times when she tried to ride public transportation. So she quit riding public transportation. And she started walking, to help these folks in Romania. She said that the Peace Corps knew that these crimes were happening against her, but they say they didn't take it seriously and no legal recourse was offered. She was exposed to young men who exposed themselves; and she was told, Well, don't be around those people. No one did anything, and no one cared.

When she was followed home by some men, she didn't talk to the police and they gave her some bodyguards. She requested a new location, but she was turned down and her transfer was denied.

When she returned home, she tried to get counseling, but she received no counseling for the crimes committed against her. And here is what she has to say. She said, I would have liked the Peace Corps to have never put me there. They knew it was unsafe for me. They should have communicated with the police and the school in their own country. I would have liked them to take me more seriously when I reported these crimes. I would have liked to have had counseling when I returned. But once again, Mr. Speaker, no one did anything.

When she left Romania, she told the Peace Corps not to send anybody else over there, but they did. And the person who replaced her was also racially abused by swastikas drawn on her residence because she was a Jewish American.

The next individual, I'm not going to use her real name because she doesn't want us to know her true identity, but she grew up on a ranch. She now lives in Texas, and she went to Laos in May of 1996 to convince farmers to plant trees and show them how to do that. But Mary Jo, as I will call her, stayed there for 2 years.

Mary Jo said that she had come back from a confrontation and was attacked because she felt unsafe. She lived in a small village in a string of villages that were about 80 miles south of Maseru. She had arranged her ticket back to the United States when she was attacked because she felt unsafe. But here is what happened to her.

On an evening in 1999, Mary Jo and her neighbor left a village shop and were headed down a dirt path to their home. Her neighbor's ex-boyfriend followed and after a confrontation struck Mary Jo with a rock. The blow knocked out six of her teeth, destroyed her eye socket, and left a palm-sized crater in her face. The rock had come from the behind, the back of a creature and blood had started coming down the back into her throat. She ended up alone in a deserted section of the hospital when she was finally found. She says, It was dark, I was scared, and I didn't know where I was.

Taxis only ran from her village at night, and so she couldn't really reach the Peace Corps. So some neighbors found someone to drive her 20 miles to a local hospital. She remembers a young woman stitching her up and she remembers being, once again, left alone, abandoned. She felt abandoned by her own country.

The next day, she was moved to another hospital in South Africa, where a surgeon installed a metal plate to hold the bones together around her left eye and her chin and cheeks and nose.

The Peace Corps brought her back to her home base, but she said they didn't help her in her recovery. Mary Jo and her sister, who had flown in from the United States, had to sleep in a hotel because the agency wouldn't let them stay in a hotel, and they had difficulty getting in the United States. She even had to beg the staff to take her to the airport. At no time, according to her, did the Peace Corps ask her what they could do to help. She said, It was terrible. I was so messed up. She has had 10 operations in 2½ years, and surgeons put metal plates in her face and she also has false teeth.

Mary Jo, being the remarkable person she is, wasn't really angry at the Peace Corps. She had been attacked in this village by villagers. She was angry because nobody in the agency seemed to care. Once again, no one did anything.

"It was like I was never in the Peace Corps," she said. And when she got home, no one contacted her from the Peace Corps to check on her to see how this victim of crime was doing. The attacker went to jail for 3 weeks, but he was later released because Mary Jo had come back to the United States.

Kate Puzezy was another angel from America who had gone to help a country that most of us have never heard of.
or would be able to locate on a map. Benin, where she went in 2007. She was a girls’ club to help empower the young women that were in this school.

It’s hard to be a girl in that part of the world, according to Kate’s cousin, Ms. Jacobs. And the girls started speaking about some of the issues they were facing, and they were starting to communicate that to Kate. Before long, the girls began to tell Kate about another person who worked for the Peace Corps but wasn’t an American. He was a citizen of Benin who was paid by the Peace Corps to help work with the Peace Corps. His name was Constant Bio, and these girls had said that this person was sexually assaulting these young girls.

She had started hearing that he had been sleeping with some of the girls, he had gotten some of them pregnant, and some of them had been raped.

At the request of several teachers, Kate sent an email to the Peace Corps in Benin’s capital recommending that this person be fired from the Peace Corps. She said, “Please believe me, I’m not someone who likes to create problems, but this has been weighing on me heavily.” This was in an email that was found later and turned over to ABC News. “This man is not someone I want representing the Peace Corps to this community.”

Bio’s brother worked as a manager in the Police, and he asked her role to be kept secret because she didn’t want this criminal, this rapist of young girls, in this country, to know that she had reported him. But he found out about it anyway. And so when he found out about it, this is what happened: on March 11, 2009, the day after the Peace Corps authorities had fired this criminal, Bio, and just 2 months short of completing her 2-year commitment to the Peace Corps, Kate was found dead on her front porch with her throat slit.

The Puzey family says the Peace Corps was insensitive in its treatment of them until officials had learned about the ABC News report, and then they got more involved. Unfortunately, it was too late. Unfortunately, no one did anything or paid attention.

Before the news reported this murder, this homicide, the Puzey family believes and states that the Peace Corps should show compassion or interest. Kate’s father Harry says this: She was my hero. I thought maybe a representative would come to the house to talk to us, or at least a letter in the mail. But that did not happen, because just a box showed up with my daughter’s belongings that came by deliveryman. This is disrespectful, Mr. Speaker, to the life of this wonderful person and to her family.

Now the Peace Corps has changed some of their procedures, and we will get to that in just a minute.

The fifth example I want to talk about is Jill Hoxmeier. She was a Peace Corps volunteer in Guyana, which is in South America. She was a volunteer, and she had created ways to help young women combat and understand the disease of HIV/AIDS and other functions and other diseases. She was teaching them life-skills courses and had worked on issues of relationships between the mothers there and their daughters.

In 2007, a year into her service, she was riding her bike home from work when she was assaulted, and then was raped in the bushes and sexually assaulted by a man who had been following her for some time. He choked her so hard she couldn’t breathe or even scream.

She believes the Peace Corps needs to do more to help victims cut through the bureaucratic red tape and get the care they need. “It was too hard to navigate the problems that I had been going through all by myself.” Once again, insensitivity, and nothing seemed to happen.

Peace Corps victims who are members of the Peace Corps who have been victims have formed an organization, a support group, but it is going to be a group that is going to be active. They call it the First Response Action Group, and I want to see more of them hopefully here on the Hill.

Today, I met with the Director of the Peace Corps, Aaron Williams, who happened to be in the Peace Corps years ago. He is now the director. I explained to him and talked to him about these issues and other cases that have come to light, and he and I discussed this problem. We are going to have, hopefully, a Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on this very issue, the Peace Corps and the relationship it has with its volunteers throughout the world, how to make them safe, how to take care of them once a crime is committed against them and how to take care of them after that crime has been committed.

The Peace Corps Director, Mr. Williams, assures me that they are going to develop a victim advocate program and hire a victim advocate. They are going to help these victims of crime get counseling services. They are going to help them medically, even after they have been discharged from the Peace Corps. Unfortunately, the Bureau of Labor has issues in dealing with these Peace Corps volunteers who are in Peace Corps service, who still have issues that they need to be taken care of, and the Peace Corps is going to work with the Department of Labor to work out this bureaucratic nonsense.

Every victim, he says, is going to have access to medical counseling and legal services; and when a crime is committed against an American in the Peace Corps overseas, the ambassador of that country is going to contact the highest ranking official in that country to let that America wants some results and wants to take care of the victim, but also wants the perpetrator held accountable.

One of the most important things that Director Williams has agreed to do is to set up a victims advocacy program, a victims advocacy advisory board made up of different groups like RAINN and other NGOs to give advice to the Peace Corps on how to take care of these people who are coming home and are just getting on to let this issue die. We are going to continue to promote and understand the Peace Corps.

But we want these wonderful people in the Peace Corps, who have in the past been harmed and had crimes committed against them, we want to rescue them as a nation. We want to take care of them, and the Director of the Peace Corps says we will go back and help those people. We want to take care of Peace Corps volunteers now that are being assaulted. Twenty-two a year, that is 22 too many. We don’t want it to happen to anybody. But we want to take care of, and we want to have procedures to make sure that these Peace Corps victims in America, and take care of them.

We are doing a better job as a Nation in taking care of our wounded warriors in the military, another great group of ambassadors that represents the rest of us. They come home with all kinds of injuries, and we are finally taking care of them. We need to understand that these Peace Corps volunteers are just as precious and take care of them as well.

People cry “peace, peace,” but there can be no peace as long as there is one American Peace Corps volunteer that has no peace.

And that’s just the way it is.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must remind members of the gallery that they are here as guests of the House and any manifestation of approval or disapproval of the proceedings is in violation of the rules of the House.

CALLING FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO EASTER ISLAND CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVARGA)