

jobs and provide a better quality of life for the people that we represent.

Mr. FALEOMAVEGA. 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 understand 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 those problems.

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 the legislation our skies have become 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 burdening 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—in designing and manufacturing 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 key air pollutants by 60 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 Medical Center 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, 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 surrounded by facilities that make up the highest concentration of air polluters 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 and father moved to the city to fulfill the American dream of owning their 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 Act in doing 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.

ROLL CALL OF THE PEACE CORPS VICTIMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WOMACK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for half the time remaining before 10 p.m., which is roughly 22 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to address an important issue that has come to light recently. It has to do with the wonderful group of volunteers that serve in the United States Peace Corps.

The Peace Corps was the idea of John F. Kennedy. He went to the University of Michigan way back in 1960, and he started encouraging those college students to get involved in other countries and helping those countries in their social development and their cultural development in the name of peace. A wonderful idea.

When he became President in 1961, President Kennedy signed an Executive order establishing the now important Peace Corps. By 1966, there were over 15,000 young Americans, all volunteers, that were working in the Peace Corps throughout the world.

Since those early days of the Peace Corps, 200,000 Americans, mostly young people, 60 percent female, have volunteered for their 2-year service in the Peace Corps to work in Third World countries on everything from health to farming to small business, just helping other people throughout the world in a way that not only benefits them personally but benefits the recipients in these foreign countries. They really are, in my opinion, along with our United States military, the greatest ambassadors we have from our country to show that we are concerned about the welfare of other nations. And they help build a better life for not only the people that they come in contact with, but their generations and the children that they have as well. I think they are really volunteer angels.

The work that a Peace Corps volunteer does is hard work. It's important, but it's very difficult. They're in a place far from home, sometimes very remote and primitive areas, and yet they, on a daily basis, are working to improve the lives of these individuals.

Like I said, I think it's one of the best things that we do in this country as ambassadors are those young people in the Peace Corps. It's tough work. It's hard work. I wouldn't do it. It's so difficult. And you know, there are people in our country, a lot of them mainly young people who choose that as a calling to help other people in other countries.

I've got four kids, and they're all kind of wanting to save the world, too. They've been to Mexico and lived in orphanages in Trinidad. They've been to Honduras. They've been to Africa and

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 by the people who live in that country.

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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 and attempted rapes, almost 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 Smoczek.

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 to the 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 back alley somewhere in Bangladesh.

According to Jess, the Peace Corps did everything they could to cover this 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 always 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 wisdom teeth 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 things being thrown at her. She was spit 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 with blonde hair 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 in Romania, 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 she says 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 did 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 investigation. 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 with 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 Lesotho 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, stuck out the 2 years in this location, even though it was difficult. 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 crushed the bones in her face, 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 anyone 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 transit house, and they had difficulty getting back to 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, she wasn't really angry at the Peace Corps because she was 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 Puzey 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 teacher at a local school. She formed 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.

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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 she sent 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 Peace Corps office, and she 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 did little to 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-skill courses and wanted to help build stronger 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, dragged 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.

Jess and other 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 we will 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 against them.

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 no longer 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 them know 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 victims of crime. So we are not going 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 them, and we want to have procedures to make sure the Peace Corps is listening and takes care of victims of crime as well.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I spent most of my life at the court house in Houston. I was a prosecutor and criminal court judge for 30 years. I saw many of these victims of crime. Sexual assault, rape, to me is the worst crime that can be committed against a person. You can understand why people steal; you can understand some crimes. But that crime of sexual assault is a crime not of sex, but a crime of power; but it is also an attempt by the perpetrator to destroy the inner soul of the victim. We need to understand that, and we need to take these people, these victims, these wonderful volunteers of 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. FALEOMAVAEGA) is