

It is very hard work being a Peace Corps volunteer. They deal with issues that most Americans never deal with. Just simple basic necessities such as of electricity and water and matters such as that, they do without, or they are difficult to find in the remote areas where they are because they are helping other people that don't have those things we have in the United States. Generally, they work alone when they are in foreign countries.

But all is not well with the Peace Corps, Mr. Speaker, because during the time since President Kennedy started the Peace Corps and those wonderful people go overseas, many times those volunteers, those young Americans, become victims of crime in these foreign countries; and when they become victims of crime, in some cases our own country abandons them.

Between 2000 and 2009, the Peace Corps itself says there were over 221 rapes and attempted rapes, almost 150 major sexual attacks and 700 other sexual assaults. That is 1,000 crimes against American Peace Corps volunteers. Recently, the Peace Corps has announced that there is an average of 22 rapes a year against American Peace Corps volunteers somewhere in another country.

This is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about real people. They are real stories and they are real victims.

I would like to mention just one of those persons that I know personally. I have got to know Jess Smochek since this crime against her has occurred. 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 walking to the house that she was to live in. But no one in the Peace Corps did anything about this assault. She told the Peace Corps staff over and over again that she felt unsafe in Bangladesh and the situation she was in, but the Peace Corps didn't do anything.

Months later, she came in contact with the same men, who then kidnapped her. They beat her. They sexually assaulted her. But they weren't through. They abandoned her and threw her in an alley somewhere in Bangladesh. And no one did anything.

According to Jess, the Peace Corps did everything they could to cover this up because they seemed to be more worried about America's relationship with Bangladesh than they were about this American volunteer that was assaulted, a victim of crime. Jess says that the Peace Corps not only didn't do anything, they blamed her for the conduct of others. They blamed her for being a sexual assault victim.

Mr. Speaker, a rape victim is never to be blamed for the crime that is committed against her. It is the fault of the criminal offender, whether it occurs in the United States or abroad. We need to understand that these precious people who go overseas and represent

us somewhere in the world, when a crime is committed against them, we need to take their side. We need to be supportive of those individuals. And we don't assume they did anything wrong, because they did not do anything wrong when they became a victim of crime. They were just victims of crime, and the person that should be held accountable is the criminal, and not to blame the victim.

Mr. Speaker, rape is never the fault of the victim. It is always the fault of the perpetrator.

But Jess got no satisfaction from the Peace Corps. No one did anything. 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, not for the sexual assault that was committed against her.

□ 1030

This was Jess's case. A few others were brought to light recently by ABC News and 20/20. And now, more and more of these Peace Corps volunteers over the years are coming forward and telling us about their stories. Mainly, they are women. We recently had a hearing in Foreign Affairs about this situation. Their stories were heart-wrenching. So now it's time to pass legislation to protect these women and to give them basic victim services, and that is what we will be doing in the next few days, along with the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, people cry, Peace, peace, but there can be no peace for American angels abroad until they are treated with the dignity that they deserve and the support of the United States. We need to help the Peace Corps readjust itself to become a better institution.

And that's just the way it is.

#### A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR AFGHANISTAN

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, like many Americans, I was profoundly disappointed in President Obama's announcement last night. I had hoped that he would offer an Afghanistan troop drawdown that was significant, swift, and sizable. Sadly, the proposal failed on all three counts. Now is the time for bold action and decision-making to bring our Nation's Afghanistan policy in line with what the American people want, while recognizing the deep and grave toll this war has taken on our global credibility and our national security. Instead, the administration's choice was to largely stay the course. Instead, President Obama chose to perpetuate a war that is not only bankrupting us morally but fiscally as well. The loss of blood and treasure cannot be underestimated.

The American people have been enormously patient, Mr. Speaker. They

have endured great sacrifice. But after nearly a decade of war, they're weary of losing their bravest men and women and their hard-earned tax dollars to a policy that simply has not achieved its goals.

We are not more secure. The Afghanistan leadership wants us out and their people do not appreciate our sacrifice. This is not a partisan issue. When asked, the majority of Americans want our troops to come home. And not several years into the future. No, they want our troops to come home now.

Abandoning this military policy does not mean that we will abandon the people of Afghanistan. A smart security plan would provide for development and reconciliation. It would bring the international community together and help the Afghan people move towards a sustainable future through economic and domestic support, among other means.

Mr. Speaker, more than 1,600 lives have been lost. Where will it end? When will our sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, friends and people we know in the community come home from Afghanistan? How many empty chairs are there at the dinner table tonight? When will the heartbreak end?

Let's talk about the economic cost. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle like to talk about dollars and cents, about how this and other actions we take are costing us too much money. Well, while we stand here, money is flying out of our Treasury to support this war. Try \$10 billion a month. Imagine what we could do with \$10 billion a month. Just last week, this House voted to take food from the mouths of pregnant women and their children. We're supposed to pinch pennies on important investments like our children and other American projects while we waste huge sums on a failed war. This boggles the mind and it shortchanges the needs we have right here at home.

It is long past time, Mr. Speaker, that we put an end to this madness. It is time to bring our troops home—all of our troops—safely home.

#### VICTORY IN AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. There's something that I'll personally never forget. That occurred in April, 2007. I'll get to why that is something I'll never forget in a second. That's when the majority leader, Senator HARRY REID, said of Iraq, "I believe myself that the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense and—you have to make your own decisions as to what the President knows—know this war is lost and that the surge is not accomplishing anything, as indicated by the extreme violence in Iraq."

As in 2007, Senate Majority Leader REID was in a rush to the exits in Iraq and a rush to declare the war had been

lost. Why was that important to me? Because I was in Afghanistan at that time—or a nation by Afghanistan—getting ready to fly a KC-135 aircraft into combat in Afghanistan. As I was on the treadmill exercising, I saw what the number four most powerful guy in politics said, and I felt it in my soul. I felt anger. I knew that there was celebrating in the caves in Iraq and in the caves in Afghanistan because the United States said we were going to lose. Well, guess what? It took the brave leadership of somebody to say we will not lose in Iraq and we're on the verge of victory. We had a surge in Iraq. And today, it appears to be a more stabilizing situation, and hopefully in 10 years Iraq will be an example of democracy in the Middle East.

Last night, I heard the President say nothing of the word victory in Afghanistan but talked about how this is the beginning of the end. General McChrystal recommended to the President that to win in Afghanistan, we need 80,000 additional troops. Mr. President, at a bare minimum, we need 40,000 additional troops. The President gave 30,000. And in giving the 30,000, he immediately gave a timeline for withdrawal.

Now, I will tell you the Taliban are used to fighting for long periods of time, and they know that if they simply have to wait a couple of years, that is an encouragement to them. But I supported and support what the President was doing in Afghanistan up until last night, even though I believe he should have given the troops required for victory. But last night I saw that all the surge troops are going to be pulled out of Afghanistan, magically, by Election Day. As a military pilot and an Air National Guard pilot, I can tell you the soldiers are weary of war. The American people are weary of war. But leadership is not about saying, "We're tired, we're going to quit. It's about standing up for freedom and standing against those that would destroy our way of life."

I was in Afghanistan just a month ago talking to generals on the ground who say we literally have turned a corner in Afghanistan. It is bewildering to me that yesterday we send a message that we're wrapping this thing up and it's the beginning of the end before we have seen that victory arrive. Let me ask you, do you believe last night in the President's speech that the Taliban was sad to hear what he was saying or that they were happy to hear it?

Ladies and gentlemen, just as Senate Majority Leader HARRY REID couldn't have been in a bigger hurry for the exits to Iraq, he was proven wrong. So, too, if we stick this out will those that say we cannot win be proven wrong again. America has a vested interest in seeing an Afghanistan that can stand up against terrorism, that can begin to defend itself against terrorists who seek to overthrow their country, who seek to overthrow Pakistan, and can do so with limited U.S. help. That is how

we begin to see victory. Or, we can just give up.

I can tell you that as a military member and the military members I've talked to, we don't want to have to be there another day. But we also don't want to come home in any condition less than total victory. Let us finish the job. Let the generals on the ground have the tools they need to finish the job. How we get good news and turn that into an immediate pullout of Afghanistan is beyond me.

Mr. President, I did not hear you once last night mention the word "victory" in your speech. I hope that was a needless and sad omission from your speech and did not reflect what you believe in Afghanistan. Ladies and gentlemen, we can win. America only loses when we choose to. America will win in Afghanistan.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

□ 1040

#### FAILED DRUG WAR

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

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, it's hard to believe that the war on drugs has lasted 40 years. The stories of Americans who have suffered because of the war on drugs continue to flood my inbox. Even veterans who served our country are victims of our senseless drug war.

For instance, Alex from Franklin, Ohio, wrote in to me. Alex is a U.S. Army veteran with chronic pain and muscle spasms due to his service to our country. After returning from his deployment, he was put on opiate muscle relaxers from the VA clinic, which didn't work well for him. Following a friend's recommendation, he tried medical marijuana, and it worked for him. However, he was forced to quit in order to accept a new job, and his pain returned. He returned to the VA over and over again, searching for something to relieve the pain. Their only answer was to prescribe stronger and stronger opiates, far stronger narcotics than marijuana. When that didn't work, he was sent to physical therapists, who didn't have an answer either; but because he lives in a State that doesn't offer access to medical marijuana, he is forced to have a very difficult decision between living with his pain or violating the law.

Another person who wrote in is Bob, from Fulton, Georgia, who wrote me to share the story of his wife, who has suffered from systemic lupus for over 30 years. Lupus has slowly deteriorated her body, destroying her hip joint and shoulders. Multiple doctors have said there is nothing they can do to relieve

her pain. During those 3 decades, they have tried all sorts of powerful approved and legal narcotics—to no avail. The only thing that has relieved her pain without side effect and makes her life better is medical marijuana. Again, unfortunately, for Bob and his wife, their State does not have access to medical marijuana like my home State of Colorado does and 14 other States.

Bob ends the story about his wife by saying, "She is 65 years old and can only look forward to pain and agony." I'm sure there are many folks in our country in the same situation. Releasing them from the threat of arrest and incarceration simply for trying to live a pain-free life would be a godsend for these patients and their caregivers.

Is this the reason that we're waging a war on drugs—to ensure that sick people continue to suffer from pain unnecessarily or are driven to buy stronger, more powerful and more addictive narcotics?

Now, there are a lot of views on what a more sensible marijuana policy might look like. My own approach is support for legalization and creating a regulatory system similar to what we have for alcohol and tobacco. We can regulate access, make sure people are not driving under the influence, prevent minors from accessing drugs, tax drugs, and engage in public outreach and education campaigns about the dangers of marijuana.

Taxing and regulating marijuana would save taxpayers billions of dollars and would generate revenue. In fact, each year, the Federal Government spends \$8 billion arresting and locking up nonviolent marijuana users—again, not marijuana dealers, not marijuana growers. There is \$8 billion spent locking up nonviolent marijuana users. For instance, Alex, the veteran, or Bob's wife in Georgia could very well fall victim to that if they're in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Taxing and regulating marijuana would also make our communities safer. Removing marijuana from the criminal market would free up police time so officers can focus on violent crimes, property crimes, people driving under the influence of alcohol or marijuana or any other substance. Tax dollars could be used to incarcerate real criminals who threaten public safety rather than veterans like Alex who are simply using marijuana as a less powerful narcotic alternative to deal with their pain than the opiates that are fully legal under the law and prescribed at the VA.

Instead of reaping these benefits, our country continues to suffer under the failed war on drugs. We need to put an end to this war on drugs, which has caused so much needless suffering. The government should treat its citizens like responsible adults instead of interfering in their lives, and it should offer to help those suffering addiction instead of incarcerating them. The proper front to win the war against narcotics abuse in this country is a health