

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

war, not a war of violence. We are losing this war. Addicts continue to suffer needlessly every day. Those who would benefit from medical marijuana are continually forced to violate the law or to live their lives in pain.

We can do better as a Nation. Many States are leading the way, and we at the Federal level need to pursue the direction that has been followed by an increasing number of States, and we need to regulate the use of marijuana in a way that is compassionate, that discourages usage among minors, and we need to make sure that we have a health aspect in dealing with addiction where it exists.

WHEN AND HOW WILL AMERICA GET BACK TO WORK?

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

Mr. HUIZENGA of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and come before this body to talk about something that I think is a key question that the American people have. We are dealing with a lot of weighty issues these days—Afghanistan, Libya, the debt ceiling, the Tax Code and tax reform—but I believe the key question that we have before us is and the key question that the American people have for us is:

When and how will America get back to work?

Mr. Speaker, it's far more than just creating a bill and labeling it "job creation bill" or a whole package of those or a stimulus package of government spending that, frankly, hasn't worked and even admitted to and joked about by the President recently when he said those shovel-ready jobs and those shovel-ready projects maybe weren't so shovel-ready.

No, they weren't.

But it's far more than just creating a bill and labeling it "job creation." It's about creating an atmosphere for private sector growth.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the private sector creates prosperity, not the government sector. The government sector can give a job, but the private sector creates wealth and creates prosperity, and it's not just in our Tax Code and how that's being applied; it's also in the regulatory atmosphere that we present to those job creators.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this House is trying to inject some reasonableness into a system that has gone awry. Whether it's the EPA creating out of whole cloth regulations that we have not dictated should happen or whether it's the National Labor Relations Board coming up with hurdle after hurdle for these job creators, this administration has continually overstepped the bounds of reasonableness, and it's our job, Mr. Speaker, to rein that in. You would think with 429,000 new jobless claims last week—let me repeat that—with 429,000 new jobless claims we would try to more aggressively

create a better climate and change that atmosphere. I can tell you we're trying to do that here in the House. We just need some partners across the other side of the Capitol and in the administration as well.

Recently, the House Republicans had an opportunity to meet with the President at the White House. My good friend and chairman of the Small Business and Job Creators Caucus, of which I'm a member, my friend from Wisconsin, REID RIBBLE, got up and indicated to the President that we need to do three things for success.

One, we need to have consumer confidence. That means, whether they're the people up in the balcony or those who are watching on TV right now, with the money that they have in their pockets, they feel confident enough that they're going to have a little extra, that they can go out and spend some money on an appliance or on a car, which is very important for those of us from Michigan, or maybe on a vacation. We need to have some consumer confidence, and they don't have that right now.

The other thing is we need to have credit available to those small business creators, those job creators, who are out there, who are cash-flowing, who are continuing to make those tough decisions to stay in the black, but they're now finding out that they can't access credit because of the unreasonable regulations that the Dodd-Frank banking bill has put in front of them.

Lastly and thirdly and maybe most importantly, we need certainty. We need a stability that has not been there for a number of years now. We need stability in our Tax Code. We need stability in our regulations. People basically need to know what the rules of the game are so that they can make long-term business decisions to again create those jobs. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the reasons why I support the House's plan for American job creators, and I encourage you to go to my Web site "Huizenga.house.gov" to see more about that.

Again, it's not just about a bill that's labeled "job creation." It's about an attitude that we need to have. In this package, we know that we need to remove redtape and the excessive regulations that are out there. We know that we need to expand American domestic energy production. That's a "must do" for us. We need to fix and streamline our Tax Code. We need to expand new markets abroad for the goods that our manufacturers make.

But again, Mr. Speaker, it's not just a bill. It's an attitude. We need to have an attitude of, "Yes, we will work with you to help create those jobs," not, "No, it doesn't matter what your question is. The answer is 'no.' We are not going to help."

□ 1050

That, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, has been the dominant attitude of this administration and of this government, and it's time that we change that.

IT IS TIME TO FOCUS ON NATION-BUILDING HERE AT HOME

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. The United States' objective in Afghanistan was to root out, destroy, al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, and their Taliban hosts. That job is done. Afghanistan has been superseded now as a haven for terrorists by tribal areas in Pakistan, Yemen, and Sudan. The inter- and intratribal disputes in Afghanistan are rooted in ancient history, and 12 to 36 more months of a large U.S. troop footprint is not going to resolve centuries-old conflicts among the Afghan tribes. There never has been, there never will be, a strong central government in Afghanistan.

So I disagree with the President's plan for a snail-pace partial drawdown of U.S. troops over the next few years. We should do it much more quickly and leave only a residual force to prevent a terrorist takeover. There were only a few thousand troops there when we drove out the Taliban and when we pursued Osama bin Laden. Unfortunately, we lost an early opportunity to capture and kill him because of mistakes by then-Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

But that being done, the President did say something last night with which I strongly agree. He said, America, it is time to focus on nation-building here at home. I couldn't agree more. I've been trying to do that for the last 2½ years but running into roadblocks down at the White House when I try and rebuild the Nation's transportation infrastructure.

Now, let's just think for a minute. We're borrowing and spending \$120 billion a year in Afghanistan, both to support our troops and to engage in nation-building, building them schools, building them highways, building them bridges, while our own schools, our own highways, our own bridges are crumbling and collapsing; \$120 billion borrowed and spent in Afghanistan, what could we do with that here at home?

We could begin to address the backlog of 150,000 bridges on our national highway system that need repair or replacement; the \$70 billion backlog on our transit systems for basic capital maintenance, let alone new investment in new transit systems to more efficiently transport our people; to deal with the 40 percent of the pavement on the national highway system that's substandard; to deal with congestion in our major cities and our ports; to move freight and Americans more effectively.

And in addressing that with \$120 billion that we're borrowing and spending in Afghanistan today and instead spending that money here at home, we could put over 3 million to work, not just construction workers. People say to me, well, Congressman, I don't work in construction. It's not just construction. We have the strongest buy-America requirement in transportation of