

the fire hits us, and utilize our water so that we can actually get agriculture moving again.

Ladies and gentlemen, we've got a job to do here in Congress. We've got to get American jobs moving again. That's going to be by utilizing our natural resources and by getting Americans willing to take the risk on our economy: willing to invest, willing to borrow money to start a new business, and willing to go out there and promise new employees, not only that they'll have a job, but a long-term job.

We have the power to do that here in Congress.

We need to have the will.

HONORING THE LIFE OF DON RICARDO ALEGRIA

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

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a towering figure in Puerto Rican history and culture. Puerto Rico and the world lost a pioneering and leading scholar last week with the passing of Don Ricardo Alegria.

Don Ricardo Alegria devoted his long life to the affirmation of Puerto Rican national identity and culture. His study of the history and culture of the Taino Indians of Puerto Rico was groundbreaking work. By helping Puerto Ricans understand our Taino, African and other heritage, as well as many other important aspects of Puerto Rican history and culture, Don Ricardo helped us all to understand better who we are, where we come from and what being Puerto Rican truly means.

But Don Ricardo Alegria was not only a scholar whose work was essential to the Puerto Ricans' understanding of our history; he was a determined and proud man who refused to let our culture be forgotten or destroyed. He was a founder and the executive director of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and of many other important research, cultural and educational institutions. In this role, he was a warrior, defending our cultural heritage.

It is not an exaggeration to say that, without Don Ricardo's leadership and tenacity, the historic buildings and walls of Old San Juan, which are loved by Puerto Ricans and visited by tourists from around the world, may not be standing today. He led the fight to preserve Old San Juan and to make sure its historic significance was understood by all.

□ 1010

Ricardo Alegria was an example of what makes us all so proud to be Puerto Rican. He looked to a better future while treasuring our past. He embraced what makes Puerto Ricans unique, and he understood that we have our own identity; and we should never run away from it. We should celebrate it. And

without history and without question, he loved our people and our history. I offer Don Ricardo Alegria my humble thanks and gratitude for his commitment to Puerto Rico, his leadership for our people, and the way he elevated our history and our culture.

At this time of crisis for Puerto Rico, a time when many in power seem to have forgotten the traits that make us "us," make our island our island, and make our history our history, Don Ricardo was very supportive of my work in Congress. The inspiration of towering Puerto Rican figures like Don Ricardo motivate me to speak out on this floor and denounce attacks on the civil and human rights of Puerto Ricans. These attacks come from the same quarters Don Ricardo fought all his life. They come from those who seek to destroy the national culture and identity of the island of Puerto Rico. And they have not succeeded and will never succeed because there will always be Puerto Ricans like Don Ricardo standing defiantly, proudly, and courageously in their way.

This fact was driven home right here in Congress just yesterday, Madam Speaker, at a well-attended briefing conducted by the ACLU, the National Institute for Latino Policy, and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund.

As part of their briefing, these organizations showed a video depicting the many scenes of violence by the police of Puerto Rico against unarmed and peaceful protestors. I have seen this video, and I am certain that many Members that see these images would be moved to indignation and action. That these scenes happen under the American flag and that these abuses are committed against American citizens is simply shameful. If any of my colleagues saw these images, I am sure they would feel the same indignation I felt when I saw them.

Madam Speaker, it is out of my deep concern for the people of Puerto Rico that I wish to inform my colleagues that I have sent a letter today to Attorney General Eric Holder. This letter requests the release of any and all documents and information regarding contacts by officials or representatives and lobbyists of the Government of Puerto Rico with the U.S. Department of Justice and their civil rights division into the very serious allegations of systematic police brutality in Puerto Rico, an investigation that is over 2 years old.

I have requested this information under the Freedom of Information Act because public reports allege that the Government of Puerto Rico is using its well-paid top Washington lobbyists and other resources to thwart the release of the Justice Department reports. The reports are based on lobbying disclosure forms that do not give much detail on exactly what the lobbyists are doing for the Government of Puerto Rico. Given the recent history of the ruling party of Puerto Rico trying to

act with impunity and in secrecy, these published reports have raised serious doubts in my mind.

So, Madam Speaker, I want to make it clear, while there may not be transparent and open government in Puerto Rico or a Freedom of Information Act there, as far as the Federal Government is concerned, the secrecy and the impunity of the regime in Puerto Rico ends here.

CONCEALED CARRY LAWS

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

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, last Friday something actually very great happened. Wisconsin became the 49th State in the Union to approve concealed carry. Well, that means that leaves my home State, Illinois, as the only State to oppose that constitutional right to concealed carry.

The action taken by Governor Scott Walker was a major step for Wisconsin, but the State of Illinois now remains the only State in the Nation to prohibit concealed carry and deny law-abiding citizens' rights to protect themselves or their family.

The Constitution of the United States and 44 States, common law, and laws of all 50 States recognize the right to use arms in self-defense. In 1895, the Supreme Court case, *Beard v. U.S.*, the Court approved the common law rule that a person "may repel force by force" in self-defense and concluded that, when attacked, a person is "entitled to stand his ground and meet any attack made upon him with a deadly weapon."

In 2008, the Supreme Court ruled in *District of Columbia v. Heller* that "the inherent right of self-defense has been central to the Second Amendment right," and that the amendment protects "the individual right to possess and carry weapons in case of confrontation."

Right-to-carry laws have proven to be effective. Since 1991 through 2009, 23 States have adopted the right to carry, and violent crime rates have declined 43 percent. This all comes on the heels of a five-fold increase in the number of shall-issue conceal carry States from 1986 to 2006. Along with this, since the 1980s when the conceal carry issue started, the number of conceal carry permit holders is estimated to have risen from 1 million to 6 million people. Of major note, murder has declined 49 percent. Also, the city with the highest gun homicide rate in the Nation, Washington, D.C., happens to also have the strictest gun control.

The lowest rate of gun homicide in the Nation is in Utah, which has some of the most liberal policies when it comes to conceal carry issues. According to the FBI, total violent crime and murder dropped more than 6 percent during the first half of 2011. Anti-gun advocates are in disbelief over this

number as not only is the Nation going through an economic downturn, but they've been seeing that the amount of Federal background checks done in order to purchase firearms broke record levels with more than 14 million occurring last year alone. That's a 55 percent increase in firearms purchases in just 4 years, but it has not even led remotely close to the doom and gloom havoc being peddled by anti-gun advocates.

Criminologist Gary Kleck analyzed National Crime Victimization Surveys and concluded that robbery and assault victims who used a gun to resist were less likely to be attacked or to suffer an injury than those who used any other methods of self-protection or those who did not resist at all. Unfortunately, in my home State of Illinois, Governor Quinn took it upon himself in May to determine what's best for Illinois. Rather than listening to the voice of the Illinois constituency, Quinn made desperate 11th-hour phone calls to sway Illinois Democrats to his side and block vital legislation to allow concealed carry in Illinois. He knows better than 49 other States, and he knows better than top law enforcement organizations like the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, the Illinois Sheriffs Association, the Chicago Police Lieutenants Association, and the Chicago Police Sergeants Association.

Quinn doesn't get it, but 49 other States do and so do I, which is why I am a proud cosponsor of H.R. 822, the National Right-to-Carry Reciprocity Act of 2011, which was introduced by my colleague, Representative CLIFF STEARNS of Florida. This bill allows any person with a State-issued concealed carry to carry in any other State. Therefore, for the 49 States that issue concealed carry permits, their State laws would apply.

In Illinois, I refuse to deny visitors the right to carry weapons when they are authorized to do so. We must follow the example set by every other State in this Nation and allow law-abiding citizens to own and bear arms. We must restore, defend and preserve this constitutional right at all government levels.

REDUCING THE FEDERAL DEFICIT

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, over the past several weeks, we've been debating ways to reduce the Federal deficit.

Republicans have said that everything is on the table and that nothing is sacred, but that just isn't true. The Republicans refuse to cut tax giveaways to the wealthiest special interests in this country. And when it comes to discussing the merits of continuing our efforts in Afghanistan, the Republicans clamor to defend it despite our fiscal mess.

I want to remind my Republican friends, the situation we are in now is not new. Throughout history, from Rome to the Ottoman Empire to the Soviet Union, the overextension of military and protracted struggles in foreign countries have crippled empires.

Some historians have credited Ronald Reagan for the Soviet Union's collapse, but what really bankrupted the Soviet Union was its wars. Just like us, they paid a crushing price both financially and morally in Afghanistan. Overextending geopolitically comes at a cost over time, and any nation that thinks otherwise is setting itself up to repeat the mistakes of the past.

As of today, the United States has spent more than 2½ times the percentage of GDP on Afghanistan than the Soviet Union spent of its GDP during its 9-year war in Afghanistan. Public polls are clear: Americans know the cost of the war in Afghanistan is unsustainable and want us to withdraw as soon as possible.

And when it comes to cutting back on support for the neediest Americans, we can't seem to face the urgent reality that the money that we spend abroad needs to be spent here at home. The financial facts tell the story. Taxpayers in my district in Seattle have spent \$1.1 billion for the Afghanistan war to date. Think about that: one city, \$1.1 billion. For the same amount of money, we could provide health care for 700,000 children from low-income families, or put 125,000 kids in Head Start, or health care for 150,000 more veterans.

□ 1020

Imagine how different it would be if States like Wisconsin, which faces a \$3.6 billion budget deficit, did not have to bear the cost of the war in Afghanistan.

So the question before us is simple: What is our priority? Fighting a war with no end or investing in the American people? The answer lies in what kind of country we are, what legacy we leave behind to our children and our grandchildren, and transcending political decisions toward a common commitment to make America strong again.

America will cease to be a world power if we fail to support the domestic foundations of our Nation. Yet the House does not even blink as it approved a \$650 billion defense budget last Friday. While the Republicans were cutting any spending that helps people, they didn't so much as flinch as they threw hundreds of billions of dollars into the bottomless pit of the defense budget.

We need to stop seeing the world through the lens of constant threat and foster a sense of the common good and shared responsibility. That, not our military footprint, is what will advance our interests in the world and make us confident again.

In a national poll conducted last year, 47 percent of Americans rated

China's economy as the strongest economy in the world. Our crumbling roads reflect our crumbling self-confidence. Our national prosperity is vital to our national security, and that is why I believe getting out of Afghanistan must be the center of reducing our deficit. Anything short of that would ignore the fiscal reality and the will of the American people to end the Afghanistan war.

We have a choice before us: Continue the war and continue downhill, or stop the war and start up the hill to regain what we've lost over the last few years.

NEW TAXES KILL JOBS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to join with my colleague from Illinois, Congressman ADAM KINZINGER, in congratulating the people of Wisconsin on passing a concealed weapons bill. I think they'll find, as we have found in South Carolina, that having a concealed carry permit—we call it Law Abiding Citizen's Self-Defense Act—that the consequence of this a number of years ago now has been a reduction in crime. In fact, many of the people who—as I was a floor leader in the State Senate to propose the concealed carry law, so many of the people who opposed it, and they opposed it thinking that they were doing correctly, have subsequently told me that they really are thrilled that now it has passed, that it, indeed, has promoted a reduction in crime in our State. And I know the same will be true in Wisconsin and possibly one day in Illinois.

Madam Speaker, time is running out for the American people. With just weeks to go before our country defaults on its debts, liberals in Congress continue to roadblock any progress on real spending cuts. The American people want to see spending reforms. The administration can cut other Federal spending before it allows a default on the U.S. debt. Americans understand that the Federal Government is burdening future generations with debt by borrowing over 40 cents of every dollar it spends. Senior citizens are at risk with the value of the dollar in question.

Americans want to see meaningful spending reform. Liberals want to play political games. Republicans have been trying to lead on spending reform. From the moment this new Congress has been in session, House Republicans have passed numerous bills that cut spending, curb government growth, and encourage job growth for American families. The latest news on the debt limit talks shows yet again how out of touch this current administration is with the American people. Cut the spending. Do not impose new taxes which will kill jobs which need to be developed by small businesses.