

The current conflict between Israel and Hamas offers a clear distinction between good and evil.

Israel took control of the Gaza Strip as a result of the Six-Day War in 1967. It granted self-governance to the region in 1994, and in 2005, unilaterally withdrew its forces.

The resulting Hamas government has since militarized Gaza and used it as a launching site for continuing and escalating attacks against the civilian Israeli population, with the avowed objective of wiping Israel off the map.

The Arab Spring welcomed by the Obama administration brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power in Egypt. During its brief tenure, it opened a road for the mass importation of weapons to Hamas. These weapons, and others smuggled in by sea, were strategically placed in schools and hospitals and fired upon Israeli cities without provocation.

As Churchill once said of Britain: Israel did everything it could to secure peace. Perhaps it did too much.

The result was thousands of rocket attacks and many terrorist incursions by Hamas aimed solely at the civilian population. Israel finally did what any civilization must do under such circumstances: it finally fought back.

Hamas has deliberately staged its attacks from hospitals, schools, and mosques, using children as human shields, leaving the Israelis the Hobson's choice of enduring the killing of their own population or taking out the instruments of destruction that are deliberately sited in schools and hospitals. They have chosen to defend themselves.

There is absolutely no doubt of Hamas' objectives and that of its allies: they have been crystal clear and unwavering on their intention to destroy Israel and kill every Israeli. They seek to eradicate the Jewish homeland, whose history in the region stretches back more than 3,000 years.

Their allies have been intent on annihilating every Christian and Jew in the Middle East, and they are well on their way toward achieving this goal. It would be the height of naivete to believe that it will stop. Yet, this administration, and many on the Left, seem to view the two sides as moral equivalents. Many on the Left even portray Israel as the aggressor.

Israel has made the decision to by force demilitarize Gaza for its own survival. It is now making serious progress and degrading Hamas' ability to make war. That is the only true path to peace.

Yet, the Obama administration is now working to halt Israel's progress and allow Hamas the time to resupply and regroup and resume its attacks. This serves only the objectives of Hamas and is a prescription for prolonged war and bloodshed.

Hamas has broken every cease-fire it has agreed to, and Israel has abided by every cease-fire, often holding return fire for hours after Hamas has broken

these accords. There is no reason to believe that Hamas will abide by future cease-fires the moment it has recovered its war-making capabilities.

Why would this administration interfere in this manner, the effect of which is to take sides against the only pro-Western regime left in the Middle East?

Today, all that stands between a peaceful and free world and a fanatical fascist caliphate stretching from the Bosphorus to North Africa is the state of Israel and the influence of the Western democracies, particularly that of the United States.

In 1929, Churchill warned of Britain's irresolution in the Middle East. He said: "Any appearance of lack of will-power on the part of the British government or of lack of confidence in its mission in these countries blows like a draught of air on the dull, fierce embers."

Mr. Speaker, at this perilous hour, let us not repeat the mistakes of history.

ADDRESS OUR TRANSPORTATION NEEDS NOW

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, yesterday afternoon, I stood at the back of the Senate Chamber and watched a critical debate. Under the leadership of Chairman RON WYDEN of the Senate Finance Committee, his partner, Ranking Member HATCH; Chairwoman BARBARA BOXER from California, CHRIS MURPHY from Connecticut, BOB CORKER from Tennessee, and Senator TOM CARPER from Delaware held forth on critical legislation to be able to help America deal with our infrastructure crisis.

America—it is no secret—is falling apart and is falling behind. It is well overdue for us to have a robust, important 6-year reauthorization to deal with our transportation needs.

We can't do that unless we resolve the funding conundrum. We have been limping along. We can't even get through the current 27-month extension without a summer slowdown, cutting back on critical Federal funding for contracts around the country.

What the Senate did was tackle this issue head on. They had a funding proposal that was fairly debated, where they were able to provide enough funding to get us through the end of the year, but not so much that it allows this Congress off the hook to slide into the next Congress, and probably the Congress after that, but instead, face up to our responsibilities now.

Mr. Speaker, the presentation of Senator CORKER from Tennessee urging us to be grownups and move forward, and Senator BOXER talking about the critical needs and not to be waylaid by this fantasy that somehow the Federal Government should abandon its commit-

ment to a National Transportation Highway System that we initiated under President Eisenhower, that somehow that is a thing of the past, turn our back on it, slash transportation funding, and just kind of wait and see what happens around the country—she was eloquent and forceful. Again, we have watched Senator MURPHY and Senator CARPER be focused on that which we need to do.

Mr. Speaker, we need to address and embrace the bipartisan Senate vote yesterday: 79 bipartisan votes to be able to do our job, avoid the summer shutdown, and do so in a way with a funding approach that is much more sustainable and reasonable, not the so-called pension smoothing that is ill-advised on so many levels.

Two weeks ago, Democrats in the House of Representatives were united: 99 percent supported what is, essentially, the Senate outcome. That didn't prevail on the floor of the House in a motion to recommit that I offered. But Democrats didn't pick up our marbles and quit. We actually provided the votes necessary to keep the issue alive and send the suboptimal Republican approach across to the other body. There weren't enough Republican votes to pass it, but we kept it alive hoping that we could see what happens on the Senate side, that we might have a stronger more reasonable proposal.

That optimism and cooperation on the part of the Democrats in the House was rewarded because we have this bipartisan proposal, which is, in fact, better, supported by 79 Senators.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for the House to be able to address this bipartisan approach from the Senate. Allow us to vote on it. It ought to be the first step in our being able to avoid the summer shutdown and be able to get on with the 6-year bill.

Rarely have we seen the stakeholders so united. The American Trucking Association, the road builders, the U.S. Chamber, building and construction trades, the bicyclists, and the engineers. We watch across the country the people who build, who maintain, and depend on our infrastructure united, supportive of the approach that has emerged from the United States Senate. Even as we speak, they are contacting congressional offices, urging Members support the bipartisan Senate approach.

I respectfully urge the Republican leadership to allow those voices to be heard, to heed the stakeholders, heed the American people, give them a bill worthy of voting on. It will pass overwhelmingly, and we will be doing our job.

SPURRING TEACHER EDUCATION MOVEMENT FOR STEM ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, every country must deal with and answer the

question: What does it take to be prosperous and to have prosperity for future generations?

There are many answers to that question, but one of the keys is science, technology, engineering, and math—the STEM fields—in our educational system.

The United States needs to be able to compete in these fields on a global scale, and children of all schools should have the opportunity to develop these skills no matter where they live.

Recently, teachers in the Second District of New Mexico brought up the question: What about us? Can we use funds that are set over here in the Education Department to develop better skills in the STEM areas?

Those questions were not answered in a completely positive way—that maybe it was not possible. Therefore, the teachers put forward an idea that maybe we should just get the flexibility in, a practical suggestion for an important concept.

Teachers and educators in the Second District provided firsthand experience and developed the idea into a concept. Several teachers formed an ad hoc working group. Brian Claar from White Sands Schools, Lindsey Guerrero and Marci Hearn from Gadsden Independent School District, Marci Behrens from Las Cruces Public School District, as well as Susan Brown, Nicole Delgado, and Christina Abeyta from the New Mexico State University STEM Outreach Center, all came together and developed that concept into a proposed legislation.

Working with my staff, they actually got the bill written, and on June 25 of this year, I introduced H.R. 4973, titled: Spurring Teacher Education Movement for STEM Act, also known as the STEM for STEM Act.

H.R. 4973 increases flexibility for teacher development funds under the Rural and Low Income title of the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965. It allows the funds to be used for teacher development in teaching STEM.

The STEM for STEM Act also expresses the need for the U.S. to compete on a global scale. A teacher should have the high-quality professional development opportunities in STEM to increase their content knowledge and improve student learning.

Professional development is essential for providing teachers and educators with growth opportunities that then are presented to our children.

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Teacher professional development enriches the learning environment for students and educators alike. It is important for us to say thank you to those teachers who make it possible for America to compete into the next generation.

Hopefully, this bill, H.R. 4973, will provide a small element of help for the rural areas that stretch across the Western part of this country.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

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

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the importance of comprehensive immigration reform and the growing humanitarian crisis we are facing at our southern border.

It is the job of the Congress to face and resolve challenging issues like our broken immigration system. We ought to pass the bipartisan Senate bill that would provide commonsense solutions to address not only reforming our immigration system, but to deal with this immediate humanitarian crisis at our border.

Instead, the Republican House leadership refuses to allow a vote on comprehensive reform and has come up, instead, with a plan that would change the law passed in 2008 to combat human trafficking. In addition, this partisan bill will provide limited funding for this fiscal year.

Again, House leadership plans to pass a short-term fix, so that they can go back to their districts next month and say: well, we tried to fix this crisis that we are facing.

This is not how we should be solving our Nation's problems. Each day that our immigration system remains broken, jobs are lost, and our economy suffers. It is time to set politics aside and focus on fixing our current immigration system. In fact, failure to address reform is making it more difficult to deal with the thousands of unaccompanied children arriving at our southern border in hopes of finding safety.

The humanitarian crisis that we are facing is in part a result of the increasing turmoil in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, where drug trafficking, human trafficking, and violence is rampant. Families have been tortured and killed, and today, there are people who are literally running for their lives.

Atrocities are being committed in those countries, and they must bear the responsibility of addressing and resolving their issues. Mexico also has a role to play.

We in the United States must now face the humanitarian crisis this violence is causing at our southern border. In a joint statement, President Obama, along with Presidents from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, pledged to reduce criminal activity in Central American countries by promoting greater social and economic opportunity.

It is my hope that these leaders stay true to their word and demonstrate leadership by addressing the humanitarian crisis taking place within their own countries.

These young unaccompanied children must be treated in a humane and dignified way. Ultimately, these children's fate rests in the hands of our immigration judges, and those children who are not granted asylum must return to

their countries. Playing politics with this grave crisis, as some are doing, is not productive.

It is the height of hypocrisy that Republicans want more border security, but have refused to allow a vote on a comprehensive immigration reform bill that would in fact provide more funding to secure our borders. That makes no sense. We have spent billions of dollars on border security, but clearly, our border is not yet secure.

The comprehensive immigration reform bill passed by the Senate in a bipartisan fashion requires that a long-term plan be developed and executed with an initial \$8.3 billion in funding to focus on securing the borders today and an additional \$6.5 billion in funding to be spent over the next 6 years to in fact secure our border.

What we need now, more than ever, is an open and honest discussion on the House floor about the relationship between immigration reform and this humanitarian crisis. Therefore, I urge my Republican colleagues to join together, in a bipartisan fashion, like they did in the Senate, to find an effective and humane short- and long-term solution to this crisis, which is directly related, in my opinion, to fixing our broken immigration system.

ABLE ACT

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

Mr. CRENSHAW. Mr. Speaker, this morning, I want to bring attention to proposed legislation known as the ABLE Act, or Achieving a Better Life Experience. It is something that is important to me and to a lot of Members of the House.

I first filed this legislation 7 years ago. Since then, we have come a long way. Today, 377 Members of the House and 74 United States Senators are cosponsors of this legislation. There is no piece of legislation in the Congress today that enjoys more bipartisan, bicameral support than the ABLE Act. Tomorrow, the Ways and Means Committee in the House will take up this legislation, and I hope that they will pass it with a favorable vote.

Just what is the ABLE Act? It is a piece of legislation that attempts to help those individuals with disabilities achieve their full potential. How does it do that? Well, it allows individuals with disabilities to set up a tax-free savings account. They take that account, it grows tax free, and they can use the proceeds, as long as they meet qualified expenses.

Those individuals face challenges that you and I can sometimes hardly imagine. They might be medical, transportation, education, or housing needs. We already allow other individuals to use tax-exempt savings accounts to help them.

If you want to save for retirement, you can set up a tax-free savings account called a 401(k). If you want to set