

THE AFTERMATH OF TERRORIST ATTACKS

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, we are all horrified by the barbaric attacks in Paris designed to slaughter innocent people and inspire terror. We stand with the French people and are all committed to redoubling our efforts to ensure we keep Americans safe and intensify our efforts to eradicate these evil, sinister forces that appear almost to be a different species.

It is important, however, that we think through clearly where we are, what we have done, and what makes sense going forward to protect Americans and redouble our efforts against this enemy. We must not jump to conclusions and do something before it is carefully planned and analyzed.

I was here in the aftermath of the horror of 9/11, the killing of innocent Americans in the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, and but for the bravery of passengers on United Airlines flight 93, we might well have had our Capitol destroyed.

The Federal Government acted after 9/11, but it is not clear our actions were thought out the way they should. We assembled a clumsy behemoth, the Department of Homeland Security, the largest department we have created since 1947. In retrospect, it is not clear that was the wisest course of action. Think about the excessive bureaucracy, charges of waste, fraud, and inefficiency in that department. Look at the clumsy response to Katrina.

We passed the PATRIOT Act instead of the bipartisan legislation produced by the Committee on the Judiciary. Look at the vast, sprawling, shadowy intelligence network, so large nobody actually knows precisely how big it is. Remember, the failure of 9/11 to stop the attack was not for lack of intelligence. It was a failure to be able to use the knowledge we have. There is a danger at times of drowning in data.

The impulse to lash out led to the disastrous war in Iraq. The aftermath of that effort has done more to empower ISIS. It not only drew people to the movement, but we created a space where they can operate, grow, and lash out at us.

Now we hear what can only be described as crazy talk in the Republican Presidential primaries not just about sealing the borders, but having a religious test for refugees fleeing terror.

Remember, the 9/11 attackers did not sneak across the borders, but exploited weaknesses in our visa system. Even in Europe, it appears that most of the people involved with the attack did not sneak in, hidden with Syrian refugees. They were actually people already in Europe, radicalized and moving freely about.

It is appropriate to be concerned, angry, and determined to protect innocent people, to hunt down and elimi-

nate these horrific threats. I just hope that we learn from our past mistakes about impulse and overreach that may not produce its intended results but, instead, may leave us with more problems and vulnerability.

Remember how a college dropout was able to expose vast amounts of sensitive American data. Edward Snowden had been a private contractor who had worked for the government just a few months.

Working in a highly charged political environment does not tend to bring out the best in Congress. We need to be careful about getting this right, that we have the support of the American people, and that Congress in a really frustrating time in American politics takes the time and energy to craft effective action. Let's try and get on the same page rather than a rapid response, which history shows is not necessarily the right response.

Decidedly, turning our back on Syrian refugees is un-American, unpatriotic, and morally weak. Turning our back on an entire population due to broad-brush characterizations of those who practice a certain faith goes against our core values as a country. I think America is better than that.

Seeking compassion for Syrian refugees can be done securely. The facts make that clear. A failure to do so would put us on the wrong side of history. It would be one of those mistakes we make under pressure and would only make us less safe rather than more.

REFORMING CFPB INDIRECT AUTO FINANCING GUIDANCE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. JENKINS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1737, the Reforming CFPB Indirect Auto Financing Guidance Act.

Businesses across West Virginia's Third District are already facing hardships from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's rules. Those businesses that make, sell, finance, or service motor vehicles in my State are especially worried about the CFPB's 2013 rulemaking affecting their industry.

The 2013 rule could raise credit costs and push consumers out of the marketplace entirely. It should be consumers, not government bureaucrats, deciding what works best for them.

This bill would rescind that flawed rule and replace it with commonsense guidance for transactions related to indirect auto financing. The bill would give consumers, especially those with low and moderate incomes, a chance to receive the best financing options available for them to purchase a new auto vehicle.

I fully support passage of this bill and hope we can continue to work in a bipartisan fashion to reform CFPB rulemaking.

REACTING TO THE TERRORIST ATTACKS

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

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, we are shocked, horrified, and deeply saddened by the news coming from Paris. As a member of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I know there is much to fear, both for our allies and for us.

But in light of the attacks on our ally France last Friday, I urge my colleagues to keep a cool head and not to react exactly the way that ISIS and other terrorists hope we do, with fear, with chaos, and with lashing out. But, sadly, that is what we have already seen Republican Governors, elected leaders, candidates, and media figures do.

I have been here long enough to know a thing or two about opportunism. Maybe it is too much to resist when you are one of 15 candidates for President of the United States. Politicians, pundits, and celebrities will be tempted to say whatever they can to get the news cameras pointed at them.

The Governor of Illinois, my home State, could not resist saying our State was closed to Syrians fleeing the terror of ISIS and the Assad regime. The Governor of Louisiana, the son of immigrants, running for President of the United States, a nation of immigrants, said "no" to refugees. The Governors of a dozen other States did so, too. A Senator whose parents came as refugees from Cuba fleeing there has said "no," too.

This is despicable and cowardly and precisely the kind of reaction ISIS wanted. ISIS could not have written a better script. The free people of the world are turning their backs on people seeking safety and freedom. When we sent Jews back to Germany and when we sent Japanese to internment camps, we regretted it, and we will regret this as well.

We have had candidates actually say that refugees seeking safety in the strongest nation in the world must first pass a test to prove they are from an acceptable religion. In the United States of America they said this. In the 21st century. An acceptable religion in America.

Now, of course, the Governors of Illinois, Texas, and Louisiana, and most of the other States that are scared of ISIS, are Republican. Because it is a Federal matter, they are overstepping their powers with executive orders because they cannot actually stop refugees from resettling in their States, and they know it. How sad.

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Instead, they have instructed State agencies not to assist people fleeing terror. We are a better country than that.

No matter how scared Republican leaders become, we must not abandon our commitment to being a nation

without equal in a world, a nation that does not fear or shy away from any challenge. It is our commitment to religious equality and the freedom to worship as we please that has made us a great nation. And this is no time to abandon that tradition.

Our bravery, the bravery of our military, and the bravery of our commitment to freedom and equality have shown for almost 250 years what American exceptionalism is truly all about.

It is not the time to lose sight of ourselves and say America is too weak, that America cannot handle 20,000 or 200,000 refugees fleeing for their lives. It is not the time for America to consider raising the white flag and say to those waving the black flag: "Yes, ISIS, you are right. We dislike and fear Muslims, and we do not care if you perish or not."

A lot of us love this country too much to see it abandon core principles and values because religious extremists commit acts of terror designed precisely to terrorize us.

On Thursday, the Immigration Subcommittee will hold a hearing on refugees from Syria and the Middle East, as well it should, but you can already imagine what we will hear. Republicans will most likely raise fears that Muslim terrorists disguised as refugees would somehow pass exhaustive criminal background checks because they have been lying in wait in those camps overseas for years on the slim chance they could do damage to America. They will raise suspicions, instill fear of Muslims, maybe even fear of a President they have been saying is a Muslim, and it will probably be a pretty sad display.

Let us as legislators, leaders, and patriots rise above petty politics, rise above sectarian fears, and rise above the underlying layer of xenophobia that often surfaces in this country at moments like this throughout our history. And let us maintain America's commitment to being a beacon of hope for those fleeing oppression, violence, and intolerance.

A haven for the religiously persecuted, whether they are Buddhists from Tibet, Christians from Iran, or pilgrims from Europe, is who we are. We are a nation that lives by the motto: "Out of many, one." We will not run in fear from that motto today or any day. This is America.

CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL BOONDOGGLE

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, as a Californian, I know full well that we are suffering from a record drought; but what we already know is that California officials pushing the State's high-speed rail proposal won't be deterred by skyrocketing costs, an absence of private investment, or the \$55

million—and growing—funding gap. What we didn't know was the extent of secrecy and mismanagement taxpayers would face at the hands of State officials pushing this project.

Just this month, we learned that in 2013 the agency's main contractor projected that the first phase's costs had risen 31 percent. This information was concealed by the High-Speed Rail Authority and only released 2 years later after pressure from Congress.

While the lack of transparency is unacceptable, especially given that taxpayers are ultimately on the hook for this project, the fundamental issue here is that the entire project is a ruse—in literal terms, a train wreck—in that State officials knew this for some time and that those same officials hid this from the public.

In 2008, voters were promised an 800-mile system that would link Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego, cost about \$34 billion, and would have less than one-third of the costs paid by the State through its taxpayers. The system was promised to travel from San Francisco to Los Angeles in under 2 hours and 40 minutes.

Fast forward to 2011 when the price had shot up from \$34 billion to \$100 billion, the plan was reduced to only L.A. to San Francisco, and the State was quick to grab billions of—unknown at the time—Federal stimulus that came along later, funding that could have been used for critical needs like roads or water infrastructure that California needs so desperately, as well as now shifting cap-and-trade dollars recently created to try and prop up high-speed rail and its deficient budget dollars.

As a State senator at the time, the first bill I introduced was one that would require them to come up with the ultimate full plan of the cost of doing high-speed rail. Having not succeeded in getting that through a majority that still liked it as it was, my next legislation was to say, now that we know this is over \$100 billion, let's put this back on the ballot and in front of the voters, since the price has tripled and they were deceived at what it would cost at the time. That, too, met defeat, as those in the majority still wished to continue this boondoggle.

Today, the Governor claims the price has fallen to \$68 billion for what would be an illegal system, based on what the voters passed under Prop 1A. However, the estimate ignores the costs of tunneling through the Tehachapi Mountains, ignores cost spikes in the initial construction segment, and ignores the rising costs of lands acquisition due to people having to fight because they are having their homes, their farms, and their small businesses paved over by this project.

The promises made in 2008 ranged from low ticket prices to questionable job figures, including the fact that they were claiming there would be a million new jobs from high-speed rail. When we pinned them down in committee a little bit later, they said, well,

that would mean a million job-years. That number has since been pared down. All these have been proven false. In fact, these claims are so misleading that a State court has forbidden the legislature from writing ballot measure descriptions.

Earlier this week, I sent out a survey to residents in my weekly e-newsletter to constituents in California's First District, my own district, asking them to share their thoughts on high-speed rail as it is now. I listed a number of suggested actions we could take on high-speed rail, from leaving it as is to defunding it, and asked which best represents our constituents' position on the project now.

Of the nearly 1,600 answers we received, their views are pretty clear. Nearly half of them said they thought funding for high-speed rail should be redirected to invest in water storage and water infrastructure to help our State right now in this drought.

About 20 percent thought the State should subpoena the cost documents and require High-Speed Rail Authority officials to testify why the figures were concealed. Approximately 18 percent thought California's high-speed rail should undergo Federal investigation in response to these allegations, given that the project involves the use of Federal funds. A scant 7 percent thought we should keep going forward with high-speed rail and believed the current price tag is a worthwhile investment of public funds. Lastly, 4 percent supported investing in high-speed rail, provided the project stayed within the old constraints, the old prices—the ones they saw on the ballot. So, at best, you see 11 percent that might support high-speed rail and 4 percent that might under the old price, which is nowhere near what was projected.

People don't like this project, don't trust those advocating for it, and they deserve better than to see their own tax dollars used to lie to them. No new Federal dollars will come from here to help this project be propped up anymore.

It is time we start prioritizing funding for projects that actually address real problems facing California, such as the current drought. It is time to apply common sense to this situation. We have a State whose economy depends on a sound water supply, yet in the midst of a historic drought, we are still chasing this high-speed rail boondoggle.

Rather than throwing billions of dollars away, let's get to what people demand and will help our economy and the people of California.

CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, when the average American wants to learn about a policy, where do they turn for