

This brings us to the other argument, the second argument, which is that there is not time. I brought this graphic here to show that, for the last several Presidents, the average approval time was something like 2 months. The current President has some 300 days left in his term.

Take a look at this one: approval time for Justices Alito, Roberts, Breyer, Ginsburg, and Thomas. If you add all of those individual periods of time together, you still don't get the amount of time that the current President has left in his term.

This, of course, brings us to the arguably most laughable argument that we hear lately, which is that some 20-plus years ago, then-Senate Committee on the Judiciary Chairman JOE BIDEN said something along the lines of perhaps then the President shouldn't make an appointment because it was an election year.

□ 1015

I don't need to point out that, as much as I like and respect the Vice President, his words of 25 years ago do not carry constitutional force or the force of law. We shouldn't spend a lot of time on that argument.

So what is really going on here? If those are the best arguments against even extending the courtesy of a senatorial meeting to the President's nominee, an unprecedented action, what is really going on?

Here is what is really going on. It is a government shutdown. We have seen this before. When the rules we read at the opening of every Congress result in an outcome my friends on the other side of the aisle don't like, they simply shut it down. They did that in October 2013.

Between the days of October 1 and October 16, they shut down the Federal Government, an action that Standard & Poor's estimated cost the U.S. economy \$24 billion, or fully 0.6 percent of our economic growth is gone because the Republicans wouldn't accept the Affordable Care Act.

Look, I get that. They don't like it. But it has been passed in due course in this House, shown to be constitutional by the Supreme Court, and the answer was: No. We don't like it. We are shutting down the government.

Let's not shut down the government over the Supreme Court.

COLOMBIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of this body the current negotiations taking place in Cuba between the Colombian Government and the FARC, which is a U.S.-designated terrorist organization. That deal is dangerous for Colombia and for our U.S. national security.

Let me explain. As a friend of the Colombian people, I have been a pro-

ponent of widening and strengthening our bilateral ties with Colombia by supporting the United States-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement. This agreement has helped many companies in my congressional district of south Florida strengthen their trade capabilities with Colombia.

I have also supported Plan Colombia, a collaborative effort alongside the Colombian Armed Forces and security forces aimed at improving the security environment. Plan Colombia enjoys wide bipartisan support, resulting in a significant reduction in the cultivation of coca in years past, record dismantling of labs, and drastically reducing kidnappings, which are an important source of revenue for the FARC.

Despite great advances in the conflict during the Uribe administration prior to President Santos, I have expressed serious misgivings about the negotiation initiated by the Colombian Government with the murderous Castro regime as a supposedly impartial mediator.

Mr. Speaker, the Castro brothers run an impressive communist state, with complete disregard for human rights, due process, and a notorious history of supporting nefarious actors throughout the region.

Using Cuba as a mediator in the negotiation is misguided, at best. It is widely known that the Castro brothers have been great supporters of the terrorist group FARC, have allowed the FARC to use Cuba as a safe haven, and have even trained some FARC terrorists in guerilla warfare tactics.

Yet, despite knowing that the Castro regime has internationally voiced strong support for the FARC, even lending materiel and monetary aid to the rebels, we expect the Castros now to be acting as impartial mediators? Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker.

With the Colombian Government negotiating with the FARC and with Cuba as a mediator that is supposedly impartial, the pending agreement includes no jail time for any of the FARC criminals. These criminals have kidnapped and tortured scores of Colombian citizens and have even held American citizens hostage. No jail time.

According to the agreement, if the FARC members admit to their crimes, they would be put in what is the equivalent of house arrest from 2 to 8 years—8 years is the maximum—and they would not serve any jail time and they will not be extradited to the United States to face any charges they have pending here.

You heard that right, Mr. Speaker. This agreement could include a request to drop any arrest warrant and drop any extradition process from the United States that we have filed to prosecute members of the FARC. This is completely unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

I am also concerned about provisions in the agreement that would allow members of the FARC to run for political office, as they would likely use the

massive funds that they have from their illegal narcotics trade to finance their campaigns and further undermine what the Colombian people are trying to achieve by having a safe, secure Colombia again.

Evidence has shown that, since the negotiations began with the FARC in Havana, coca cultivation numbers in Colombia have increased. From 2014 and 2015, we have seen an increase of drugs flowing from Colombia. Who do we think is responsible for that? The FARC. Who is making more money from narco trafficking? The FARC.

What I find most disturbing, Mr. Speaker, was the call by the Colombian Government to remove the FARC, an organization with American blood on its hands, from the U.S. State Department's Foreign Terrorist Organizations List.

Lastly, there are several unanswered questions about the implementation of this misguided deal. How will the FARC disarm? How will they surrender their weapons? What role will the United Nations play as it oversees the implementation of the process? Will the Obama administration continue its pattern of granting concessions and end up releasing FARC leader Simon Trinidad, who is serving time in our prison?

Mr. Speaker, the United States must reexamine this agreement and urge the Colombian Government to address some of these grave concerns. We have a responsibility to our taxpayers to be good stewards of their funds as well as a moral imperative to support and seek justice for the victims of the FARC, not their perpetrators.

AIRCRAFT NOISE

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

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Phoenix, I rise to demand an end to business as usual at the Federal Aviation Administration.

In 2014, the FAA decided, without any input from civic leaders or members of our community, to implement new flight paths for aircraft from Sky Harbor International Airport. The impact of this decision on local residents was swift and severe. Without warning, our communities were suddenly exposed to constant, deafening aircraft noise.

As they run businesses, raise families, and struggle to sleep at night, Phoenix residents must now contend with the incessant roar of planes passing overhead. Simply put, the new flight paths have deprived the Arizonans I represent of the peace and quiet they enjoyed before the FAA intervened.

Unfortunately, the agency has only exacerbated this difficult situation by overlooking the objections of local residents and ignoring clear direction from Congress to reconsider these routes.

When urged by the House in the 2015 omnibus to “identify appropriate mitigation measures” to address the problem of aircraft noise in Phoenix, the agency disregarded the will of this body and took no meaningful action. That is simply unacceptable. The American people deserve a government that is responsive to their needs and accountable to their elected officials.

We have seen the same pattern of indifference repeated in cities across the country. But now, finally, leaders from both parties are demanding real reform at the FAA.

Democrats and Republicans came together to include the language in the fiscal year 2016 spending bill that will require the FAA to develop a plan to proactively address the concerns of Americans, including Phoenix residents, exposed to high levels of aviation noise.

In addition, legislation introduced earlier this month to reauthorize the FAA contains several key provisions that could help provide relief to Phoenix residents plagued by noise from passing aircraft. The bill will require the agency to review flight path changes if the FAA administrator determines that they have harmed communities in the vicinity of the airport.

The measure will also compel the FAA to consider steps to mitigate aircraft noise-related concerns if requested to do so by a local community or airport operator.

Finally, the FAA will be required to submit a report to Congress on how the agency intends to improve its woeful community outreach and engagement efforts.

Collectively, these provisions represent an important step forward, but they aren't enough. Together with other members of the Quiet Skies Caucus, I am committed to strengthening this legislation as the process moves forward.

Mr. Speaker, civic leaders, businessowners, and families in Phoenix have been ignored for too long. The flight paths over our city must change and so must the course of an agency that for too long has disrespected Congress and disregarded the needs of my constituents.

Now is the time to pass legislation to ensure that local communities have a seat at the table when new flight paths are plotted. Let's give local residents the ability to appeal routes that are undermining their quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of aircraft noise, the people of Phoenix are speaking loudly. They deserve to be heard.

HONORING CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH ON ITS 150TH ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. JOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an institution that has served the people of Pinellas County,

the people of Florida, and people in all corners of the world for 150 years. It is an institution that continues each day to serve our loving God.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor Calvary Baptist Church in Clearwater, Florida, as it celebrates its 150th anniversary.

In 1866, Reverend C.S. Reynolds and his wife Judith, along with a handful of Christ followers, founded the Midway Baptist Church in Clearwater Harbor, Florida. The church is considered to be the first organized church of any kind in what later became the city of Clearwater, and it was the very first Baptist Church in Pinellas County.

During the 1920s, under the leadership of Pastor A.J. Kroelinger, the church undertook a major building project in the heart of Clearwater.

The ornate rotunda was completed in 1926 and became known as one of the most magnificent buildings in the Southland. It stood as the home for Calvary Baptist Church and was recognized as a Clearwater landmark for nearly 80 years.

Calvary's history is a story of God's grace and providence. It endured the effects of both World Wars and the Great Depression. It continued to experience eras of significant growth under the leadership of Pastor O.E. Burton throughout the 1950s and 1960s and Pastor Bill Anderson, who led the church from 1975 to 2002. Since 2004, Pastor Willie Rice has led this vibrant church and its expanding outreach.

The church is distinguished by its faithful adherence to the message of God's love and the redemptive purposes in and through Jesus Christ. The church has served its local community and partnered with others through its historic affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention, extending its influence of compassion-based ministries around the world.

Throughout its history, the body of believers who make up the church have been instrumental in founding and supporting many local ministries in the Tampa Bay area. These ministries reach into every facet of human experience.

Through partnerships with several community-based pregnancy centers, members of the church provide resources and support to struggling pregnant mothers and their unborn children, honoring the sanctity of life. They provide clothing, food, and shelter to the homeless. The church is faithful each day to honoring our veterans.

Calvary expresses the redemptive grace of our loving God by directly supporting individuals transitioning out of prison as well as recovering addicts. The support they provide to these individuals helps restore dignity and purpose of life.

The church ministers in many ways to the young people of the community through a vibrant in-house youth program as well as numerous community outreach programs.

Calvary Christian High School opened its doors in the fall of 2000 with the goal of challenging all students to achieve academically to the highest levels of their God-given abilities.

Another community outreach program provides school materials to disadvantaged elementary students through the Adopt a Classroom project. Supporting children and families is a central element of a Christian lifestyle. It is central to the mission of Calvary Baptist Church.

Internationally, Calvary provides financial and material resources and hundreds of volunteers to support disaster relief and recovery efforts worldwide.

Through medical mission trips, the church provides much-needed care to communities in far reaches of the globe. With direct support and through global partnerships, Calvary assists in community development efforts throughout the world.

In short, Mr. Speaker, Calvary Baptist Church in Clearwater, Florida, has become a part of the fabric of our Pinellas County community, enriching the lives of its members and neighborhoods.

But far more important, Calvary continues each day to share the message of the saving grace of the Christ in whom we put our faith and in whom we put our trust.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me today in recognizing Calvary Baptist Church of Clearwater, Florida, as it celebrates 150 magnificent years of ministry and service.

□ 1030

RECOGNIZING GRACE PRESTON, AWARD-WINNING BROCKWAY VOLUNTEER

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Grace Preston, a sixth-grader from the Brockway Area Elementary School, which I am proud to say is located in the Pennsylvania Fifth Congressional District.

Grace was recently among two students in Pennsylvania to be honored with a Prudential Spirit of Community Award. This award is given to young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism.

Grace has raised more than \$4,000 in the past 3 years to improve the lives of animals in her community. She has done this through the sale of homemade dog treats, cat toys, and flea and tick repellent.

She became interested in helping animals after her family adopted a dog from a local shelter. Now, through her efforts, Grace has raised enough money to enable the local Humane Society to purchase a storage shed, as well as other supplies such as rabies gloves.