

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FOR MITIGATED PROPERTIES ACT OF 2017

HON. BRIAN BABIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 27, 2017

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor today to introduce the Community Empowerment for Mitigated Properties Act of 2017.

When the Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA) buys up repeatedly flooded—and uninsurable—residential lots, the houses are demolished and these properties become permanently barred from development. The properties become open lots and give flood waters a place to be absorbed, but the strict requirements and regulations on development of the land can leave a patchwork of empty spaces and an uncertain future about their upkeep and maintenance.

This legislation would ensure that FEMA provide notice to municipal land maintenance authorities that a flood mitigation purchase has been made inside their jurisdiction, and how disagreements between local government's competing land maintenance standards can be mediated. Enactment of this legislation would help communities in my district and around the country to better deal with these situations, and I look forward to advancing it through the Transportation and Infrastructure committee and this House.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge a former member of my staff, Daniel Amico, for his hard work on this legislation. Daniel has moved on to pursue a new opportunity, but I wish him well and thank him for his efforts on my behalf preparing this bill.

THE MIDDLE EAST

HON. FRANCIS ROONEY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 27, 2017

Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with my colleagues several articles that I have written over the years regarding the Middle East. As a Member of the Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats Subcommittee on Foreign Affairs, these pieces serve to outline and inform discussions that our Committee will cover in the 115th Congress.

ISIS, ISLAMIC EXTREMISM, AND THE LONG WAR

Regardless of various opinions about the United States' military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001, I would argue that President Bush's words to a joint session of Congress on 20 September of that year ring just as true and valuable now: "We are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom" against an onslaught by terrorists practicing "a fringe form of Islamic extremism".

Recent unconscionable acts of violence by Islamic militants, including beheadings and burnings alive not heard of for hundreds of years, demand broad and possibly unique means of response and concerted action by the modern world. Certainly the "overseas contingency operation" with which the Obama Administration replaced the "Global War on Terror" in May 2009 has failed to accomplish the task. Now ISIS leaders openly

threaten to "conquer your Rome, break your crosses and enslave your women."

Not since the Communist state of Stalin, or perhaps the Third Reich, have we faced such a potential, or at least self-proclaimed, existential threat to the modern world. It required a half century of containment to mutate the former and a brutal world war to eradicate the latter.

The religious inspiration behind ISIS, Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and affiliated groups add a different face to the movements which call for responses broader than purely military activity. Recalling President Truman's unsuccessful effort to draw the world's religions into the fight against communism, we need to draw religious leaders from all traditions—especially the vast majority of Muslims who do not align themselves with the medieval barbarism of the terrorists—into open and concerted action in opposition to the threat posed here.

In the early 1950s, Truman found only one group, the Catholic Church, willing to broadly and openly attack communism. In 2006, it was Pope Benedict XVI who spoke out more clearly and aggressively against the evil of using religion to inspire hatred and violence—and of the fundamental incompatibility of the Prophet's command to "spread the word by the sword" with the way of life in the modern 21st century. He urged the Islamic world to reconcile the Koran with modernity, to bring reason to its interpretations just as the Enlightenment did for theocratic monarchies in the 18th century. He made it clear that moderate Muslims must take responsibility for their own religion.

And while there have been some encouraging comments, inter-religious dialogues, and op-eds to this effect, we are still in the early stages of a protracted struggle for the minds of heretofore not radicalized muslims. The "soft power" of religious opinion makers is an important factor. In fact, some have argued as Ambassador Charles Freeman (USFS, Ret.) has that "only a coalition with a strong Muslim identity can hope to contain" the terrorists. He argues that the doctrines of ISIS cannot be successfully refuted by non-Muslims because the U.S. "lacks the religious credentials to refute" Islamic terrorist groups as "a moral perversion of Islam."

The lack of cultural integration in different nations' societies also presents a major challenge. Whether it is European "multiculturalism," or an affirmative prejudice, the lack of alignment of many Muslim groups with the national identities and cultures of their countries has created a breeding ground for radicalization. Here is where our unique American "exceptionalism" can show the light. Our "melting pot" tradition of assimilation of diverse peoples has created—despite some bumps in the road—a uniquely broad and culturally tolerant society. And the related concept of citizenship based on residence and personal actions rather than blood and lineage can serve as a powerful model.

As the world gropes for solutions, it has become clear that concerted action by the modern world, akin to the Allied Powers' collaborative actions to confront the Axis, is absolutely necessary. Spain and France recently passed bi-partisan laws granting expansive powers to the authorities to monitor and interdict internet connectivity with radical Islamic sites, to isolate and track down "lone wolf" terrorists, and to restrict and contain travel to and from places of known terrorist activities. Modifying the Schengen visa program and putting in place tightened border security are issues to consider as means of improving tracking of known terrorist suspects.

Lastly, we should consider a "containment" and isolation program to ring fence

the terrorist geographies, turn them onto themselves and limit their capacity to export murder beyond their borders. In so doing, perhaps we can help assure that their neighbors who are our allies in all this (especially Jordan) are reinforced and protected. Turkey has a powerful role to play both because of their long land border with Syria and Iraq, and due to the complexities presented by the PKK in Turkey and the evolution of Kurdistan and its Peshmerga, which are capable fighters and allies of the West. Only a comprehensive strategy can turn the tide and lead us to ultimate victory in the Long War.

IS THIS WAR YET?

Contrary to the constrained and parsed language that the Obama administration uses to describe the terror radiating from the Middle East, we are at war. The terror attacks in France only underscore this reality. This is a struggle for the values and freedoms the Western world holds dear. The modern secular state where all religious faiths are respected, and the rights of all men and women are to be protected, is under siege. These attacks are neither sporadic "episodes," nor are they merely criminal. We confront a locally and regionally organized movement with a unifying ideology and global ambitions.

While the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda and their ilk are in some ways more complicated than traditional nation states, the underlying ideology has echoes of mid-20th Century fascism. There is tyranny in the beating heart of both movements.

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton correctly noted that the enemy are "jihadists," but shied away from conceding that it is unmistakably and by its own description Islamic. You can argue whether the wave of terror that began with the Iranian Revolution and reached new heights with the Islamic State attacks on France is truly inspired by a perverted interpretation of Islam, or rather the cynical and calculated manipulation of religion for the purpose of hegemonic conquest. Either way, the result is largely the same. The Islamic State, Al-Qaeda and the constellation of Islamic extremist groups that orbit around them have spread fear across the world. They have imposed a significant "security tax" on free societies. And they have seized significant territory across North Africa and the Middle East.

The question confronting all free societies targeted by these extremists is whether to declare war against those who are waging war against us. If so, what is the best means to mount the kind of wartime response traditionally associated with nation state conflicts?

One possible measure would be an embargo that cuts off extremist held territory in Iraq and Syria from the rest of the world: No cross border movement, no flights in and out, no connection with the global commons. This would essentially treat extremist held territory as a belligerent nation, and it might well entail recognizing the already de facto partition of Iraq and Syria into their Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish regions. Islamic State leaders believe they occupy a Caliphate, so why should they avoid measures that traditionally constrain aggressor nations?

More punishing measures could also target any governments or non-governmental organizations that nurture or support the terrorists, including the governments of many of our Sunni allies in the Middle East. Even indirect or private support for a radical movement that has declared war on the civilized world should carry a heavy cost, one that creates an incentive for these nations to become part of the solution to a problem that

is in many respects of their own making. In short, cut off the money, dry up support, and starve the extremist movement.

The plight of innocent people in areas occupied or contested by these extremists is a humanitarian tragedy on an almost incomprehensible scale. While all innocent people driven from their homes or persecuted by these extremists deserve our help and support, the plight of Christians in this regard is unconscionable. The world needs to help all of the displaced persons created from this conflict, but the ultimate answer to their suffering is to stop the wanton violence and destruction so that they can return home.

A good place to start is the “No Fly Zone” and safe corridor in Syria which Governor Jeb Bush and others have endorsed. Such a safe haven could offer a means to bring humanitarian aid to the displaced, stem the current refugee tide, and serve as a base of operations for more moderate forces opposed to the extremists.

This sad chapter in human affairs will pass, but decisions and actions are urgently needed to hasten the day when the Islamic State and its fellow travelers take their rightful place on the ash heap of history, alongside other extremist movements like fascism, imperialism, and communism. As in past wars, free peoples will ultimately prevail so long as free nations stand united against tyranny, recognizing it under whatever black flag it travels. Appeasement and parsed language, such as we have repeatedly seen from the Obama administration, will not deter hardened jihadists.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE CENTENNIAL OF THE BOROUGH OF DUPONT, PENNSYLVANIA

HON. MATT CARTWRIGHT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 27, 2017

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Borough of Dupont, Pennsylvania, which will celebrate its Centennial on March 28, 2017. When Judge Garman signed a decree on March 28, 1917 to officially incorporate the Borough of Dupont, he could not have imagined the robust, close-knit, and thriving community that Dupont is today.

The citizens of Dupont have always shown resilience and determination. In 1896, when the residents of the Dupont section of Pittston Township were unhappy with their living conditions and the allocation of their tax dollars, they banded together to present a petition for incorporation to Luzerne County. When their petition was denied, the citizens of Dupont did not back down or give up. They spend the next 21 years revising and submitting new petitions until their ultimate success in 1917.

In 1917, Dupont was home to 27 saloons, 6 butcher shops, a watch maker, 5 candy stores, and 3 pool rooms, among other fine establishments. Today, Dupont is home to many area favorites, including the Dupont Polish Club and VFW Post 4909, as well as a number of successful businesses and restaurants. These small businesses and gathering spaces truly reflect the community-minded and entrepreneurial spirit of Dupont.

Communities like Dupont are what make Northeastern Pennsylvania a unique and vibrant place to live and work. Over the past one hundred years, the Borough has demonstrated a commitment to fellowship and

progress, a trend which will no doubt continue and contribute to the prosperity of this treasured community.

LIMITING INHUMANE FEDERAL TRAPPING (LIFT) ACT

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 27, 2017

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today, I am reintroducing the Limiting Inhumane Federal Trapping (LIFT) Act, which would severely restrict the use of inhumane body-gripping traps on public lands and by public officials. Every year, countless dogs, cats, and wild animals are injured and killed in body-gripping traps such as leg and foothold, Conibear, and snare traps. The animals caught in these traps are subject to intense pain that can last for hours, or even days. If they don't die immediately from the injuries, animals can suffer from dehydration, predation, or when a trapper eventually finds them. Furthermore, pets and other companion animals can be the victims of these traps. Body-gripping traps are non-selective in their victims, and can be particularly dangerous if set in popular areas. There are many effective non-lethal methods that can be deployed in place of these cruel traps.

Despite these serious risks, body-gripping traps are used by federal agencies, local governments, private entities, and individual trappers to catch creatures for their fur, keep animals away from livestock and crops, and even for recreational purposes. Wildlife Services, a federal agency notorious for its secrecy and use of inhumane animal management techniques, often uses body-gripping traps as a first resort. This results in the death or capture of thousands of animals per year in these cruel body-gripping traps. Federal agencies too often avoid more humane, effective, and non-lethal control options to control animal species. The LIFT Act would ensure that federal agencies, including Wildlife Services, do a better job of regulating trapping by non-federal entities on public lands, thereby limiting cruelty and protecting public safety.

Inhumane trapping is a problem in Oregon and across the country. There have been too many unfortunate examples of wild animals and pets falling victim to these traps. This bill complements efforts by other colleagues in the House and Senate to crack down on the use of body-gripping traps in light of the growing public acknowledgement that we cannot and should not continue to endorse the widespread use of these inhumane devices.

AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT OF

2017

SPEECH OF

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 24, 2017

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, never before, in more than two centuries of American history, has Congress taken back benefits and replaced them with a package that, in turn, reduces benefits in use by the American people.

The effect on the District of Columbia would be particularly disappointing because the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has brought the city to virtual universal coverage (only 3.4 percent not covered). Moreover, most Americans, including D.C. residents, get their coverage through their employers. The untold story about Trumpcare is its effect not only on the ACA, but the harmful effects it could have on the one-sixth of the U.S. economy that is accounted for by healthcare costs.

The reason Americans oppose Trumpcare is its take-backs: 24 million people would lose coverage; premiums and deductibles would increase; essential coverage for maternity care, prescription drugs, and emergency room visits would end; healthy pre-Medicare elderly would be charged five times what others pay; and instead of lengthening the Medicare Trust Fund, Trumpcare would shorten it by three years. The most devastating effect of repeal would be felt by the lowest-income Americans who benefit from the Medicaid expansion in the ACA with the end of the Medicaid expansion in 2020. Seventy-four percent of Americans, including 54 percent of Republicans, oppose cutting Medicaid funding.

I urge my colleagues to join the American people in voting no: recent polls show only 17 percent of the American people support the Republican Trumpcare bill.

HONORING DR. ELLEN N. JUNN

HON. JEFF DENHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 27, 2017

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor Dr. Ellen N. Junn, who will be officially inaugurated as the 11th President of California State University, Stanislaus, on March 30, 2017.

President Junn has demonstrated a dedication to excellence in the pursuit of knowledge with a career spanning more than 30 years in teaching and leadership positions at five different California State University campuses.

In addition to her years of service, President Junn has an extensive catalogue of published work with a focus on supporting the success of underserved students, the significance of university-community engagement, and strategies for supporting non-tenure track faculty, especially women and minorities.

President Junn has helped countless students attain baccalaureate and graduate degrees through a core commitment to forging and advocating pathways for the underserved. She has been recognized as an exemplary leader and fierce promoter for the California State University's diverse community of students, faculty, and staff. She has also advocated for an engaged and high-impact undergraduate experience, led by a team of dedicated teachers.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring and congratulating Dr. Ellen Junn on becoming the next President of California State University, Stanislaus, as we look forward to a long and productive partnership benefitting the citizens of our collective region.