

countries to justify military action. These include operations at Guantanamo Bay, warrantless wire tapping, and recent military actions in Libya, Syria, Somalia, Yemen, and many more. This report only looked at unclassified military actions. How many more military actions are happening without the knowledge of the American people?

In the 16 years since the AUMF was enacted, three Presidents have used this legislation to wage endless war; and as long as this AUMF stays on the books, any President will be able to use this blank check to wage war anywhere, anytime, in perpetuity.

I have been trying to end this AUMF for years, and this summer we got closer than ever before when the Appropriations Committee agreed, in a bipartisan vote, to adopt my amendment sunsetting the AUMF—that is after 8 months upon signing of the legislation, not right away. It would take 8 months for it to sunset.

The 2001 resolution was passed in 3 days. Certainly, we can debate and vote on a new AUMF in 8 months. Members of both parties agreed at the time that it was time for Congress to debate and vote on a new AUMF, one that reflected the national security needs of 2017, not 2001.

But then my bipartisan amendment was stripped out of the bill in the dead of night by Speaker RYAN and the Republican leadership with no debate or vote in the Rules Committee. They just wiped it out, an over 326-page bill. It just vanished.

But here is the bottom line: Republicans want a new AUMF. So do Democrats.

So my question to the Speaker is: What is the holdup? Why have you not scheduled a debate on this vital national security issue? What, Speaker RYAN, are you afraid of? And also, why won't the President submit a new one?

In 2017, American servicemembers have been killed in Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. At what point will congressional leadership say enough is enough? How many young lives do we have to lose before Congress steps up to do its job? We owe this to our brave troops.

In 2001, when I opposed this authorization, I recalled the words of Reverend Nathan Baxter, dean of the National Cathedral. “As we act,” he said, “let us not become the evil that we deplore.”

RECOGNIZING PORTS-TO-PLAINS ALLIANCE

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

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and recognize the Ports-to-Plains Alliance on 20 years of hard work to ensure a voice for rural communities in America's heartland and for educating others on the importance of building out infra-

structure around feeding, fueling, and clothing America's cities in urban areas.

Let me start by recognizing the hard work and the leadership of my dear friend and predecessor who left big shoes for me to fill, and that man is Randy Neugebauer, who is, in my mind, the father of this great initiative. And we in west Texas and up and down the backbone of this country owe him a debt of gratitude. I extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to Congressman Randy Neugebauer.

For those who aren't familiar, the Ports-to-Plains corridor runs north and south through the center of America's heartland, from my State of Texas to Montana, through New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, Wyoming, and North Dakota. It is strategically located to create jobs and increase economic efficiency by connecting rural areas to urban America, regional trade centers, and international transportation facilities.

Within the Ports-to-Plains service area, there are three congressionally designated corridors, high-priority transportation corridors, consisting of over 2,300 miles of highway and 38 million citizens.

The Ports-to-Plains region includes States that lead our Nation's energy economy, with 7 of the top 10 States in oil production and 8 of the top 10 States in wind energy generation, producing over \$44 million in agriculture goods, or about 22 percent of the United States' total production of agriculture.

The Ports-to-Plains corridor annually generates over \$166 billion in trade with Canada and Mexico, which is almost 20 percent of all U.S. North American trade.

The bottom line is: Middle America provides the food, fuel, and fiber that strengthens and protects our Nation, but that is only true when we can get the product to market. Unfortunately, nearly half of this region consists of two-lane, antiquated roads that cannot safely and reliably handle today's traffic demands, much less future traffic demands.

These roads were never designed to accommodate the kind of traffic and large trucks being used today, mainly by the energy and agriculture industries. The Ports-to-Plains Alliance, through its partnerships, has formed a strong voice for rural America promoting the importance of investing in its highway infrastructure.

I am honored to share the significance of this corridor and its needs by chairing the newly created Congressional Ports-to-Plains Caucus alongside—and this is a bipartisan effort—my House co-chairs Representatives SMITH, GONZALEZ, CUELLAR, and our counterparts in the Senate, Senators HEITKAMP and FISCHER.

If we are going to continue to feed and clothe the American people and fuel this great economy, we must make

the investment in our infrastructure, and we must make that investment in rural America. The return is incalculable, unmeasurable, unquantifiable, and we need to make that investment.

If you want to make America great again, support the people of rural America, support the products of rural America, and God help us support the values of rural America.

God bless America, and God bless America's beating heart in small towns all across this land.

IMPROVING AVIATION

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, there are groups proliferating across America who want to improve our system of aviation. Most people are not anxious to get on planes these days, given the conditions on the airplanes themselves, the treatment they get, the charges to put their bag in the overhead or sit on the aisle—all of these things. It has become quite an unpleasant experience. And then you have the aggravation of delays that ruin your trip, your business meeting, and sometimes your vacation.

Last week, I talked about the Citizens for On Time Flights. Now we have a new group, another new grassroots group. Imagine this. It is called Flyers for Fairness. Now they want to fix the system. Their fix is to privatize the largest, most complex, safest system of air traffic in the world.

They say that we are trapped in the 1950s using World War II radar. Well, that is not quite so true. Actually, it is not World War II radar. We are still using radar. However, we do have a system where we can fly planes closer together, more efficiently use the air-space, called ADS-B.

They would have us believe that somehow this thing is infinitely delayed and overbudget and not happening. Well, actually, we had a GAO report last week that said, actually, it is on budget and it is going very well and, in fact, it is operational.

Well, then why aren't we using it? Well, because the airlines, many of them flying older aircraft, do not want to upgrade their GPS systems. It is very expensive: \$200,000 per plane. We calculated it for American Airlines. To equip every plane in their fleet, it would cost them 40 percent of their baggage fees—40 percent of their baggage fees. Now, Wall Street wouldn't like that, so they don't want to make the investment.

Just like the airlines haven't invested in their reservations and dispatch systems which have repeatedly gone down, stranding, cumulatively, millions of people over the last 5 years, but they say they could do a better job running the air traffic system.

Well, actually, the statistics don't quite bear out the arguments of Citizens for On Time Flights, and Flyers

for Fairness, fake Astroturf groups actually funded by Airlines for America. In fact, this Flyers for Fairness is pretty funny.

A guy named Alan Clendenin is the head of it. He won't say who finances the group. He is a former air traffic controller who vehemently opposed privatization as recently as June and now chairs this citizen group and is being paid a handsome salary by whom? I wonder.

Now, here is the big problem with their argument. We have the most recent statistics on delays. Normally, the biggest cause of delays is weather. They would have you believe it is the air traffic system. It is not. In fact, the number one cause of delays in the United States of America today is airline operations. So that is right; the airlines themselves, when they schedule 15 planes to take off at the same time at one airport, when the airport can only take off 1 plane a minute, that causes delays.

□ 1045

When they mess up their crews' schedules and they do other things, that causes delays. When they fly decrepit aircraft and they have maintenance issues, that causes delays. Forty-six percent of the delays in June were due to airline operations.

How is that going to be dealt with by privatizing the safest, largest, most complex, and sophisticated air traffic control system in the world?

The second largest cause, as you can see from the chart, is bad weather. Actually, the FAA has developed a way to help deal with that and more efficiently reroute planes called Data Comm, which is in all of our major airports now so we can deal with it. So we have cut down on weather delays about as much as we probably can. There are always going to be weather delays.

Then the ATC system itself, in fact, improvements are coming there with a very sophisticated electronic flight script, which will be in all of our control towers within 3 years. It is already in our en route centers. We are told that they are using paper strips. Well, the paper strips are actually infallible. They don't have computer malfunctions, unlike their reservation and dispatch systems which frequently strand travelers.

The FAA made a business decision to have a much more sophisticated form of electronic strip which will help sort out traffic at dispatch on the ground, given the routes they are going to take automatically, and reduce congestion at airports and reduce delays in the future.

So what would those private interests do differently?

The bottom line is they would profit from it. That is all. They wouldn't make it any better.

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today I pose the question: Why do many people—too many—how many is too many?

The number that can have an adverse impact.

Why do too many people—not all—why do too many people deny the existence of circumstances that can have an invidious impact upon society? Why?

Why would people deny that there is a link between smoking and cancer?

Why would people deny that invidious discrimination existed when there were laws on the books that encouraged invidious discrimination?

Why would people deny the existence of climate change with all of the empirical evidence available to us to peruse and scrutinize? Why? Why, Mr. Speaker?

Because if you deny it, you don't have to do anything about it. If you deny the linkage between smoking and cancer, you don't have to do anything about it. If you deny the links between invidious discrimination and the impact on persons who are discriminated against, you don't have to do anything about it. If you deny that climate change exists, that there is something going on, then you don't have to do anything about it.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding denials, we have to acknowledge that, as of late, in Houston, Texas, we have had three major events—three major hurricanes—to have to cope with. And these three major events, while there may be some debate about whether they are 100-year floods or 500-year floods, everybody agrees that they are billion-dollar floods, plus, I might add, because the empirical evidence is there to support it.

With all of these hurricanes that are traversing the Atlantic Ocean and coming into landfall here in the United States, the frequency of them has to get our attention. So whether you think it is climate change or whether you think that these are acts of God—and the law recognizes such language—or whether you just can't explain it but you recognize that it is occurring, I think we have to do something about what is going on.

Mr. Speaker, we can no longer assume that the old normal is going to apply to our circumstances. There is a new normal that we have to cope with, and this new normal has much to do with how we will provide for the welfare and safety of the people of the United States of America.

How will we approach flood insurance?

The National Flood Insurance Program is in debt that we acknowledge to the tune of \$24.6 billion. That is what we acknowledge. But after Harvey and after what has happened recently in Florida and in the islands, Mr. Speaker, that number is going up exponentially.

If we are of the opinion that there is no climate change, this is just sort of a freak of nature that is occurring right

now and things will go back to the old normal and we just stay with that, then we won't take the necessary steps to provide flood insurance that is going to cover people so that they are not lost in a storm of red tape and bureaucracy.

We have to change the dynamics that relate to flood insurance in this country. We have to find a way to allow that \$24.6 billion that is going to go up exponentially to be properly resolved. It has to be eliminated.

Here is why: If you pass that on to the policyholders, then many people will not be able to afford flood insurance. If people can't afford flood insurance, then they are not going to be able to buy homes. If they can't buy homes, then we are going to have an impact on the economy.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it is time for us to do several things with flood insurance. One, resolve the issue of when versus flood as it relates to compensation for damages. Two, eliminate the debt. And, finally, I would say this: We have to, whether we like it or not, acknowledge that there is a new normal, especially after what has happened in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and the territories.

I would also want to be specific about Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Our prayers and thoughts are with them just as they are with those persons in Florida who have been harmed and the many persons across Texas, Louisiana, and other States.

This is our moment in time. This is our opportunity to make a difference. Let's acknowledge the change and make a change.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 52 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Thank You, Dear Lord, for giving us another day.

As the difficult work of appropriations continues in the Congress, we ask Your blessing upon the Members and their staff who have done the detailed work to produce legislation for the government of our Nation. May their work be blessed with success to the benefit of all Americans.

Continue to bless those who are recovering from hurricane destruction