In the first Gulf War, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the many missions they have faced in the past two decades, our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coastguardsmen have defended our great Nation from those who wish to do us harm.

On this Veterans Day, I submit to our men and women: Your service is not over and your mission is not complete. Now, more than ever, your country needs you. Stand up. Tell your story. The next generation needs to hear from you. We are forever grateful for your service.

□ 1215

OPPOSE THE TAX BILL

(Mr. NOLAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NOLAN. Mr. Speaker, the simple truth is that the rich are getting richer in degrees unparalleled in human history in this country, the poor are getting poorer, and the middle class are getting crushed.

And now our Republican colleagues have offered a proposal to the Congress of the United States to make it worse. The fact is that, under the Republican tax bill, the upper 1 percent will be getting a $1.7 trillion tax deduction. At the same time, independent reports tell us the middle class will be getting—millions of them—will be getting an increase in their taxes, and we will be passing on $1.5 trillion in debt to our children and our children's children.

Mr. Speaker, this tax bill is a scam. It is traditional old-fashioned trickledown economics that has never worked and has been the ruination of every great economy in every great country in the world. We have to oppose it and stop them from succeeding in this tax scam.

GOD BLESS OUR VETERANS AND GOD BLESS AMERICA

(Mr. ARRINGTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, before I go back to the great State of Texas today, I just want to say happy Veterans Day to our men and women who have sacrificed and served so bravely.

I want to say, from all those who I represent in west Texas, thank you for giving up your day so that we could have our tomorrow. You represent the very best of our American values, and we are the most powerful, the most prosperous, and most generous Nation in the world. We are the most free Nation in the history of the world because of you.

God bless our veterans and God bless America.

TRIBUTE TO VETERANS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise to salute our veterans and to indicate to all of them that they are truly heroes walking amongst us.

I want to thank all of the armed servicemen and -women for their selfless dedication to the protection of this Nation every day, putting on the uniform unselfishly and standing in the gap.

I think it is also important to note the many families who are also a part of this freedom.

And let me acknowledge the 21.6 million brave men and women who are veterans of our Nation's military service: 30,000 of them in the 18th Congressional District.

But I want to take a moment—and I will be speaking about this tomorrow and on Saturday, Veterans Day, about POWs and MIAs. I want to salute Congressman SAM JOHNSON from Texas and Senator JOHN MCCAIN from Arizona, both of whom suffered injuries, whom you can even see now in the United States Congress, during their time as a POW. I honor them, and I hold them in high esteem.

And to the families of the MIAs from all of the wars, I want to say to them that we continue to pray for your loved ones.

As a sponsor of eight pieces of legislation and 35 pieces of legislation that I cosponsored to make lives of veterans better, today I salute you and say happy Veterans Day. God bless all of you, and God bless this free Nation, the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to all the men and women who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States and risked their lives to defend our freedoms and way of life.

Veterans are truly heroes walking among us.

I want to thank all of our armed serviceman and women for their selfless dedication to our protection every day.

Each Veterans Day, Americans come together to remember those who have served our country around the world in the name of freedom and democracy.

The debt that we owe to them is immeasurable.

Their sacrifices, and those of their families, are freedom's foundation.

Without the brave efforts of all the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, Coast Guardsmen and women, and the National Guard and their families, our country would not live so freely.

I offer my deepest gratitude to our nation's troops and reservists, their families, and the 21.6 million veterans, including 29,126 here in the 18th Congressional District.

21.6 million brave men and women are veterans of our nation's military service.

Nine in ten military families believe the public does not understand or appreciate their sacrifices.

We use Veterans Day to show our veterans and military families how important they are to us and how grateful we are for them each and every day.

November is National Caregivers Month to show our caregivers how grateful we are for them.

It is only fitting that we thank those caregivers who serve our military today.

5.5 million spouses, parents, children, and other loved ones care for our wounded warriors and 15 percent of caregivers spend 40 plus hours a week providing care for our military families.

As a Senior Member of the House Committees on Judiciary and Homeland Security, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations, I care deeply about our veterans.

In this Congress alone, I have sponsored 8 pieces of legislation and cosponsored 35 pieces of legislation that will positively benefit our veterans and their families.

On the battlefield, the military pledges to leave no soldier behind.

As a nation, let it be our pledge that when they return home, we leave no veteran behind.

This day and every day, let us honor their service with actions that fulfill our commitment to our troops, their families, and our veterans—and that are worthy of our grateful nation.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I just want to start out echoing what my friend, Congressman RICK NOLAN, was saying: We should not be about the rich getting richer.

There are different strategies to try to accomplish fairness in a free country. If it is truly free, people are going to have to have the opportunity to fail as well as succeed. The only other alternative is the government kills any incentives to be more productive and just says: We are going to flatline everybody across the board, no matter how much you produce.

We have seen, over and over throughout history, that never works. Income redistribution never works. You kill the incentives. And, as I was told back in the summer of 1973, in an exchange program at the Soviet Union, by a bunch of farmers who were sitting in the shade mid-morning in the middle of the summer, I asked—and I tried to use my best Russian: When do you work out in the field? I couldn't tell what was cultivated and what wasn't. It all looked terrible.

They all laughed. I thought maybe I had translated something wrong. But one of the farmers, in Russian, said: I make the same number of rubles if I am out there in the field, or in the Sun, or here in the shade, so I am here in the shade. That is why socialism doesn't work.

So there have been many different strategies that have been utilized

throughout this Nation's history, and throughout the history of the world, to try to create—sometimes it is not an effort to create fairness in this country. It has normally been, thank God. But under the Obama administration's efforts to redistribute income, it brought about, for the first time in our Nation's history, that the top 1 percent of our Nation made 95 percent of the income.

I just was staggered. But that happened under the Obama administration. And, obviously, that tells us that the strategy for encouraging success, financial success, was an abysmal failure. Under the 8 years of Commander in Chief Obama, as he commanded over the economy, he made sure—I don't think it was intentional—but his efforts made sure that the very richest in the country became much richer and the rest of the country suffered.

And those on food stamps skyrocketed to the highest level ever. I think over 50 million. We had 95 million Americans, for the first time in our history, who got so tired of applying for jobs, unsuccessfully, they quit even applying.

And so how does the Obama administration respond? They responded by not counting those 95 million in the unemployed numbers because they were no longer looking for jobs. The economy, it really hasn't recovered. People have been flatlined, or less, when adjusted for the little inflation we have had.

So it is time to try something different than the Obama efforts that put 95 percent of the Nation's income in the top 1 percent's pockets. We are already seeing that change, and I am hoping that our efforts, especially in creating tax cuts, will cause the economy to just skyrocket, the way it did after the 30 percent tax cut kicked in under President Reagan by 1983.

I do want to touch on something that came out in the last week. This article from The Hill says: ''Early Comey draft accused Clinton of gross negligence on emails.'' It turns out—we find out now—that FBI Director Comey started drafting months before Hillary Clinton was interviewed, and months before discussion with Cheryl Mills and the other potential targets of the criminal investigation over the destruction of Hillary Clinton's emails.

It should have been obstruction of justice. That is not gross negligence when you tell somebody to go destroy your phone with a hammer, and you have them use BleachBit to take out everything in your phone or in your computer. That is not gross negligence, that is intentional obstruction of justice, when you know that there is a subpoena after the things you are destroying.

But FBI Director Comey decided to play politics instead of law and order. Maybe that would make a good new series on television or Netflix—not ''House of Cards,'' but ''House of Injustice''—where we play politics with justice, instead of trying to do justice, trying to fulfill the oath to pursue justice.

In any event, he had ''gross negligence,'' as the term he attributed to Hillary Clinton, in that first draft. But, apparently, when he realized that gross negligence would be a crime, he eliminated what would clearly have been a complete accusation of a crime having been committed by Hillary Clinton.

So, interesting, just more information coming out about why James Comey should not—well, he should be considered someone worthy of investigation himself. He admitted to leaking information in order to manipulate the Justice Department, not by being up front and recommending a special counsel—oh, no. He wanted to create a special counsel, just like he did when he told John Ashcroft to recuse himself.

Ashcroft, obviously, not knowing what Comey had in mind, but he was going to appoint his child's godfather to be special counsel—Patrick Fitzgerald—and let him go on a witch hunt trying to get Karl Rove or Vice President Cheney—unsuccessful. So he manipulates and creates a case against Scooter Libby, so he could at least have a scalp to show for the millions and millions of dollars that were wasted.

But from Comey's standpoint, his child's godfather made a lot of money, and Comey got to lash out at the Bush administration, so probably from their standpoint it worked out real well.

But it also points to the fact that since James Comey has been involved up to his eyeballs in what is going on as FBI Director, whoever were to be special counsel, if anyone, they would need to be someone who is not close friends with James Comey. And, as Comey apparently pointed out to the Washingtonian, when they were doing a big article on him back in 2013, basically, Bob Mueller—if the world were on fire, Bob Mueller would be the one standing there with him to defend him at the end.

So, clearly, Mueller, if he were interested in ethics, would have refused—and actually interested in following the law himself—he would have refused to be appointed special counsel. But we now know that since Mueller, as FBI Director, was involved in the investigation of Russia's efforts to gain United States uranium, to try to corner the market on uranium, and they were apparently committing crimes in their efforts paying bribes, whatever is necessary, to try to acquire United States uranium, the investigation went on apparently for 3 or 4 years, as an undercover person.

Well, Mueller and the U.S. attorney in charge of the investigation, named Rod Rosenstein, actually the guy who appointed Mueller to be special counsel, they ended up ensuring that the records of that long-term investigation would be sealed, and they even went to court and got a court order to seal it.

And whose name was on the motion to seal those documents? Rod Rosenstein. He did have a deputy sign on his behalf, but Rod Rosenstein was sealing the records so people couldn't know that Russia was committing crimes while they were trying to acquire U.S. uranium.

□ 1230

If people saw that the FBI and the Justice Department knew that Russia was committing crimes, paying bribes trying to acquire U.S. uranium, then they would have been complicit with the effort to approve the sale of uranium to a country that was committing crimes to get it. If they had not approved that, then it is doubtful that the Clintons would have struck the megamillions Russian lottery the way they did, and their foundation.

So the last two people in the country that should have been involved in an investigation into potential Russian collusion should be a person named Rod Rosenstein and another person named Robert Mueller.

I have great respect for his valiant service to our country in Vietnam. This isn't about Vietnam. This is about manipulating the justice system. It is about sealing an ongoing investigation that showed crimes being committed to put our national security at risk, and not speaking up against the sale of 20, 25 percent or so of America's uranium to an entity that would provide it to Russia.

We now know that that uranium did not stay in the United States, as some had said. Well, when you are going to sell uranium to people who have been paying bribes, acting illegally, is it any surprise that if they are willing to violate the law, that they would be willing to violate the terms of an agreement or other laws regarding that uranium?

So I am still hoping—and, yes, I believe in prayer, so I am hoping and praying that justice will be done, that those who should not be investigating will step out of the picture or be forced to step out of the picture, and we can have a fair investigation into potential crimes.

Another very important piece of information that has come out about the shooter in the Sutherland Springs massacre has been this scream, this cry for more gun control, and that is immediately after we had a radical Islamist terrorist screaming ''Allahu Akbar.'' Even on FOX they said that means ''praise be to God.'' No. It means ''praise be to Allah.''

If you want to look for ''praise be to God,'' you can look for somebody to actually say in English, ''Praise be to God;'' or you could look on top of the Washington Monument, where American leaders had inscriptions on all four sides of the metal capstone on top of the Washington Monument; but on the side facing the U.S. Capitol, they had inscribed in Latin, ''Laus Deo,'' meaning ''praise be to God;'' not ''praise be to Allah,'' but ''praise be to God.''

The reason they had ''Praise be to God'' facing the Capitol is that this is east of the Washington Monument, and what they aspired to have was the first rays of God's sun every morning striking ''Praise be to God,'' enlightening those words before anything else in our Nation's Capital was lit; ''Praise be to God,'' then the rest of the Capital City would be lit. That is why it is there.

It turns out that the New York killer, the radical Islamist, he came to the U.S. under the diversity visa lottery program that was started because apparently some Senators and a few Democratic House Members believed that we were having too many Hispanics come in and we were not having enough Irish come in. So they created this program so immigrants like Irish, who were not being properly represented in the numbers, could have a chance to come into the U.S. the way so many Hispanics were.

Well, I didn't think we cared about national origin that we needed a special program to give some other countries a chance that Hispanic countries would not have, but apparently some thought that was going to be appropriate.

It is high time to get rid of the program. We have known for years terrorists have been trying to win the lottery, and terrorists have won the lottery.

My friend, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, BOB GOODLATTE, had a terrific op-ed in The Hill, entitled: ''Visa lottery program is too much of a gamble for our nation and needs to end.''

Republicans in the House voted to end the diversity visa lottery back in 2005. The Senate wouldn't take it up. Senators were still there that helped start the program, like Senator SCHUMER. Then Democrats had the majority for the next 4 years after 2006. They certainly weren't going to end the diversity visa lottery program. They are the ones who wanted it.

Then, in 2012, in the session after we got the majority back, we voted again to end the lottery, but the Senate, again, wouldn't take it up.

In the last session, we didn't get it voted out, but I am grateful to the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, BOB GOODLATTE, for pushing, as he has, and I am hoping we can get that bill to the floor that will allow us to end it.

In that op-ed, Chairman GOODLATTE says: ''The visa lottery, which was enacted 10 years prior to 9/11, is foolish in the age in which we live. Those in the world who wish us harm can easily engage in this statistical gamble with nothing to lose. The Office of the Inspector General at the State Department has found that it poses significant national security risks. In fact, Saipov''—the New York City radical Islamic terrorist—'' is the fifth person who has been accused or convicted in connection with terrorism plots to have come here through the visa lottery.

''In another instance, Hesham Hadayet, an Egyptian terrorist who killed two and wounded several others at Los Angeles International Airport on July 4, 2002, was a lawful permanent resident who received his green card through the program''—the diversity visa lottery program—''since his wife was a visa lottery winner.''

So this Egyptian terrorist was a lottery winner, or his wife was, and the two people who he killed in L.A. Airport and those he wounded were the losers of that lottery.

Chairman GOODLATTE goes on to say: ''Additionally, in August of 2002, Pakistan national Imran Mandhai pleaded guilty to conspiring to wage jihad by plotting to destroy electrical power stations, the Israeli consulate, and other south Florida targets. He entered the United States with his parents, who had won the visa lottery, in 1998.

''Similarly, in August 2002, two diversity lottery winners from Morocco—Ahmed Hannan and Karim Koubriti—were indicted as members of an alleged terrorist 'sleeper' cell in Michigan. In June 2003, a jury convicted Koubriti of conspiring to provide material support or resources to terrorists, and Hannan of possessing false documents.''

So visa lottery applicants, some of them—many of them submit several applications under different names in order to increase their chances of winning the visa lottery.

Chairman GOODLATTE continues: ''And marriage fraud is rampant in the program. 'Pop-up' spouses often appear in between the time that the applicant registers for the lottery and the time when the applicant is interviewed by the State Department. These 'spouses' pay the applicant in order to be part of the applicant's green card winnings.''

Winnings from the visa lottery.

Chairman GOODLATTE continues: ''The United States has the most generous immigration system in the world, admitting more than 1 million legal immigrants each year.''

There is no country in the world that allows that many people to come into their country legally. We are far from being the largest country either geographically or population-wise, yet we are the most generous country in the world in allowing people into our country legally.

Chairman GOODLATTE goes on: ''Eliminating the visa lottery does not negate our Nation's generosity, but makes our immigration system smarter and safer for the age in which we live. Our immigration policy should be based primarily on our national needs, security, and economics, as opposed to an arbitrary system. The visa lottery is too much of a gamble for our Nation to make with today's ongoing threat of terrorism and must come to an end.''

There is no other country in the world that is so stupid regarding its own national security and national interests that it allows a lottery to determine who would get a visa to come into their country. It, hopefully, will be ending soon.

That is why there was this article in The Daily Caller: ''GOP Senators Distance Themselves from Diversity Visa Program They Helped Create.''

There are some who helped create the diversity visa lottery program in the Senate who are saying: You know what? Maybe it is time to get rid of it.

I hope we will.

Yesterday, though, in the House Judiciary Committee, we did have a bill come up. It is being urged by law enforcement, Federal law enforcement, by the Justice Department, FBI, the National Security Administration, CIA, our intelligence folks. They are saying: We have got to have this 702 program reauthorized that will end on December 31 of this year.

Well, we know that the system has been abused. We were assured when I was here early on in Congress that: Gee, just reauthorize this, because there are no Americans who are going to be harmed by allowing these warrantless wiretapping situations. The only way an American could be caught up in this wiretapping would be if they are talking to a known foreign terrorist or a member of a known foreign terrorist organization.

So that gave me some security. And back then—some years back when we were authorizing the program, I said to my friends that were against the program because they were afraid an American would be caught up: Well, if they are afraid of being caught up in this wiretapping or this tapping into phone calls, then just make sure that their foreign terrorist friends call them on somebody else's phone.

That was glibly said. Little did I know that it is not just known foreign terrorists and it is not members of known terrorist organizations; it has gotten so far afield that even if a Member of Congress has an innocent visit with a diplomat or an ambassador from a foreign country, that can be—and apparently, we are told, has been—used to listen in and monitor conversations. But we were assured there is a great safeguard, because if an American is picked up under this monitoring of foreign terrorists, then the American name will be masked so nobody will know who it was.

So through the Fourth Amendment, we will protect them from having a warrantless search of a conversation without a warrant from a judge, which requires that they are proving probable cause to believe that the individual is involved in a crime, has committed a crime. And then with that probable cause being proved—as a judge, I signed felony warrants for searches, for seizures, for arrests, but you had to have probable cause.

□ 1245

But you had to have probable cause. This allows them to grab those conversations without probable cause.

So with all that we have begun to learn, and especially when we found out how liberal the Obama administration was with unmasking American

names and that we had people who have shown themselves to be extremely political in their decisions and activities, even being willing to go on Sunday morning television shows six times in 1 day and lie intentionally to the American public about the Benghazi matter, that that same political person would be unmasking American names right and left, and although I know there is one Republican who said, ''Oh, I talked to her, and I'm convinced that she's fine,'' well, I am not. We need that being thoroughly investigated, as well as the other unmaskings being properly and thoroughly investigated by people who are not so gullible.

This is serious stuff. When we in Congress allowed this loophole around the Fourth Amendment requirement for warrants in order to seize or obtain evidence, we anticipated that it would be carefully and strictly adhered to. And then we see the unmasking has been so liberally done, and there certainly seems to be a prima facie indication, when you look at who unmasked and the people who were unmasked, that you have one political party in power investigating their political opponent for political gain. And, once again, thank God it didn't end up the way they hoped.

But this is still quite serious, and that is why I applauded my friend, another fellow felony judge in our background. Former Judge TED POE and ZOE LOFGREN from California, Democrat, had a good amendment in my opinion, and it was going to require that before law enforcement—once they obtained these American names and numbers, well, law enforcement, apparently, once they have obtained these American names and numbers and phone numbers and conversations, and obtained them without probable cause in compliance with the Fourth Amendment, there are countless numbers of queries being made into the database on that individual or on the phone number just doing phishing expeditions, and then, if they find something, seeing if they can use that information to help prosecute them on another matter. Those are truly phishing expeditions. They should not be allowed without a warrant.

Okay. We will say you obtained the information legally, even though you did it in violation of the Fourth Amendment. But if you are going to go back and research that database, you should have probable cause before you start being allowed to basically listen in on conversations or follow up on all kinds of activity that was gathered without any probable cause.

This is what the government does that the Founders were afraid of. They didn't know that there would be cell phones some day or the highly technically proficient ability to communicate we have now. But they knew that mankind would not change. It has not changed. There has always been evil. There will always be evil in this world, and we have to guard against becoming part of the problem when we are in the government.

The Founders' safeguards, all of those amendments, basically, were safeguards, whether it was the First, Second, Fourth, Fifth, Eighth, Tenth, I mean, those are critically important—Sixth Amendment. Those are all important to preserving our rights. So I was saddened that that amendment failed: 12 voting for it, 21 voting against it.

I appreciate the chairman and the ranking member, Mr. CONYERS, agreeing to an amendment that Mr. CICILLINE made, my Democratic friend. And, in fact, I had an identical amendment I was going to make, except mine added two other safeguards, two other laws.

My friend and neighbor—office neighbor, that is—agreed to accept my friendly amendment, to add those other two laws, to ensure that when the U.S. Government went after and examined and queried this 702 material—the warrantless wiretapping, as The Hill calls it—that these laws would apply to those queries to hopefully increase the concern by those making the queries that they could be punished.

But this article goes on and says: ''The current law allows Federal investigators to search collected data belonging to American citizens, an authority critics say circumvents Fourth Amendment protections against unlawful search and seizure.

''The Liberty Act would require criminal investigators to obtain a court order before viewing the content of any American's communications collected under the NSA program—but would not require a warrant to search the database in the first place.''

So the Liberty Act it is referring to actually was used as the amendment to that bill.

Anyway, I know Mr. CONYERS is quoted in the article, saying: ''We have been assured in explicit terms that if we adopt this amendment today''—talking about the Poe-Lofgren amendment—''leadership will not permit this bill to proceed to the House floor.''

And that was also a concern mentioned by our friend from New York, JERRY NADLER.

But I would submit that we should not be afraid of Republican leadership doing the wrong thing. At least, it doesn't hurt, I guess, to have a healthy fear because that certainly has happened. But we still ought to be pushing to do everything we can to ensure that the U.S. Constitution is properly followed and we don't continue to have loopholes around it.

So that is an ongoing fight, and the Senate has got to take it up. But there are concerns that the Senate is just going to rubberstamp what the NSA wants. They are not going to have any of the safeguards that we put in the bill as it is already, which I still don't feel is enough, and that is why I voted against it, as did the man who sits next to me in the Judiciary Committee, JIM JORDAN. ANDY BIGGS voted against it as well.

So there were a number of us who voted against the bill because the proper protections, in our opinion, are not there. We have just got to continue to advocate for that.

I also want to mention a bit of fake news that came from the Huffington Post.

I have met Ms. Huffington. She could not have been more congenial. When I was at ABC, going to be on the Stephanopoulos show Sunday morning, she was a delight to talk to, but the stuff coming out of her publication sometimes is rather astounding.

We had a debate in the Natural Resources Committee. We were voting on some bills, and a comment I made that was not necessarily central to the discussion but I thought might be interesting—I mean, if they would look at my full comments and comments I have made and continue to make, as I have said before, British Petroleum should never have been allowed to keep operating their drilling platform in the Gulf of Mexico called Deepwater Horizon. They had hundreds of egregious safety violations when other companies had one or two.

The only reason we can find that the Obama administration allowed British Petroleum to continue to drill with such egregious safety violations, with such complete, utter disregard for the safety and well-being of those on the platform and of wildlife in the Gulf of Mexico and those bordering the Gulf of Mexico, all we can find is they were about to come out and endorse the President's cap-and-trade program, something that Speaker PELOSI desperately wanted.

I had read an article that indicated they even had BP representatives in the office of Senator John Kerry trying to work out when they would do the big rollout of this big oil company that was going to support cap-and-trade. Basically, they would have an inside deal and would have made billions of dollars that other oil companies would not have made because they didn't have the inside track like the Obama administration was going to give BP.

But that is when the Deepwater Horizon blew, from what I understood, and so that is why the Obama administration was so slow to respond. They kept hoping this was going to go away and it wasn't going to be as serious, because BP was assuring them: Oh, it's not that bad. We have got it under control.

They didn't have it under control. They should never have been allowed to have been drilling when that blowout occurred. It did have an adverse effect on the Gulf. It did have a very adverse effect on so many things.

But the comment that the Huffington Post wanted to create some fake news, latched onto, is I was really upset and concerned about the damage that BP had caused.

I have to go back and look. It wasn't that long after this happened, but I

drove hundreds of miles along the beach, and I kept getting out with my high-def camera expecting to be able to find a lot of oil on the beaches. I know I had read and seen there was a spot south of New Orleans, and, apparently, I didn't start close enough to that.

I understood it was really ruining the beaches of Florida, and I went along the Miracle Coast and along the Mississippi and Alabama coast there. Everywhere I went, I would maybe find a few drops of oil like we have on our Texas beaches quite often, but it is just a drop or two here or there. I was going: Where's all the oil?

Everybody said: Well, it is, like, 5, 10 miles up the coast.

So I kept going up, looking for this big oil spill on the beach. And I knew there were people who were undertaking heroic efforts, you know. I had seen those on the news. I had talked to people who were doing it.

Kevin Costner had a great idea, it appeared, for sopping up the oil to keep it from getting to the coast. So there were Herculean efforts being made to stop the oil. But there should have been more oil on the beach.

So they want to make it sound like I am just oblivious to any oil ever coming ashore because I did say what is absolutely true, that it is amazing the way nature seems to take care of problems, and we know that because there is ongoing oil seepage every day.

I don't want oil on our beaches. I hate oil on the beaches.

□ 1300

Really, it is infuriating when you are walking along the beach and you step on an oil bubble and then you have to spend a bunch of time trying to get that oil off your foot, even a small drop. But you could go to southern California, off the coast, and find drops of oil here and there from natural seepage.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, you can go to their website, and they talk about natural oil seeps. They said: ''A 2003 report from the National Research Council estimates that, on average, approximately 160,000 tonnes''—and it is spelled t-o-n-n-e-s; apparently metric tons—''of petroleum enter North American waters through natural seeps each year.''

Apparently, 1 ton is about 7.33 barrels per ton, or 307.86 U.S. gallons per metric ton. So if you multiplied 307—or 308, if you want to round it; multiply 160,000 tons by 308, then you could get an idea of how many gallons of oil seep out just through cracks in the Earth's surface and come up through the waters.

They are hard to find, although sometimes you can see them from satellites or from aircraft. You can see the oil shimmering on top of the water since it is lighter than water. It floats up through the seawater and comes to the surface.

Anyway, just more fake news trying to create a big deal where there wasn't any. But you can go online to Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. They have a good article on the natural oil seeps. It says: ''As much as one-half of the oil that enters the coastal environment comes from natural seeps of oil and natural gas. These geologic features are known to occur in clusters around the world, such as off the southern coast of California and in the Gulf of Mexico, but are still relatively unstudied. In recent years, advances in remote sensing have enabled more accurate detection and estimates of natural oil flows into the ocean.

''In locations where seeps are found, oil flows slowly up through networks of cracks, forming springs of hydrocarbon similar to the La Brae tar pits on land. Lighter compounds rise buoyantly to the water's surface and evaporate or become entrained in ocean currents; others fall the seafloor and collect over hundreds or thousands of years.''

So if you multiply 308 times 160 tons, and then multiply that times thousands of years, you will get an idea as to how much natural seepage there has been of crude oil into the ocean.

But at least the Huffington Post article points out that—and this was from the Deepwater Horizon blowout—''About 24 percent is believed to have evaporated or dissolved. The remaining 35 percent was 'naturally dispersed' or persisted in the environment.'' And it says only ''41 percent was directly or chemically recovered, burned or skimmed.''

So they only got 41 percent. That is pretty good. It is not good enough. We need to be better at doing that. But it really is amazing how nature seems to respond to catastrophes, but we are supposed to tend the garden, and that means we do the best we can to keep the garden clean.

Mr. Speaker, I want to return to the issue about the shooting down in Sutherland Springs. The President, I think, appropriately pointed out when he was asked about it. He said: I think that mental health is your problem here.

People are screaming for more gun control. Yet every time it seems that more gun control is pled for, our people that mean well stand up and scream: Oh, you got to do something. I don't care if it is wrong. Just do something.

Well, it may be well-intended, but that is extremely foolish. You can do more harm by doing something even if it is wrong. It is often tragedies that lead to the worst legislation because people in Congress feel like we have got to do something. We have got to do something quick, even if it is wrong, so that the American people think we are dealing with it.

Jefferson was not at the Constitutional Convention, but I understand he suggested that potentially a good amendment would be that you could not pass a bill here in Congress until it had been on file for a year.

Obviously, that has never made its way into the law, but some of our worst legislation comes too quick as an overreaction to some tragedy, some failure when we don't have adequate time to see what would be the best thing to do.

As it turns out in the Texas shooting, the gun laws were entirely adequate to prevent that from happening, but for those who put their faith in the government keeping us protected, which our Founders did not do—that is why we have a Second Amendment—you have to look no further than this tragic massacre to understand the government is not likely going to be there to protect you.

It turns out the shooter, a man full of evil, was convicted of a crime that should have prevented him from even having a gun. Yet the Air Force failed to get the conviction into the databank so that when searches were done, background checks didn't pick it up.

So when the government fails, the Founders expected that by having a Second Amendment where, not the military of the United States, but actually militia groups that form up, they would be able to have weapons. Those were rank and file citizens who were not hired by the government. They were simple citizens of the United States who would respond to suppress any outrage that the government might try to impose.

That is what happened when Patrick Henry got 5,000 people to come out when the British Government, that was the law of the land, started going through their homes and taking whatever they wanted.

They responded with guns, citizens coming out of their homes. No, I am not advocating for those who want to create more fake news. I am not advocating for a revolution. We have, fortunately, a Constitution in place that they didn't have in 1775, that allows us to fix things without having to have a revolution.

But the answer is not more gun control laws. This guy was full of evil. He had mental health problems. The system should have prevented him from having a gun. The laws that were in place should have prevented that, and I am grateful that the State of Texas did its part.

He applied for a concealed carry permit, and even though the Air Force conviction wasn't there, there was enough evidence to prevent him from getting a concealed carry permit in the State of Texas. But the other laws, where the Federal Government is supposed to protect us, failed to work because the government often fails to do its job.

The thing that really, to me, became an outrage—and it is something that our Founders feared perhaps more than anything else when they were trying to set up a good governing document—was persecution of Christians. That is why so many people came to this country in its earliest days.

Christians were being persecuted, as has happened for over 2,000 years. They thought if they came to America and

they could have a country where they could be free to practice their Christian beliefs without government prosecuting and persecuting them, that it would be just a little slice of heaven on Earth, as much as you could get while there is still so much evil in the world.

Now, as this country, led by its Supreme Court, others like the ACLU, and Freedom From Religion groups, they—we have already been told, you can't mention God. You can't pray. You can't mention your religion. Well, that is certainly not what was the feeling of those who were the predominant Founders and those who made the best improvements in America.

It was a Great Awakening, a huge revival in America. Before the mid-1700s, so much of the country turned to God, had Christian beliefs, Biblical beliefs, and their children—children like Sam Adams—grew up having such profound faith in God, profound faith in the Bible.

I was looking down the hall in what is right below the rotunda and one of the signs up there mentioned Sam Adams. Sam Adams was called the Father of the American Revolution. He was a product of the Great Awakening in the 1700s.

He was so moral. I guess many people knew that he knew how to make good beer. But he also had profound belief in the Bible, in God, in nature's God, and that is what drove him to push for a country where there could be equality; where people could practice their religious beliefs, whether they were atheists, Buddhists, Confucianists, Orthodox Jews, Muslim, only so long as they did not believe that their religion should overtake and supplant the U.S. Constitution, which is what radical Islamists believe.

We have now come to a place where Christians are being so vilified and belittled and besmirched that this country is beginning to look like the places that the Christians that fled to America had to leave to avoid persecution.

So we get these Twitter comments that say—an article from the Huffington Post, naturally—playing up the ridicule of Christians.

One tweet from Rosanne Cash says: ''They were in a church that was full of prayers. They need a government that will enable commonsense gun laws.''

Karen Tulmulty said: ''Thoughts and prayers for people who were mowed down in a church sounds especially hollow.''

Michael McKean said: ''They were in church. They had the prayers shot right out of them. Maybe try something else.''

Keith Olbermann said: '' 'Thoughts and prayers' again . . . idiot? These people were in CHURCH. They WERE praying.''

Katie Mack said: ''At this point, 'thoughts and prayers' just means 'shut up and take it.' ''

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Wil Wheaton said: ''The murdered victims were in a church. If prayers did anything, they would still be alive, you worthless sack of'' S-dot-dot-dot.

Chris Evangelista: ''They were already in a church . . . it's almost like prayers do absolutely nothing and actual reform is needed.''

Marina Sirtis said: ''To all those asking for thoughts and prayers for the victims . . . it seems that your direct line to God is not working.''

Josh Gad: ''Terror attack that kills six gets travel bans same day. Deadliest mass shooting and deadliest church shooting ever get prayers and too soon to talk.''

Roxane Gay: ''After a mass shooting in a church, the phrase 'thoughts and prayers' from the mouths of useless politicians becomes even more asinine.''

Robert McNamara: ''We need more than prayers. . . . Today's victims were at church praying. We need sensible gun regulation and a ban on AR–15 weapons.''

By the way, if there were a ban on AR–15s, then the shooter would have been allowed to continue shooting, and he probably would have killed everybody in the church because the guy that stopped him, thank God, had an AR–15 that he used to shoot him and get the carnage to stop.

Sara Bonaccori says: ''Clearly your prayers aren't working if a mass shooting can take place in a church. Maybe we can try a legislative solution now?''

Mr. Speaker, it just goes on and on belittling Christians and belittling people who believe in the power of prayer.

Then we had an article from The Hill today. Representative JARED HUFFMAN in a news interview says that he thinks there is too much religion in politics. Huffman told The Washington Post that he has for years not answered questionnaires that ask him about religious beliefs instead putting: unspecified or none of your business. I don't believe in religious tests.

I don't either. Although if somebody says they are a Christian and they come before our committee and they keep making a big deal about how I am a Christian, then, as we know even in court, credibility is always an issue. If you say under oath you are one thing and it turns out you are not, then you are not really a Christian, you don't have Christian beliefs, and that is worth knowing.

You say you are a Christian? What does that mean? I will not hesitate to ask that if it is going to reflect not on their religious beliefs. I am not going to hold those against anybody. But if you say you are one thing and you are lying, that is important to find out.

Anyway, more of the same. There is a great article in National Review by David French, dated November 6: ''In the Face of Evil, Prayer Is the Most Rational and Effective Response.''

He points out that: ''While I disagree with atheists, my quarrel right now isn't with their disbelief, it's with their choosing this moment to not only mock Christians but to also display their ignorance of basic Christian theology.

''You see, the presence of evil—especially the increasing presence of evil—demands a prayerful response. Scripture is full of examples of God's people crying out to Him in great distress. Jesus cried out to God in His great distress. Time and again God responds in ways that bring healing and restoration to broken people and broken nations. He always responds in some way—often not the way we ask or demand.''

If He were to intervene and stop all evil, then it means we become robots; we don't have free choice. We become basically robots. As any parent knows, you can order your child to love you or to hug you, but there is nothing that means more to your heart and soul than a sweet, little child running up to you voluntarily, throwing their arms around you, and saying, ''I love you, Daddy'' from the heart.

If we have a Heavenly parent, doesn't it make sense that that Heavenly parent would want us free to choose to love the Heavenly parent?

The article says: ''Progressives always respond to mass shootings with a series of proposals that wouldn't have stopped the mass shooting.''

Mr. Speaker, it is happening again. It is happening again. This shooter in Sutherland Springs, Texas, could not have lawfully possessed his weapons, but he ignored existing gun laws. So who follows the laws if you pass laws to take away guns? The honest people, the ones who are victims in a shooting like this. That is who follows.

There are laws in Texas that enable a church to be a gun-free zone, and apparently too many people assume every church is gun-free. If someone had had a gun in that church, there would not have been 25 people killed.

So, Mr. Speaker, my thoughts and prayers are with the country, and I hope and pray others will join.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

TAX REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Speaker for recognizing me and indicating that I can speak for an hour. We get caught up in so many issues here that we sometimes don't explore them in depth, and with 1 hour, I plan to look in depth first at the President's trade policy toward China, and then toward the Republican tax bill.

The President is meeting again with President Xi from China. They will put out a beautiful joint statement, they will pose for photographs, and there will even be a business deal or two to announce.