

But that didn't stop Assad. Just 11 days ago, less than 10 days after President Trump instructed military leaders to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria as soon as possible, Assad again launched a chemical attack on more than 500 people.

In response, and without meaningful discussion with Congress, President Trump, once again, ordered air strikes against Syrian targets associated with the Syrian chemical weapons program.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the U.S. presence on the ground and our air engagements in Syria since 2015, this Congress has never openly and formally debated the question of authorization for the use of military force in Syria.

It is time for us to do our job. Assad is a barbaric, genocidal dictator. The use of chemical weapons is heinous, and the use of conventional weapons against civilians, which he is also guilty of doing, is equally heinous.

Syria is a humanitarian disaster. 400,000 Syrians, most of whom are innocent civilians, are dead. These facts are not disputed. For more than 70 years, the United States has been an anchor of international security, and I believe we cannot look away when a dictator brazenly and repeatedly violates international law.

The debate that is long overdue in Congress should not be limited to if, when, and how the United States should respond to the next chemical attack. Congress abdicated that responsibility in 2013 and in 2017, and I fear we are on course to do so again this year.

Deliberations over how and when to retaliate against the next chemical weapons attack must be part of the larger debate that we must have about our country's goals, policies, and strategy in Syria and whether another solitary military strike would be effective.

We should recognize that another military response will be hollow if not accompanied by a more robust, whole-of-government approach. We need to agree on a strategy that will permanently deter Assad from using chemical weapons, send a message to Moscow and Tehran, and push Assad to the negotiation table to achieve a lasting political solution to the civil war and humanitarian crisis.

Will this approach require greater support of the secular opposition in Syria? Will we have to work with our NATO allies to intervene more purposefully to contain Assad? These are the things—the issues—that every Member of Congress must grapple with as we weigh the use of military force. The President cannot act unilaterally.

I believe our ideals and principles, as well as our national security, are at stake in Syria, along with our leadership of an international system where we seek to ensure that weapons of mass destruction are never used.

I believe our democracy is stronger when the President acts with the support of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, let's debate and vote on the authorization to use military force in Syria now.

ENSURING U.S. MARITIME JOBS

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

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to express my continued support of American maritime jobs through enforcement of the Jones Act.

The Merchant Marine Act of 1920, more commonly known as the Jones Act, was named for its primary sponsor at the time, Senator Wesley Jones, of my home State, Washington State.

The Jones Act exists for good reason. It sustains and protects a strong domestic maritime and shipbuilding industry. It creates jobs for U.S. mariners, many of whom are veterans. It underpins U.S. maritime defense policy and is essential to preserving national security interests at home and abroad. The Jones Act requires the use of American-owned and -operated vessels to move all waterborne cargo between points in the U.S.

I have long maintained that the Jones Act ensures that domestic industries can remain vibrant contributors in the global shipping industry.

At its core, the Jones Act is a critical labor standard that helps put U.S. seafarers to work and maintains important workplace rights. In Washington State, approximately 60 percent of the State's ferries employees working on vessels are Jones Act compliant.

In 2012, I called on the then-administration to protect American jobs by adhering to the Jones Act in response to rising gas prices and the proposed release of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Last year, I spoke up to support the Jones Act fleet in its heroic response to the natural disaster that hit Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

As a member of the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee, I am committed to working with my colleagues to uphold the longstanding tenets of the Jones Act to safeguard the important role maritime industries play in our economy.

The Jones Act exists for good reason. We should use it to good effect.

EXTENDING CONDOLENCES AND SYMPATHY TO THE BUSH FAMILY

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

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, once again, I rise to speak from the well of the House of Representatives.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I would call to our attention the fact that there is a time when we should put all politics aside. This is such an occasion, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to extend my condolences and sympathies to the Bush family. I rise today, Mr. Speaker, because I want the world to know that I have great respect for the family.

Politics aside, Mr. Speaker, Ms. Barbara Bush, the First Lady—not currently, but in my world, once a First Lady, always a First Lady. I rise because this First Lady demonstrated something that this country can be proud of.

She was a person who has left a legacy of respectability as it relates to being a First Lady of the United States of America. She respected herself. She had standards. She had principles. She had boundaries. There were certain things that she wouldn't do and would not allow to be done while she was in the White House. Respectability: she respected others which engendered respect for her.

I rise because she will be missed. I rise because she has left this legacy of respectability.

I also rise because, as a neophyte newly elected to Congress, I received an indication that her husband wanted to speak to me. I went over to speak to him. I had no idea as to why he would ask for an opportunity to visit with me, but I did visit with him. I thought it would be a 5-minute meeting. It went much longer than 5 minutes.

He obviously was in one party and I in another. We did not know each other, but we spoke at length. The thing that I remember as we were bringing our meeting to closure, I remember his calling to my attention that one of my greatest challenges in Congress would be to develop an agenda for myself.

There are many people who will have agendas for you. The great challenge in Congress is to develop your own agenda. So on my agenda, I want my record to show that I stood in the well of the Congress of the United States of America to thank the First Lady, Ms. Barbara Bush, for her service to her family, to her country, and indeed to the world.

GOP'S WAR ON THE POOR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to proudly represent all of the welfare queens in the United States of America, all those women who get up every day and struggle as mothers, often caretakers for elderly parents, who are juggling two and three minimum wage jobs, \$7.25-an-hour jobs a day, and then being told that they are welfare cheats because they need food stamps, SNAP, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, in order to meet the basic food needs of their children.

I rise, Mr. Speaker, to decry your, Mr. Speaker, agenda and the agenda of the majority party to beat up on these poor, hard-working people because they are poor, people who find themselves in the predicament of having more month than money and need just a little bit of assistance to meet those basic nutritional needs.

We are sick and tired of people exaggerating and claiming that people are

gaming the system to the tune of \$65,000, \$70,000 a year, and that they don't want to work. People want to work, but they are constantly in competition with foreign workers who earn \$3 a day. We are in a postindustrial economy, and often people cannot find work and cannot find enough work to meet their needs.

Often people find work, but those jobs do not provide them, Mr. Speaker, with healthcare. But they are being told that they need to provide a urine specimen and have a drug test to get healthcare simply because they don't have an employer that is able to provide them or willing to provide them with healthcare.

Although the claims, Mr. Speaker, have been refuted time and again with facts and research that poor people have dignity, poor people love their children, but poor people are just not getting a fair shot despite all of this.

Republicans continue to perpetuate this propaganda and these talking points that impose even more obstacles on people who are poor. They continue to promote policies that are humiliating, like the ration or harvest boxes or peeing in a cup and eliminating basic rights of Americans because they are financially poor in the richest country on the planet. We are sick and tired, Mr. Speaker, of being sick and tired.

□ 1030

And why do we think this is happening, Mr. Speaker? We think this is happening, Mr. Speaker, because you yourself, Mr. Speaker, declared that we are going to pay for the \$1.5 trillion tax cut that we just gave to the wealthiest Americans, corporations, shareholders, all over this planet, we are going to pay for them by cutting Medicaid. We are going to pay for them, Mr. Speaker, by cutting Medicare. We are going to pay for them by cutting Social Security. We are going to pay for them by cutting food stamps, thus the need to vilify people who are poor.

Mr. Speaker, how about if we really want to help people escape poverty and reduce dependency on the safety net, how about trying to raise the minimum wage so that people who are having trouble putting food on the table will actually earn enough money to be able to afford to pay for basic food needs?

If we really want to help people escape poverty, why don't we recognize that basic healthcare is a human right? And we should be trying to fortify the Affordable Care Act as opposed to 60, 70 attempts to repeal it.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Americans to wake up.

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS— ANGELS ABROAD

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, America's Peace Corps volunteers are

our angels abroad. They represent the very best we have in America, but right now, we are not doing enough to protect them.

One volunteer, Jennifer Mamola, her life was forever changed after an accident while she was serving in Uganda. Early one morning, Jennifer was walking with two friends to a bus stop. Out of nowhere, a drunk driver rammed into them; one volunteer was killed and Jennifer's legs were broken.

When she returned home to America, still bedridden and loaded on pain medication, she faced an uphill battle to get treatment because of bureaucracy. After months of fighting the system, she was finally approved for disability, but her nightmare didn't end there. Her case was regularly reopened, and she struggled to get the surgeries she needed and was not always approved. Still traumatized by her experience in Uganda, she reached out for mental health treatment, only to be ignored.

I have heard too many stories like Jennifer's, volunteers eager to make a difference in the world, return home to America, seem to be abandoned by an organization they gave so much for.

Others tell of their struggle to receive quality medical care and protection while they are overseas. A brave volunteer opened up to me about the daily sexual harassment she experienced while serving in a country overseas. During broad daylight, men would grope and threaten her as she walked home from school.

One afternoon at the market, the cashier threatened to break into her house in the middle of the night, come into her bedroom, and sexually assault her. When she reported this to the Peace Corps, they assured her that the men were "simply joking."

The harassment went on for months and months. Finally, she made the decision to return to the United States. She could no longer bear the harassment, and she was threatened and afraid.

Peace Corps recorded her reason for leaving as "difficulty adapting to the culture." Are you kidding me? A culture of sexual assault in a foreign country? This meant she was not awarded the certificate of service or letter from the President of the United States that she earned.

Sexual assault and harassment should never be excused as "joking." It should never be brushed off as a cultural norm. Peace Corps has fostered this belief for too long.

Between 2010 and 2014, there were over 900 reported cases of sexual assault and rape by Peace Corps volunteers overseas. This is unacceptable. Our volunteers deserve protection. They deserve basic protections from bad guys who seek to harm them. They deserve quality medical care, both in country and when they get back to the United States.

Now, the Peace Corps has made some changes, but as a former judge, I can

tell you that it is our duty to do everything within our power to protect our angels abroad and do more.

Peace Corps volunteers are the face of our country in places where America's shining beacon of hope and liberty may not always shine so bright. They promote goodwill, a better understanding of the United States. They do so much for people overseas. This helps to secure an enduring partnership for our Nation. They change lives every day in the local communities that they serve. Their service to this country should not turn into a nightmare that interrupts or even ends their lives.

We must remember that these Peace Corps volunteers, many times, operate alone in remote areas of the world, doing the best they can to help other people.

Simple changes would greatly improve the safety and security of our Peace Corps ambassadors abroad. That is why the bill Representative JOE KENNEDY of Massachusetts and I have introduced—the bipartisan Sam Farr Peace Corps Enhancement Act—is so important.

We must not continue to send our volunteers into remote areas of the globe without adequate protections against harm. They must have access to a qualified medical doctor and an effective healthcare system to take care of them when they come back to the United States.

There are some things that we can do and this bill will help. It is time to stand up and take action for our volunteers. They are some of the best that America has, representing America and the Peace Corps, and it is our responsibility to take care of them.

And that is just the way it is, Mr. Speaker.

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 36 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: Lord God of mercy, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

Our Nation is singular and powerful by the very fact that Congress begins its workday with prayer, setting an example for all students and workers and people of this great land. It has done so from the very beginnings of Congress itself.