

aisle last year to pass the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act, a bill to hold Iran accountable for its ongoing support for terrorism, ballistic missile proliferation, and human rights abuses. This legislation passed the Senate with an overwhelming bipartisan majority of 98 to 2. Ultimately, it served as the base text of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, which addressed a wide range of hostile behavior from not just Iran but from Russia and North Korea as well. This bill calls for the administration to develop a comprehensive regional strategy to deter conventional and asymmetric threats. We are fast approaching the deadline for that strategy.

More importantly, however, we have heard the President say for more than a year that he was going to develop a plan to hold Iran accountable. Thus far, we have seen nothing more than tough talk. The reality is that this administration has yet to fully implement critical provisions of this law that could substantively counter Iran's nefarious behavior. The bill gives the President the authority to target human rights abusers, including those complicit in the ongoing repression of protesters, but he has yet to use that authority. The bill also authorizes the President to go after those individuals and entities that are violating international arms embargoes, exporting hateful ideologies and weapons across the region and fomenting violence and chaos against innocent civilians in Syria and Yemen, but he has yet to go after these actors.

While the administration designated Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps under terrorism authority—something I applaud—it has not effectively targeted actors associated with the IRGC.

All of my colleagues know that I was deeply skeptical and strongly opposed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. I voted against the JCPOA precisely because I thought it was a mistake to roll back sanctions on Iran without the total dismantlement of its nuclear infrastructure. However, refusing to certify Iran's compliance with a deeply flawed deal, as the President did in October, does little to address its shortcomings. The President's move in October was a hollow attempt to fulfill a campaign promise while continuing to let Iran enjoy the benefits of the JCPOA and continue its non-nuclear malign activities throughout the region. Furthermore, this decision was carried without a clear path forward and without specific proposals that could have garnered critical international support.

At the end of the day, the Trump administration's actions may have actually left the United States with less leverage to address Iran's far-reaching, nefarious behavior in the Middle East, whether it be its support for terrorism, its human rights abuses, or its illegal ballistic missile development. None of

these critical security challenges are addressed simply by not certifying the JCPOA, nor does it move us toward a comprehensive international strategy for the nuclear program Iran plans to resume immediately following this agreement's expiration. In short, the President's own lack of policy has squandered whatever leverage he may have hoped to gain.

Furthermore, the President has severely disadvantaged himself by gutting the very instruments in his national security apparatus that should be taking the lead on Iran and all foreign policy matters. As an architect of the sanctions networks that crippled Iran's economy and forced its leaders to negotiate with the international community, I know how essential our diplomatic arsenal is to confronting Iran.

The President, however, seems committed to hollowing out those agencies and offices that are in the best position to advance our diplomatic interests. The Trump administration, for example, has shuttered the office of sanctions policy at the State Department. The Office of Foreign Assets Control at the Treasury Department is now woefully understaffed. As the President publicly talks about supporting democracy, his administration has scrapped funding for human rights and democracy programs and even removed the word "democracy" from USAID's mission statement.

Meanwhile, Iran continues to increase its presence in Iraq, to maintain support for the terrorist organization Hezbollah, and to take credit for Bashar al-Assad's murderous grip on power in Syria.

The United States must be willing to work with its allies if we are serious about holding Iran accountable. We should be corralling our allies in Europe to begin treating all of Hezbollah's entities as terrorist organizations. We should be moving our allies toward the development of a comprehensive international strategy for addressing Iran's nuclear ambitions once the JCPOA expires.

Finally, this administration must prioritize the release of American citizens unjustly arrested and detained in Iran. Today, Princeton University student Xiyue Wang, a scholar from one of the most renowned academic institutions in the world, in my home State of New Jersey, remains in prison under ridiculous charges of espionage. Similarly, Siamak Namazi, a former student of Rutgers University in New Jersey, remains in prison, along with his father, a former UNICEF employee. And Robert Levinson remains missing after more than 10 years.

In short, this President's approach toward Iran thus far has been a disjointed mix of campaign promises, bluster, and confusing signals to our allies—not a serious consideration of how to effectively confront an existing and growing threat.

So, as we approach a legally mandated deadline for the President to

present Congress and the American people with a sound policy to confront a real threat, I call on the President to make use of our incredible national security establishment, to consult experts who can help formulate a strong, sound policy capable of confronting Iran's destabilizing behavior in the Middle East, and to implement a strategy that will effectively confront Iran's continued support for international terrorism, its belligerent ballistic missile tests, and its ongoing public and brutal abuses of human rights within its own borders and around the world.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, Republicans just passed the largest tax reform package in 30-something years, and middle America will go home in February with bigger paychecks than they did—I say in February because it will not take that long for the IRS to update their software. They will go home with more money in their pockets.

If there has been a theme in the Trump administration, it is that they want those working Americans, those middle-class Americans, to do better under this President than they did in the previous 8 years. That tax reform package is part of that, and I am amazed that my Democratic colleagues objected to it. They objected to middle-class Americans having more money in their pockets, in their take-home pay, for no other reason, I think, than to resist President Trump.

OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS LEASING PROPOSAL

Mr. President, what I am about to speak about speaks to better jobs and better wages for working Americans, for those middle-class families.

This afternoon, the U.S. Department of the Interior released the Trump administration's draft proposed program for offshore oil and gas leasing. This proposal would mean more affordable energy made right here in the United States of America. That is good news for American workers and families. I commend President Trump and Interior Secretary Zinke for their commitment to supporting American workers and making America energy dominant.

For decades, past administrations have handcuffed American energy manufacturers by restricting offshore leases to the western and central Gulf of Mexico. You could only drill there, not elsewhere. Past plans left 90 percent of U.S. offshore resources off limits to energy producers and in the process said no to thousands of good-paying American jobs and billions of dollars in offshore investments—when I say “offshore,” I mean off the American shore

but creating jobs here in the United States of America.

The Trump administration's proposal rejects the status quo and puts American workers and families first. It would open areas with significant oil and gas potential—areas off the coast of Alaska and the Atlantic and Pacific and portions of the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

What are the ramifications of this? According to one study, opening the eastern Gulf of Mexico would create nearly 230,000 new American jobs by 2035. It would bring roughly \$115 billion of investment to the United States. Federal, State, and local governments would collect an additional \$70 billion in tax revenue by 2035, not because rates are going up—rates have now gone down—but, rather, people are making more money, and because they are making more money at lower rates, Federal, State, and local tax receipts continue to increase. American energy production would be boosted by about 1 million barrels of oil, making our country more secure.

Let's take a look at the State-by-State job increases from these lease sales. Florida gets the biggest gain of all—87,000 new jobs by 2035. Texas would add 62,000. My home State of Louisiana would add 31,000 new jobs. Alabama would add 21,000; Mississippi, 12,000; and the rest of United States, 15,000 new jobs.

I know some of my colleagues across the aisle, including my Democratic colleague from Florida, have expressed concerns about this energy production plan's impact on fishing and military training in the Gulf of Mexico. Let's remember that oil and gas manufacturers have coexisted with other activities for decades. I share my colleagues' interest in protecting our communities, businesses, and the environment. The reality is that these goals are not mutually exclusive, especially on the gulf coast.

Let me use Louisiana as an example. According to NOAA, Louisiana has 4 of the 10 top ports in the country by volume and value of seafood landed. In 2016, two Louisiana ports alone received 670 million pounds of seafood landed in the gulf. This is in addition to the oil and gas production off of our coast. Together with Texas, our two States accounted for half of U.S. shrimp landings.

NOAA also reports that roughly half of the jobs in commercial and recreational fishing in the gulf exist in States where there is also oil and gas production. Recreationally, gulf anglers accounted for 33 percent of fishing trips, which equals 39 percent of the total U.S. catch.

Of course, more than 85 percent of recreational landings were in inland estuaries or State territorial waters. Most of the oil and gas activity we are discussing today is in deeper, Federal waters many miles away.

Again, the gulf coast is a working coast, and it has been proven over the

decades that multiple industries can successfully coexist.

When my colleague from Florida brought up his concerns about potential conflicts with the Department of Defense operations in the Gulf of Mexico, I took that very seriously. Ensuring that our military is equipped to train and test is vitally important. However, it is simply not true that the eastern Gulf of Mexico must be completely free of energy production in order for the military to conduct operations. Our military's own testing data from the last 5 years makes that very clear. This map shows all the Department of Defense testing done in the last 5 years in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. The Department of Defense used only 19 percent of the eastern Gulf of Mexico during the last 5 years. To put it differently, 81 percent of the gulf went untouched.

When you look even more closely at the space regularly used by our military, it becomes clear that this objection to energy production in the eastern gulf does not pass the smell test.

This is the Panhandle of Florida. Right here is the State of Alabama. For those who are interested in it, the Florida-Alabama bar is right there, and this is where folks from Louisiana love to go and enjoy themselves.

This is, if you will, zoomed in on the last map and shows the spaces the military used for more than 14 days during that 5-year period. So over 5 years, these are the spaces it used for more than 14 days—not per year but over the 5 years. Only 0.5 percent of the eastern Gulf of Mexico was used by the Department of Defense for more than 14 days over the last 5 years—0.5 percent. That means that the Department of Defense regularly uses only 1 out of every 200 acres in the gulf.

I have met with both the Interior Department and the Defense Department and urged them to work together to ensure the best use of Federal waters. This data shows that it can be done.

I am confident that, under the Trump administration's proposal, we can provide thousands of Americans with good-paying jobs, boost our energy manufacturing and security, strengthen our economy, and do it in a way that is environmentally responsible and protects our communities.

I applaud today's announcements because it will make a true difference for our country and for the American people, the American worker who has not done well over the last 8 years but under this administration has begun to do well, and this is the next step in making sure that his and her future is as bright as it ever could be.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CORNYN). The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Texas, Mr. CORNYN, be recognized at the conclusion of my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING THOMAS S. MONSON

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life of a truly remarkable man: Thomas S. Monson, the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

On Tuesday night, at the age of 90, President Monson was called home by his Heavenly Father. I expect that his reunion with his wife Frances was a joyous occasion, and I am confident that this reunion will provide comfort to his three children and eight grandchildren.

But President Monson's legacy is far greater than his family, even though that was of paramount importance to President Monson and his wife Frances. President Monson's legacy also includes the countless men and women whose lives were touched by him, as well as the confident, global church he helped to shepherd, to expand, and to strengthen.

Consider this: In the 54 years Thomas Monson served as an apostle, church membership swelled from 2 million to 16 million. That accomplishment is a blessing from God, but it was realized by saints like President Monson, who devoted their lives to serving Him—in his case, starting at an exceptionally young age.

Thomas Monson was born and raised in Salt Lake City in a large and devoutly faithful family. He attended Utah State University. He served with honor in the U.S. Navy Reserve, and he worked for a time in printing, including for the Deseret News.

By the age of 22, he was the bishop of a ward, a local congregation in Salt Lake City, charged with guiding over 1,000 people in their walks with Christ.

By 36 he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, one of the youngest people ever to receive that special calling.

But Brother Monson did not give in to hubris as a result of those unexpected and, in many cases, early promotions. Quite the opposite, he was humbled by the very heavy mantle that had been placed on his shoulders with each of these callings.

Members of President Monson's ward remember the young bishop as a steady companion to people who were enduring struggles and hardship. There were 80 widows in his ward, and Bishop Monson took the time to visit every single one of them on a regular basis. Also in his ward were 18 servicemen fighting in the Korean war. Every month, he sent letters to those 18 men to remind them that they had not been forgotten, and even decades later, he would speak of these servicemen and widows during the church's General Conference meeting. His love for them could still be felt by those in attendance.

Those stories illustrate the kind of man President Monson truly was. I can testify to this fact through personal anecdotes of my own, including the fact that in 2010, shortly after I had been elected to the U.S. Senate, President Monson invited me, along with