

our own communities as a result of climate change. The past 2 years alone were the two worst fire seasons on record. Climate change has, no doubt, heightened the impact of these fires which is why we are witnessing these horrific impacts, and they are so difficult to manage.

Climate change is happening now and we must do more. For starters, we must continue to make significant efforts to reduce our carbon footprint. We must continue to invest in clean air and affordable transportation made more readily available to all of our communities throughout the country.

Last year, the House took strong steps to protect our planet in the future by passing H.R. 9, the Climate Action Now Act. H.R. 9 confronts the climate crisis by keeping us in the Paris Agreement, and demanding a plan of action from the administration to participate in a meaningful fashion. But that bill, along with hundreds of others, are currently sitting on Senator McConnell's desk collecting dust, sadly.

These current events have made it clear that we have an imperative need to act on this climate crisis. And while we wait for the Senate to act, I am doing all that I can to make a difference in California as it relates to our air quality, transportation, and our water needs that are impacted.

As a member of the State legislature, years ago, I created the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to help monitor and reduce pollution in the valley and improve our air quality, and we have made progress.

I am also the cosponsor and helped to introduce the Clean Corridors Act and the Clean School Bus Act that also reduced greenhouse gases.

We have also helped kick-start California's High-Speed Rail project which will get millions of drivers out of their cars and into cleaner, more accessible transportation, along with our inner-city transportation, our intermodal concept to use all of the modes of transportation more effectively for cleaner air quality.

I am also working on water legislation that will help improve conservation and work toward a sustainable water supply for our farmers and cleaner water for our communities throughout California.

California's broken water system is not suited to deal with the increased volatility caused by climate change.

For those of you who are unaware, California gets most of its water, its moisture, between November and March. The rains are important. They are critical, and the snow in the mountains are Mother Nature's icebox.

With climate change, we see the droughts have become longer and more intense, and the storms that we rely on for the snowpack are fewer and are at a higher elevation, which means this incredible water system that we have created over the last 100 years has to adapt to those changes.

Food is a national security issue, not only in California, but in America and throughout the world. Without a reliable supply of water, we cannot grow food, not only for our Nation but for the planet, and so this is a critical issue.

We need to understand that for 7 billion people on the planet in the last 2 years—suggested to increase to 9 billion by the middle of this century—the ability to provide a sustainable water supply for the entire world and for us to grow food to feed our people in this country is absolutely critical.

Therefore, we have a moral responsibility to be good stewards of this planet that we call home for ourselves and for the future generations to come.

As we begin the new year, let's work together now to find bipartisan, commonsense solutions to help us pass along a better planet for future generations to come. This, among all of the other difficult issues we face, I believe, is the primary challenge of the 21st century.

IMPORTANCE OF RURAL HEALTH

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the importance of rural health and what it means to the nearly 60 million Americans who call rural America home.

No matter where you live, access to quality healthcare should not be considered a luxury. Recently, a local hospital in my district was recognized as a healthcare leader in rural America. The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Northwest campus in Venango County was one of 18 rural hospitals in the Nation to receive an award for excellence and patient safety and quality in 2019.

The accolade is given annually by The Leapfrog Group serving more than 2,100 hospitals to find the Nation's best in healthcare safety and quality.

Hospitals like UPMC Northwest are just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to building a network of reliable care in rural America.

In many cases, rural residents can still live very far away from the closest hospital, which makes getting quality care even more difficult.

Telehealth can help reduce barriers to health services for all residents, particularly the elderly, and those with limited mobility. The Northwest campus of UPMC has been a leader in telehealth and telemedicine.

Telehealth options are becoming increasingly available in not only rural communities, but across the country. Ninety percent of healthcare executives say their organizations are developing or already offer telehealth services, and in 2018, approximately 7 million individuals took advantage of a telehealth consultation.

□ 1030

Telehealth services are a great tool for those who may live far away from a hospital, but it also takes much of the hassle out of scheduling an appointment and makes routine care much more efficient.

Mr. Speaker, I have been proud to assist in leading the advancement of telehealth and telemedicine legislatively in this body, including the STEP Act, which greatly expanded access to telemedicine to our Active Duty military, Reserve, and Guard. That was signed by President Obama in the VETS Act, which did the same thing for our American veterans under the VA MISSION Act signed by President Trump.

As we continue to explore ways to increase access, affordability, quality, and basic choice, telehealth or telemedicine must be a part of that conversation.

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

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

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, "All is well!" "So far, so good!"

This is the latest sequel in Trump's government-by-tweets, that couldn't be further from reality. Hopefully, we pray that no American lives were lost last night. But every American is less safe today than before Trump's assassination of a major foreign leader. He has taken us to the brink of war, and, hopefully, he will use the opportunity of a restrained counterattack not to escalate further but to seek an off-ramp to deescalate the crisis that could endanger the world.

Attack begetting attack, and hate begetting hate—in that direction lies the abyss. The only justification that he can offer for ignoring President Ronald Reagan's Executive Order against assassination of foreign leaders is that of an imminent attack, that we need to get them before they get us. He has failed to offer any such evidence of an imminent attack to justify this rash assassination that previous administrations, Republican and Democrat, and the Israelis who had the capacity to do this, recognized posed more danger than good.

"Overreliance on our packing the biggest gun and having the fastest draw as in some old John Wayne western movie does not truly make us safer. This is not a formula for the safety of our families. It is a formula for international anarchy. A quick draw may eliminate the occasional villain, but it comes at the cost of destabilizing the world, disrupting the hope of international law and order, and, ultimately, it will make even Austin a very unsafe place in which to live."

Those were the precise words I used in challenging the horrendous Bush-Cheney invasion of Iraq, and they apply even more today to the war with Iran, a country that is about four times

the size and three times the population of prewar Iraq and has far more capacity to do harm to us and our allies.

Trump has no plan and no strategy in the Middle East. Ending one general's life is not an endgame. Like the invasion of Iraq, already the biggest winner from Trump's misguided non-policy is the country that he opposes the most, Iran, whose allies now in Iraq have asked all of our troops to leave and who have called them occupiers; Iran, whose presence has caused the removal of all civilian employees and foreign service officers of the United States from Iraq.

Now, with the assassination, Trump has united those who were once opposing the regime in Iran. In Iran, there are incredible protests, and in Iraq there are protests against Iranian influence. So after abandoning our Kurdish allies and surrendering that part of the Middle East to our adversaries, Trump has now managed to unite the many people who were favorable to the United States and who were questioning the very malicious presence of Iran.

I believe that Congress must act and this House must act to assert its constitutional authority to rein in this out-of-control President. Last July, we attempted to do just that. I voted with a strong majority in this House to adopt the Khanna amendment to basically say that we would deny all funds for his attacking Iran without his coming first to this Congress to justify it; and I supported a second amendment that was adopted by our colleague, Representative LEE, which made it clear that there is no authorization for use of military force that exists on the books today that justifies any offensive action against Iran.

This House should use the full strength of our authority to restrict President Trump from rushing into another war that will be so costly to us in blood and treasure. It is a war that American families do not want.

As one very concerned father movingly wrote to me this week: "[If] my son is to be deployed to protect and serve our country, please do your best to be sure it is for the right reasons. He is proud to [serve] and will do his duty to the best of his ability without question. His Mother and I could not be prouder. Please don't let it be about some ill-conceived political distraction from an egomaniacal madman."

Let us come together to build a better path forward. Let us give peace a chance.

SUPPORT DISASTER ASSISTANCE IN PUERTO RICO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN) for 5 minutes.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the people of Puerto Rico. They are still struggling from the aftermath

of Hurricane Maria in 2017 and now are dealing with incessant seismic activity on the island since December 28 of last year.

Puerto Ricans still need ongoing assistance from Federal disaster programs, like those offered by FEMA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Today, I would like to emphasize HUD's work, particularly through its Community Development Block Grant program and the disaster relief program for Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico has an allotment of over \$20 billion under CDBG-DR programs that will be spent on unmet needs and mitigation expenses to ensure local infrastructure is restored and in a better position to withstand future disasters. This clearly puts us in a positive position to restore our housing stock, economic activity, and damaged infrastructure.

However, of the \$20 billion, only \$1.5 billion is currently available to be drawn down by the grantee, the Puerto Rico Department of Housing. Although this is a large amount, delays and other challenges have impeded the availability of these additional funds.

To make matters worse, Puerto Rico has been experiencing a sequence of tremors since December 28, including a 6.4 magnitude earthquake yesterday during the early morning and a replica of 6.0 in the morning as well. The earthquake and subsequent aftershocks have caused significant housing and infrastructure damages in the south part of our island, including the towns of Guanica, Guayanilla, Penuelas, and Ponce, among others.

My constituents are afraid and uncertain of when these occurrences will cease, and the reason for that is approximately more than 400 people are still in shelters. One death has been reported. Additionally, there was an immediate power outage that impacted the entire island. As we speak, 75 percent of the island is without power and without electricity.

I commend President Trump for signing the Federal emergency declaration last night. It is clear that the people of Puerto Rico will need Federal assistance to fully assess damages, recover, and prepare for other future events.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, aftershocks and an increase in overall seismic activity are expected throughout the next week, including a chance of another large earthquake that could cause additional damage. I am confident that we will show the strength and resiliency once more in the face of another disaster, but we cannot do it alone.

That is the reason, when you see schools that were impacted on the island, crushing one of the schools in Guanica—thank God there were no kids present at that time. Because the Governor resumed order, the classes were suspended, and we saved a lot of lives in that school.

But we can't do it alone. That is the reason we need to secure proper dis-

bursement of funds requiring planning and preparation, and we must ensure local agencies in Puerto Rico, like the Department of Housing, are equipped to manage and oversee the funds. Therefore, I understand bolstering capabilities, and I understand the changes and challenges. We need improvement, but I do not understand the repeated delays, the lack of information, and the violation of congressionally mandated deadlines for the CDBG-DR funds.

Mr. Speaker, whatever changes or improvements need to be made must be made within the bounds, guidelines, and deadlines set forth by Congress to the Federal agencies. Puerto Rico is currently waiting for an agreement for an additional allotment of \$8 billion for unmet needs, which already has an approved action plan and now needs a signed agreement for that money, including \$2 billion for restoring our depleted power grid. These are urgent needs at this time.

CONGRESS SHALL HAVE POWER TO DECLARE WAR

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

Mr. HIMES. Mr. Speaker, for the last 2 months, the House has been riven by the process of impeachment. It has been emotional, divisive, and challenging. If you noticed, many of the statements about impeachment started with some version of this: Impeachment is the most serious thing that Congress will do, other than declare war.

Well, here we are. In the next day, in the next month, and in the next year, this body may be called upon to make decisions that will alter history and possibly send young men and women to their deaths or not. I say "or not" because, once again, I see Congress at risk of failing to stand up for the clear mandate placed on us by the Constitution, to which each and every one of us took an oath.

There is no argument about our duty here. The language of the Constitution is plain: Congress shall have power to declare war, not Congress shall have power to declare war unless the President wants to retaliate against someone; not Congress shall have power to declare war unless a Syrian airbase needs destruction; not Congress shall have power to declare war unless our forces are attacked in the Tonkin Gulf.

Congress shall have power to declare war. Period, full stop.

Mr. Speaker, in the long run, this has nothing to do with our confidence in a particular President. It has everything to do with whether we take the obligations that Mr. Madison and Mr. Hamilton asked us to take seriously. In their wisdom, the Founders understood that every American—every American—should have a voice in the decision to go to war because it will be those Americans who offer up their