

said: Stop shedding blood, and let's sit down at the table and be able to work this out.

In the meantime, let's not assume that Soleimani was some innocent bystander. He had a lot of American blood on his hands. Let's take into real life what it really means to live in Baghdad and serve in our diplomatic mission and hour after hour run to bomb shelters as rockets are raining down randomly on your facility. There is plenty of provocation. Now it is time for diplomacy. Let's get this worked out.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROMNEY). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, first, I want to say to my colleague from Oklahoma that I appreciate his remarks. I was on the floor last week talking about this issue. He is absolutely right. Soleimani was a recognized terrorist, not by the Trump administration but by the global community, including the Obama administration, the United Nations. The two organizations that he had were both considered terrorist organizations. He was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of our constituents and thousands more who were maimed or injured.

When I have been at these briefings, I am sort of getting a different briefing than, apparently, some of my colleagues are. The briefings have been very explicit about the degree with which this particular individual had already attacked and killed so many Americans and, in fact, there were more plans, of course, in the future. That is why he was traveling around the Middle East, meeting with other commanders, including the commander of the Islamic militia group in Iraq that very day.

I think this is a time for us, as the Senator from Oklahoma has said, to be sober and to be realistic about the great threat that he posed to us, and not just in this administration but in previous administrations, and now talk about a way forward, avoiding war with Iran but making sure Iran is held accountable.

To the people of Iran, I say today that we are with you. We understand the fact that your country is one where your own rights have been repressed and you have not had the ability to achieve your dreams. We want that for you, as well. Our arguments are not with you. They are with the Government of Iran.

#### REMEMBERING CHRIS ALLEN

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am here today to talk about something very sad. Last week, my staff and I were informed that a colleague of ours, Chris Allen, a Senate staffer in the Senate Finance Committee, passed away unexpectedly.

Chris was an amazing guy. He was diligent, hard-working, and an expert on pensions and tax-exempt organizations. He was a very valued colleague.

I got to know him particularly well over the last couple of years as we worked together on pension issues. He was the one who, along with Charlie Bolton in my office, really focused on the complicated issue of multiemployer pensions and other retirement security issues.

We have a crisis in our country right now. The pension system is in big trouble. Chris Allen played a pivotal role in ensuring that this very important issue was brought to the fore and that we have responsible solutions for it. He was developing a framework to prevent the collapse of that longtime employer system. He also recently prevented pension cuts to over 92,000 retired coal miners through his work. He is the one, I think, most responsible from all of the staff on the Hill for ensuring that we expanded 401(k)s to millions of part-time workers left behind by current law.

Last month, Congress enacted and the President signed the SECURE Act. It is going to help millions of Americans to have more peace of mind in retirement. I don't believe it would have passed the Senate at the end of last year but for Chris. That is how important he was. Through his quick wit and tenacity, he is the one who built the coalitions to get that done, and he built the momentum for it when, frankly, a lot of others had given up. As a result, all Americans are better off.

In this difficult time, my thoughts and my prayers are with his wife Lynda-Marie, his daughters Sophie and Lucie, and all of his family and his many, many friends, as we mourn the loss of a true public servant. I also want to express condolences to Chairman GRASSLEY and the entire staff of the Senate Finance Committee.

Chris will be dearly missed as a friend, a retirement expert, and a model public servant.

#### SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am here today to talk about the path forward on legislation and commonsense solutions that my constituents and all of our constituents would like to see this year. The Senators in this Chamber came back to town this week, along with Members of the House, at one of the most partisan times in our Nation's history.

We just learned that the House is now going to send us Articles of Impeachment. This will be the third Presidential impeachment trial in our entire history and only the second one in the last 151 years.

It will be the most partisan one ever. I agree with the NANCY PELOSI of a year ago, who said: "Impeachment is so divisive to the country that unless there is something so compelling and overwhelming and bipartisan, I don't think we should go down that path because it divides the country." I think she was right about that. Yet, unfortu-

nately, without meeting those criteria, here we are going down that path.

While we face a lot of contentious issues ahead of us, I still believe we can legislate for the benefit of the people we represent, and we must. That is our job. We can't let partisanship cause us to lose sight of all the opportunities we have here every day to come together, to find common ground, and to pass commonsense solutions to address the issues our constituents care most about.

In fact, I would say that under the radar and without fanfare, we have recently done that. At end of last year, we enacted a number of bills and provisions on a bipartisan basis that helped people. I talked about the SECURE Act a moment ago. Despite the headlines about gridlock and dysfunction and impeachment, we have been working on both sides of the aisle to find solutions to some of these real problems—like growing our economy, protecting national security, promoting conservation, or helping the most vulnerable.

#### OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, one area where this Senate and the Congress, in general, along with the administration, have made significant progress is combating the ongoing drug addiction crisis in America that has affected so many families represented by all of us in this Chamber.

In my home State of Ohio, we have been on the frontline of this crisis for years. Opioids, in particular, have taken a heavy toll in our communities. In fact, in 2017, our opioid overdose rate in Ohio was almost three times the national average, with nearly a dozen Ohioans dying from these dangerous drugs every single day, making it the No. 1 cause of death in Ohio, surpassing car accidents.

Since 2017, we have begun to make progress, finally, to be able to turn the tide on opioids. In 2018, after a decade of increased overdose deaths every year for the previous dozen years, we finally had a reduction, a 22-percent reduction in overdose deaths. By the way, that led the Nation in terms of the percent decrease. It is still way too high—unacceptably high—but we are starting to make progress.

A lot of it goes back to what is being done here at the Federal level, but also the State level and local level, to address this problem. We have dramatically increased funding here for treatment for recovery, including providing Narcan as a way to save people's lives. It is a miracle drug that reverses the effects of an overdose. We have done some things that are very important. More recently, we have sent these resources through legislation that the President signed into law just last year. There are resources also provided by the State opioid response grants and also by our bipartisan Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, or CARA, helping our first responders to be able

to use innovative and new approaches to ensure that individuals whose overdoses are reversed go into treatment rather than just overdosing again and again.

The good news is that at the end of the year, the spending bill that Congress passed secured a record \$658 million in funding for these Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act grants, or CARA grants. I was the author of that legislation, initially, along with SHELDON WHITEHOUSE on the other side of the aisle. We started off with closer to \$200 million. Now, we are at \$658 million. Why? Because it is working.

I have been back home, going from place to place, seeing how it works. I have watched some of these first responders in action with social workers and treatment providers who are going into people's homes and getting people into treatment who previously were not. We can't rest on our laurels because we have to do a lot more to address all forms of addiction that are increasingly becoming a problem.

We have seen in Ohio and around the country that psychostimulants have now come back with a vengeance. This would be crystal meth from Mexico and cocaine. It is surging in communities across our State. According to our deputy attorney general in Ohio, law enforcement officials in 2018 tested double the amount of methamphetamine samples as they had in 2017 and triple the amount from 2016. In other words, crystal meth is growing. Higher and higher amounts of it are coming in and more and more people are being affected by this. I heard this at roundtable discussions around the State.

I was in Knox County last year, learning that the prosecutor's office estimates that 80 to 90 percent of all drug incidents included crystal meth. Opioids used to be their biggest problem in Knox County, as it has been in all 80 counties in Ohio until recently. Now it is pure crystal meth coming in from Mexico.

I am pleased that the spending bill at the end of last year that we passed just last month changed the way in which our funding is delivered in the fight against addiction. Specifically, included in that is my Combating Meth and Cocaine Act. This is an important bill that allows States the flexibility to use the roughly \$1.5 billion in grant funds allocated specifically to combat opioids. The 21st Century Cures grants, now called the State response grants, can all be used for the treatment and recovery services for new threats like crystal meth and cocaine.

Giving our local communities that flexibility is incredibly important. I have heard it constantly when I am back home. We have now done that. We have been able to help even further to try to reverse the effects, not just of the opioid crisis but of the drug crisis and all forms of addiction.

We have made significant strides in ensuring that we can respond to this

ever-changing addiction crisis. I am proud we are able to do it. As I said at the beginning of this speech, this is a pretty divisive time in Washington, to say the least. No one can deny that. What I hoped to show by highlighting these achievements over the past year is that even in a highly partisan environment, it is possible to bring people together to get things done and pass laws that make a fundamental improvement to the lives of the people we represent.

While lots of time finding that common ground takes more work, it is worth it. The extra effort goes a long way. Fortunately, we are coming into this new session of Congress having already laid the groundwork that we need to do to continue to fight this addiction crisis.

Critical right now to that fight is passing bipartisan legislation that will help us to push back against a particular kind of opioid, the synthetic opioid called fentanyl. Fentanyl came on the scene 5 or 6 years ago with a vengeance. Just as we were making progress on reducing the use of heroin and prescription drugs, suddenly, this fentanyl arrives. It is a synthetic opioid. It is 50 times more powerful on average than heroin. It is now the No. 1 killer. It has been the last few years. In States like mine, Ohio, when you look at the numbers over the past few years, although we are making progress on other opioids, we are not making progress on fentanyl. Why? Because it is being mixed into all kinds of other drugs, including crystal meth, including opioids, including all street drugs. The improvements we have seen are significant, but fentanyl continues to be the No. 1 killer.

Fentanyl, unfortunately, knows no ZIP Code and is devastating individuals and families all across the country. According to the most recent data available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 72,000 drug-related deaths in the United States in 2017, and 40 percent of those deaths were involving fentanyl. That data showed that the overdose deaths due to fentanyl had increased at a rate of 88 percent per year, on average, since 2013.

It is a real threat to our States. In 2017 alone, we had a record 3,500 overdose deaths in Ohio that were attributable to fentanyl. Last fall, our Narcotics and Gun Enforcement Task Force seized 45 pounds of fentanyl in a single bust in Montgomery County, in Dayton, OH. There was enough of the drug to kill the entire population of Ohio.

That is why the Drug Enforcement Agency made the right call in 2018 to make fentanyl-related substances illegal to possess, transport, or manufacture. This means they have been scheduled. Thanks to that designation, our law enforcement officials have been able to better protect our communities by seizing and destroying large amounts of these fentanyl-related sub-

stances, which are the analogs to fentanyl. So that is good.

Unfortunately, due to Federal law, the DEA was only able to make these dangerous substances illegal on a temporary basis. Think about that. You have this deadly drug that is 50 times more powerful than heroin. Back in 2018, we were able to finally make not just fentanyl but all of its analogs—fentanyl-related substances—illegal. Law enforcement was using that to begin to push back, and now we find it was only temporary. Guess what. We are fast approaching the end of that designation. Next month, on February 6, which is 3 weeks from this Thursday, fentanyl-related substances will once again be legal, and it will be much harder to keep vulnerable communities safe from these deadly substances. We cannot let that happen.

I met earlier today with former Iowa Governor Terry Branstad, who is now our Ambassador to China. For years, many of us have been pushing China to do more to crack down on fentanyl because most of the fentanyl that comes to this country and kills individuals in our communities comes from China. Most of it has been coming through our mail system. We have done a lot to stop that. We have passed the STOP Act, which tightens up the post office's screening process, which has worked very well over the last year. We have also provided more money under the INTERDICT Act in order to provide better equipment not just to our Postal Service but also to the private carriers like DHL and FedEx.

What has happened is, China has also done a better job of making fentanyl illegal and scheduling the precursors and analogs to fentanyl, and we have pushed them very hard on that. I have myself been to China and have personally done that, and I know Ambassador Branstad has pushed China hard on this. Finally, China has begun to start addressing this rampant production in its country.

Terry Branstad told me today—and I agree with him—that the credibility of the United States to continue to provide pressure to China to do the right thing will be eroded dramatically if we don't continue to schedule fentanyl. As we are asking China to do it, we cannot let this designation lapse here. Obviously, what is most important is that we not let it lapse because it is the wrong thing to do and because it will affect all of our communities and all of our families who have been affected by this dangerous drug.

We can't let it happen. That is why, last fall, Senator JOE MANCHIN and I introduced a bill called FIGHT Fentanyl, which codifies the Drug Enforcement Agency's precedent to permanently schedule fentanyl-related substances. So forget these temporary designations that have caused these issues; let's permanently schedule these fentanyl-related substances.

It has very strong bipartisan support. In fact, as of a couple of weeks ago,

every single U.S. State's and territory's attorney general has now endorsed our bill. That is all 50 States and 6 territories. That doesn't happen very often. This is a bipartisan group of law enforcement officials who has said: We support this legislation, the FIGHT Fentanyl Act, that we introduced last fall. I am confident we can get it passed if it comes to the floor for a vote. There are other approaches to it as well that are slightly different than ours. I support those as well.

The point is, we need to pass legislation to ensure that February 6 doesn't come and go without our scheduling these fentanyl analogs. It is a good example of the need to continue working across the aisle on this issue. We have done a good job with it so far. As I have said, even in these contentious times, we have to do it again, and we have to do it soon. I am told that during impeachment, it is impossible or at least very difficult to legislate on any other topic without having unanimous consent. So we need to get this done before next week, before we get the Articles of Impeachment and before the U.S. Senate begins the impeachment trial.

I urge all of our colleagues to focus today on this issue. Join us in this commonsense, lifesaving legislation. Let's work together. The Committee on the Judiciary has been working on this, and others have worked on this. We have legislation at the desk to be able to solve it. I hope we can do it by unanimous consent, but we have to do it. This is lifesaving legislation to keep fentanyl from spreading its poison even further.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

#### AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, whether it is tomorrow, later today, or sometime next week, I know there will be an effort here to restrict the President's ability to engage the Armed Forces of the United States in a conflict with Iran.

I think, any time you have something like that come up, there are two most important questions that need to be answered: No. 1, Why? Why do we need this law that you are pursuing? No. 2, What would that law do? Let me try to answer the "why." I can deduce two separate arguments.

The first is the argument that somehow the actions of the United States, for example, of pursuing a maximum pressure campaign against Iran and leaving the Iran deal—according to at least the language of the version I saw, which I know is going to be amended—have included economic, diplomatic, and military pressure and that this is raising the risk of retaliation against U.S. troops and personnel, which will lead to a cycle of escalating back-and-forth violence between Iran and its proxies and the United States, and that

these warnings have been proven to be correct. I guess the first argument is that we left the Iran deal and that this is the reason we are now on the verge of what some view to be an all-out war against Iran.

The second argument is rooted in the constitutional views that some of my colleagues hold that Congress has a role to play and that no extended military engagement should be allowed without there being congressional approval. These are two separate motivations, and I think it is possible to hold that second position and also be motivated by the first. I think, for many of my colleagues, it is solely a constitutional question, which I respect. So let's analyze the "why" for a second.

First of all, I think it is just not true that the reason Iran and its proxies are trying to kill Americans is that we pulled out of the Obama deal with Iran. Iran has most certainly responded with violence to our decision, but that is not what motivated Iran. For example, before there was even an Iran deal from which to pull out, it was already equipping and supplying Shia militias in Iraq with weapons that killed and maimed Americans in the hundreds. In fact, Iran's antagonism toward us predates any discussion about an Iran deal. It predates our presence in the region and the numbers that we currently have there. I think it is also flawed because, during the Iran deal—even when the Iran deal was in place—Iran was still sponsoring all of the same proxy groups with all of the same weapons and was undertaking all of the same targeting.

One of the flaws of the Iran deal and one of the reasons the Iran deal was not a good one was that it actually didn't deal with this activity. The only thing it dealt with was enrichment. It did nothing to limit Iran's missile program, and it did nothing to limit Iran's sponsorship of terrorism. In fact, the only impact it had on its missile program and on its sponsorship of terrorism was that it provided economic activity that generated revenue to fund those things.

Despite the denial and the repeated and bold-faced lies of some who have gone on TV and have said: Oh, there was never any cash transfer, there absolutely was. There was over \$1 billion delivered to the Iranians. They say these were funds that had been frozen. They say this was their money and that this is why it was released to them as part of this deal. The Iranians don't tell you that there is close to \$50 billion in unpaid claims that have been adjudicated in U.S. courts on behalf of Americans who have suffered at the hands of Iranian terror and who have not been paid.

Suffice it to say that the Iran deal was flawed. One of the reasons it was flawed is that it did nothing to prohibit the sponsorship of terrorism, and it actually generated economic activity and the delivery of over \$1 billion in cash. I assure you this was not used to build

bridges, roads, and schools but was used to fund these nefarious activities that Iran undertook before the Iran deal, during the Iran deal, and after the Iran deal.

So the fact that Iran is responding with violence to economic sanctions, which by itself is unacceptable, tells us the nature of this regime is to respond to economic sanctions—not to military action—with violence and efforts to kill Americans. It doesn't mean this is the reason Iran was doing that. Iran was already doing that. It has just been part of its response.

This leads me to the second point. Iran has already been doing it because Iran's goal is not simply to get us back into the Iran deal; its goal is to drive us from the region. Iran does not want an American presence there, and it does not want American influence in the region. Iran does not want it in Iraq, which it has been against from the very beginning, and it doesn't want it in Syria. Yet it is not just limited to Iraq and Syria. Iran doesn't want our presence in Jordan, in Kuwait, or in Bahrain. It doesn't want any American presence in Afghanistan. It doesn't want us anywhere in the region because Iran views it as an impediment to its desire to be a dominant regional power, and Iran views it as an impediment to its ultimate design of destroying the Jewish State.

Iran decided not last week, not last year, and not at the beginning of the Trump Presidency but well over a decade and a half ago that the way it was going to get us to leave the region was by inflicting costs—i.e., with the deaths and the injuries of American service men and women—and that Iran would make it so painful for us to be there and so painful for these countries to host us that we would ultimately leave. That is the reason Iran is undertaking these attacks.

Now, why are we there? It is a good question and a valid one to answer, and I will answer it in the cases of both Syria and Iraq.

We are not there on an anti-Iran campaign the way in which some describe. There is an element of prohibiting Iran from capturing Iraq and turning it into a puppet state. By the way, many Shia politicians in Iraq share that view. They may not want us to be the protector, at least openly, but they are nationalists just like they are Shia.

The fundamental and the principal reason we are in Iraq is as part of NATO's anti-ISIS mission and as a train-and-equip mission. We are there to train and equip Iraqis to fight against ISIS. It has been an effort that has been successful. It has worked. It is interesting that for a time, when Iran shared the same fears of ISIS, you saw Iran sort of stand down a little bit. Even after we pulled out of the Iran deal, Iran pulled back a little bit because it, too, wanted ISIS defeated. Now it argues that, in its mind, ISIS has been diminished and that it is time