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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MCGOVERN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 22, 2021.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JAMES P. MCGOVERN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2021, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with time equally allocated between the parties and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

HOLDING CHINA ACCOUNTABLE

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

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, more than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, I rise once again to bring attention to the Chinese Communist Party's role in this public health and economic crisis and to call for a full congressional investigation into the origin of the virus.

Day after day, we learn more facts and evidence that confirm what we

have expected from the beginning: The Chinese Communist Party intentionally covered up the COVID-19 outbreak, squandering valuable time, creating dangerous misinformation, and, ultimately, costing lives.

Over a year ago, the China Task Force began raising real questions about the origin of the virus. At that time, the mainstream media and others dismissed our concerns. Despite their objections, we continued in our efforts to expose this coverup.

Now, after lives and livelihoods have been destroyed, President Biden and the Democrats finally are asking questions about this virus. They finally are waking up to reality.

Not only did this pandemic start in China, but the World Health Organization acted as a willing pawn of the Chinese Government to cover up this virus and hide it from the world.

After taking office, one of President Biden's first actions was rejoining the World Health Organization at taxpayer expense, without requiring a single reform to its corrupt culture.

Time and time again, President Biden has failed to hold the Chinese Communist Party accountable. Now, this Congress must act.

Last year, the China Task Force developed more than 400 commonsense solutions to counter the Chinese Communist Party's threat to our health, our economy, and our way of life. We could start by implementing these legislative solutions and restoring America's leadership in 21st century innovation.

As a Congress, we also should build upon the China Task Force's investigation into the COVID-19 pandemic origin, including whether the virus was engineered at the Wuhan lab.

Why delay? How many more Americans will need to be infected before we say "enough"?

As my friend, Leader KEVIN MCCARTHY has outlined, we need to demand

transparency, and we must seek justice. We need to get to the bottom of this question and allow the truth to come to light.

Thanks to American ingenuity, resilience, and perseverance, our Nation has embarked on the long path to recovery. However, while new virus cases are on the decline, the pandemic isn't over.

For the families of more than 600,000 Americans who have died from COVID-19, grief still lingers.

For the thousands of Americans struggling with post-COVID syndrome, the virus remains a central part of their lives each and every day.

For small business leaders struggling to keep their doors open amid the current workforce shortage, there is still a crisis.

Holding China accountable for the pandemic is still very relevant. We cannot drag our feet. We cannot just move on.

This is the time for Congress to get serious about our oversight responsibilities and fully investigate the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, I urge Speaker PELOSI and House Democrats to join with Republicans in exposing this regime's blame in the pandemic and demanding answers from the Chinese Communist Party.

We must ensure that this hostile regime never again is allowed to unleash a virus onto our shores. As we have seen, lives and livelihoods are on the line.

SCIENCE IS NOT A PARTISAN ISSUE

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

Mr. NEHLS. Mr. Speaker, more than 600,000 Americans have reportedly died from COVID-19; grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters. The true

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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toll of this disease will never be fully understood; not only the loss of life, but the loss of the means to provide for one's family for those who survived, the mental anguish over the loss of a loved one, and the fear and uncertainty of the future.

It is unfortunate that, despite all this suffering, COVID-19 has devolved into a partisan issue, each side bickering as to who is to blame. Despite that, science is not a partisan issue. The facts are this disease killed hundreds of thousands of Americans. It is one of the deadliest diseases to ever hit America. And, for good reason, many Americans want to know how it happened to ensure it never happens again.

That should be a bipartisan pursuit. But, unfortunately, my colleagues across the aisle, led by Speaker PELOSI, have stonewalled our attempts to investigate the origins of COVID-19, and they have done so even in the face of mounting evidence and unanswered questions.

There have been so many theories circulating as to how COVID-19 originated. Some in the scientific community say it was of natural origins, some say it was of manmade origins.

Can we expect the American people to educate themselves on virology and the origins of COVID-19? No. What we can expect is they demand Congress do its job, investigate, and get to the bottom of exactly where this virus came from and how it was so devastating to America.

What we know, based on evidence and research, is that this virus didn't have to be as deadly as it was. Attempts by the Chinese Communist Party to cover up and deceive delayed global readiness in preparing for the devastation of COVID-19.

A 2020 report by the University of Southampton found if interventions in China would have been conducted 1 week earlier, cases could have been reduced by 66 percent; 2 weeks earlier, cases could have been reduced by 86 percent; and if interventions by China had been conducted 3 weeks earlier, cases could have been reduced by 95 percent.

Mounting evidence continues to indicate the CCP intentionally hid information and lied about what it knew about the virus. Additionally, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom knowingly and willfully downplayed or outright denied the Chinese Communist Party's negligence, and, instead, chose to cower rather than stand up for the international community.

I am as angry as any American over the avoidable loss of life, loss of livelihood, and loss of future due to the CCP's COVID-19 coverup. We must get to the bottom of how it started and how they deceived the rest of the globe, and that is exactly what Republicans have been working toward.

House Republicans have introduced numerous measures to hold the Chinese Communist Party accountable for their

malfeasance, only to be blocked by Democrats. This has not shaken our resolve. We will continue to do the people's business in the people's House.

Holding China accountable requires transparency and justice. We need to declassify intelligence surrounding the origins of COVID-19. The American people have a right to know.

We need to evaluate and defund any investments in gain of function research with the CCP or China. We need to reform the World Health Organization by advocating for new leadership and transparency. And we need to pursue visa and economic sanctions on members of the CCP and any others responsible for the COVID-19 coverup.

We need to send a loud and clear message to the globe that America will hold those responsible for the COVID-19 coverup accountable. We must leave no doubt that if you lie to America and cause death of her people, there will be hell to pay.

SUPPORTING THE SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA PROGRAM

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

Mr. WALTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about our local allies in Afghanistan, those that are trying to come to the United States through the Special Immigrant Visa program.

Beside me here is one of the brave Afghan interpreters who stood alongside my Special Forces unit, my fellow Green Berets, in Afghanistan during one of my tours. He volunteered for that duty. He stood with us in combat. He faced extremism head-on.

And when these brave Afghans stand up, Mr. Speaker, to stand with us, to stand with our soldiers, as a critical asset that enables us to deal with the populous and communicate with the populous that we are trying to protect, but also fight alongside our Afghan security forces partners, we could not do what we have done in the last 20 years in Afghanistan and around the world in places like Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and in places like Africa, without these brave individuals who not only put their lives on the line but put their families' lives on the line to stand with us against extremism.

We called him Spartacus. We didn't use his real name, because if the Taliban found out that he was with us, they would not only track him down, they would track his entire family down.

Well, unfortunately, after our redeployment, Mr. Speaker, the very thing that he needed to get a visa to the United States, the identification paperwork that he had fought with the United States, that he had fought with America, was found on him in a Taliban checkpoint. He was taken back to his home village and beheaded, along with his brothers and cousins in his family.

This story of Spartacus is happening right now, as we speak. The Taliban, as

they slowly and methodically take over Afghanistan, are hunting these brave individuals down who stood with us against extremism.

We need to ask ourselves, as Americans, what message are we sending in terms of keeping our promises, not only with the Afghans, but again, around the world? The bottom line is, we need to get them out. We have a moral obligation to get them out.

This is not just a moral obligation, but it is a national security obligation. The State Department has a 14-step process that takes over a year to do the appropriate vetting and to assign these visas. We don't have time for that anymore with U.S. forces withdrawing within weeks.

The Defense Department is ready to do an evacuation right now. The Governor of Guam has said he is ready to accept these people, as they have done with our partners in South Vietnam, as they did with the South Koreans, as they have done with Cubans. We can process them in a safe third country and then bring those individuals home.

The Defense Department says they are ready; Guam says they are ready. Everyone is waiting on the green light from the White House.

Where is that green light, Mr. Speaker? Where is it? Will President Biden stand up and stand with those and do the right thing for those that fought with us?

And I have to be candid, he hasn't always done so. He didn't support the evacuation of our South Vietnamese allies when he was a Senator. I pray and hope he will correct that past sin and stand with those who stood with us against extremism.

I mentioned this is a national security issue as well. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Mr. Speaker, just testified that he believes there is a decent likelihood, a medium probability, that al-Qaida will come roaring back in the wake of our withdrawal. So we must also ask ourselves, when our soldiers have to go back into Afghanistan, who are they going to have to fight alongside? Will they have anyone left that will not have been hunted down like Spartacus was?

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Finally, this isn't just an interpreter issue. Twenty-five percent of the Afghan Parliament is set aside for women. These women are also being hunted, abused, forced to stay home, not go into their elected office. Some have had acid thrown on their face. Some are even executed themselves.

Civil society leaders, journalists, all those who have spoken out against the atrocities that we have seen, that we have fought against are also being targeted.

We have an obligation, as an American people, as a military, to support those who have stood with us.

Mr. Speaker, should we not, time is running out. The world is watching, and when that last American soldier