

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?

□ 1215

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

goes wheels up, these people will have a death sentence, and there will be blood on this administration's hands.

#### CONGRATULATING TERRY HAMBY

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

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Terry Hamby of Trigg County, Kentucky, for receiving the Distinguished Public Service Award for his outstanding leadership as chairman of the World War I Centennial Commission. Under Terry's leadership the commission completed the construction of the United States National World War I Memorial here in Washington, D.C.

There is no one who better understands the sacrifices of our service-members than Terry. He served for 26 years in our Nation's military, first in the Naval Air Wing during the Vietnam war before joining the U.S. Army Reserve.

After his retirement, Terry continued to honor and serve our Nation's military, and was appointed to the World War I Centennial Commission, and elected chairman in 2017. In just four years under his leadership, the United States National World War I Memorial was completed and opened to the public.

I am privileged to represent Terry in Congress, and I appreciate all he does to recognize our Nation's military. I join Terry's family, friends, and all of those impacted by his life of service in congratulating him on this enormous contribution to our Nation.

#### CONGRATULATING VERNON ANDERSON

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mr. Vernon Anderson of Calloway County on his induction into the Kentucky Trapshooters League Hall of Fame.

Vernon has qualified 10 times for the Kentucky State trapshooters team and has been a member of the Kentucky Trapshooters League's board of directors for the past 12 years. He humbly describes himself as a consistently good trap shooter, but anyone who can hit 99 out of 100 moving targets at various distances is nothing less than a great shot.

Vernon has always paved the way for younger generations to participate in trap shooting. In 2015, his activism led trap shooting to become an official high school sport in Kentucky. He then became Calloway County High School's coach, where he has passed on his knowledge and passion for the sport to students.

Once again, I would like to congratulate my friend Vernon on this great honor and thank him for his continued service to the students of Calloway County, Kentucky.

#### ECONOMIC ISSUES AND RISING INFLATION

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss the current state of our economy.

With ill-advised lockdowns finally ending, our economy should be firing

on all cylinders. Unfortunately, we are, in many ways, stuck in the mud.

America has seen a string of disappointing jobs reports that fall short of expectations, and excessive government spending is driving up what is effectively a tax increase on every American—inflation.

Over 8 million jobs are available, even as the government pays people not to work. This is creating a dramatic workforce shortage and forcing our job creators to compete with the heavy hand of government. In fact, our labor participation rate sits at just 61 percent, the lowest total this century when you exclude the opening months of the pandemic.

And the massive spending rammed through by President Biden and Speaker PELOSI is only hurting us. Inflation is surging, affecting the price of everyday items Americans buy, like milk and gasoline.

This \$2 trillion in new spending came despite an economy that was reopening and on the mend, and it made Americans less likely to work and the government more likely to waste hard-earned tax dollars.

But for our Democrat friends, this wasteful spending knows no bounds. President Biden has proposed an outrageous \$6 trillion Federal budget that is a slap in the face to every American taxpayer.

Instead of focusing on a responsible infrastructure bill that repairs our roads and bridges and puts people to work, we see a focus by this body on ramming through the Green New Deal and more wasteful spending.

As leaders, we must change course to create a stronger recovery. As our economy reopens, we must respect taxpayers, support small businesses, and empower Americans to prosper through the dignity of work.

#### HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF PRIVATE FIRST CLASS ERNEST ROBERTSON

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Private First Class Ernest Robertson of Russell County, Kentucky, who served and paid the ultimate sacrifice in the Korean war. Ernest was killed in action at 24 years old, but his remains have never been recovered.

After basic training at Fort Knox, Ernest was assigned to the U.S. Army's Far East Command, M Company, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. On April 23, 1951, he suffered a terrible injury and was captured by North Korean forces. On May 6, one day after his 24th birthday, Ernest was killed in action.

The service and sacrifice of our troops must never be forgotten, even long after they have perished. It is truly a tragedy that some brave soldiers have not yet made it home after their horrible death. We must appreciate their sacrifice and remember the cost of freedoms we enjoy here in the United States.

I join with all the First District of Kentucky in thanking Private First

Class Robertson for his service, and his family for their efforts to remember him. He will always be in our thoughts.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 21 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 2 p.m.

#### PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Margaret Grun Kibben, offered the following prayer:

God, our creator, redeemer, and friend, we offer to You all that we have and all that we are this day: Our cares and concerns, our annoyances and aggravations, our fears and frustrations, our tempers and our entanglements, as well as our hopes and happiness, our competence and self-confidence, our strength and our service.

We ask that You would recreate our spirits that we would have what we need to face the vagaries of life with renewed purpose and emboldened faith; that You would redeem our lives and the circumstances we face, that from our anxiety and uncertainty would emerge courage and wisdom; and that You would remind us of the joys of daily life, the blessings of home and the warmth of friendship, that through them we would find the gift of Your abiding presence upholding us in the effort of our labors and the living of our days.

In the redemption of Your name we pray.

Amen.

#### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to section 11(a) of House Resolution 188, the Journal of the last day's proceedings is approved.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from New York (Ms. TENNEY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. TENNEY led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.