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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. STANTON).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 20, 2021.

I hereby appoint the Honorable GREG STANTON 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 11:50 a.m.

REMEMBERING THE TRAGEDY OF THE BEIRUT BARRACKS ATTACK

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues, and all Americans, to never forget the tragedy of the Beirut barracks attack.

On Sunday, October 23, 1983, 241 brave American heroes lost their lives in defense of our freedom. That fateful date, cowardly Iranian-backed terrorists, Hezbollah, drove truck bombs into the U.S. Marine Barracks in Beirut, Leb-

anon. It was the deadliest single-day attack against U.S. Marines since the battle of Iwo Jima in 1945.

As a marine and veteran of that conflict, I made a promise to always remember and honor those fallen. I will always remain faithful to that promise. God bless America and semper fi.

CRISIS AT THE SOUTHERN BORDER

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize just how awful the crisis at our southern border is.

In the Biden administration's latest show of contempt for this mess, vaccine mandates for CBP agents and ICE agents will further throw the situation in flux.

Who is the Federal Government to force vaccines upon our Border Patrol agents, and all of us, when they are not holding illegal immigrants entering our country to the same standard?

Sadly, this is another way for Democrats to defund the police, when too many CBP agents will be fired or forced to quit because getting vaccinated is not the right choice for them.

I will continue to denounce these lawless and disastrous policies that are perpetuating this border crisis.

CELEBRATING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HOOSIER GYM

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hoosier Gym.

Before the Knightstown Gym became the Hoosier Gym, home of the Hickory Huskers, it served the community for 64 years, opening its doors back in 1921.

Many know this iconic locale when it became famous with the release of the classic movie "Hoosiers" in 1986.

Congratulations to the Hoosier Gym, its staff, and patrons. We are looking forward to the next 100 years.

TURNING THE IRS INTO A POLITICAL WEAPON

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to denounce the disturbing trend we have seen of turning the IRS into a political weapon.

Democrats have included provisions in their reckless tax-and-spending bill that will give the IRS rogue authority to monitor individuals' financial bank accounts and transactions.

Whether you are a Democrat or Republican, no one should ever support this communistic invasion of privacy by our Federal Government.

BIDEN'S ENERGY CRISIS

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the energy crisis we are facing. The Biden administration's poorly crafted, radical climate agenda has led us here.

This crisis is already hitting home for Hoosiers. An Indiana-based energy company just announced that my constituents are going to pay more for their energy this winter. What was an \$88 a month energy bill will now be \$133 a month, a 40 percent increase.

To those over at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue who have deemed this a high-class problem, wake up. You are taxing the middle class through inflation.

RECOGNIZING THE LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMUNITY OF INDIANA'S SIXTH DISTRICT

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding work our men and women of the law enforcement community do for Indiana's Sixth District.

From Muncie to Madison, and everywhere in between, these hardworking Hoosiers are on the front lines of keeping our cities safe.

Sadly, many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle want to demonize these heroes.

To put it simply, thank you to those who risk their lives every day so we can live ours.

RECOGNIZING HARDWORKING HOOSIER FARMERS

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize our hardworking Hoosier farmers as they wrap up their efforts for this year's harvest.

These fine men and women are the backbone of the State and Nation. Because of their dedication, dinner will be on the table today and tomorrow.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

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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To those who have been working sunup to sundown to make that a reality, I say thank you.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE IN DANGER IN COLOMBIA

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I just returned from leading a fact-finding delegation to Colombia from October 3 to 8.

I have traveled to Colombia a dozen times since 2001. This time, I traveled to Cali, a city still reeling from intense protests this past spring and the security forces' excessive response.

It was my second visit to Cali and my third to this specific region. I met with the mayor of Cali, the Catholic archbishop, youth who had protested, families whose children were killed during the protests, local journalists, and human rights defenders.

I then traveled an hour south to the town of Santander de Quilichao in northern Cauca. The Department of Cauca leads Colombia in killings of social leaders and former combatants.

There, I met with the U.N. Verification Mission team monitoring implementation of the peace accord and had a lengthy talk with the town's mayor. I spent the most time with Afro-Colombian, indigenous, campesino, women's, and LGBTQ organizations.

The next day, I visited the San Juan community in Sumapaz, a formerly guerrilla-controlled region in the Andes paramo, 3 hours south of Bogota.

I traveled with representatives of Bogota's mayor, whose jurisdiction includes Sumapaz. I saw water projects being carried out by campesinos, indigenous, and former combatants. I attended a town meeting where everyone was free to have their say.

In Bogota, I met with our embassy and President Duque, leaders of the Colombian police, the U.N. and the OAS, the International Committee of the Red Cross, U.S. and Colombian security analysts, Colombian members of Congress, human rights defenders, and journalists.

I returned disturbed and worried, Mr. Speaker. I am deeply concerned about the state of human rights, peace, and democracy in Colombia.

I will be listening closely to what U.S. officials say on these matters at the high-level bilateral dialogue this week in Bogota.

The U.S. has spent over \$8.2 billion in taxpayer money on military and security support for Colombia since 2000. Yet, large parts of Colombia aren't under government control or have been abandoned by the state.

Human rights defenders and local leaders are targeted and killed. Journalists are threatened and subject to illegal surveillance. The drug trade is flourishing, and illegal armed groups grow in power.

I am especially concerned by the frustration and fears I heard from organizations that have been fighting for peace for decades but today feel that things are going in a wrong and very dangerous direction.

It is painful to remember the hope they felt during my last visit in 2017, as they made plans inspired by the peace accord and its promise of progress.

For them, Colombia has taken a giant step backward, much greater than understood from Washington before my trip.

Then there were protests this spring where we saw the Colombian police react violently to legitimate demands for education, health, food, and jobs. Demonstrators were shot with live ammunition by a police force that receives U.S. aid.

ESMAD, the riot police, not a recipient of direct U.S. grant assistance, because of its terrible human rights record, used crowd-control equipment to wound, maim, and kill demonstrators. Some of this equipment was made in the U.S.A. and likely provided through commercial sales, which I believe should immediately stop.

Mr. Speaker, what do you say to a woman who asks whether she is still a mother because her only child was killed in the protests? How do you comfort a father whose son served honorably with the Colombian military only to die at the hands of the Colombian police?

I am also deeply concerned about the implementation of the 2016 peace accord. The agreement provides a roadmap to address longstanding problems in Colombia, including those that provoked the protests.

But it is a comprehensive agreement that must be carried out holistically, not a few parts here and there, while ignoring, undermining, or slow-walking the rest.

But there is reason for hope. In Sumapaz, I saw firsthand what a committed local government and an organized community can accomplish to establish peace, security, and development that benefits everyone, not just a privileged few.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of so many of our programs and projects in Colombia. I treasure the friendship between the United States and Colombia. As a friend and ally, it is critical that the U.S. speak frankly and forcefully about setbacks to peace, the need for serious police reform, and the dangerous human rights situation.

If we care about the people of Colombia and their human rights, Congress has a responsibility to take a deep look at the situation inside Colombia and reevaluate the priorities of our aid.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter from numerous nongovernmental organizations to Secretary of State Antony Blinken concerning the upcoming high-level bilateral dialogue.

OCTOBER 18, 2021.

Secretary of State ANTONY BLINKEN,
The State Department,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY BLINKEN: As you travel to Colombia for the high-level bilateral dialogue, we urge you to use this opportunity to press the Colombian government for progress on flagging peace accord implementation and for actions on critical human rights issues, including improving the dire situation of human rights defenders, advancing the rights of Afro-Colombian and indigenous people, addressing the needs of poor and landless farmers, and confronting the serious problems of police brutality and racial injustice.

As organizations that have followed events in Colombia for many years, many of us with programs and close partners in the country, we are gravely disappointed that to date the Biden Administration has not placed sufficient emphasis on these issues and hope that your visit will mark a change. We urge you to avoid public statements that praise the U.S.-Colombian partnership while skirting over the deeply disturbing patterns of human rights violations that should be a major focus of U.S. concern and diplomacy.

Police brutality. In response to massive, largely peaceful demonstrations against a regressive tax initiative, unemployment, and social exclusion, Colombian security forces, particularly the national police and the ESMAD riot squad, killed and injured protesters, mainly teenagers and young adults. Eighty-seven civilians were killed in the course of the protests according to the Defender la Libertad human rights campaign. Police shot live ammunition and projectiles into crowds, including in one case into a group of families and neighbors assembled for a candlelight vigil for a young man killed the day before, causing major injuries, loss of eyesight, and death. Police and ESMAD targeted, along with protesters, human rights defenders, journalists, and medical brigade members who provided first aid to protesters and police. Police sexually abused young women protesters and threatened women first aid responders with rape. Family members of victims of police brutality and human rights defenders seeking justice for police abuses are stigmatized and their lives threatened. Following these tragic events, rather than taking significant action to advance dialogue, police reform, and prosecutions of abusive security forces, the Colombian government has presented only superficial police reforms and appears focused on investigating and prosecuting protesters and those who helped them. Few cases of security force abuses during the 2021 protests are moving forward in civilian courts; 13 homicide cases involving security forces have been reported as inappropriately in the military justice system, which rarely results in justice.

Peace accord implementation and situation of human rights defenders. The historic 2016 peace accords, a major legacy of the Obama-Biden Administration due to its support for negotiations, are at risk due to weak implementation. As of September 2021, 292 FARC ex-combatants have been killed since laying down their arms. Moreover Colombia remains one of the most dangerous countries on earth to be a human rights defender; 158 human rights defenders were killed so far this year in 2021, according to the United Nations. For the second year in a row, Colombia leads the world in murders of environmental and land rights defenders, according to Global Witness. Colombia's community leaders are in danger precisely because they are building peace on the ground, while the government has failed to implement its peace accord commitments, including dismantling paramilitary networks, protecting