

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, FOREIGN
OPERATIONS, AND RELATED
PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS
ACT, 2024

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2023

Ms. McCOLLUM. Mr. Chair, I rise in strong opposition of H.R. 4665, Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2024.

This bill makes devastating cuts to our foreign assistance and will undo years of progress in the areas of humanitarian aid, bolstering our national security, and combatting the effects of climate change. With this bill, House Republicans have completely abandoned our country's leadership on the global stage and made our country and other countries around the world susceptible to destabilization.

This bill eliminates U.S. support for climate adaptation, sustainable landscapes, and clean energy programming. Climate change is an existential threat to every single one of us—and this bill does nothing but bury our heads in the sand. These divestments will not only be devastating to our environment, but also to our national security. Cuts to climate programs will leave the Department of Defense more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Without adequate funding to address the climate crisis, people around the globe will be driven from their homes, unable to feed their families, and will fall deeper into poverty. At a time when a historic number of refugees are fleeing conflict and instability, the United States will turn its back and be unable to respond to and assist our allies.

The majority has authored this bill to satisfy the most extreme among us without considering the real-life consequences for our allies and for the world's most vulnerable populations. This bill zeros out or dramatically cuts several critical peacebuilding funding accounts, which will severely impact the United States' ability to prevent violent conflict, build sustainable peace, and save lives. This bill hurts women and children—codifying the expanded version of the harmful global gag rule, cutting foreign assistance for family planning and reproductive health, and prohibiting funding to the UNFPA, the United Nations reproductive health agency.

Mr. Chair, this bill fails to protect Americans and cedes leadership to our adversaries. With this level of funding, House Republicans are ignoring reality and making it impossible for the United States to engage peacefully and constructively with the international community—all while our adversaries are engaging aggressively. Millions of lives are on the line, and instead of making a serious attempt to address these problems, the majority has injected politics into our foreign policy and have authored a bill that has virtually no chance of passing in the Senate. For all of these reasons, I must vote against H.R. 4665.

RECOGNIZING COLONEL ROBERT
SOLEMBERGER USA, RETIRED,
WITH A CONGRESSIONAL VET-
ERAN COMMENDATION

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2023

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, it is my great honor to present retired Colonel Robert I. Solenberger, United States Army, with the 2023 Congressional Veteran Commendation. He is the epitome of the U.S. Army's slogan, "Be All You Can Be."

Robert Solenberger was born in 1943 in Oakland, California, earning a bachelor's degree in engineering chemistry from the University of New Mexico in 1965. In the midst of the Vietnam War, a young twenty-five-year-old patriot commenced thirty years of active military service when he enlisted in 1968. While engaged in infantry training at New Jersey's Fort Dix, Robert incurred extensive lung damage, spending months in what was then the Valley Forge Army Hospital in Pennsylvania.

Medically discharged from the Army in 1972, with access to rehabilitation funding, Robert attended medical school at the University of Maryland, obtaining a Doctor of Medicine in 1974, later training in surgery. Ever the patriot, he then applied for a direct commission as a surgeon in the Army Medical Corps; with his acceptance in 1984, and assignment to Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Robert began his final twenty-six years of active duty.

Some of Robert's deployments included Operation Desert Storm with the longest and largest Mass Casualty (MASCAL) exercise; Bright Star 95, for which he would be commended by the Army of Egypt; Ulchi Focus Lens 99 in Korea; supporting USMC forces in Afghanistan in 2002 with the 555 Forward Surgical Team; as well as Kuwait, Honduras, and Panama. Colonel Solenberger held the post of Chief Surgeon at Fort Cavazos in Killeen, Texas—the world's largest military base. Uniquely, he led the surgical team in delivering Conjoined Twins—and the workup leading to the only successful separation in a DOD hospital.

Among Colonel Solenberger's decorations are a Bronze Star, the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, National Defense Service Ribbon (three stars), Joint Service, Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Army Commendation Medal, and Army Achievement Medal. He received an Order of Military Medical Merit in 1990; the "A" Designator (academic full professor), with pediatric surgery credentials in 1997, and the Combat Medics Badge.

Since retiring from active duty in 1994, Robert continues to mentor future military surgeons through his work with surgical residents at both the VA hospital system at Waco, Texas and the VA's Temple, Texas facility. Adding to his remarkable career is the also remarkable fact that Robert has performed in active military duty and as a hands-on, teaching surgeon with the Veterans Administration despite more than a sixty percent disability rating. Battlefield tested, Robert brings both empathy and inspiration to the Texas veterans he now serves with dedication and compassion.

For his love of country, tireless service and continuing to "Be All You Can Be" it gives me

great pleasure to award retired United States Army Medical Corps Colonel Robert I. Solenberger with the 2023 Congressional Veteran Commendation.

RECOGNIZING JACK WHITE'S IN-
DUCTION TO THE RHODE ISLAND
TELEVISION & RADIO HALL OF
FAME

HON. WILLIAM R. KEATING

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2023

Mr. KEATING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the posthumous induction of Jack White to the Rhode Island Television & Radio Hall of Fame.

Residents of Rhode Island and Massachusetts came to rely on Jack's reporting in the Newport Daily News, the Providence Journal, WBZ TV in Boston, the Cape Cod Times, and finally during his time as Chief Investigative Reporter at WPRI TV in Providence.

A native of Pawtucket, Jack was a hard-hitting investigative journalist who never wavered on his principles. During the Watergate scandal, it was Jack's story in the Providence Journal that brought President Nixon's underpayment of federal income tax into national focus and caused the President to respond to a question from Jack's editor with the now infamous five-word phrase: "I am not a crook." That reporting won Jack White a Pulitzer Prize in 1974, cost President Nixon hundreds of thousands of dollars in back taxes, and spurred the practice of Presidents releasing their income tax returns for public inspection. True to his convictions as a journalist, Jack never divulged his source for the Nixon story and even delayed the story by twelve days to stand with striking reporters at the Providence Journal.

After leaving Providence for WBZ in Boston, it was a reporting job at the Cape Cod Times that brought the White family to West Barnstable, and Jack's commitment to his family that kept them on Cape Cod as he commuted back and forth to Providence during his decades at WPRI. His work at WPRI was marked by numerous major investigative stories, multiple Emmy Awards, and earned him the honorary title of "Dean of Rhode Island Journalism."

Sadly, Jack left us suddenly on October 12, 2005, at age 63, leaving behind his wife Beth, daughter Elizabeth, sons John, Patrick, and Timothy, and their families. Jack's son, Tim, followed his father into journalism and can be seen on televisions across Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts each week hosting the same "Newsmakers" program that Jack hosted during his time at WPRI.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join the Rhode Island Television & Radio Hall of Fame in celebrating the journalistic accomplishments of Jack White, and I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing Jack's posthumous induction into the Rhode Island Television & Radio Hall of Fame and the impact that his reporting has had on Southern New England and our nation.

MARKING THE 1000TH DAY OF
JIMMY LAI'S IMPRISONMENT BY
THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT

HON. JAMIE RASKIN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2023

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, this week marked the one thousandth day of imprisonment of one of Hong Kong's 1,648 political prisoners: Jimmy Lai, a hugely successful businessman, owner of Hong Kong's major newspaper, and a freedom fighter for the people of Hong Kong. His "crimes" that have landed him in a maximum-security prison at age 75? Supporting pro-democracy protests and publishing the truth about the Chinese Communist Party's creeping authoritarian takeover of Hong Kong.

I have begun the process of adopting his case as a "prisoner of conscience" with the Tom Lantos Commission on Human Rights and I urge all colleagues, Democrats and Republicans alike, to adopt a political prisoner, a religious prisoner or some other prisoner of conscience in this time of terrifying global crackdown on human rights and free expression.

Jimmy Lai recognized that a free press that reports the facts is essential to democracy and a free society. He founded one of Hong Kong's most reputable papers in 1991, Apple Daily, in reference to the Garden of Eden's fruit of knowledge. One of the paper's original mottos was "an apple a day keeps the liars away." Jimmy Lai's newspaper continued to report the facts as Hong Kong citizens from all walks of life—led by thousands of courageous young people—demonstrated for their freedom and against Beijing's repressive "National Security Law" in 2019.

It is for this principled defense of truth and common sense in a civil society that Mr. Lai has been unjustly detained by China's authoritarian expansion into the free city of Hong Kong. According to the Hong Kong Democracy Council, a human rights organization, Jimmy Lai is one of 1,648 Hong Kongers who are political prisoners today. This staggering number—reached after just four years—puts the once-free Hong Kong on the same plane as countries like Belarus and Myanmar. Everyday Hong Kongers who dared to dream of a democratic future are instead languishing in detention. They await trial and sentencing before a hyper-politicized judiciary executing a twisted facsimile of Hong Kong's traditionally independent, common law court system.

Jimmy Lai was first arrested in August 2020 as one of the first targets of the repressive "National Security Law" imposed by mainland China. He has since been arrested numerous times, charged with everything from collusion with foreign powers, to so-called "unauthorized assembly," to alleged fraud. Many of his fellow political prisoners in Hong Kong face charges that are similar affronts to a free society.

The reactionary movement against democracy is global, which is why our movement to defend democracy is also global. I salute the courageous activists, like Jimmy Lai, who refuse to bend to the brutal forces of fear and authoritarianism. Whether they live in Washington, D.C. or Hong Kong or Moscow or Kyiv, everyone should have the right to determine

their own destiny. I stand here today on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in solidarity with Jimmy Lai as he marks his one thousand and first day as a political prisoner. Please join me in acting in solidarity with Jimmy Lai and demand his immediate release and freedom from the Chinese government.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ADRIANO ESPAILLAT

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2023

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, due to an unforeseen matter, I was not present for six votes yesterday evening. Had I been present, I would have voted: NAY on Roll Call No. 489, NAY on Roll Call No. 490, NAY on Roll Call No. 491, NAY on Roll Call No. 492, NAY on Roll Call No. 493, and NAY on Roll Call No. 494.

RECOGNIZING THE MERITORIOUS
SELFLESS SERVICE BY MID-
SHIPMAN SECOND CLASS MADISON
O'DONNELL

HON. MATT CARTWRIGHT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2023

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize Midshipman Second Class Madison O'Donnell who decisively acted with the valor while saving a gentleman in peril when attending the United States Naval Academy in June 2023.

While driving near Santee Basin Dock, Maryland, Midshipman O'Donnell heard cries for help and halted her vehicle. Upon locating the distressed individual, she quickly ran towards the dock to rescue a gentleman who appeared to be drowning.

Midshipman Madison O'Donnell aptly assessed the situation and proficiently deduced that a severe laceration was impeding the gentleman from pulling himself to safety. Without hesitation, she rescued the drowning man by pulling him out of the basin.

Rerieved from the danger of drowning, Midshipman O'Donnell calmed the gentleman and administered first aid treatment. She then drove him home to his family who expressed immense gratitude for her meritorious and selfless assistance.

In recognition of this act of valor, Colonel James P. McDonough, USMC, 89th Commandant of Midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy, awarded Midshipman Second Class Madison O'Donnell the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for professional achievement in the superior performance of her duties as a midshipman on September 8, 2023.

As the member of the U.S. House representing Midshipman O'Donnell's hometown of Greenfield Township, Pennsylvania, and the Member responsible for nominating her to the United States Naval Academy's Class of 2025, I am proud to celebrate Midshipman O'Donnell's admirable act of heroism.

Midshipman Second Class O'Donnell's actions, dedication to duty and the preservation

of life reflect great credit upon herself, our community in Northeast Pennsylvania, the United States Navy, and the nation. I am confident that she will have an exemplary career in service to our Nation, and I look forward to sharing in her successes in the future.

RECOGNIZING SHARON
LEDBETTER

HON. CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2023

Mrs. RODGERS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Sharon Ledbetter of Colfax, WA for her selfless service and the incredible impact she has had on the lives of veterans and their families in Eastern Washington.

In 2009, Sharon was instrumental in organizing the Lewis Clark Quilts of Valor, the Eastern Washington region's local branch of the Quilts of Valor Foundation. Her goal was simple and honorable: Award servicemembers and veterans with hand-made quilts that recognize the bravery and sacrifice of our heroes, in the hopes of providing comfort and healing now that they have returned home.

As the wife of a Vietnam-era Air Force veteran, Sharon understood these Quilts of Valor can be lifesaving for veterans. That's why, for the last 14 years, she has organized countless Sew Days, taught quilting classes, and raised financial support from local businesses and veterans' groups. Under her leadership, the group has grown to 60 members and honored more than 3,000 veterans with high-quality quilts to recognize their dedication and sacrifice to our country.

Each Quilt of Valor is dedicated to the veteran it was made for with their name, service branch, and era of service sewed on, making them an incredibly personal gift of recognition and honor. The quilts—many of which Sharon made herself—are then presented at beautiful ceremonies that have been known to move even the most stoic veterans to tears. Thanks to Sharon, these presentations are now conducted by volunteers and members across Eastern Washington and North Central Idaho.

Mr. Speaker, Sharon Ledbetter is a truly remarkable woman who deserves recognition. As she enters her retirement, I ask that my colleagues join me in celebrating her tremendous work and tireless dedication to the veterans in the greater Eastern Washington region. The profound impact she has had on our communities and the veterans in them will not soon be forgotten.

TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN HERO RYAN
MARTIN

HON. BETH VAN DUYNE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2023

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, Grapevine-Colleyville ISD's (GCISD) Director of Facility Use, Ryan Martin.

A star athlete at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO), Ryan Martin brought his talent and dedication to helping others to North