

Finally, amendment 503 is my Toxic Exposure Education for Servicemembers Act. It would require the Department of Defense to establish a new risk assessment for toxic exposure for servicemembers who are assigned to work near toxic burn pits. This amendment would also require the Department of Defense to establish an outreach program to inform servicemembers about the harms associated with working near toxic exposures.

These three amendments all aim to save lives and help prevent exposure to toxic burn pits. They do this by requesting the collection of data in the hopes of catching associated illnesses and conditions faster, educating our servicemembers on the harms associated with them, and forging a path forward to end their use.

I have fought for years to bring attention to this issue and its devastating toll on our Nation's servicemembers and their families. Time and time again, I have come before this body to tell the stories of those whose lives were devastated and forever changed by burn pits.

I have told the story of Jennifer Kepner, an Air Force veteran from Cathedral City in my district. Jennifer was an otherwise healthy mother of two who lost her courageous battle with pancreatic cancer likely caused by her exposure to burn pits during her military service.

I have told the story of Alejandro Camacho, from Palm Desert, who developed testicular cancer from the toxic fumes, particulate matter, and carcinogens he breathed in every day during his service in Iraq.

Their stories shed light on the obstacles that veterans across the country have faced and continue to face to get the care and benefits they earned and deserve.

It is for Jennifer, Alejandro, and the millions of other veterans suffering from their burn pit exposures that I founded the bipartisan, bicameral Congressional Burn Pits Caucus.

It is our duty to take care of our veterans who sustained injuries and illnesses while they were fighting for our country.

I am encouraged by the steps we have taken to address how we take care of our servicemembers and veterans suffering from toxic exposures.

The historic passage of the Honoring our PACT Act, led by Ranking Member TAKANO, will provide generational change, giving care and support to veterans and their families suffering from illness due to their toxic exposure.

The foundation of the bill was built upon my bill, the Presumptive Benefits for War Fighters Exposed to Burn Pits and Other Toxins Act, which removes the burden from veterans to prove that 23 illnesses or conditions, including various cancers that they are suffering from, are due to their service near burn pits.

However, there is more to do to prevent toxic exposures from happening,

and I will not stop fighting until our servicemembers are safe.

□ 1045

STOP FUNDING IRAN

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Madam Speaker, as the country deals with distractions, the truth of which is very difficult to get out of the White House or other sources, such as the missing Titanic submarine—when did it actually implode? We couldn't get the truth on that.

Where is the packet of cocaine that came in the White House? Who is responsible for that? Why can't they track that with their massive security systems?

Also, it is silly that males compete in women's sports and are being allowed in women's places like their locker rooms. These are important issues in and of themselves, but they distract from some really important issues that don't get a lot of press or coverage these days.

Madam Speaker, look at the situation with Iran and its development of nuclear weapons. Iran is a very unstable country and one that is a very well-known sponsor of terror around the world in many areas. Let's hearken back a little ways here.

Under the Obama administration, everybody remembers that first pallet of cash that was flown into Iran of about \$400 million, basically of other currencies because there were still sanctions at the time that we couldn't send U.S. dollars in there. It was mainly Swiss francs and euros that were sent in for a total of about \$1.7 billion to help sponsor terror that Iran is so good at.

How are we supposed to ask our partners around the world to continue sanctions against Iran—whatever is left in place after the JCPOA was put in in 2015—to help stop the major sponsor of terror in the world? How are we supposed to continue that?

Indeed, the Biden administration has a plan or an idea of sending \$17 billion more over there to help prop up their treasury. What in the world are we doing that for?

With all the things we need to spend money on in our own country here, why would we want to help prop up the treasury of the major state sponsor of terror that Iran is?

JCPOA, agreed to under the Obama administration, has been a complete failure in trying to limit the amount of uranium that they would be refining through their centrifuges. Our understanding is that they have 23 times the stockpiles of these uranium materials provided for in the 2015 JCPOA. We are really adhering to that agreement and enforcing that agreement it sounds like. Yet, we are talking about this ad-

ministration sending \$17 billion more to help prop up their economy and help them do more terror activity.

At the point that Iran reaches 90 percent enrichment on its uranium, Israel is going to have some very important decisions to make because Israel is already surrounded by a lot of people that don't like them in the Middle East, including Iran.

If they get the weapons they need and the ability to deliver them, Israel is going to have some very, very tough decisions to make on preserving themselves. Israel is not getting much of a good signal coming from the current administration in the White House that the United States is going to be there to back them up like they need to be. What will that force them to do?

Who knows? It will probably force them to do some very extreme things. I don't blame them. The International Atomic Energy Agency can verify that they have reached already 83.7 percent of enrichment levels of a certain amount of stockpile that Iran has. They are not far from having nuclear-weapon capable materials. When they reach that 90 percent point, that is generally accepted as nuclear bomb ready.

Is Iran a stable enough country that we can trust them with nuclear bombs?

That was what supposedly the whole JCPOA was about—to keep them from getting nuclear weapons. This isn't the Iran of old where the United States at least used to have a relationship with them, and they had a lot more of a westernized culture with free movement, free activities for women or for many Iranians. This was pre-1979 when the Ayatollah was taking over there. It is still a very unstable country and causes much instability in the world.

The idea of them gaining nuclear weapons very soon, when they reach that 90 percent mark, puts us all in a pretty perilous position. We are across an entire ocean from the situation. We are across the Atlantic and such. Our great ally, Israel, as well as part of Europe, what are they going to be facing with a nuclear Iran?

We better get serious on not sending them \$17 billion or more, but putting the sanctions back in place that will bring Iran to its knees and stop this nuclear proliferation and their ability to sponsor terror.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

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

Mr. GROTHMAN. Madam Speaker, I will address one of the very important Supreme Court decisions which came down in the last couple weeks and some of the comments that have been made critical of that decision. I am talking about the one that dealt with a policy now known in the United States as affirmative action.

What that policy does is it gives, as a practical matter, preferences both on

the basis of race and gender in university admissions. Actually, the public debate should go beyond that because in this country not only do we have a policy in which we try to have certain groups jump ahead of other people based on test scores or grade point average, we also have preferences, or encourage, as a practical matter, preferences in hiring for government jobs as well as hiring in jobs working for a private organization, if that private organization has at least 50 employees and does business with the Federal Government. There are also preferences with regard to government contracting.

As a practical matter, we have had these preferences since 1965. We are talking about things that are 67 years old.

I will point out that sometimes with regard to government contracting, it encourages lying. I have talked to people in my district who talk about their colleagues putting businesses in the name of their wives so they can get the preference for a woman-owned business even though the guy continues to run the business.

My friend doesn't like it because he is an honest person and he refuses to lie. He doesn't like the fact that people who are lying move ahead of him. He is in the construction field.

There are two ideas put forth as to why we need these preferences: One is to undo past injustices from years ago, going all the way back to slavery in the 1860s; and, secondly, the idea that somehow we should ask businesses or government to have a more diverse task force. I am going to deal with each of one of these separately.

First of all, with regard to past injustices, the benefits in universities and the benefit in government affirmative action goes to people who were never even in this country. We have to ask ourselves, why, if my ancestors came here from Peru in the 1990s and never experienced a period in this country, assuming there was such a period in which there was a lot of prejudice, why would we be giving preferences to people who moved here in the 1990s?

Also, Madam Speaker, Black people who moved here from Jamaica or the Bahamas in the 1990s, well past the era of Jim Crow, much less well past slavery times, why would we be giving them preferences?

The Biden administration, most recently, is trying to add another group to get preferences, people from the Middle East or northern Africa. Why, if someone moves here from Algeria or Syria today, they may not even be citizens, why would they be given preferences? What is the underlying rationale?

The other thing to point out here is that we are hypothetically giving preferences to people who are doing better than the native-born population. This is something people should remember before they advocate for this or if they have children or grandchildren making the pitch for this.

Right now the ethnic group in America that is doing the best financially—and money is not the most important thing in life, but nevertheless, that is frequently what we look to when we determine these programs—are Indian Americans who are the most successful group in America today. Behind that, we have people from China. I think the number two group right now is from the Philippines. People from Cuba are doing better than the native born.

According to Thomas Sowell—this is a book somewhat dated—according to Thomas Sowell, the second generation after people move here from the West Indies, Jamaica, and the Bahamas do better than the average American.

Given that, like I said, we are dealing with people who came here well past the time of prejudice. Why in the world would we be giving preferences to these people?

The next thing I will point out is that some people fall back on the idea that we need a diverse group of students or a diverse workforce. This is kind of a bizarre argument, and it is something people should have to defend.

Let's say I am one-quarter Peruvian—I am not, but let's say for the sake of argument I am one-quarter Peruvian. I have never been to Peru. I don't know a word of Spanish. I have never been to a Spanish-speaking country. Why in the world would we be giving me preferences to bring the Peruvian viewpoint to an engineering firm, let's say?

It makes no sense at all. I have no connection other than DNA with people that are Peruvian.

These are some of the ideas that I think people should have to respond to before they are critical of that decision, or people who want this sort of policy to continue.

THE THREAT OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAMALFA). The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Iowa (Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest threats we face today as a Nation is the threat of the Chinese Communist Party at home and abroad.

The fiscal year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act includes funding that protects the citizens of the United States from the imminent threat of the Chinese Communist Party. It requires the DOD to notify Congress of collaborative nuclear efforts between China and Russia and assess the cooperation between China and Iran on ICBM technology.

This year's NDAA counters aggression from the Chinese Communist Party on every front. It promotes processes for our small businesses to enter the market to work with the DOD in an effort to continue to grow the American small business economy and on-

shore manufacturing capacity to the United States.

Additionally, the NDAA recognizes the growing threat of the Chinese Communist Party to Taiwan, reaffirming U.S. support of the defense of Taiwan to allow Taiwan to defend itself and fully funds military exercises with our allies and partners in the Pacific to counter China's growing military expansion.

Further, the NDAA protects us at home by building up our cybersecurity capabilities and developing new emerging technologies in AI to help our soldiers defend against threats against our Nation and the largest pay raise in over 20 years of 5.2 percent, barely keeping pace with inflation, to help our enlisted and lower-paid servicemembers.

Supporting the NDAA is essential in making sure our soldiers and interests abroad are supported and defended to the highest standard, while also making sure that all of us at home in the United States are protected from threats, as well.

Mr. Speaker, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, it is estimated that 6 out of 100 people will have PTSD at some point in their lives. Sadly, the incidence of PTSD is higher in veterans and Active Duty servicemembers.

As a doctor, former director of the Iowa Department of Health, and a 24-year U.S. Army veteran, the mental, emotional, and physical health of my constituents and fellow veterans is one of my top priorities in Congress. For too long, PTSD and other mental or physical ailments have had devastating effects, and far too often, they go untreated.

The new FDA guidance that presents considerations for designing clinical trials for psychedelic drugs will give patients and their doctors increased access to effective treatments rather than alternatives such as opioids.

That is why I introduced the Veterans CARE Act to allow the VA to research the effectiveness of using medical cannabis for chronic mental and physical pain and why we have held roundtables on emerging breakthrough therapies.

I hope others will join me in supporting these novel forms of research that will benefit our heroic veterans.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 58 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.