

The House Committee on Foreign Affairs recently released the report on its investigation of during and after the rushed withdrawal, "Willful Blindness: An Assessment of the Biden-Harris Administration's Withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Chaos that Followed."

The committee found that the Biden-Harris administration was determined to withdraw from Afghanistan no matter the costs, prioritizing the optics of the withdrawal over the security of U.S. personnel and failing to plan for all contingencies.

The administration's hasty decisions and disregard for U.S. personnel on the ground during the withdrawal led to the deaths of 13 of our military members by a terrorist attack on Aug. 26, 2021, the deadliest day for our military in Afghanistan since 2012.

This catastrophic withdrawal not only resulted in the deaths of our servicemembers, it has also weakened U.S. national security, with Afghanistan once again becoming a haven for terrorists, and has damaged U.S. credibility on the world stage after abandoning our Afghan allies to Taliban revenge killings.

This tragedy was preventable, and the Biden-Harris administration has yet to take accountability for its failures or even meet with the Gold Star families of our fallen soldiers. Americans will never forget the ultimate sacrifice made in defense of our nation by:

Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Darin T. Hoover, 31, from Salt Lake City, Utah

Marine Corps Sgt. Johanny Rosario Pichardo, 25, from Lawrence, Massachusetts

Marine Corps Sgt. Nicole L. Gee, 23, from Sacramento, California

Marine Corps Cpl. Hunter Lopez, 22, from Indio, California

Marine Corps Cpl. Daegan W. Page, 23, from Omaha, Nebraska

Marine Corps Cpl. Humberto A. Sanchez, 22, from Logansport, Indiana

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. David L. Espinoza, 20, from Rio Bravo, Texas

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Jared M. Schmitz, 20, from St. Charles, Missouri

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Rylee J. McCollum, 20, from Jackson, Wyoming

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Dylan R. Merola, 20, from Rancho Cucamonga, California

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Kareem M. Nikoui, 20, from Norco, California

Navy Hospitalman Maxton W. Soviak, 22, from Berlin Heights, Ohio

Army Staff Sgt. Ryan C. Knauss, 23, from Coryton, Tennessee

STANDING UP TO COMMUNIST CHINA

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) represents the greatest threat to American values and national security in our lifetime, and we must counter the CCP's efforts to gain leverage over our nation and beyond. President Xi Jinping has gone so far as to say that he will do whatever it takes to bring Taiwan under his control, including through military force.

From securing our supply chains and protecting American technology to defending American biosecurity and drug manufacturing, the nearly three dozen bills that the House advanced are a step toward reducing China's leverage over the U.S. and strengthening U.S. dominance.

Just one of the bills that I am co-sponsoring and voted for that would directly affect Western North Carolina is the Protecting American Agriculture from Foreign Adversaries Act, which amends the Defense Production Act of 1950 to require the Secretary of Agriculture to be included on the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) for agriculture-related issues. It also requires CFIUS to review

and potentially block purchases of farmland by foreign adversaries that pose a national security risk.

We cannot allow enemies of the U.S. to buy up America's farmland, which poses a food and national security threat, and I will continue to work with the House to combat the CCP's aggression here at home and overseas.

BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION'S "AMERICA LAST" FOREIGN POLICY

Over the past three and a half years, the Biden-Harris administration's policies have put Americans last, diminishing our national security and draining hard-working Western North Carolinians' hard-earned savings.

This administration's failed policies have caused sky-high inflation, record-high gas prices and an unprecedented invasion of our borders.

During my district work period, constituent after constituent—including many small-business owners—have shared about the effects of high prices on running a business.

Meanwhile, thousands of illegal immigrants continue to flood our borders, endangering the safety and well-being of every American.

The radical, sanctuary-city policies are incentivizing illegal immigration, and your hard-earned tax dollars should not be used to serve illegal immigrants and further signal to the world that America's borders are open.

To reverse such harmful policies that are rewarding illegal immigration and to protect women from sex offenders and abusers, I voted for the No Bailout for Sanctuary Cities Act and the Violence Against Women by Illegal Aliens Act and will continue to push for policies that serve the best interests of our citizens and nation.

CHAMPIONING MAIN STREET BUSINESSES

The National Federation of Independent Business is a voice for small businesses across our nation, and I'm grateful to have been selected for this year's Small Business Guardian Award.

As someone whose background is in business, I understand the challenges that Main Street faces, including heavy-handed government regulations. We need more pro-growth, pro-small-business policies so that small businesses can thrive and create jobs.

WELCOMING WNC CHAMBER MEMBERS TO DC

It was a privilege to welcome members of WNC Chambers of Commerce for their retreat during which they focused on problem-solving and opportunities to improve workforce development and local economies.

America's risk takers and job creators have long been under attack from Washington, and I'm striving to reduce regulations, create a better tax climate, and help develop a workforce that provides opportunity and fuels our economy by fixing how Washington works.

With my warmest regards,

CHAD EDWARDS,
Member of Congress.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DEAN PHILLIPS

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 23, 2024

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I inadvertently voted NAY on Roll Call No. 429. I intended to vote YEA.

HONORING BOB GOMEZ

HON. DEBBIE LESKO

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 23, 2024

Mrs. LESKO. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Arizona's 8th Congressional District, it is my honor to recognize Bob Gomez. Bob is a leader in Republican Legislative District 3, which includes the northern most areas of the 8th Congressional District and a population of over 236,000.

Bob has worked tirelessly to educate, train, and inspire the next generation of citizens through civic engagement. His efforts to work collaboratively with other leaders have been instrumental to the success of Republican elected officials and candidates in the state legislature and beyond.

I am thankful for his leadership and dedication to conservative principles. I sincerely appreciate his service to the legislative district and to the state of Arizona.

CELEBRATING THE HANOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT FOR 135 YEARS OF SERVICE

HON. DARIN LAHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 23, 2024

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Hanover volunteer Fire Department of Hanover, Illinois for celebrating their 135th anniversary.

In the 1800's, Hanover's fire protection was virtually non-existent. The Hanover community rallied together to organize a fire company and purchased a Button hand fire engine in the summer of 1889. Later in 1890, a 414-pound fire alarm bell was gifted to the fire company by the ladies of Hanover and a tower was built on the North side of the town hall to house it.

On January 29, 1924, a new volunteer fire company was organized by twenty-two men. In the summer of 1942, the War Public Works Fire Station was built and was used by the Hanover Fire Department until another building, located at 201 Fillmore Street, was completed in 1970. The Hanover Fire Department remains at that Fillmore Street location to this day.

The illustrious history of the Hanover Fire Department is a testament to the strong spirit of community present in Illinois and demonstrates the importance of first responders and their service. As a Member of Congress, I will continue to support Illinois communities like Hanover and their emergency first responders who honorably serve their communities.

For 135 years, the Hanover Fire Department has served the residents of Hanover and Hanover Township and is possibly the oldest and largest volunteer fire department in Illinois. Today, we celebrate the Department and commend its multitude of volunteer fire fighters for their dedication to Hanover. I extend my sincere congratulations to the Hanover Volunteer Fire Department of Illinois for a successful 135 years, and I wish them even more success going forward.

HONORING THE LIFE AND WORK
OF MARGARITA GONZALEZ**HON. KATHY CASTOR**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 23, 2024

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and contributions of Margarita Gonzalez, a Tampa trailblazer and outspoken advocate for our diverse Hispanic community. Margarita served the City of Tampa for nearly 30 years as the City's first Hispanic community liaison and in other important roles Margarita was a beloved champion for Tampa's Hispanic families and small business owners, and she leaves behind a vibrant legacy that will support Tampeños for decades to come.

Margarita and her family fled Cuba and arrived in Florida on July 4, 1966. At age 12, she was one of the first Cuban refugee students in the Hillsborough County Schools. She always knew the importance of education, and despite not knowing any English, she was motivated to work hard, learn English and get involved in school activities.

After graduating from Leto High School, Margarita began working on her bachelor's degree at Hillsborough Community College. For the next 13 years, Margarita attended college classes while juggling full-time jobs. She never gave up on her studies because she personally understood the irreplaceable value of an education. "After losing everything, I realized that a person's biggest asset is their education," said Gonzalez. "Knowledge and skills cannot be taken away from you."

She worked for the Tampa Port Authority and the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and continued her education by completing a bachelor's degree in public relations and communications from the University of South Florida. In 1987, Margarita began working for the City of Tampa and Mayor Sandy Freedman, doing community relations and interpretation work. Margarita saw a need for Hispanic members of the community to learn about the opportunities and services the city provided. It was then that Margarita began producing and hosting two Hispanic television shows, *Nuestra Tampa* and *Community Affairs Report*.

Throughout her nearly 30 years of service to the City of Tampa, Margarita's responsibilities included community relations, communications, coordinating the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council, establishing the city's International Affairs Office, and as a human rights investigator, which is important to support a diverse, respectful and inclusive community for our neighbors, families and businesses. While serving our City, Margarita established the Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Committee, which is committed to preserving and celebrating Tampa's vibrant Hispanic culture. Margarita also ensured that part of Hispanic Heritage Committee's work is to provide mentoring and scholarship programs to local students.

Margarita won many awards for her service work, including Hispanic Woman of the Year by Tampa Hispanic Heritage, the 2019 Latina Lideres Award by the *Latin Times*, the 2023 Hillsborough County Women's Hall of Fame inductee, and the 2021 Tampa Bay Lightning Hero award, among many others. She was the first Hispanic woman to serve as a member of

the Superbowl Task Force in 1991 and chairperson of the Tampa Hillsborough County Youth Council.

Margarita made it her life's work to ensure that students in need were supported. She was a founding member of the Hispanic Professional Women's Association (HPWA) and Foundation (HPWF) and served on the boards of many other community service organizations. Through the HPWF and the donation of \$50,000 she received as a Tampa Bay Lightning Community Hero Award recipient, Margarita established The Margarita Gonzalez HPWF Latino Endowed Scholarship, her own endowment at USF for local high-achieving, Spanish-speaking students with demonstrated need. Margarita was able to attend college herself because of scholarships, and she said it was "a dream come true" to be able to give back in this way Margarita hoped that supporting future generations would inspire them to support others as well.

Margarita was a truly selfless and charitable leader. She also was a devoted daughter and loving caretaker to her mother, Angela Elba Gonzalez. Margarita's legacy will continue to live through her mother, her sister Elba Cruz and husband Hiram and her nephew and godson Michael Cruz, his wife Rebecca and their two daughters.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my neighbors across the Tampa Bay area and the citizens of Florida, I am proud to honor Margarita Gonzalez for her lifelong dedication to education and service. It is selfless community servants like Margarita that make Tampa the welcoming and generous place it is today. Our community is eternally grateful for her immense contributions. I trust that Margarita Gonzalez's legacy will inspire others to serve their neighbors and live the American Dream.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF SAM
MARTINEZ**HON. ADAM SMITH**

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 23, 2024

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Sam Martinez and to commemorate how his legacy has inspired change in Congress.

This week, the House of Representatives will consider the Stop Campus Hazing Act. This bill was brought to my attention by the advocacy of Mr. Martinez's family, and I co-sponsored this bill shortly after meeting his parents. Today, I address the House as a proud cosponsor of this legislation, and I urge its passage.

Mr. Martinez was a Bellevue resident and Washington State University student whose life was tragically cut short on November 12, 2019, at the age of 19. He was a beloved son, brother, and friend, and my heart is with the community he leaves behind.

Mr. Martinez was born in 2000 to parents Hector Martinez and Jolayne Houtz. He grew up as a brother to Ariana Martinez in Bellevue, Washington, and throughout his life he was surrounded by friends and loved ones. Those who loved him remember his fierce athleticism on the soccer pitch, his dry sense of humor, his intelligence, his commitment to volunteer work locally and abroad, and his loyalty to his

friends and family. He was in the Bellevue School District's Spanish immersion program and graduated from Newport High School in June 2019. In the fall of 2019, Mr. Martinez matriculated at Washington State University, where he planned to study business and entrepreneurship.

Mr. Speaker, as the House considers the Stop Campus Hazing Act this week, let us remember Mr. Martinez and call attention to this critical issue that impacts students like Mr. Martinez nationwide. My thoughts are with his family and loved ones as we honor his legacy today.

HONORING BASIL FERNIMOS

HON. DEBBIE LESKO

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 23, 2024

Mrs. LESKO. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Arizona's 8th Congressional District, it is my honor to recognize someone who has been a force in the North Phoenix area, Basil Fernimos. Basil is a founding member of the North Valley Constitutional Republican Club.

As a passionate constitutionalist, Basil has been responsible for organizing and leading conservative efforts in the northern parts of our congressional district.

I am thankful for Basil's efforts and dedication to bring awareness and educate the public. I sincerely appreciate his service to the 8th Congressional District and to the state of Arizona.

RECOGNIZING THE MISSION QUILTERS
FOR THEIR HUMANITARIAN
EFFORTS**HON. RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHY**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 23, 2024

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring to my colleagues' attention, the outstanding work of Mission Quilters which recently completed their 10,000th quilt that will be donated to global communities in need of basic supplies.

Mission Quilters is a group of about 20 volunteers at the Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Schaumburg, who gather every Thursday morning to stitch quilts. This tradition dates to 1985, when Carol Langseth, the wife of the church's then-pastor, had the goal of creating handmade quilts to provide comfort to those in need around the world. I am very pleased to report that just last week, the group reached a milestone with their 10,000th quilt. These quilts are distributed both locally and to communities in nine countries, through the Lutheran World Relief organization.

Mission Quilters relies on the donations of materials from individual quilters and other organizations. These materials are then cut and used to create a variety of quilts. Volunteers participate in the process by sewing and layering the quilt squares. Working together, they produce at least four quilts per week. In fact, the quilts produced by Mission Quilters could cover 185 football fields and stretch 22,222 yards. The finished quilts are first used