

in our community. For the sake of all the people who we love, for every single person even in this building, we must do it now.

Ms. BALINT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. DESAULNIER).

Mr. DESAULNIER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my wonderful colleague from Vermont for yielding and for convening this important conversation.

This discussion could not be more timely, Mr. Speaker. Rates of mental health conditions for America's children have been rising for years, and now they are rising exponentially.

In 2019, one in three high school students reported persistent feelings of hopelessness and depression, representing a 40-percent increase over 10 years. Social media has had a profoundly negative impact on mental health, with adolescents who spend more than 3 hours per day on social media facing twice the risk of developing symptoms of depression and anxiety.

The youth mental health epidemic in America has also caught the attention of our top public health authorities. Over the last several years, the Surgeon General has issued advisories about youth mental health and the harm caused by social media. Included in the advisories is guidance on how young people, their families, educators, health professionals, tech companies, and other stakeholders can address these challenges by encouraging healthy relationships, modeling good behavior, improving data privacy for children on social media, and more.

The CDC has also been involved, including through research about the COVID pandemic's negative impact on youth mental health, the isolation. The agency found that during the pandemic, youth experienced a very low rate of social connectiveness, understandably. A sense of being cared for, supported, and belonging at school, and that lack of feeling connected to school, was associated with a nearly 20 percentage point increase in persistent feelings of hopelessness and depression amongst American young people.

These statistics, obviously, are deeply troubling and a warning sign to us here in Congress and to America. We have a responsibility to the future of this country in Congress to support children and families who are struggling.

I am proud to have led legislation like the Early Childhood Mental Health Support Act, which would provide Head Start and Early Head Start programs with funding to conduct behavioral health interventions for young American children. I am proud to say that this bill passed the House last Congress with bipartisan support in my broader Mental Health Matters Act.

We have to keep pressing on until this bill and other legislation to protect the mental health of young Americans get across the finish line, signed,

and implemented. We know that failure to address mental health disorders and adverse childhood experiences early on can lead to a lifetime of bigger issues and serious outcomes for the individual and for our country and communities.

As we continue our work in Congress to address children's mental health, we must ensure that our efforts meet the critical needs of this moment.

Mr. Speaker, I again thank the gentlewoman for convening this and for leading the effort to raise the consciousness of this epidemic in America.

Ms. BALINT. Mr. Speaker, we have heard from Members from many different parts of the country, from Vermont to Michigan to California to Hawaii. As I said before, we must prioritize human connection and healthy relationships, and we have to craft policy and make bold investments to address our national mental health crisis.

The percentage of U.S. adults who report having been diagnosed with depression at some point in their lifetimes has reached nearly 30 percent. This is almost a 10 percentage point increase since 2015. The percentage of Americans who currently have or are being treated for depression has also increased to almost 18 percent. These rates are the highest recorded by Gallup polling since it began measuring depression using the current form of data collection in 2015.

It is impacting all of us, but I am particularly concerned about the toll it is having on our kids and teens. Thirty years ago, the greatest health threats to teenagers came from binge drinking, drunk driving, teen pregnancy, and smoking. These have all fallen sharply since then, but they have been surpassed by soaring rates of mental health disorders.

In a little over a decade, the number of adolescents reporting depression has increased by 60 percent. Emergency room visits by adolescents are up as parents seek help for their teens who are struggling with anxiety, depression, and self-harm. Suicide rates among adolescents are up sharply, as well.

The public health crisis has intensified since the pandemic, but it didn't cause it. We have seen a steady increase over the past 20 years. Young people now are getting less sleep, less exercise, and less in-person time with friends, all crucial for physical and mental health. Adolescent brains are being exposed to a huge wave of incoming stimulation via social media and technology.

□ 1845

Teens in my district have told me they feel anxious, disconnected, and depressed. Many fear that their constant use of cell phones and social media is impacting their mental health.

We have important work to do, all of us. Every single congressional district is experiencing this. My work on men-

tal health will be a cornerstone of the work that I do in Congress.

I am working toward a future in which anyone who wants mental health care gets it and when we finally end the unequal treatment of mental health and addiction.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ISSUES IN NICARAGUA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. MOORE) for 30 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MOORE of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Alabama?

There was no objection.

Mr. MOORE of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, American citizens from Alabama and Texas and their Nicaraguan partners have made it their mission to spread the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Nicaraguan people for nearly 30 years.

Evangelists with Mountain Gateway Ministries have worked across the country, leading on disaster recovery and feeding, clothing, and planting churches with the support and assistance of the Nicaraguan government.

In January, however, the Attorney General of Nicaragua began pursuing charges against three U.S. citizens associated with Mountain Gateway and 11 Mountain Gateway Nicaraguan pastors on trumped-up charges of money laundering and organized crime.

In addition to being barred from meeting with their legal representation and their families, the lawyers on their case were denied access to the case files and to other relevant documentation against the pastors.

During the sham trial, the government was unable to produce evidence of the alleged illicit activity. Despite this, the 11 pastors have been sentenced to up to 15 years in prison and a combined \$1 billion in fines.

These pastors were working to bless the people of Nicaragua, and now they have been thrown in prison, and all their property has been seized.

These sentences leave families without income and children without mothers and fathers simply for sharing the good news of Jesus. I am deeply concerned that these citizens and pastors were targeted for sharing their faith.

Matthew 5:10 says: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

I recently introduced a resolution, H. Res. 1019, condemning the Nicaraguan government for unjust imprisonment of these people, and I hope my colleagues will join in support.

I am praying for a swift resolution to this situation so these pastors can be safely returned to their families and continue sharing the Gospel.

I am grateful to the Members of Congress who joined me for this Special Order to highlight this issue and call on the Nicaraguan government to release the imprisoned pastors immediately.

I yield to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ADERHOLT), one of my first cosponsors of H. Res. 1019.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of these Nicaraguan pastors, ministry leaders of Mountain Gateway, who are unable to speak for themselves.

I thank my colleague from Alabama for taking this time of the Special Order to discuss this issue, to bring it to the attention of the American people, and, really, to the world.

He has been a great champion on this, and there are many members of our delegation in Alabama, and, really, across the country, that are very concerned about what we have heard going on in Nicaragua and the situation down there.

Unfortunately, so many of the American people are very unaware of what the situation is just a few hundred miles south of our border here in the United States of America.

These leaders, as has been already mentioned, but it should be repeated. These leaders have been convicted by the Nicaraguan government on sham charges. They now face up to 15 years in prison and \$80 million in fines each.

The arrests came after these courageous pastors led a series of revivals that were authorized by the Nicaraguan government. They were rounded up, and they were imprisoned shortly after a mass outpouring of faith in the capital city.

Mr. Speaker, it is an act of religious persecution that put these men and women in prison, these pastors, these leaders, these spiritual leaders, these ministry leaders. It is human rights violations that have kept them in prison.

Again, I am so thankful that we live in a country where we do not have to worry about going to prison. I think so many Americans take for granted all the many freedoms that we have in this country.

One of those main freedoms that we have is that we get to worship freely. We can worship freely, whether it be at an outdoor revival, whether it be in a large event, small event, or just being at home reading our Bible. We don't have to worry about being sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Myself, as a young boy who accepted Christ in my own life, I can now be in Congress, and I can be a citizen here in this United States and not worry about the threat of prison being hung over my head. We can worship freely whether it is to go to an outdoor revival, a program that was such as happened in Nicaragua, or whether it is to simply

go to a small church service or just simply being at home with some other Christians sitting around, reading or praying the Bible together.

During this time when we are reflecting on what is going on here, I encourage the American people to reach out to their Members of Congress and to encourage them to do what they can to stand with those of us who are trying to call attention to this very serious issue.

This not only goes on in Nicaragua, but it also goes on in many other parts of the world, as well. Today, we certainly want to call attention to those pastors and ministry leaders from Mountain Gateway who aren't able to speak for themselves and be a voice here in the United States House of Representatives.

We ask for their release, and I would call on the Nicaraguan government to take action to address these indisputable violations and to free these men and women so that they can be returned to their homes and their families.

Mr. MOORE of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. PALMER), my friend.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Alabama for yielding time. I rise today to urge my colleagues to support passage of H. Res. 1019, introduced by my colleague from Alabama (Mr. MOORE), in response to the Nicaraguan government's unjust imprisonment of 11 pastors associated with Mountain Gateway, a missionary group based here in the United States.

This wrongful imprisonment is not the first time Nicaragua has persecuted good Samaritans trying to help their impoverished Nation. In recent years, Nicaragua has arrested Catholic missionaries, as well as members of the Red Cross.

As the United States Congress, we have a vested interest in both upholding international religious freedom and the safety and security of American citizens currently targeted.

I join my colleagues to call on the Nicaraguan government to rescind these unjust charges immediately and release the pastors.

To the pastors and persecuted Christians everywhere, I encourage them with this passage from Isaiah 41:10: Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Mr. MOORE of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, previously our colleagues across the aisle were talking about hope and mental health in America.

I think in Nicaragua, these ministries and certainly these missionaries were impacting people's lives and bringing them hope. It is just a shame what has happened to them.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Wyoming (Ms. HAGEMAN).

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding time and for his leadership on this important issue.

Since its founding in 2006, Mountain Gateway Ministries has been changing people's lives through the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the feeding and clothing of those in need, and the provision of water, food, equipment, and recovery assistance during and after natural disasters.

These noble and selfless efforts have had far-reaching impacts on the lives of so many families and individuals extending far beyond the borders of any individual Nation.

In 2013, Mountain Gateway Ministries began their important work in Nicaragua, spreading the Lord's word to hundreds of thousands of people.

The ministry has started and supported multiple churches across the country, provided countless aid and helping hands through hurricanes and other humanitarian relief projects, and has even gone as far as to run a Fairtrade coffee farm with the goal of providing a source of stable income for local residents in nearby rural communities.

Over the course of 10 years, they have operated with the cooperation and approval of the Nicaraguan authorities. Unfortunately, this all changed after the ministry held a series of evangelistic services in 2023, which nearly 1 million people attended.

Shortly after those services ended, the Nicaraguan government rapidly changed its position and began a relentless campaign of wrongful persecution.

In December 2023, under the guise of false money laundering claims and with little to no notice, the Nicaraguan government canceled the ministry's legal status, arrested several Nicaraguan pastors and ministry partners, threatened the arrest of U.S. citizens involved with the ministry, seized the ministry's properties, and froze its bank accounts.

After spending months at a Nicaraguan prison with no access to legal counsel, no visits from their relatives, and being unable to hear the allegations against them, the trials against those arrested commenced.

During the trial, the presiding judge arbitrarily elevated the charges against these individuals to aggravated money laundering claims.

All the Nicaraguan defendants were found guilty of the elevated charges and sentenced to severe punishments, including over 10 years in prison and fines amounting to tens of millions of dollars.

These instances of wrongful targeting and persecution have unfortunately become routine actions by the Nicaraguan government.

The same government has taken similar steps against the Catholic Church, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and many other religious groups, charities, and civic organizations.

Mr. Speaker, what is currently unfolding in Nicaragua with the members of Mountain Gateway Ministries is a

travesty, an injustice on the greatest scale.

From the time of their arrest to the handing down of their sentences, the treatment of these individuals and the ministry is in complete contradiction to the most fundamental freedoms and beliefs that we hold here in America, including the freedom of religion, presumption of innocence, and the guarantee of due process and equal treatment under the law.

I commend Mountain Gateway founder Jon Britton Hancock and his family, who are constituents of mine in Wyoming, for bringing this to my attention and for their tireless efforts to advocate for the just treatment and release of these individuals.

I urge President Biden, the State Department, and all of my colleagues to call on the Nicaraguan government to take prompt action to address these violations of religious freedom and abandonment of justice and due process.

Mr. MOORE of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Ms. HAGEMAN speaking tonight on that. I certainly want to encourage everybody to get on this resolution, H. Res. 1019, to help free these folks and bring attention to this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CARL. Mr. Speaker, as Americans, we pride ourselves on our individual liberties and due process of law. We were founded on the freedom of religion, and it is one of the most important freedoms that we hold. I am deeply disturbed by the ongoing situation of religious persecution in Nicaragua. The Mountain Gateway pastors, who spread the teachings of Jesus, have been violated at the hands of the Nicaraguan government. No person should ever be imprisoned for peacefully practicing their religion. Religious persecution is both intolerable and barbaric. The radical, leftist government of Nicaragua and President Daniel Ortega have proven themselves time again to be horribly oppressive. As a member of the United States Congress, I condemn Nicaragua's actions, and I will always fight for religious freedom at home and abroad.

WEAPONIZATION OF THE DOJ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOOD) for 30 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOOD of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mr. GOOD of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, of all of the harm done over the past 3 years by Democrats, perhaps most damaging has been the loss of faith and trust in our most sacred institutions,

especially our judicial system and our Federal law enforcement.

Like never before, the Department of Injustice has explicitly demonstrated a willingness to target conservatives and political opponents. They are not even pretending anymore.

Whether conducting SWAT raids in tactical gear at the homes of pro-life protesters, targeting and arresting concerned parents at school board meetings, buying private data on those exercising their Second Amendment rights, surveilling Catholics practicing their faith in Richmond, or the disparate treatment of January 6 prisoners, it is no surprise that half of the country doesn't trust the people in power in this administration.

□ 1900

Of course, their biggest and most immediate target is the 47th President of the United States because they know that Donald J. Trump is the primary obstacle to their quest to conquer and control the citizens of the United States, stripping them of their pesky constitutional freedoms.

The egregious lawfare, the abusive legal persecution of President Trump, is nothing more than election interference at the highest levels. It is a violation of voters' rights. It is criminal conspiracy. Their aim is to put in jail the only person, President Trump, who is protecting the American people from 4 more years of descent into an abyss from which we would never recover.

Democrats know with our country and every American far worse off than they were 3 years ago, they cannot beat President Trump at the ballot box. Whether you are talking about the border invasion, whether you are talking about the surrender of our energy independence, whether you are talking the onslaught of regulations that is costing the average family thousands of dollars, whether you are talking about the 40-year high inflation that Americans are suffering under, whether you are talking about our weakened military or our weakened foreign policy and the conflicts all over the world that didn't exist when President Trump was in office, Americans in this country are much worse off than they were 3 years ago when President Trump was in office.

The department of injustice, because they cannot beat him at the ballot box in November, colludes illegally and unconstitutionally with these rogue prosecutors and judges in New York and Atlanta.

They send Matthew Colangelo from the Department of Justice to New York. They corroborate with Fani Willis' boyfriend, who bills the Georgia taxpayers for hours spent working with the Department of Justice. The judge in New York City, who just happens to be assigned somehow every high-profile case of persecution of high-profile conservatives, abuses his power by declaring a gag order, not to ensure the de-

fendant, President Trump, gets a fair trial but to prevent President Trump, the defendant, from defending himself in the court of public opinion.

The efforts to rig the 2020 election included the suppression of conservative views, the phony Russia collusion scandal, spying on the Trump campaign, the dirty Steele dossier, the relaxation of voting procedures in the name of COVID to facilitate the ability to cheat.

Their efforts to rig the 2024 election, however, are much more explicit and transparent: prevent President Donald Trump from being on the ballot. When that failed, keep him off the campaign trail and bleed his resources. Better still, the coup de grace for them: Put him in jail via dishonest convictions and crooked courts while he waits for what will surely be certain victory by appeal.

As always with these people, the process is the punishment. In fact, this judge in this New York City trial, his daughter is raising millions of dollars off the trial for the Democratic Party.

The ex-con, the star witness, admitted today to multiple counts of perjury in his testimony under oath. These ridiculous trials, so-called improper business records, so-called overvaluation of assets, alleged document mishandling in Florida for a President who can declare anything declassified by simply possessing it, alleged election interference—that is rich coming from the Democratic Party and these rogue prosecutors colluding with the DOJ. All of this began when President Trump declared his candidacy for reelection.

Who was harmed by these alleged crimes? Who were the victims? What was the real crime? Of course, no one, no one, and nothing. This is not going to work. The American people know it for what it is.

The truth and the law are on the side of President Trump, and he is going to be the 47th President.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. BIGGS).

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for doing this.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to try to dovetail with what Mr. GOOD has talked about, and that is the weaponization of the Federal Government against American citizens for political purposes.

It is bad enough when it becomes weaponized against American citizens, but it becomes actually exponentially worse when it becomes a tool of authoritarianism to actually attack political opponents.

Why is it worse? It is worse because it undermines the very foundation of the rule of law and of the free association and free speech of American citizens, from which we recognize all of our political apparatus.

Let's think about this. We know the committee of weaponization, the Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government, recently put out a report dealing