

Hearing different perspectives and different stories is valuable, especially in a body tasked with making decisions for a diverse set of people. Despite our various policy or personal disagreements, we should agree on this: It is dangerous to repeat Kremlin talking points. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we have only seen this disturbing trend grow.

An indictment filed this month alleges that Russian state media employees funneled \$10 million to a Tennessee-based media company, Tenant, for Russian friendly content. Tenant's media influencers have a collective 7 million subscribers on YouTube and more than 7 million followers on X.

While we are no stranger to Russian misinformation campaigns, they are clearly adapting and evolving in their efforts. This month, intelligence officials said that Russia's activities are more sophisticated than in previous cycles. They are using authentic U.S. voices to launder Russian Government propaganda and spread socially divisive narratives through major social media.

Their goal is simple: to convince millions of people that Russia's war against Ukraine is justified and influence them to support politicians who agree. It is simple, and, in today's on-line obsessed world, it is dangerously effective.

Once this type of content takes off, it is impossible to reverse its course. Russia's ability to penetrate American minds goes beyond social media. Yes, we have seen it take hold in this very body. When some across the aisle vocally opposed aid to Ukraine, Russia celebrated. The host of a Kremlin-run show said: "Well done, Republicans. That is good for us."

Earlier this year, a prominent Republican in leadership acknowledged this trend saying: "We see directly coming from Russia . . . communications that are anti-Ukraine and pro-Russia messages, some of which we even hear being uttered on the House floor."

Another Republican admitted Russian propaganda has "infected a good chunk" of this party's base.

Despite our differences, the quoted Members and I clearly see how alarming this is. As public servants, it is our duty to obtain information from reliable sources and speak on behalf of our constituents, not the Russian Federation. When American leaders parrot Russian talking points, we give Putin the upper hand, we undermine our national security, and we fail the American people.

Now, as Russia's tactics evolve, we have to be more vigilant than ever. Despite what some might suggest, Vladimir Putin is a vicious tyrant, and American voices repeating his lies is an affront to our values as a nation and a threat to global democracy.

I encourage commonsense leaders, especially those across the aisle, to choose truth. We may not have control of the misinformation that appears online or the influencers who knowingly

serve as Russia's "useful idiots," but we do have control over our own words.

When Members are spouting blatant lies from the Kremlin, my colleagues have a responsibility to this country to place the truth above all else. Members have a responsibility to tell the American people why we support Ukraine and not Russia, and why democracy must win against autocracy. To those afraid of name-calling or condemnation, I say this: Criticism is a small price to pay for the preservation of truth. Years from now, my colleagues and our country will thank us for our courage to stand up for the truth in the face of tyranny.

#### DOD DEFENSE ROUNDTABLE

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

Mr. SELF. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my direct concern over the United States Department of Defense's lack of agility when it comes to warfare.

Recently, my office hosted our annual defense roundtable with defense companies both in and out of my district. The theme of this year's defense roundtable was how to increase the readiness, engagement, agility, and delivery of lethality to the Department of Defense.

It was quite telling that these companies reaffirmed the troubling RAND Defense report, which explained that the U.S. defense industrial base is not prepared to engage in all-out warfare. The modern-day axis of evil, China, Russia, and Iran, continue to work around the clock to advance their military capabilities and cause further chaos in the world, while the U.S. is woefully lagging behind.

China continues to take steps that threaten the democracy of Taiwan, Russia continues its offensive in Ukraine, and Iran has sent hundreds of missiles toward Israel through its use of proxies throughout the region.

Make no mistake: if America does not take monumental steps to reform, modernize, and expand our defense capabilities and in a rapid manner, then we will be in a difficult position of choosing which allies we can help around the world.

During our defense roundtable discussions, it was made clear that, as the U.S. military stands today, we are not ready. We must immediately take significant steps to become ready. World circumstances demand that we do.

A major point of discussion that was emphasized multiple times by the industry was the red tape and bureaucracy surrounding every government-funded project. Congress must get rid of unnecessary regulations and allow our American engineers, scientists, and great thinkers to innovate and streamline our defense programs. A key issue in the discussion was the fact that the foreign military sales process must obtain 18 different approvals, whereas in

other countries, such as Japan, it takes only one.

While extra oversight can, at times, be beneficial, given the state of the world, America must be willing to take on more levels of risk to keep pace with our adversaries.

It is well past time for Congress to take steps to eliminate these unnecessary provisions, encourage defense contractors to take on more risk, understanding that there may be failures along the way, and ultimately put ourselves in a strong position to combat the axis of evil that we face now and those we will face in the future.

In the words of former President Dwight Eisenhower: "A vital element in keeping the peace is our military establishment. Our arms must be mighty, ready for instant action, so that no potential aggressor may be tempted to risk his own destruction. . . . American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well. But now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense; we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. . . ."

I would add: not only of vast proportions, but also agile and innovative.

Eisenhower's words still ring true today. It is imperative that Congress steps up to the plate to reduce these unnecessary regulations at the Federal level so our defense industry can be lethal, agile, and ready once more to accept the challenges of this increasingly dangerous world.

#### IN MEMORY OF JESSICA ALANA SANCHEZ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. ESCOBAR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Jessica Alana Sanchez, who was born and raised in my community of El Paso, Texas. Jessica sadly passed away in July at the age of 38 after a courageous battle with cancer.

She leaves behind a 4-year-old daughter, her husband, a sister, parents, and extended family, many of whom are my constituents.

I met Jessica as a young woman when she and I were volunteering on a local campaign. From the first time I met her, it was clear that she was a brilliant individual who was guided by a strong sense of responsibility toward social justice.

When Jessica was enrolled in Mesita Elementary School, she participated in a rally to protest a plan to build a nuclear waste facility on the outskirts of our community in El Paso. She was a brave and outspoken girl and wanted to voice her classmates' worries about the negative effects on the environment if the facility were to come to fruition. After months of protests, the site was never built, and the community prevailed.

She continued to advocate for people while at El Paso High School, and her advocacy transcended our borders. She was particularly concerned about drug cartel violence and the disappearance and murders of hundreds of women factory workers across the border from us in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. She petitioned city leaders on both sides of the border to take action to curb violence and to safeguard those vulnerable workers.

Her activism and community involvement were evident to others. She attended Stanford University for her undergraduate degree and Boston University Law School.

Incensed by our country's failed immigration policies and actions that gave rise to the separation of families, Jessica decided to return to California. She would go on to work on advocacy on behalf of migrants and refugees at the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights in Los Angeles.

Jessica was also a mother to her daughter, Leila. She raised Leila to embody her core values of fairness, equality, and giving back to her community. She felt it was her obligation that Leila be raised to speak out as a woman in our society and be proud of her Latina heritage and family background.

It was not all about politics. Jessica and Leila also had fun singing and dancing and reading books. They enjoyed making arts and crafts together and decorating their annual Christmas tree with projects made throughout the year. They watched children's television shows, like "Sesame Street" and "Bluey," and spent summer afternoons playing in their neighborhood park and feeding the ducks there.

Jessica was a woman of faith and believed strongly that we are all tasked with utilizing our God-given gifts and talents to journey in solidarity with those we encounter in life and contributing to the common good.

I close by sharing a reflection Jessica delivered as an intern with the Catholic community in June 2009 during a Sunday service at Stanford's Memorial Church. It captures her philosophy and her outlook on Christian discipleship that she practiced throughout her young life very well.

Jessica's reflection is as follows:

"I remember the first time I answered my call to service. My home parish in El Paso, Texas, sponsors a Thanksgiving dinner for homeless residents in our binational community. My family and I showed up at the church cafeteria and were assigned the task of serving guests plates of food. I was 8 years old and extremely intimidated by strangers.

"Anxiety grew in the pit of my stomach as I carried a meal to my first guest, an older woman in a Dallas Cowboys' jersey. As I placed the plate in front of her, she glanced up. She didn't speak, but there was a calm gratitude in her eyes. I felt connected to her. God opened my heart in that moment and enveloped me with peace.

"For the first time, I understood the gift of service. It has made an indelible impression upon me. My commitment to service played a huge role in my decision to accept the intern position with our Catholic community at Stanford. I was called to give back to a community that supported me in my time of need."

Those were Jessica's beautiful words. Madam Speaker, on behalf of El Paso, I extend my deepest condolences to Jessica's family. Jessica left us too soon, and I and everyone who knew her will cherish our memories with her. I am proud to honor the life of Jessica Alana Sanchez and ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing her lifetime commitment to advocating for her community.

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#### HONORING ACHIEVEMENTS OF DEMITRI AYALA AND SERGIO LERMA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. DE LA CRUZ) for 5 minutes.

Ms. DE LA CRUZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the incredible achievements of two outstanding young men from the Rio Grande Valley.

Demitri Ayala, a McAllen resident and recent high school graduate, has made us all proud by winning first place at the International Powerlifting Federation Sub-Junior and Junior World Powerlifting championship in Malta. Demitri's dedication and discipline serves as an inspiration to all of us.

Madam Speaker, I also recognize Sergio Lerma from Donna, Texas, who earned second place in the same competition.

Both of these young athletes have showcased not only their physical strength but their perseverance and commitment to excellence. Their accomplishments represent the best of south Texas, and we are incredibly proud to have them as part of our community.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate Demitri and Sergio on their remarkable achievements.

WELCOMING HOME CHIEF MICHAEL SANDOVAL

Ms. DE LA CRUZ. Madam Speaker, today, I have the distinct honor of welcoming home Chief Michael Sandoval of the United States Navy from his deployment in Djibouti, Africa.

Senior Chief Sandoval led the boat maintenance facility, overseeing 22 sailors and ensuring that all patrol boats were ready for critical missions in the area. His leadership and dedication were vital as his team launched and operated four patrol boats to safeguard Navy vessels, maintaining a strong security posture and a 360-degree perimeter until all vessels safely departed.

In addition to their vigilant patrols, Senior Chief Sandoval and his team

played a crucial role in training local Djibouti forces, enhancing their defensive tactics and strengthening partnerships.

His service exemplifies the best of our military: strong leadership, a commitment to excellence, and dedication to the security of our great Nation.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of our community, we welcome him home and thank him and his team for their service. May God bless him.

HONORING THE LIFE OF BARBARA SUE REAVES

Ms. DE LA CRUZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Barbara Sue Reaves, a remarkable woman from Alice, Texas, who passed away on August 21, 2024, at the age of 73.

Barbara dedicated her life to public service, working first as a city planner and a grant writer for numerous cities, including her last role with the city of Alice. Her efforts played a crucial part in shaping and improving the communities she served, making her legacy one of lasting impact.

Barbara's love for her family and her dedication to her faith were central to her life. She is survived by her brother, Alan, and his family, who will carry on her memory with love and pride.

Barbara was also known for her passion for running and her devotion to her local church, where she was active and a cherished member.

Madam Speaker, her passing is a great loss to all those who knew her, but her contributions will never be forgotten. We send our deepest condolences to her family and loved ones. May her memory be a blessing and an inspiration to all of us.

#### CELEBRATING ROBERT T. SCOTT, PRESIDENT EMERITUS OF ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. KENNEDY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Mr. Robert T. Scott as he is bestowed the prestigious title of president emeritus of St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute in Buffalo, New York.

Mr. Scott began his career as a religion teacher at St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute, affectionately known as St. Joe's, in 1971. Over the years, he served as a social studies teacher, vice principal, principal, and president.

In 2001, Mr. Scott earned his letters of affiliation, the highest honor awarded by the Institute of Brothers of Christian Schools, the religious order that founded St. Joe's in 1861.

Mr. Scott retired in 2018 after an extraordinary 48-year career at the all-boys high school.

Throughout his career, Mr. Scott has exemplified the mission of St. Joe's: to transform the lives of students from diverse backgrounds through academic excellence and care, rooted in a Lasallian Catholic community, developing and cultivating each student's