

have presumptive benefits to over 300 illnesses caused by burn pits and other toxins, and the list keeps growing.

I will always fight so that our veterans and their families' needs are met. Thank you to all who have served.

To my constituents, my doors are open if they need any assistance.

CONGRATULATING DISTINGUISHED MILITARY SERVICE SOCIETY INDUCTEES

(Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate veterans across the country, I was proud to stand alongside three incredible heroes: Retired United States Air Force Colonel George Farfour, the associate dean of the School of Strategic Force Studies at the Air Force Institute of Technology; United States Navy Lieutenant Commander Eric Green, who has led global health engagements, strategic medical planning activities, and mitigated environmental health threats; and retired United States Army Colonel Rodney Mallette, the special adviser to the chairman of the board for International Auto Logistics. We were inducted into the Distinguished Military Service Society at East Carolina University, joining a network of 79 other incredible alums.

I congratulate these vets. I thank all vets and their families so much for their service to our country.

WOMEN SHOULD HAVE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

(Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, let me say this loud and clear: Women, not politicians—women, not politicians—should have the freedom to choose whether or when to start or grow a family. You know what? The voters of Florida agree with that.

In my home State, a clear majority, 57 percent, voted to support an amendment to enshrine access to legal abortion in our constitution, because they know that reproductive decisions should be made by a woman and her doctor.

Despite that clear majority, sadly, amendment 4 did not reach the threshold of 60 percent, leaving in place a cruel 6-week abortion ban, endangering women's lives, their futures, and doctors' freedoms. Now doctors have to decide between saving women's lives or going to prison.

It is time, Mr. Speaker, for Florida's legislature to stand up, to respond to our voters, and to repeal that 6-week abortion ban.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARL) laid before the House the fol-

lowing resignation as a member of the Committee on the Judiciary:

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC, November 12, 2024.

Hon. MIKE JOHNSON,
Speaker of the House,
Washington, DC.

SPEAKER JOHNSON, I hereby resign from the House Judiciary Committee.

Sincerely,

ADAM B. SCHIFF,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted. There was no objection.

THE INCREASING THREAT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to focus on one of the most serious issues of our time: the increasing threat of nuclear weapons.

Over decades of negotiations, a multilayered architecture of nuclear arms control agreements resulted in significant reductions in the total number of nuclear weapons and nuclear warheads in the arsenals of the United States and Russia. It also promoted and built an international consensus to shun nuclear testing and embrace nonproliferation.

Today, we face the challenge that the only remaining arms control agreement between the U.S. and Russia, New START, expires in February 2026, just a little over a year from now.

The world stands at the brink of a nuclear arms race with no guardrails or no limits. The U.S. has committed itself to modernize its nuclear arsenal over 30 years at a cost estimated to exceed \$1.5 trillion.

Russia repeatedly has threatened to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine and even against NATO nations for any reason he perceives as the West making threatening moves against Russia.

North Korea continues to threaten South Korea, Japan, and the United States with a nuclear strike while forming a new alliance with Russia.

China is engaged in a buildup of its own nuclear arsenal. The Pentagon estimates China will likely have 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035 if the pace of its buildup continues. Iran may decide to build nuclear weapons following tit-for-tat missile strikes with Israel and the U.S.' failure to revive negotiations on restoring curbs on Iran's nuclear program.

Adding to this uncertain and tense global nuclear security landscape, the American people voted to return Donald Trump to the Presidency for a second term.

Now, during his first term as President, he withdrew the United States from the Iran nuclear deal and allowed other arms control agreements to expire or for the U.S. to withdraw.

It will be on his shoulders to help the world back away from the brink of the first use or exchange of nuclear weapons since the end of World War II, and to avoid a new nuclear arms race with all of its financial and geopolitical costs.

If he chooses to take on these challenges, he will not find himself alone.

In 2017, most of the nations of the world came together to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, TPNW. The treaty is an international agreement that prohibits the development, testing, production, and use of nuclear weapons. It entered into force in 2021. The TPNW's goals are to eliminate nuclear weapons and reduce global nuclear arsenals to zero. Currently, 93 nations have signed the treaty and 74 have ratified it.

Along with my colleague EARL BLUMENAUER, I am the proud author of H. Res. 77, a bill that calls on the President to embrace the goals and provisions of the TPNW and make nuclear disarmament the centerpiece of U.S. national security policy. It also calls on the United States to lead a global effort to move the world back from the nuclear brink and to prevent nuclear war by returning to negotiations that advance nuclear arms reduction. I am grateful that 43 of my House colleagues have joined this resolution as cosponsors.

I am also the sponsor of H.R. 3154, the HALT Act, which would freeze current nuclear arsenals and press for a return to the negotiating table.

Further, on November 1, in the First Committee on International Peace and Security of the U.N. General Assembly, delegates voted to study the impacts of nuclear war for the first time since 1989.

While there is already a wealth of robust research on the effects of nuclear weapons, this has not been comprehensively brought together in 35 years. During these decades, there has been major progress on climate and scientific modeling tools, and this new study will allow scientists to review the improvements in our understanding of the effects of nuclear war.

Mr. Speaker, 144 nations voted in favor of the resolution, including nuclear powers like Germany and nations who suffered from atomic testing in decades past. Only three nations opposed: Russia, France, and the U.K., with the latter saying this matter has been studied enough. Thirty nations abstained, including the United States.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, in October, the Nobel Committee decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2024 to the Japanese organization Nihon Hidankyo. This grassroots movement of atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki received the Peace Prize for its efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again.

The award reminds us most vividly of the cost of nuclear war. As many of my

House colleagues know, for over a decade I have championed the cause of the atomic veterans to be recognized for their sacrifice, suffering, and patriotism in working on U.S. atomic testing and production sites, often with little or no protection from radiation.

□ 1430

After years of bipartisan work by Congress, in September 2023, in a moving ceremony, the Pentagon awarded the Atomic Veterans Commemorative Service Medal in-person and online to those still-surviving atomic veterans and posthumously to their families.

However, members of the military were not the only ones who suffered. Civilians, especially in the State of Nevada, were also victims of atomic testing. Known as the down-winders, these civilians and their lands suffered from the impact of nuclear radiation and drift carried by wind and water. They, too, deserve to be recognized and honored.

Mr. Speaker, what my colleagues and I are talking about here today is a big deal. This issue needs more attention. The relevant committees here in Congress ought to be doing hearings. We ought to be discussing this more and more on the House floor because, really, the ultimate question here is the salvation or the destruction of our planet.

Certainly, we all can come together to protect not only the people of the country but the people of the world from nuclear weapons.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Maine (Ms. PINGREE).

Ms. PINGREE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on the House to prioritize disarmament diplomacy.

Mr. Speaker, 2024 marks 80 years since the world was introduced to nuclear weapons. In that time, there have been several instances when complete catastrophe was at our doorstep. At the height of the Cold War, we narrowly avoided a nuclear exchange during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Thanks to extraordinary leadership, the United States and Soviet Union were able to pull back from the brink at the very last minute.

Years later, early warning system errors, once again, brought us within minutes of a nuclear exchange, and we are not the only countries that have nearly ended life on Earth through nuclear escalation.

Today, there are close to 13,000 nuclear weapons across the globe, a figure that continues to rise at an alarming rate because the world is turning away from nuclear nonproliferation treaties. Nine countries currently own nuclear weapons, while six others have them stored within their borders.

While many of these countries are historically rational actors within the international community, countries that see nuclear weapons as the ultimate deterrent, the ever-changing state of the world today demands that we not remain complacent. Not all nu-

clear states are rational actors, and there is no guarantee that rational nuclear states will always remain rational.

As Putin continues to attack Ukraine and threaten Europe and the United States with nuclear war, the world is made less safe. When Kim Jong Un supplies Putin with soldiers to fight in Ukraine, North Korea inches closer to launching a nuclear strike. In the Middle East, where ISIS-K is re-emerging in Pakistan amid political and economic instability, the prospect of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of bad actors grows by the day. Years after the Trump administration decided to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal, we risk yet another adversary developing a nuclear arsenal.

As democracy deteriorates across the globe, even the United States is not impervious to nuclear weapons falling into the hands of extremists.

The world today is far different from what it was at the end of World War II, yet our policy toward nuclear weapons has not fundamentally changed. Now more than ever, we must pursue nuclear disarmament. Rather than bringing the world closer to disaster, let us prioritize disarmament diplomacy and make real progress to creating a safer, better world for our children, our grandchildren, and all generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for organizing this Special Order hour, and I encourage all Members of Congress to cosponsor H. Res. 77.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. FOSTER).

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative MCGOVERN for holding this Special Order hour to discuss the importance of nuclear security.

As the only Ph.D. physicist in Congress, I feel I have a special responsibility to join this discussion and to ask what we can do to strengthen our global nuclear security architecture and maintain U.S. leadership in this area.

I am proud to be the co-chair of the Congressional Nuclear Security Working Group along with Representative CHUCK FLEISCHMANN. It is important to continue the dialogue on nuclear security and the significance of arms control, especially as it connects to current events.

One of our caucus' main goals is to continue to engage on the Hill and with external organizations to facilitate awareness of global threats of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism. It is our hope that through building awareness and generating bipartisan dialogues we can create practical legislative solutions for these critical national security issues.

With the escalation of China's nuclear program, Russian nuclear threats amid the invasion of Ukraine, Iran's growing nuclear capabilities, threats by Israeli cabinet members to use its nuclear arsenal against its neighbors,

and the escalation of North Korean missile testing, this is not a small task.

Above all, we see Ukraine, one of the few governments on Earth that has voluntarily given up its nuclear weapons in return for an international promise of territorial integrity, we see it threatened to be abandoned by some, including some in the United States.

If we are going to be successful in confronting these unprecedented challenges, then we need to work across party lines as we look to the 119th Congress and beyond.

One particular place where we are already working together in a bipartisan manner is at our national laboratories. As the co-chair of the bipartisan National Labs Caucus, our national labs create the underlying foundation for all of our nuclear security efforts, including the nonproliferation and national security priorities that we are here to talk about today.

One of the features that you have got of being a Member of Congress, Mr. Speaker, is that if you ask, you can be taken into the room in our national weapons labs where you can see our nuclear weapons taken apart. If you enter that room and you talk to the experts about the details of the nuclear weapons, why they are built that way, what the capabilities are, and what the implications are if these are detonated, if you don't take your job seriously after entering that room, then you are not thinking clearly. I find that Republicans and Democrats upon entering that room think about their job in a different way than they would otherwise.

This whole discussion is even more important than ever as we face an uncertain geopolitical environment that pushes against the international rules-based order and toward an age of strategic competition. I find so many of the lessons that have been well-known by Members of Congress during the Cold War seem to have been forgotten today. The simple lesson, for example, that there are weapons that you can own that make you less safe, which was well understood by Members of Congress back in the fifties and sixties, seems to have become a completely alien concept to Members of Congress today. That has led, I think, to some very bad policy, like people thinking that hypersonics make you safer; whereas, in fact, if you have hypersonics and your enemies know you have hypersonics, then they are more likely to react on a hair trigger to anything that looks like a launch against them and not have the time that they need to react rationally.

Over the years, I have focused my attention specifically on several areas to strengthen our nuclear security architecture.

First and foremost is H. Res. 1079, a resolution I introduced in the House with 39 other Members supporting arms control and condemning Russia's purported suspension of its participation

in the New START treaty. The current extension of New START is set to expire in just over a year, and anyone who remembers previous arms control negotiations will know that there is almost no time left to negotiate a subsequent treaty.

Additionally, any negotiations, whether with Russia, China, or any other country, require partners who are willing to have discussions on arms control, something that is easier said than done. In a time when traditional channels of dialogue in arms control and strategic stability have been closed or are quiet, we will rely even more on keeping alternative channels open.

Nongovernmental organizations, scientists, and research institutions kept dialogue open during the worst parts of the Cold War, and we may need to rely on them to fulfill those roles again.

Another institution that is crucial in these times will be the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA. We are already seeing the incredibly hard work that Director General Grossi and his staff are putting in to responding to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the nuclear plants that are being put at risk there and all the myriad other crises that are at their doorstep.

In recognition of that work, I have also been leading H. Res. 641, a resolution that highlights the indispensable role that the IAEA plays in strengthening nuclear security and safety around the globe.

Again, I thank Representative MCGOVERN for this time and this very important discussion. There is a decent chance that everyone on Earth will spend their last few moments wondering why we did not spend more attention on nuclear weapons. I do not want to be part of that mistake, so I thank the gentleman for letting us participate today.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his thoughtful comments and for urging both Democrats and Republicans to learn more about this issue. Democrats and Republicans ought to have a mutual interest in survival, because that is really what is at stake here.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI).

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman MCGOVERN for putting this together and for the opportunity to speak on this crucial topic.

Since their creation, nuclear weapons have shocked the world with their destructive potential and left us grappling with how to limit their dangers. Today, it is even more important than ever that we take the steps, however difficult they may seem, to reprioritize deescalation and prevent a new nuclear arms race.

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, two Cold Warriors commanding the largest nuclear arsenals on the planet, declared that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. This profound truth has been repeated often,

and it has been reaffirmed by the leaders of all five nuclear-armed states in 2022. It should serve as both the starting point and the guiding principle in every discussion we have about nuclear weapons.

Yet, today, we seem to be overlooking the lessons even the most resolute Cold Warrior strategists understood. Despite our successes in eliminating nuclear testing, shrinking stockpiles, and preventing proliferation, we now risk drifting from these hard-fought achievements. Instead of advancing cooperation, we find ourselves amid a resurgence of the same Cold War mindset that once pushed us dangerously close to the brink of nuclear annihilation.

The path before us is clear: we must either continue to build on our successes in reducing the risk of nuclear war or return to the insecurity and dangers of the Cold War era.

Instead of pursuing the obvious choice, hawkish perspectives on all sides have locked the U.S., Russia, and China into a nuclear build-up, each country racing to develop new long-range missiles, stealth bombers, and space-based systems, fearing the gains of the others and responding with more weapons of their own.

Rather than challenging these approaches, Congress continues to authorize steps that are increasing the pace of this new nuclear arms race. This fear-driven rhetoric promotes the dangerous myth that more weapons make us safer, yet nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, without arms control agreements, every new weapon we build only fuels an unwinnable race as adversaries respond in kind.

When advocates tell us that our nuclear modernization will cost \$1.7 trillion, it is difficult to fathom just how much money that truly is. To be clear, the cost is more than the Iraq war cost us over 20 years, and the costs just keep rising. The Sentinel program which will replace the Minuteman III ICBMs has already ballooned to \$200 billion, an 81 percent cost overrun.

For comparison, we could buy 20 aircraft carriers for the cost to modernize a few hundred unusable missiles and warheads. For a fraction of the cost, we could keep our current ICBMs, subs, and air-based bombers, but we continue to spend blindly without ever saying enough.

It is fascinating that from across the aisle, deficits don't seem to matter when it comes to defense.

Mr. Speaker, \$58 billion for the State Department? Oh, that is excessive. However, \$200 billion for one-third of our nuclear triad doesn't seem to even prompt a congressional hearing. For the same \$200 billion, we could fully fund the National Institutes of Health's annual budget for 10 years or provide universal pre-K education for every child in the U.S. for nearly 30 years.

However, the cost is not just financial. The soaring price tags of these nu-

clear programs are shocking in their own right, but it is also the human cost, the cost of our global security, and the increased risk of catastrophic conflict.

Congress must reclaim its role in shaping a rational, responsible nuclear strategy, one that prioritizes diplomacy over escalation, deescalation over deterrence, and arms control over arms races. The American people deserve a government that works to reduce risks not magnify them.

We must rebalance our focus toward arms control, recognizing that diplomatic engagement and meaningful treaties are proven tools for reducing the global stockpiles of nuclear weapons and curbing the spread of those weapons. These efforts demand our unwavering commitment. History has shown that reliance on nuclear arsenals as the core of our security is misguided.

With nuclear stockpiles increasing worldwide, our collective call for restraint and deescalation is more crucial now than ever.

□ 1445

Our diplomatic efforts should match the intensity of our military programs. This requires making difficult choices, ensuring that our limited resources support our true long-term security goals.

Pouring billions of dollars into nuclear modernization while neglecting diplomatic initiatives is not a sustainable strategy. It is a trajectory toward greater danger and increased instability.

I stand before my colleagues today to say that we still have a choice. We can choose to invest in a future that prioritizes dialogue and cooperation. We can choose to modernize our thinking rather than just our weapons. We can also choose to move toward the total elimination of nuclear weapons, recognizing that it is the only true way to ensure a safer world for future generations.

The road ahead is not going to be easy, but it is clear. Let us reaffirm our commitment to arms control, to oversight, and to a nuclear policy based on reason and restraint, not on fear and reflex. Let us continue to work together toward a world free of nuclear weapons, where security is based on peace and cooperation and not the perpetual threat of annihilation.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) for his powerful remarks. I thank the gentleman also for being the co-chair of the Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control Working Group.

I yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BEYER), the other co-chair of the Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control Working Group.

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I stand with my colleagues today to help raise the alarm about our unsustainable and reckless

nuclear posture. Sadly, we have come a long way in the wrong direction since Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev pledged to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

Many of my friends in this Chamber, particularly on the Republican side of the aisle, speak passionately and eloquently about our fiscal trajectory and the rising national debt. I share their concerns and believe we need to be clear-eyed about the scale of the increasingly serious debt problem and we must seriously consider the merits of additional spending in a difficult fiscal environment.

Yet, many seem to forget this issue when it comes to the larger defense budget and, specifically, our nuclear weapons modernization program.

The CBO estimates that it will cost us over \$1.5 trillion over the next 30 years and \$800 billion over the next 10 years. Please remember that our current estimates in defense costs are always wrong, and they are always wrong on the low side. We always underestimate significantly, sometimes dramatically.

Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the need for nuclear deterrence, particularly with Russian saber-rattling and an expanding Chinese nuclear arsenal, our spending priorities and nuclear strategy are becoming divorced from reality, a reality of scarce resources and a variety of competing national security priorities.

We are on track in the next NDAA to authorize billions of additional dollars in spending on a host of unnecessary nuclear programs that have, at best, a marginal benefit to our national security and, at worst, destabilize the fragile peace we have today.

For example, the measure being negotiated would likely have us continue to pour billions of dollars into a new nuclear sea-launched cruise missile program, which is a costly solution to a nonexistent problem. There is absolutely no reason to believe that Russia or China would be any more deterred from using nuclear weapons if we were able to field yet another low-yield weapon. We already deploy a vast array of such weapons.

The reality is that our current nuclear arsenal presents more than enough of a deterrent to our adversaries, and we simply do not have the resources to spend lavishly on redundant nuclear weapons systems while also maintaining and modernizing our conventional military capabilities.

I am deeply concerned that, while we continue to overspend on our nuclear arsenal, we are neglecting to engage in meaningful nuclear disarmament diplomacy on the international stage, which is the only real way to safeguard the country and the world from the horrors of nuclear war.

I applaud the Biden administration for offering last year to discuss, without preconditions, a new nuclear arms control framework with Russia and a separate bilateral nuclear risk reduc-

tion arrangement with China, but we need to do more in Congress to support these efforts and encourage the next administration to carry the torch.

At the very least, before the expiration of the New START Treaty in 2026, the U.S. should propose to Russia that both sides maintain the current limits of the numbers of deployed strategic nuclear weapons until a more comprehensive agreement can be reached.

Looking ahead, the cornerstone of future arms nuclear talks should be the adoption of a no first-use policy when it comes to our own nuclear arsenal. Currently, the U.S. President has the ability to order the launch of hundreds of nuclear warheads within 15 minutes with no oversight or input required from anyone else, including Congress. Vesting this much power into one person, Democrat or Republican, is irresponsible, dangerous, and unnecessary.

Given our massive conventional military advantages over our adversaries, there is no plausible circumstance that could justify the use of nuclear weapons to respond to a nonnuclear threat.

Removing the specter of U.S. nuclear weapons first in a conflict would be an important first step toward increasing strategic stability and slowing down or stopping the global race to develop new nuclear capabilities and advanced conventional-strike weapons.

In an increasingly unstable world, it is incumbent on all of us to reduce the existential risk of nuclear war in every way we can. Let me explain my use of the term “existential.” It is about actual existence.

While we fret over who won or lost in a given election, we must not forget that the real danger and the real challenge is the continuation of humanity itself. Will we live as a species, or will we die? That is the simple question before us.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his remarks and, again, for reminding us how costly the nuclear arms race is. The American people want us to spend money on them and not on weapons that, if ever used, could destroy this entire planet.

Mr. Speaker, I am now proud to yield to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. TLAIB).

Ms. TLAIB. Mr. Speaker, we know that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. There are roughly 13,000 nuclear weapons currently stored in bunkers, missile silos, warehouses, airfields, and Navy bases all around the world.

One warhead has the power to wipe out an entire city. A full-scale nuclear war could devastate life as we know it. The catastrophic risks posed by nuclear weapons are growing. We know that Putin continues to recklessly threaten the use of nuclear force in the war in Ukraine, and genocidal maniac Netanyahu continues to recklessly raise the nuclear threat level all across the Middle East.

The White House and Congress need to double down on efforts to work to-

ward diplomacy and negotiate new constraints to cap and further reduce nuclear arsenals.

We must implement a new nuclear arms control framework to prevent an unrestrained nuclear arms race. It is absolutely terrifying, Mr. Speaker, for many of our residents in the United States that the President of the United States has the power to decide to launch a nuclear weapon right now. Think about that for just one moment.

The use of just a fraction of the nuclear weapons we possess, most of which are ready for launch within minutes of an order from any President, would lead to mass destruction on an unprecedented global scale.

Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle should back commonsense efforts to adopt measures to reduce the risk of nuclear war. We must continue to work toward an international agreement, Mr. Speaker, with all countries that possess nuclear weapons through a very Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that we already have.

Also, many of my residents continue to say: Stop. Stop the United States from being addicted to wars. We could be using so much of these resources to fund clean water, to fund housing, to fund childcare, and so much more that invests in the future and not the end of our world.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her inspiring remarks and for always speaking truth to power.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield now to the gentleman from California (Mr. DESAULNIER).

Mr. DESAULNIER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the time for nuclear weapons stockpiling is over. Instead, we should focus on the United States leading the world in disarmament and diplomacy.

As the ultimate weapon of war, nuclear weapons should be an absolute last resort or no resort. With the U.S. having enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world, they become more than a deterrent. They become a threat to ourselves and the rest of the world.

Today's landscape paints a picture of even more reasons to act swiftly. The last remaining agreement limiting the world's two largest arsenals is set to expire in 2026, and China has increased its arsenal from 100 to 300 nuclear weapons on their long-range missiles.

At the same time, Russian President Vladimir Putin has refused to take up President Biden's offer to discuss a new nuclear arms control framework. China's leaders have also rejected U.S. offers for follow-up talks on nuclear risk reduction and arms control issues.

As indiscriminate killers, nuclear weapons will not be the answer to our current or future problems. It is in the world's best interests and the United States', as the leader of these interests, that we reengage in efforts to produce a new framework with Russia and China to further cap and reduce nuclear arsenals.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. McGOVERN for being a leader on this important issue and bringing us together to discuss it.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. DESAULNIER) for his words. Again, I think what my colleagues are hearing today are concerns that many of our constituents share, that we are spending this excessive amount of money on stockpiling nuclear weapons and the concern that we are not talking about the impact if these weapons were ever used. It would be devastating.

Mr. Speaker, I am now happy to yield to the distinguished gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. RAMIREZ).

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman McGOVERN for holding this Special Order hour to discuss the very real threat nuclear weapons represent to our shared safety and our peace.

Mr. Speaker, it has been almost 80 years since the beginning of the nuclear age. Given where we are at this precise moment, the risks posed by nuclear weapons feels real, it feels present, and it feels tangible.

Despite warnings from advocates and the United Nations, the threat of nuclear escalation is on the rise. In fact, our Nation's leadership has played an important role in either mitigating or escalating this dangerous reality. What we do and how we lead and what we say to the world will continue to be a crucial factor in the nuclear arms race and war in the years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I am tired of saying it, but words matter, and I quote: "Let it be an arms race. We will outmatch them at every pass and outlast them all." That was the incoming President's answer to the question of a possible nuclear war back in 2016.

We know that, as our Nation and other States agreed in a 2022 declaration, nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Despite the claims of warmongers, including our President-elect and the military industrial complex, nuclear weapons are not defensive or an effective strategy for deterrence.

The bottom line is nuclear weapons are tools of war, death, and mass destruction. They can't be used without catastrophic humanitarian consequences that violate every single principle of international law and our shared humanity. We are headed in the wrong direction with a trigger-happy President about to take office.

Will he renew the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty?

Will he ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons?

Will he decrease spending on nuclear weapons or decommission our already massive nuclear arsenal?

Of course not.

When we invest in nuclear proliferation, I want us to remember that we could be providing assistance in our communities. We could be supporting the education of our children. We could

be transforming our infrastructure and delivering nutritious meals to families. We could be assisting first-time home buyers. We could be building a quality healthcare system.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on, and Congressman McGOVERN would need another five Special Order hours, but what I am saying is that these are life-giving investments in people. Nuclear weapons only bring total annihilation. We must pursue another path forward. We have to pursue a path toward peace, and we can do that together.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her powerful remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I am now happy to yield to the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. TITUS), who can tell us firsthand about the impacts of nuclear testing on people in nearby areas—not just nearby, but hundreds of miles away—how it not only pollutes the air, but the water and the soil and everything else.

□ 1500

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman McGOVERN, Congressman McGOVERN, for his leadership in this area and for setting up the Special Order on such an important topic.

As a political science professor and a student of the history of nuclear weaponry, and now a Member of Congress representing much of southern Nevada, I have learned a thing or two about our nuclear legacy. In fact, I wrote a book on Nevada's atomic heritage called "Not In My Backyard."

Nevada was the focal point of nuclear development during the Cold War. Over four decades, the Nevada Test Site, which is located just a hundred miles north of Las Vegas, hosted over 900 nuclear tests, more than any other place in the country.

Throughout the 1950s, the mushroom cloud continued to loom in the distance as people enjoyed what Las Vegas had to offer. It was almost like a tourist attraction.

These tests were conducted to better understand the power and impact of nuclear weapons, and the site played a major role in shaping national and international policies regarding nuclear testing and nonproliferation.

The radiation given off by more than 100 atmospheric tests, however, has had devastating impacts on those downwind. That includes workers at the test site, our atomic soldiers who did war games in the shadow of the detonations, and also sheepherders across the border in Utah.

The fallout caused cancer and premature deaths for thousands across the West and contaminated soil in the vicinity of the test site, resulting in a loss of biodiversity.

The 800 underground tests also resulted in radioactive contamination of groundwater, and that is still a problem today. Radioactivity levels in the water are declining over time, but elements such as plutonium and uranium are likely to pose a risk for thousands of years.

Fortunately, the Department of Energy's Stockpile Stewardship and Management Program and the National Nuclear Security Administration and its nuclear weapons laboratories have been able to certify that our nuclear stockpile remains safe, secure, and reliable without needing to resume explosive testing.

Mr. Speaker, in 2020, the Trump administration called for a resumption of nuclear testing in the breach of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. I helped lead the charge in the fiscal year 2021 NDAA process to ensure that explosive nuclear testing could not be resurrected in the United States because it would be right there in Nevada.

With a second Trump administration taking office in January, that same disastrous policy from 2020 is featured in Project 2025. That is the blueprint that we understand Trump will be following in his next 4 years.

On page 399, Project 2025 calls for the rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which will not only allow nuclear testing here at home but will give the green light to other nuclear powers around the world to do the same.

The result will put us on a collision course of catastrophic proportions with Russia and China. It will undermine the entire arms control regime, allow for the proliferation of these weapons to non-nuclear states, and will once again put the health of Nevadans in jeopardy.

Mr. Speaker, the United States has been a beacon of nonproliferation and responsible stewardship of nuclear stockpiles. Upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union, we helped newly reformed republics like Kazakhstan safely remove and decommission warheads and testing facilities while ushering in a new era of nuclear risk reduction by implementing the nonproliferation treaty, New START, and, of course, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Those in favor of resuming nuclear testing under the principle of peace through strength are merely contributing to additional nuclear risks and challenges to strategic stability.

Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. In a nuclear arms race, there are no winners, only losers. We must not provide foreign nations with a justification to openly conduct nuclear test explosions while imposing immense financial and health costs on our constituents.

The U.S. has been a leader on nuclear risk reduction, and we must continue to act responsibly in that regard. It is one of the most serious things that we face, and we must stand strong against it.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for being such an advocate on behalf of people who have been victimized by nuclear testing. We appreciate all the work that she does.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), who

has been a champion on arms control issues for many years.

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. MCGOVERN for this Special Order and for giving me a minute to speak, but also for his tremendous leadership because this is such an important issue that I think sometimes gets swept under the rug.

There are a couple of things I remember about my last life. I was a very active member of the SANE/Nuclear Freeze disarmament movement. I worked for a phenomenal Member of Congress, Congressman Ron Dellums. We talked about nuclear weapons and how it is an equalizer. It is an equal-opportunity destroyer.

I think everyone in our country and throughout the world needs to understand what impacts nuclear weapons have had and will have. I visited Nagasaki. I visited Hiroshima. I also had a chance to meet with many children who were survivors of Chernobyl. I saw what the human impact was: permanent disabilities, generational trauma, generational DNA changes, physical disabilities.

Let me read you what one report explains in a very quick paragraph: "Nuclear weapons produce ionizing radiation, which kills or sickens those exposed, contaminates the environment, and has long-term health consequences, including cancer and genetic damage."

I have seen this with people who had relatives who were impacted by a nuclear bomb and the genetic damage through the generations.

"Their widespread use in atmospheric testing has caused grave, long-term consequences. Physicians project that some 2.4 million people worldwide will eventually die from cancers due to atmospheric nuclear tests conducted between 1945 and 1980."

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for bringing this once again to the attention of this body because this world should not have one nuclear bomb. Our country should lead the effort for nuclear disarmament. We should set the standard. We need to reduce the investments that we make in the production of nuclear weapons. We need to eliminate nuclear weapons, and we need to be in the lead for that.

Mr. Speaker, I will say again that a nuclear bomb is an equal-opportunity destroyer.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership on this and so many other issues.

During his first term, President Trump was right to initiate talks and to try to negotiate a nuclear agreement with North Korea. Perhaps he can be successful at this initiative over the next 4 years. I hope it is something he decides to prioritize.

There are other important nuclear security issues that I hope he will take to heart and, like his Republican predecessors, Ronald Reagan and Dwight Eisenhower, help lead the world away from the brink of a nuclear arms race and a nuclear war.

These include taking a critical look at nuclear modernization to ensure it will provide cost-effective deterrence, hold the Pentagon accountable for unnecessary and costly weapons programs, adhere to the nuclear weapons limits set forth in the New START agreement, extend and expand upon existing arms control engagement, uphold the global taboo on explosive nuclear weapons testing, and stop funding missile defense programs that do not work.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we should aspire to be a world free of nuclear weapons. That is what you have heard over and over from the Members who have spoken here today.

I want to close with one final thought. Mr. Speaker, when I was in college, I worked my way through college, working in the office of Senator George McGovern of South Dakota, no relation but one of my heroes and a champion on nuclear arms control.

I accompanied him to a debate with William Buckley at Yale University, and the debate was on: Resolve that the SALT talks are in the interests of U.S. national security.

Governor McGovern closed that debate by saying, in 1963, we were debating the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. "Senator Everett Dirksen [of Illinois] took to the floor to close the debate. He said that he had just reread John Hersey's 'Hiroshima,' the description of what happened to that great city, the morning after, the scene of one family sitting charred around the breakfast table; out in the yard, bits and pieces of children's clothing; the broken arm of a doll; toys and debris scattered over the landscape. And he said: 'I thought about that scene, and I said that someday Everett Dirksen will be buried in Illinois, and when that happens, I don't want to put on my gravestone: 'He knew about this, and he didn't care.''"

Mr. Speaker, the choice is whether we are going to reduce and eventually reverse this nuclear madness. That means not victory for anyone if it is ever used but the death of all and perhaps the death of our planet.

Many years ago, in ancient wisdom, it was said: I have set before thee two choices, life or death. Therefore, choose life that thee and thy seed may live.

That is the choice he wanted the United States to make in 1978. That is how he concluded that debate. That is the choice I want the United States to make in the year 2024.

Mr. Speaker, the stuff that we are talking about here today is not theoretical. It is not just some abstract debate. This is real. It is shocking that we are not focused more on this issue.

Again, Democrats and Republicans ought to have a mutual interest in survival because if these weapons are ever used, it could mean the end of our planet. As Mr. FOSTER from Illinois said earlier, we don't want to look into the sky, see one terrible flash, and that is

the end of it, and we wonder how we got there.

We have it within our power right now to do something to reverse this trend toward nuclear destruction. We just have to have the courage to stand up to the defense contractors and all of their big money and to people who, quite frankly, think that the only way we can be strong is to build more and more nuclear weapons.

That is not the measure of our strength. The measure of our strength, quite frankly, is the quality of life of the people in our country. We live in the richest country in the history of the world. We have 47 million people who do not know where their next meal is going to come from. We should all be ashamed of that. It is a national scandal.

When we try to raise that issue on the floor, we are told we don't have the money. Yet, we have over a trillion dollars to build more nuclear weapons? That is insane. That is mad.

Mr. Speaker, the plea of all of us here today, to Democrats and Republicans alike, we want the issue of a nuclear-free world on the table. We want that to be one of our goals. We want to aspire to that goal. We want Congress, Democrats and Republicans, to come together and to make that a reality.

I hope that people across this country get more engaged on this issue and demand more of their government on this issue. The trend right now and the way we are headed is in the wrong direction.

Let's strive for a world free from nuclear weapons. Let's urge the next President to do this. Again, I have great concerns, deep concerns, about the next President and his priorities. Do you know what? We can't give up hope. We ought to do everything we can to press him and this Congress to move in a different direction.

Mr. Speaker, I thank all of my colleagues for participating in this Special Order, and I yield back the balance of my time.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will remind all persons in the gallery that they are here as guests of the House and that any manifestation of approval or disapproval of proceedings is in violation of the rules of the House.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 15 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, November 14, 2024, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.