

smoke clears and the embers fade to nothing, people come back to rebuild their lives not because it is easy but because it is necessary and because they believe in their neighborhood, their community, and in one another.

Right now, our Nation is passing through a different kind of fire—an inferno of division, of fear, of dreading the rent check on the first of the month, and watching institutional guardrails topple one by one by one. But we are not powerless—not us here in this body, not those in America who have the most important title in a democracy, that of “citizen.” We are not condemned to live in the ashes. We can rebuild a country where every child has a fair shot and hard work leads to a good life; where people, no matter their background, are free from want and fear, free to succeed; where government is accountable and responsive to the people; and, yes, where right and truth and decency matter.

It is the country my parents believed in when they brought our family to California, and it is the America I still believe in with every fiber of my being. If we fight for it, if we refuse to give in to cynicism or fear, that beautiful country, that beautiful world, is still within reach. That is the future I am committed to seeing. That is the future I ask your help to bring about. And from the bottom of my heart, I thank the people of California for sending me here to take up that charge.

(Applause.)

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

TRIBUTE TO ADAM SCHIFF

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I am so proud to have Senator SCHIFF as a partner in representing our home State of California.

As you have heard me say many, many times before, California is not just home to nearly 40 million people; we are not just the most populous State in the Nation; we are also proud to be the most diverse State in the Nation and are proud to represent the largest economy of any State in the Nation. California has become the fourth largest economy in the world.

It is a true honor and responsibility for each of us to represent our respective States, and I think it is especially so for the great State of California. While it can be complex at times and does require a lot of work all of the time, I have no doubt that Senator SCHIFF is doing and will continue to do a tremendous job.

Now, a lot of us, as Members of the Senate, have already begun to know Senator SCHIFF through his remarks here today, through his participation in our caucus meetings and lunches, and through his participation in committee hearings or even in just one-on-one sessions.

But as the country learned just a little bit more today, it is no surprise that, given his life journey and that of his family, and his professional experi-

ence, which included as assistant U.S. attorney, prior to elected office; his State of California service in the legislature, prior to his coming to Congress, a couple of decades ago—combined with the commitment and clear passion, along with his professionalism and his work ethic and his integrity, it is no surprise that he is a true champion for so many things, including for a grower and farm worker alike, for reproductive rights, for labor rights, for so many issues and values that we hold dear. And they include speaking truth to power—not just, but especially, to the President of the United States—when it is called for, and it is being called for so often in these times that we are living in.

One of the things that so many of us admire about Senator SCHIFF is his willingness to do so without hesitation, despite being a constant target of threats and attacks by the President of United States.

So, folks, it has been about a year. A lot more time, a lot more work, a lot more impact to come from Senator SCHIFF, not just for the benefit of the State of California but for the United States of America and the longevity of our Constitution.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 260

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, today, myself and my distinguished colleague from Montana, Senator SHEEHY, rise in support of what is perhaps the most commonsense national security legislation that has come across the Senate floor this year.

The No Tax Dollars for Terrorists Act will help to prevent even one American dollar from going to terrorist organizations like the Taliban.

American military personnel spent years fighting the Taliban. Over 2,000 Americans were killed in Afghanistan, and more than 20,000 were wounded. It is a slap on the face of these veterans and their families if even one taxpayer dollar would flow to this organization.

We need to know that the NGOs and the foreign nations that aid is provided to do not pass those dollars to the very organizations that look to harm us.

The Taliban and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan try to erase women and girls from society. Christians and other minority groups face constant threats, including torture, kidnapping, and murder.

Idahoans and all Americans deserve to know that not one of their hard-earned tax dollars is going to fund these heinous organizations.

I am thankful that President Trump has cut off aid to Afghanistan in an attempt to stop money from flowing to the Taliban.

This bill that is before us right now will ensure that Congress is made aware of any exploitation of our tax dollars by the Taliban or to the Taliban, and that the U.S. Government has a plan to address that.

This vote is an easy, resounding yes. It is beyond understanding why anyone would be against this legislation, where we are trying to keep money out of the hands of terrorists—our money.

If Democrats continue to block this bill, as they have done for months, I am committed—and I recommit—to moving it as quickly as I can through regular process in my Foreign Relations Committee. This bill should become law.

I urge my Democrat colleagues to join us to ensure that no American tax dollars go to the Taliban.

I yield to my distinguished colleague from Montana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. SHEEHY. I want to thank Senator RISCH for helping to lead this legislation in the Senate.

Most Americans probably find it somewhat surprising, as they struggle with affordability, as they struggling to fill their gas tank or pay their rent or afford their mortgage, that many of their tax dollars—in fact, upward of \$10 billion of their tax dollars—are sent directly into the pockets of foreign terrorist organizations—terrorist organizations that we spent thousands of lives and decades fighting, to protect our shores, to include the lives of some of my friends.

I spent years of my life, as did my wife spend years of her life, fighting these terrorist organizations, trying to keep this country safe, and now we are told that our tax dollars have an obligation to go into the pocket of those organizations to buy bullets, to build bombs, to coordinate attacks that don't just kill Americans. They kill those who share our values worldwide.

It is not just westerners and Americans who are killed by this. The Taliban systemically hunts down those in Afghanistan with whom they disagree, those who want to be free, those women and girls who saw a brief period of freedom under our occupation there, and now they are once again placed in the yolk of terrible sexism, of not even fascism but outright terror.

It isn't just Afghanistan. This extends across the globe. This terrorist financing network is not just guys in mountain caves collecting dollar bills. This is a sophisticated global finance network that spans the entire world.

The Iranian regime, although not directly connected in many ways to this, is absolutely directly connected to the international flow of terrorist funds through sophisticated real estate transactions, cryptocurrency, oil smuggling, piracy, kidnapping, and terrorism.

It is unthinkable that we would intentionally and knowingly hand our taxpayer dollars to organizations that actively kill Americans and attempt to destroy our values every single day.

I think it should be a bipartisan American issue for us to finally put an end to this ridiculous practice that is actively costing us lives and precious freedom capital around the world.

I hope we pass this act. I urge a "yes" vote, and I urge it quickly.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I thank Senator SHEEHY for those remarks. I think you are absolutely correct that Americans have no idea that some of their taxpayer dollars are actually winding up in the hands of terrorists.

I know there will be people who say: Oh, we can't do this because some money needs to go in there to help women, children, babies—that sort of thing.

What we have learned, if we have learned anything from what has happened in Gaza, is that when you have a terrorist organization that is in charge of a country, it is impossible to keep the money, food, or anything else that is sent in there out of the hands of terrorists.

If you see the terrorists on TV, they always look well fed. They are well armed. They are doing well. And, at the same time, the babies in the country are starving to death, and the same thing with the women and young children.

So with that, this legislation is designed exactly to do that, and that is, to keep every dollar out of the hands of these terrorists.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, as if in legislation session and notwithstanding rule XXII, the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 260 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, first of all, what is important for me to acknowledge is that Senator RISCH on the Foreign Relations Committee has done excellent work on making certain we don't get taxpayer dollars to the Taliban.

I also want to acknowledge my appreciation for the service of the Senator from Montana and his wife in protecting us against terrorist activity.

Let me explain why I object, because my objection is not for the purpose of keeping money out of the Taliban. That objective I support.

What I don't support is a bill that is written in a way where aid and humanitarian organizations that are spending money they raise to do work we support—and that is to protect women and children who are subject to the vicious conduct of the Taliban—that they will be cut off from being able to do their work.

The reality is, for some of these NGOs, if they have to pay an electric bill, then the bill, as drafted, would mean they are not able to do their work.

So when you have an aid organization that is dedicated to trying to help

girls and women from the oppression, who are from the Afghan people, who are the victims of the Taliban authoritarianism, and even paying an electric utility bill, even paying a water bill would mean that organization is shut down and can't do the good work that I believe the majority of us, if not all of us, in the Senate would support—because our concern is the well-being of the people of Afghanistan, and our objection is to the authoritarian and violent rule of the Taliban.

So this bill, as drafted, would interfere with legitimate work that would do good for the people in Afghanistan, especially women and girls, who are the victims of the Taliban. Our government is not sending money to the Taliban. That was discontinued under President Trump.

Our government is not sending money to American NGOs or NGOs in governments that are our allies. So what this bill is doing is trying to ensure that money that is sent to help Afghan women and children and other vulnerable people is not siphoned off to indirectly support the Taliban. That is a worthy objective, but it is overly broad in how it is written.

So it would literally mean that NGOs that are doing work that we support can't be done. And for that reason, I do object.

You know, we have got to keep in mind that the Taliban is our adversary, but there are over 3 million Afghans who have lost access to health services.

There are many Afghans who served with our military and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude. They saved, in many cases, the lives of men and women who served in the military. And among the people who have been the biggest advocates for the Afghan people, as opposed to the Taliban, are many of our brave soldiers who have served in Afghanistan.

So the objection here is based on how the bill is written, how it is overly broad and will have the effect of stopping good work that does good things for oppressed people. That is the reason that I want to assert my objection to this legislation.

VENEZUELA

Mr. President, while I am here, I do want to just make a comment on an issue that is going to come up, if I may, and that is this question of what is going on in Venezuela and the fact that there is going to be a potential effort on the part of President Trump to initiate military activity without congressional authorization.

The one point I want to make, which I think has to be on the minds of people who take a look at this, is that there is an assertion that there is military power to attack boats that intelligence says are carrying drugs to the United States.

On the one hand, even as on the other, the President is using the unique power vested in him and the Constitution to pardon one of the big-

gest drug dealers in the history of the world, and that is the former president of Honduras, Mr. Hernández. And I want to just note that glaring contradiction.

On the basis of the remarks I gave, although I acknowledge the intent in this bill from the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Oregon.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3344

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, the heart of our Constitution is the separation of powers. The Founders, having just won their freedom from the tyranny of a King, were determined that the most profound responsibilities of government—whether to go to war and how to spend taxpayer dollars—would be decided by the people.

The Founders wanted the people's representatives in Congress, from all parts of the Nation, from all walks of life, to publicly debate and vote on these critical decisions. That is why article I, section 8, of this Constitution says:

Congress shall have the power . . . to declare war.

Not the courts, not the President, but Congress.

Yet, as we stand here in this Chamber, President Trump is preparing to launch a war—a war on Venezuela—without a declaration of war, without a congressional authorization, without a congressional appropriation of funds.

So I have come to the floor to reassert the constitutional role of Congress over this decision of going to war. This bill is cosponsored by Senators KAINE, VAN HOLLEN, ALSOBROOKS, WELCH, MARKEY, and SANDERS, and I appreciate their partnership. It prohibits the unauthorized use of the U.S. Armed Forces in hostilities with respect to Venezuela.

Certainly, Nicolas Maduro is a brutal dictator. His regime has a long history of abusing human rights and crushing political dissent. That is not in question. And that reality demands a consistent, principled foreign policy. But it does not give permission for any President to violate the Constitution of the United States of America that we are sworn to uphold when we come here to serve the American people as Senators.

Yet President Trump is still threatening these hostilities against Venezuela by deploying a massive force in the Caribbean. That military force reportedly, as of this moment, includes about 15,000 American troops, including 2,200 marines; 11 naval warships, including our largest aircraft carrier, the USS *Gerald R. Ford*, and its strike group. It includes amphibious assault vehicles and guided-missile cruisers and destroyers and a submarine.

The deployment includes fighter jets, surveillance drones, and patrol planes—many of which are based in nearby Puerto Rico where the United States has opened an old naval base for