

school district that has been devastated with overdoses. Most of the children in that school, a middle school—and it was heartbreaking—either had a family member or knew someone who had died of an overdose.

Some of the stories you hear, and one that really stands out with me because I have talked with this mom who was in my congressional district, her son, unfortunately, had a disease, Crohn's disease, and had to go through some surgery as a small child and endured that rather well. It worked out well. But when this young man turned about 16, 17, 18 years old, he had to go back and do surgery as a result, and this time, the painkillers they gave him he used basically one time and his life spiraled out of control.

This was an athlete. This was a kid who did so well in school, but his life just went into almost a death spiral, and he wound up being incarcerated—and all because he wasn't wired to be able to handle these painkillers.

That is a part of this battle. We need better science. We need better medicine so we can determine who can tolerate certain medications and who cannot, whose life would be transformed in such a negative way by using a painkiller one time. But that certainly is all a part of this battle.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership on this and thank her for hosting this Special Order tonight.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman THOMPSON, and I know the people of his district are well served by him. I thank him for his service on our committee, on the Agriculture Committee, and all that he does to help us write good legislation and pass good legislation.

As Congressman THOMPSON said, unfortunately, this problem with opioids affects people at all ages and in all walks of life, at every income level, every category of people—male, female, old, young—but we particularly grieve over the young people.

We have heard about babies becoming addicted because their mothers were addicted and of the work that is done to help those babies become free from opioid addiction.

We have heard about the veterans who become addicted because of the treatment that they have received. We know nobody is attempting to get anyone addicted to opioids or anything else, for that matter, but we realize that over the years, we have had stronger use of these drugs than we probably should have had used.

There are many ways to approach pain relief and pain management, and, unfortunately, in the past, too often it has been the path of least resistance.

We do hear over and over the stories about young people who suddenly get addicted because of surgery or an injury, and it happens sometimes very, very quickly.

As Representative THOMPSON has said, it has a huge impact on jobs. We

have, right now, 6 million unfilled jobs in this country, and the reasons are very many; but some of the reason is because we have so many people addicted to opioids and other drugs, and they are simply unable to pass drug tests.

We hoped, by this graphic here, to illustrate that the problem with opioids is very close to all of us at home, very close to us; and what we are hoping for is to find ways at the Federal level to get beyond opioids, to help people who are addicted have some stability, regain their health, be healed of their addiction.

But this cannot all be done at the Federal level, and we know that. In fact, too many people look first to the Federal Government for an answer. The Federal Government usually is the worst place to come for an answer. It usually has to be done at the local level, then at the State level, and, last, the Federal level.

But I know, as Representative THOMPSON has pointed out, many Members—in fact, I believe all Members of Congress now—are concerned about this problem we are facing with opioids, and we will answer the call to do something. My only hope is that we put everything into perspective.

As we have learned from our hearings and talking to other people, much of this work needs to be done in the family to start with, in the medical communities, and once people become addicted, then in the local communities as people collaborate, work together to help people not become addicted to opioids, and once they do get off of the addiction, to get back to a normal life.

I know that all of us pray for those who are addicted and pray that they will find a suitable program to help them become free from opioid addiction, and for those who have never become addicted, to be in a great environment so they never seek out drugs as an answer, because they are not an answer.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for being here tonight, I thank the staff, and I yield back the balance of my time.

#### RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE INVESTIGATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. PERLMUTTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend Representative FOXX for bringing up a subject on opioids that is obviously plaguing so many places in America. It is a very topical and important discussion to have.

I want to change the subject, Mr. Speaker, and talk about a number of things that really concern me and many Americans across the country. That concern is:

Why has the President not released his tax returns?

Why is he so concerned about the Mueller investigation into the interference by the Russians in our elections? What is it that is being hidden? What are people afraid of? And why continue to threaten the FBI, threaten Mr. Mueller, threaten Mr. Rosenstein, threaten the Department of Justice, and, really, the police that are trying to get to the bottom of the interference by Russia in our elections.

□ 1745

And so I think we have got to take a look at exactly what has happened so far in that investigation. And that investigation with Special Counsel Mueller has resulted now in the guilty pleas of Michael Flynn, National Security Advisor; Rick Gates, former Trump campaign adviser; George Papadopoulos, former foreign affairs adviser to the Trump campaign; Richard Pinedo, a gentleman who committed identity fraud in the Russian probe; and an attorney named Alex van der Zwaan.

Currently under indictment are Paul Manafort, former Trump campaign chairman, 13 Russian nationals, and three Russian entities.

Now, why is this important? Congresswoman FOXX was talking about opioids. That clearly is important. Jobs and economic security of this Nation is something that I like to be talking about, or doing away with the opioid epidemic. But what is important about this comes down to the very pillars of America, the pillars of freedom, liberty, and independence.

Because if another nation is directing the outcomes of our election, those key pieces of who we are are threatened. We broke away from England to become a sovereign nation and not to be affected and ruled by some other country. So at the heart of this, it is about who we are as Americans, who we are as a country, to get to the bottom of Russian interference in our elections.

What they did was unprecedented and is something that is bigger than the election of 2016, maybe the election of 2018. It is about our ability to govern ourselves without interference of somebody else, some other nation.

In Congress, we passed an act that provided for additional sanctions against Russia because it is becoming more and more apparent of their interference with our elections. But the administration was reluctant to impose those sanctions. The question is, why?

The Ambassador to the U.N., Nikki Haley, just recently with respect to sanctions said: We are going to increase sanctions because Russia may have had some role in Syria with the different chemical weapons that were used.

And she went out so far as to say, we are going to impose some additional sanctions, but then had the rug pulled out from underneath her by the White House saying: Oh, wait a second. Even

though you are somebody I appointed and you are our U.N. Ambassador, we think you are way ahead of yourselves on the sanctions against Russia.

My question is: Why? What is it that is holding the White House back? I think it comes back to something I said at the very beginning, and something we asked for a year ago, which were the President's tax returns, which we have yet to see.

I mean, what is it that is in there that is so worrisome? Every other candidate for President, every other President turned over their tax returns. There is so much smoke here with these convictions, with these indictments, with what we know in terms of the interference in many States across the Nation, that we have got to get to the bottom of this.

The continued threats that have come from the White House to stall or limit the investigation, the ability of the law enforcement officers of this Nation, the FBI, for goodness' sake, to do their job, is something none of us could have ever expected.

And so even though most of us would much rather talk about jobs, we would rather talk about the environment. We would rather be dealing with subjects that affect day-to-day Americans, everyday Americans. The problem is the values of this Nation are under attack, the freedom, liberty, and independence that we enjoy that is so key to everything we believe in that we are not going to let this go. We are going to stand up for the rule of law and for honesty, and for allowing law enforcement to finish its job without being constantly threatened.

Mr. Speaker, I am joined by a number of my friends who also have similar concerns to the ones I have raised. I would like to yield to my friend Mr. BOYLE from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Congressman for that city, and allow him some time to bring us his thoughts and raise his concerns.

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Colorado who has done such a wonderful job of organizing us, month in and month out, to stand here on the House floor, really, more than anything, in a sincere and genuine effort to attempt to prevent a constitutional crisis from happening.

It is vital—not as Democrats or as Republicans, but as Americans—it is vital that we allow this special counsel investigation to continue and to reach its natural conclusions, whatever the facts may show.

I certainly hope, and I believe, that all of us should hope that it won't show collusion; that it won't show anything more than what has been reported about interference in our 2016 elections. But it is vital to the integrity of our democracy and our national security that we know that for sure.

Now, one would think—given the record interference, really attack, from the Russian Federation upon the United States during the 2016 election,

just as they have in other country's elections, such as Germany, France, and of course repeatedly on the Ukraine—one would think that the President of the United States would say, yes, we must get to the bottom of this.

Instead, this President has not once asked his staff—as far as we know, and as has been verified by folks like the Director of the DNI and the Director of the CIA—has not once made it the mission of the U.S. to combat this interference. That is worrying.

We also know now that on two separate occasions, the President has seriously considered firing the special counsel. That is exactly what President Nixon did in October of 1973, what has been called the Saturday Night Massacre, that prompted a constitutional crisis then. It would prompt a constitutional crisis today.

Now, the President keeps calling the Mueller investigation a witch hunt, which is interesting because that is the exact term that President Nixon used. And if you look at headlines from that day, it was exactly the same term Nixon used. But the President calls it a witch hunt and says it hasn't produced anything.

So far, the investigation of the special counsel has produced 17 indictments, including 5 guilty pleas—some witch hunt. I don't think those 17 individuals under indictment consider that a witch hunt and, certainly, the 5 individuals who have already pled guilty, including one who worked in this White House.

So I will pause there, because I know there are a number of our colleagues who want to speak on this important issue. This is something that should unite us all. I am appreciative to those Republican colleagues, especially in the Senate, who have spoken out publicly and say that they support the Mueller investigation and support the independence and integrity of it, but it is time that we don't just say that we support it.

I do think it is time that we have legislation that protects it so that we can ensure that this investigation will reach its natural conclusion.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, and I say to my friend from Pennsylvania—we were talking about the indictments and the guilty pleas—the last time we really had a special counsel appointed was in 2003, and it took 2 years for one indictment. We are a year into this investigation, and we have got 5 guilty pleas and 17 additional indictments. So we ought to be all taking real stock of what is actually happening here.

I now yield to my friend from Missouri, EMANUEL CLEAVER, one of my best buddies here in the House, former mayor of Kansas City, Missouri, for his thoughts on this subject.

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, I am thankful that we have this moment that we are using to make some expressions of concern, and I thank Mr. PERLMUTTER for organizing it.

Let me preface my comments, Mr. Speaker, by saying that when President Trump was elected, against the advice and concern of my family, my many campaign workers, and supporters, I attended the swearing in because I believed—and still believe and will always believe—that my responsibility as a Member of Congress was to be at the inauguration as a Member of Congress.

Then at the first joint session—not the State of the Union, but the joint session—many of my friends and family said: You know, do not go. The President is alien to our concept of decency and democracy. I came anyway. I sat not too far from where I am standing now.

I also then went to the State of the Union. Some of our colleagues chose not to come. When there were Articles of Impeachment placed on the table for a vote, I voted to table it against a person I have known in Congress longer than I have known anybody else because I know he is a decent and thoughtful person, Congressman AL GREEN. He had brought it to the floor. I voted to table it, along with just about every Republican and a sizeable number of Democrats, and the reason was, I believed that it was important for Mr. Mueller to complete his investigation.

I resent any discussion about trying to impeach the President. I am not in that group.

I must say, however, how troubled I am by many of the things that I have seen. And when I grew up down in Texas in the 1950s and 1960s, in elementary school at the Booker T. Washington Elementary School, we had these tests. Back then, there was a great threat from Russia. And economically, Wichita Falls, where I attended high school, was completely dependent on Sheppard Air Force Base for its survival.

My first job was at the SAC base, the Strategic Air Command. I cleaned up. I thought it was the biggest job any human being could get. I was 15 years old and, man, I was big time. I cleaned up the barracks for the SAC Command.

And then at school, we had to get under our desks for a drill for an attack from Russia. And we would hear the horn. All over town, schoolkids were getting under their desks. The truth is, we all would have been burned up. I am not sure that a wooden desk was going to protect us. But I was a kid and I didn't know any better, so all of us got under our desks.

But it allowed me to understand one thing, and I have never forgotten it: At that time, Russia, the Soviet Union, was not our friend. And over that period, a lot of things have changed. That has not changed.

And so let's fast forward to our last Presidential election. It is indisputable. Every single intelligence agency in the United States, as well as intelligence agencies with our allies in

Europe, say that the Russians interfered with our election—not attempted to do so, but interfered.

□ 1800

Did they change the outcome of the election?

There is no evidence to support that. However, there is plenty of evidence to support that Russia remains the enemy of the United States of America. I necessarily am going to become increasingly concerned when the President of the United States refuses to say even one bad thing about Vladimir Putin, who is—and I don't like to call people names—I don't call my colleagues bad names; that is not who I am—this man is a bully and a danger to the entire world.

The most troubling moments I have are when I hear people say, as I did on TV the other night, they were interviewing a woman and she said: "I don't care anything about Russian meddling. All I want them to do is just let Mr. Trump have his agenda approved." And I am thinking: What is happening to this Republic?

I have five grandchildren, the youngest of which just turned three last month. My work in Congress, my ministry in the United Methodist Church for 37 years, my time on the city council, my time as mayor, all was dedicated to what I wanted for my grandchildren. I want them to enjoy the same kind of freedoms that we enjoyed.

Mr. Speaker, anybody who is watching this and who has even a semblance of objectivity would have to say something is dramatically wrong when the President will, by Twitter, attack anybody and everybody—horses, children, little animals—anybody he will criticize and call them names, except Vladimir Putin. Vladimir Putin is the only person he will not criticize. This man orchestrated an attempt to damage our democracy.

What Putin did—and it was brilliant—I have to say he is a devilish man, but he created a beautiful way of doing it. He knew the weaknesses of the United States and so he tried to exploit it. And it is still going on.

For example, just a few weeks ago, one of those Russian bots had a deal on the internet advising White Americans not to go and see the movie *Black Panther*. Inside this message online is that African Americans are attacking white movie-goers.

Now, of course, that didn't happen, it is not even remotely the truth, but Russia understands how to get to us. They look at our weaknesses and they attack. We cannot help in that process.

Mr. Mueller needs to complete his investigation. I will never support doing anything legally in this body until Mr. Mueller completes his investigation.

I thank Mr. PERLMUTTER for getting us together. I think that we have got to make the American public conscious of what is going on and maybe, more importantly, what is not going on.

If we are able to do that, this Republic, the greatest Republic that God Al-

mighty has ever blessed to exist, the greatest Republic in the history of this planet, is going to be in jeopardy.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Missouri, and his words, as always, are powerful and right on the mark. We think this is serious business and it is nothing that we take lightly.

My friend, Mr. HUFFMAN from California, is somebody who has given this a lot of thought, and he wonders why the President doesn't speak out against Vladimir Putin, he wonders why the President hasn't turned over his tax returns, he wonders why the President has attacked the FBI, he wonders why the President has attacked the Department of Justice, just as I do.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN), my friend.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Colorado for his leadership and convening these conversations. It was really helpful to hear from our friend from Missouri, who reminds us that this is really a big deal, this Russian meddling, and that we have to keep pushing to get answers as to why our President behaves so strangely when it comes to Russia, and we have to hold anyone who may have been part of that Russian interference fully accountable.

I will tell Congressman PERLMUTTER that constituents in my district, and I think a growing number of people around this country, are extremely concerned and growing more and more concerned about this dark cloud of corruption over the Trump administration; about the possibility of collusion between the Trump team and a foreign government to affect the 2016 election; about the obstruction of justice, the pattern of lying about even the most basic facts; and just based on what has already come out through the special counsel investigation and through the media and, to some extent, through congressional investigations, their level of concern is really growing.

This week, I want to focus on one aspect of these investigations that we have tried to push here in the House and in the Senate: the issue of privilege. I am not talking about the kind of privilege where a billionaire's son-in-law gets a job inside the White House, even though he has no foreign policy experience and can't get a security clearance. That is a different kind of privilege.

I want to talk about the issue of executive privilege. This is an idea that Presidential communications need to be kept out of the public eye, even when Congress or the courts issue subpoenas and request that information.

Presidents have always kind of tried to claim that this type of privilege is implied in the Constitution's separation of powers. It is an argument that a President might not get as candid and fulsome advice from his Cabinet and others if all of it was going to be publicly disclosed. So I can appreciate

that. But the Trump administration has taken this notion of executive privilege to extreme and absurd lengths. I think we need to talk about that.

Just a little quick historical aside, though, on executive privilege. The concept and the limit of executive privilege has really only been tested at the Supreme Court in a pair of Watergate-related lawsuits in the 1970s. This came about when the special prosecutor sought access to President Nixon's secret Oval Office tapes.

In that case, the court rejected President Nixon's attempts to quash a judicial subpoena. The unanimous decision of that court was that the President had to hand over these tape-recorded conversations with his closest advisers about the Watergate break-in. Of course, we know that was the beginning of the end of the Nixon Presidency.

So back to the modern era.

Over the past year, we have seen numerous Trump officials, and even some who never worked in the White House, refuse to answer questions from Congress, asserting some variation of this executive privilege. In the now-defunct House Intelligence Committee investigation we have seen it. We have seen it in the Senate Intelligence Committee investigation.

I think we need to take a look at how this is being used or misused. We have seen witnesses, literally on a break from their testimony, take phone calls from the White House, where they get instructions about what questions they can answer and which ones they can't.

Essentially, President Trump has treated the executive privilege as if it is a gag order he can invoke on those around him. It is sort of like the hush money nondisclosure agreements that he has entered into with porn stars and playmates and all sorts of others to keep embarrassing or damaging information out of the public eye.

A few specific examples of this and why it doesn't hold up.

In June 2017, Attorney General Jeff Sessions was testifying before the Senate committee about the firing of James Comey. He refused to answer certain questions, but he did choose to answer others that he thought were helpful. He claimed that he was protecting the right of President Trump to assert the executive privilege.

Well, first of all, Sessions can't selectively choose when to invoke the privilege and when not to. There is this thing called waiver, and you don't get to cherry-pick the stuff that you think helps you and then invoke the privilege for the stuff that doesn't.

But the second point is that the Attorney General even admitted that he does not have the power to claim executive privilege. He said: "I am protecting the President's constitutional right by not giving it away before he has had a chance to weigh in."

The President hasn't done that. In fact, the President has yet to assert

the executive privilege, but he has had all of these other folks on a short leash, counting on them to assert the privilege.

So then we go to January of 2018. Steve Bannon was testifying in the House Intelligence Committee. He only agreed to answer 25 specific yes or no questions that had been drafted by the White House.

So, on a bipartisan basis, the committee issued a subpoena to force Bannon to answer these questions, but he continued to stonewall and the committee never followed through. Again, why Bannon's assertions of the privilege don't pencil out.

In the United States v. Nixon, the Supreme Court made very clear that public extrajudicial disclosure of a privilege like the executive privilege is a waiver. So right off the bat you have the problem that Steve Bannon spilled his guts in "Fire and Fury" for the whole world to see. He has made public extrajudicial disclosures of all manner of communications involving the Presidency on all of these subjects. But he has also played this pick-and-choose game, much like Attorney General Sessions. Even if he had the privilege to assert for himself, which he doesn't, it just doesn't hold water.

Now, some of the oversight that Bannon has been ducking has to do with the transition period before Donald Trump was even President. Obviously, there is no executive privilege if you are not yet the executive. So that is another problem.

When he was asked whether he was being instructed by the President to invoke executive privilege, guess what? He refused to answer. Our friends in the House Intelligence Committee were in such a hurry to shut down their investigation that they did not move to hold him in contempt of Congress, and they never followed through on their subpoena.

Another example.

January 2018, Mr. Trump's former campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski, appeared before the House Intel Committee and surprise, surprise, he refused to answer all sorts of important questions. Since Mr. Lewandowski never served in the Federal Government, it would be pretty preposterous to assert executive privilege as a way to evade Congress' questions. But it is up to the majority in Congress to actually force him to answer these questions.

Again, Mr. Trump is onto, apparently, a winning strategy in this Congress. He instructs others not to answer questions, suggests they should assert the privilege, or some variation of it, and then counts on a compliant majority in this House and in the Senate to simply not follow through.

Something similar happened in February 2018. Hope Hicks, the White House communications director, was testifying before the House Intelligence Committee and would not discuss anything from the inauguration

forward. The committee declined to issue a subpoena, despite the request to do so from our ranking member, ADAM SCHIFF.

So you may ask in these various situations: Why wouldn't President Trump himself simply assert the executive privilege?

I think one reason for that is we can safely say that it makes him look even more guilty. That is hard to do, based on the way he has conducted himself so defensively with such a seemingly guilty state of mind in his tweets and other public statements, but the assertion of the privilege would be a very clear signal that he is trying to impede legitimate investigations.

So he would rather have Bannon and Hicks and Lewandowski and Sessions stonewall for him, and then count on a compliant hyper-partisan Congress not to follow through. That is why we have so many unanswered questions and why it is so important that you continue to bring us together to talk about this to make sure the American people know that we are going to keep talking about it and we are going to keep asking what they are hiding and what they are afraid of.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up here, but I think there is one word we ought to change, because the word doesn't justify or doesn't really describe what occurred with these elections.

What occurred with the elections by the Russians was not meddling. It was sabotage. That is really what we are talking about. It wasn't just somebody saying to your mother-in-law: "Please don't meddle in my business." This is sabotage. This was an attack. This was interference and a violation of our sovereignty, of our independence, of our freedom.

So we start with that, and then we ask these questions of my friends on the Republican side: Had the tables been turned and this was a Democratic administration, can you imagine what kinds of investigations would be underway today, what kinds of subpoenas would be issued, and not to allow the Intelligence Committee to shut down that investigation when none of the questions were answered because of this innovation of executive privilege that they don't hold, because this is much bigger than all of us.

□ 1815

Representative CLEAVER talked about the fact that Russia is interfering, all around the world. They are not our friends. I would love to see something develop where there really is some kind of an alliance, but we definitely don't have that now.

There are a lot of questions:

Where are the tax returns?

Why haven't they been presented to the Congress?

Why are we not fulfilling the law that we passed on sanctions?

Why are we holding back even though Nikki Haley said we are going

to issue more sanctions concerning Russia's role in Syria?

Why the continued attacks by the administration against our FBI, our chief and best law enforcement agency?

Why continue to undermine the investigations?

These are serious questions, and they can't be swept under the rug. This is serious business. It goes to the heart of the values of this Nation, of freedom and independence. We have got a lot of work to do. I hope there is a bright light shone on all of this and that these investigations run their full course to see exactly what has happened.

Mr. Speaker, if my friend from California would like to close, I would offer him that opportunity.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I will close on my end but with a bit of a question for my colleague:

We have talked about how big this is. I think "sabotage" is not too strong a word for what the Russians did in the 2016 election. I think anyone who was involved in a criminal conspiracy with them to pull that off, certainly there are criminal penalties, violations, possibly up to and including treason, that may apply. So we have to get to the bottom of this. We have to get to the truth.

And if Congress won't do its job because of partisan reasons and won't follow through and hold folks in contempt when they ignore subpoenas and when they refuse to answer questions, we can at least protect the special counsel investigation so that that lifelong Republican leading this investigation can get the truth out for the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I guess my question for Congressman PERLMUTTER is: Given how big this is—and we have never seen anything like this. We have never seen all of this evidence that a candidate for President—folks at the top of his campaign were involved in these illicit activities with a foreign power, this extensive sabotaging of our election, and all of the coverup and the obstruction and other problems that are coming to light. Given all of that, how will history judge those who refuse to let the special counsel get to the bottom of it all so we can all know the truth?

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I hold out hope for all of the Members of this body to want to have the truth and allow this investigation to run its course. And I hope and expect that the Members—Democrats and Republicans—will support and protect the special counsel, the Department of Justice, and the FBI so that the lawyers and the cops on the beat can finish this investigation. And that is what is key.

So I hope that it turns out that there isn't anything else, that it is 5 guilty pleas, it is 17 indictments, and that is it; we are done. But I don't expect that to be the case either.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TAYLOR). Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

GENOCIDE AWARENESS AND  
PREVENTION MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. WAGNER) for 30 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month. Today we remember the millions of victims of genocide throughout history, and we recommit to working toward the day when genocide and mass-atrocity crimes are not only inconceivable, Mr. Speaker, but they are nonexistent.

April marks the commemorations of some of the worst genocides in history, including the Holocaust and Rwandan, Cambodian, and Armenian genocides. Time and again, senseless bloodshed has ended innocent lives and fractured families and livelihoods.

My hometown, St. Louis, is home to the largest Bosnian community outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This community has shaped what the city looks and feels like. It has added great cultural diversity to the city, immense intellectual capital, thriving small businesses, and a strong religious presence.

Two decades ago, members of our Bosnian community were refugees. In 1995, Orthodox Serbs, under the command of General Ratko Mladic, initiated a horrific ethnic cleansing campaign against majority Muslim Bosniaks. The escalating bloodshed forced 130,000 Bosnian refugees to seek new lives in the United States. Thousands were murdered in Srebrenica. Today I wish to honor these brave men and women.

The resilience of our Bosnian neighbors has enriched our city, and their courage inspires me. It has inspired me to seek change. Tomorrow I am offering an amendment to the State Department Authorization Act of 2018 asking the administration to study countries at risk of genocide and mass-atrocity crimes and craft training regimens for U.S. Foreign Service officers.

Should this bill become law, America's diplomats will have the know-how to respond to those conflicts on the ground and act before violence spirals out of control. Most importantly, this amendment establishes that the official policy of the United States of America is to regard the prevention of genocide and atrocity crimes as a core national security interest.

However, this is just one step in the right direction. The U.S. Government must improve how it responds to con-

flicts. Last April, I introduced the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act to improve U.S. efforts to prevent mass-atrocity crimes, named after the courageous Auschwitz survivor. The legislation honors the legacy of Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel and his life work to fight evil around the world.

Mr. Wiesel was just 15 years old when the Nazis deported him and his family to Auschwitz. He was the only member of his family to survive. Having witnessed the near total destruction of his people, he spent his life defending the persecuted. In his honor, we fight to rectify injustice and protect the most vulnerable in our society and across the globe.

As Mr. Wiesel understood so well, the true horror of genocide is that it is preventable, and the U.S. Government has the tools to effect real change. The Elie Wiesel Act would affirm the mission of the United States Atrocities Prevention Board and its work to coordinate prevention and response efforts. It would also authorize the Complex Crisis Fund to support agile, efficient responses to unforeseen crises overseas.

This time, when America says "never again," our actions will reinforce our platitudes and our words. I thank the Chair, Mr. Speaker, and I thank all of my colleagues who share in this fight.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN).

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from Missouri, for her leadership. I am honored to join her and other distinguished colleagues this evening in recognition of Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month.

Preventing genocide and mass atrocities is a moral imperative that deserves to be at the very top of our priority list. Mass atrocities are large-scale, deliberate attacks against civilian populations. They include genocide but also crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing.

After the Holocaust—the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of 6 million Jews and members of other persecuted groups by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between 1941 and 1945—people all around the world vowed to never again stand by in the face of genocide; but since then, mass atrocities, including genocide, have been committed in Indonesia, Cambodia, Guatemala, East Timor, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sudan, and South Sudan, among other places. Hundreds of thousands of people have been murdered, tortured, disappeared, or suffered sexual violence; and millions more have been forced to flee with profound humanitarian, political, and national security consequences.

I don't believe the world's failure to prevent atrocities is because no one cares. In this era of instant communication powered by social media, most people I meet have seen and passionately condemn the ongoing atrocities in Syria and elsewhere. Nor is it be-

cause no one knows what is happening. Many, many people warned us for years about the potential for genocide against the Rohingya in Burma.

The problem is that we have not been very good at turning knowledge and moral indignation into action to prevent a bad situation from worsening. We must do better. We must do more. This year, in the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, which I co-chair along with my colleague Congressman RANDY HULTGREN, we are looking at the tools we have as U.S. policymakers to prevent mass atrocities and asking how we can strengthen them.

We are asking what it would mean to institutionalize an atrocity prevention's lens so we don't wait until it is so late and the problem is so big that all we can do is lament the immorality and the inhumanity and then provide humanitarian aid to the victims and survivors. As we undertake this effort, we know that there is a lot of good work already underway in both Chambers of Congress and on both sides of the aisle to find new ways forward.

One example is H.R. 3030, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2017, led by Representative ANN WAGNER and cosponsored by both myself and Representative HULTGREN. We also recognize that government officials cannot do this work alone. We need civil society, in all its diversity, to help us. We need community associations, churches, synagogues, mosques, schools, and businesses to take a stand against hate speech, to teach and live tolerance, to document and denounce human rights violations, to open their hearts to reconciliation based on justice. We need to get to the point where our societies recognize and honor every person's innate human dignity.

And I want to take this opportunity to salute one of the many organizations that are doing just this kind of work. STAND is a student-led movement to end mass atrocities and genocide by organizing and educating their peers and communities. I first met student leaders of STAND in 2005 and 2006, when they were part of the national movement that brought the genocide happening in Darfur, Sudan, to public awareness. They were my teachers during that time.

Tonight, representatives of STAND are here listening to this debate. They push us to do better, and I thank them for their commitment and their vision.

Mr. Speaker, mass atrocities are human rights violations on a grand scale. We must find new strategies to prevent them from happening and more effective strategies to interrupt and stop them at the very earliest stages, should they begin to unfold.

Mr. Speaker, all of us in this Chamber, all of us in this country, need to do more, because I believe, if the United States of America stands for anything, we stand for human rights. We need to be better. We need to be more effective in preventing these mass atrocities and these genocides.