

□ 1215

BORDER SECURITY

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

Mr. ROTHFUS. Mr. Speaker, in the coming days, this House will debate the importance of securing our border with Mexico. This should not be a controversial debate. Every nation has the right to secure its borders. There are, indeed, differences among nations from the type of government to the freedoms and liberties a country's people enjoy, and borders define where these begin and end.

Borders also allow countries to determine who and, as important, what is allowed to enter into respective nations. It is this latter point, Mr. Speaker, given the historical context in which the United States and Mexico find themselves, that impels not only the United States but also Mexico to ensure that we have a secure border. There are certain products, namely dangerous narcotics, being made in and shipped through Mexico that we do not want in the United States, and there are items such as illicit cash from drug sales that Mexico does not want imported from the United States.

Yes, we are concerned about knowing the identity of individuals coming into our country, and we need to be vetting each individual seeking admission to the United States. But it is the illicit drug trade, which is responsible for taking tens of thousands of lives on both sides of the border, that makes beyond urgent the securing of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Ninety percent of the heroin used in our country comes from Mexico. Fentanyl, methamphetamines, cocaine, and marijuana also flow across the border in staggering amounts.

These poisons destroy lives and result in billions of dollars of illicit cash flowing to transnational criminal organizations on the Mexican side of the border. These organizations are described best in one word: evil.

Over the last decade, Mexican drug cartels have been responsible for deaths of thousands of Mexicans, and their exports have killed thousands of Americans. Mexico prosecutes relatively few of the murders that occur on its soil.

The cartels kill with impunity. They kill Catholic priests. They kill journalists. They kill students. They kill politicians. They have killed U.S. agents. And they kill each other. The rule of law has been replaced in many Mexican states with the law of violence, revenge, and brutal force.

Headlines over the past 2 years tell the story: National Catholic Register, May 22, 2018: "Why Is Mexico the Deadliest Place to Be a Priest?"

The New York Times, December 21, 2017: "Most Lethal to Journalists: 1. War Zones 2. Mexico."

CNN, July 2, 2018: "Mexico goes to the polls . . . 132 politicians have been killed since campaigning began."

The Wall Street Journal, November 14, 2018: "'It's a Crisis of Civilization in Mexico.' 250,000 Dead. 37,400 Missing."

Progress against the cartels has been too slow, but there have been some encouraging developments. The trial of the alleged head of the Sinaloa cartel, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, is underway in New York. Within the last month, the Department of Justice indicted individuals affiliated with the Jalisco Nueva Generacion cartel, but those individuals remain at large.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration also recently announced it was joining with State and local officials in Chicago specifically to go after Mexican cartels, which have played a role in the violence that plagues that community, a community that is 1,500 miles from the border.

In announcing the action, the DEA said: "There is no single entity or solution that can stop the flow of dangerous illicit drugs like heroin and fentanyl into Chicago or to keep them from harming the citizens of this great city. . . . To be clear, these drugs are being produced, manufactured, and trafficked by various Mexican cartels to numerous parts of the United States and elsewhere in the world."

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the border issue does not just affect California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. It affects the entire Nation, including my district in western Pennsylvania.

Our two countries have not done enough to combat the epidemic of drugs and violence. It is an epidemic that has left mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters on both sides of the border steeped in grief.

There is no single solution to this evil. But one tool is available, and that is the force of our will. It is an act of the will to stop the transfer of drugs northbound into the United States and the transfer of illicit cash southbound into Mexico.

A secure border is a necessary prerequisite to this end. That secure border requires not only, where appropriate, physical barriers. It also requires significantly increased capacity for inspecting vehicles traveling between the United States and Mexico at our ports of entry.

More inspection lanes, more equipment, and more personnel were prescribed in the Securing America's Future Act. If we are serious about securing the border, that bill should accompany any appropriations language we pass this month.

As the 115th Congress draws to a close, let us take one more vital step to ending the drug crisis and bring peace to Mexico and communities across the United States.

Mr. Speaker, let's secure our border.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 18 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

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AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WILLIAMS) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Gracious God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

You have blessed us with all good gifts, and this past week, with thankful hearts, we gathered with family and loved ones throughout this great land to celebrate our blessings together.

Bless the newly elected Members of the 116th Congress who resume their orientation on Capitol Hill. Give them calm and confidence as they prepare for a new role as servants of our Nation's citizens.

Bless the Members of the people's House who have been entrusted with the privilege to serve our Nation and all Americans in their need. Grant them to work together in respect and affection, faithful in the responsibilities they have been given.

As the end of the 115th Congress approaches, bestow upon them the gifts of wisdom and discernment, that in their actions, they will do justice, love with mercy, and walk humbly with You.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CURTIS)