

the U.S. have a very keen interest, and I raise it today in a friendly but firm voice. That is, namely, the status of Northern Ireland under the Good Friday peace accords.

Unfortunately, Mrs. May, in her announcement yesterday, indicated that that was the one issue, that her efforts to protect the Good Friday peace accords were going to be renegotiated and possibly dismantled.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to remind the House that the Good Friday peace accords, which were signed 20 years ago last April 10, have the active and supportive involvement of the U.S. Government and the U.S. Congress.

The Clinton administration in the 1990s, at the invitation of the Irish and British Governments, named former U.S. Senator George Mitchell as Special Envoy to Northern Ireland, and he chaired the all-party peace negotiation over a number of years, which led to the Good Friday peace accords. His work, along with his successor, Richard Haass, was crucial to the success of the talks and the execution of the agreement.

In the U.S. Congress, members of a bipartisan group of lawmakers, including our colleague RICHARD NEAL of Springfield, Massachusetts, were frequent visitors and participants during the negotiations.

To this day, Mr. NEAL and bipartisan members of the Friends of Ireland Caucus, of which I am a member, continue to monitor the progress and success of the Good Friday peace accords and are deeply, deeply concerned that Brexit, if it reinstates a hard border on the island of Ireland, will undo one of the great diplomatic successes of our time.

Mr. Speaker, the successful results of the peace agreement cannot be denied. During The Troubles, which preceded the accords, more than 3,600 residents of the six counties of the North lost their lives due to sectarian violence and 763 servicemembers of the British Government and the Northern Irish Government lost their lives. To put that in perspective, 464 U.K. troops have lost their lives in the long war in Afghanistan. The economic results have also been undeniable.

Mr. Speaker, I have a little bit of experience because in 1973 and 1974, I was a student in England and spent the Christmas break in Northern Ireland visiting a fellow student in the town of Enniskillen. I took the train from Dublin to Belfast. In the border town of Dundalk, where I was asleep, I was awoken by a British soldier heavily armed, poking me to look at my backpack.

While we visited in Enniskillen, there was a bombing in the village. Looking around, it was clearly a depressed economy because of the hard borders and because of the isolation of Northern Ireland.

Fast forward, I took a trade mission from the State of Connecticut to Belfast 2 years ago, and it is a transformed city. It is thriving. It is healthy. Clear-

ly, allowing the Northern Irish economy to participate both in the full island as well as Europe has had beneficial effects. That is why the people of Northern Ireland actually voted “no” on Brexit.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a point today where the British Government clearly has to make a decision about whether to preserve one of the great diplomatic successes, which provides a roadmap for sectarian violence all across the world. Diplomacy succeeded in Northern Ireland. It is imperative that those in charge there protect the hard-fought work and remember that there are stakeholders outside of England and Great Britain, including the United States Government and the United States Congress, which have skin in the game and have investment in terms of the great success over the last 20 years.

Protect the Good Friday peace accords. Protect the peace that has flowed from it. Protect the prosperity that has improved the lives of the people of Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic, and the world at large.

DEMOCRACY REFORM

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

Ms. SCANLON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Speaker-designate PELOSI, Whip HOYER, and Representative SARBANES for honoring the will of the American people and pledging to make democracy reform a top priority for the 116th Congress.

One of the greatest promises of our democracy is that our government is of, by, and for the people. Our democracy has always been a messy experiment. It is not perfect. It is not a spectator sport. But it is our greatest hope. At this point in time, unfortunately, many of our democratic structures are under attack.

In my home, Pennsylvania, over the past decade, we have seen the impact of antidemocratic policies. The cards have been stacked against the voices of Pennsylvanians through unconstitutional gerrymandering, repressive voter ID laws, and restrictive absentee ballot deadlines. These tactics have been used to muzzle the voices of our constituents, as well as voters in North Carolina, Wisconsin, Georgia, and other citizens across the country.

□ 1030

The H.R. 1 package being advanced by Representative SARBANES and the Democracy Reform Task Force is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to restore the American people's faith in our institutions. History has shown us that our American experiment is at its best when we face complex challenges head-on and we are better for taking them up.

H.R. 1 is our path forward to a more perfect democracy. Our elections are

the bedrock of this Nation, and the sanctity of those elections must be protected from threats, both foreign and domestic.

We can make it easier, not harder, for eligible Americans to vote. We can end the dominance of Big Money in our politics. We can ensure that public officials, from the White House to Members of Congress, put the interests of the American people first. We can do all of those things, and we must.

Public opinion polls show that the American people's distrust of our governmental institutions is at staggering levels. We must work together, Democrats and Republicans, to change course and restore the people's faith. We have real work to do, and Members of the incoming class are ready to roll up our sleeves. The voters have charged us to restore the balance of our political institutions and make sure that everyday Americans have a seat at the table.

When we listen to people instead of special interests, we can raise the minimum wage and create good-paying jobs; we can lower prescription drug prices and give people better access to healthcare; we can make real investments in our infrastructure; we can reduce gun violence; and we can increase funding for job training programs and public education.

Mr. Speaker, we owe it to the generations before us who worked to establish this democracy and we owe it to the generations that follow to ensure that we have a Government that is truly by and for the people. We can work on this together. It is up to us to get it done, and this work starts now.

THANKING FIRST RESPONDERS TO THE CRANSTON FIRE

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

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the communities affected by the Cranston fire, one of the largest wildfires my congressional district and eastern Riverside County has ever seen.

While the Cranston fire was contained in August, many of my constituents are continuing to piece their lives back together, and anytime severe rain is forecasted, they once again go into high alert for mudslides from the burn scar.

The Cranston fire started on July 25, 2018, and within a matter of a few hours residents of Idyllwild and the mountain communities were immediately forced to evacuate from their homes. Without hesitation, first responders from the Idyllwild Fire Department, the Idyllwild Volunteer Fire Company, CAL FIRE, the California Highway Patrol, the U.S. Forest Service, and countless others from all over the Nation sprang into action.

Thanks to their efforts, no lives were lost and the fire was fully contained by August 10, having burned more than