

County, Pennsylvania; Montgomery County, Pennsylvania; Berks County, Pennsylvania; and Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, for the opportunity to serve you here in Congress for 2 terms.

This was always, admittedly, a dream of mine, and it is something that I took great pride in doing. It has been a very humbling experience. In some respects, it has been a very rewarding experience. In other respects, it has been challenging and frustrating at times. But when you are someone who puts your name on a sign and gets elected to this institution, you carry with yourself a certain humbleness and a certain sense of purpose that every single one of the 434 Members that I have served with—probably more since there has been resignations and reelections—but everyone who I have served with in this institution takes their job very, very seriously, and I just hope the American people realize that even as we have differences here, we have a lot more that binds us together as Americans, and everyone is here trying to do their very best.

□ 2045

I would also like to, real briefly, just thank my parents, Sherry and Tony, for their support through the years; my wife, Christine; my children, Ryan and Caroline; and the many great members of my staff who have just done an absolutely wonderful job. I think one thing that every single Member of Congress can universally agree to is that the staff is underappreciated, undercompensated; but without them, this institution would not run, and we would not be able to be as effective as we are day in and day out.

I would particularly like to recognize Lauryn Schothorst and Dante Cutrona, my chiefs of staff through the years; Kori Walter, my district director; Jason Carver, my constituent services director; and if I start naming all the other staff persons, I would probably forget one. But I just want each and every one of them to know how personally grateful I am for their service to Pennsylvania's Sixth Congressional District, this country, and myself.

And for all those whom I have served with, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for being a friend and being an advocate for this country and for your constituents all across this country.

This is a very special institution. It has been a real privilege to serve in it. God bless each and every one of you, and God bless America.

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, Mr. COSTELLO, for his kind words, and I also want to commend him for his great service to our country. The people of Philadelphia's suburbs have been blessed to have been represented over the last 4 years by a thoughtful, honest, decent man, someone whom I worked with very closely on issues like the environment, like immigration, the difficult issues, the controversial

issues, the issues where legislators are required to take risks if they are going to have a positive impact.

My final message is just extreme gratitude to this wonderful institution, to my community for this privilege, this opportunity. To my parents, Teresita and CARLOS CURBELO, when they arrived in this country with nothing except the desire to be free and to work and contribute, I don't think they could have ever imagined that their son would be able to serve in this fine institution. Only in this wonderful country can we tell stories like that. Only in this wonderful country do these miracles happen.

I also want to thank my wife and my two daughters—Cecilia, my wife, and Sylvie and Carolina, my daughters—because public service is difficult, especially on young families, and my wife and my daughters have sacrificed a lot. Of course, we have done it with the support of our family, my in-laws, my parents, my friends, and everyone.

Again, to all my colleagues, I wish you the best. I will be rooting for you. Please continue trying to help strengthen this country, continue trying to do the right thing every day and serve with a servant's heart.

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

HOUSE FREEDOM CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS) for 30 minutes.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage my colleagues to stay in the fight to make sure that we help this President deliver on a promise that he made years ago.

I am sad that tonight we are here, and we are on a backdrop of a potential government shutdown; but, really, what it is is more a function of the fact that we have not done our job like we should have done already.

The President, many, many months ago, said that he would not sign another funding bill unless we gave him wall funding. So what did this House do? It passed a bill to fund the Department of Defense and passed a short-term CR. And they said: Do you know what? We are going to have that fight, but we are going to have that fight after the midterms.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is after the midterms, and we are here with a number of my colleagues tonight to say that we are ready to fight on behalf of all the freedom-loving Americans to make sure that we have secure borders and that never again do we have to worry about terrorists and drug traffickers coming across our southern borders.

So I have a number of my colleagues tonight, Mr. Speaker, who want to speak on this to encourage the American people to stand with us in this fight.

I yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. BIGGS).

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful that my colleagues are here standing up for the crisis, to solve the crisis on the border.

Securing the United States and the American people, this border, is a fundamental, constitutional responsibility of the Federal Government. We have Members of the House and Senate who are still unwilling to ensure we have control over our borders, unwilling to ensure we know who enters the United States, and unwilling to enforce our immigration laws.

Some of the opposition has forgotten their previous support for border walls back then, before they didn't fundamentally disagree with border security or the border wall. But now they simply don't want President Trump or elected Republicans to get a win. What they want is open borders.

In 2006, some of the Democrats still in the Senate today, including Minority Leader CHUCK SCHUMER, voted in favor of the Secure Fence Act to build a southern border wall.

For now, Republicans still control Congress. Rumor is that our leaders are negotiating a deal to avert a shutdown and fund the government through February 8. Once again, we are kicking the fight for border security down the road.

When are we going to stand up and fight, if not now?

Our coalition of Members here have drafted an amendment that would allow us to deliver on our promise to make the necessary policy changes to end catch and release, increase the number of immigration judges, and provide \$5 billion in border wall funding.

In all of the debate about borders and illegal immigration, many of the headlines focus on those who have come here illegally, but I urge you to remember people on the American side of the border. Remember the ranchers and residents living along the border who are impacted by smuggling and trafficking that goes on because of our lack of will in this body. Remember our Border Patrol agents who risk their lives every day trying to keep us secure.

I urge my colleagues in the House and our leadership to think about what is best for America. Is it the status quo, or is it standing up to fight for the security and sovereignty of our Nation?

Clearly, we must stand up and fight now. I urge my fellow Members to support funding for the border wall before January 3 comes; and if we have to, I am willing to stay here to make sure that happens.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to another gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GOSAR).

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, a study came out earlier this year that said the opioid epidemic today is deadlier than the Vietnam war in 1968. That study found that opioids had cost our country more than 1.7 million years of life. Those are moments of joy, family, and community that are lost irrevocably. And as we move into the Christmas season, it is worth thinking about the millions of American families dealing with addiction and overdose tragedies.

We have done a great deal in Congress to try to fight the epidemic, from beefing up grants, to tougher law enforcement, to fixing the pain medication guidelines, to cracking down on bad actors in the pharmaceutical industry. But we have not addressed the immigration issue, which is central to the crisis.

The book, "Dreamland," written by veteran L.A. Times Reporter Sam Quinones, provides one of the most definitive accounts of how we got to this grim place we are today. It details how Mexican nationals south of Arizona pioneered a new model of drug distribution, decentralized and customer-centric, that successfully flooded our towns and cities with black tar heroin just as the availability of prescription opioids was ebbing.

Our porous border was the lynchpin of that model in two ways:

One, it allowed traffickers to be caught by police, to be deported, and to reenter the country, ensuring an unbroken stream of illegal labor for trafficking organizations;

Two, it allowed drug dealers to display their ill-gotten gains at home in Mexico, gaining status in their towns by poisoning our people.

That is above and beyond the simple fact that an insecure border allows massive amounts of drugs to be smuggled into our country.

Make no mistake, we are under chemical attack. Fentanyl is so potent that even a small amount, the equivalent of a few grains of salt, can be lethal. Earlier this year, police seized enough fentanyl to kill 26 million Americans.

Securing the border is a matter of life and death. We have got to build the wall. This amendment that we are talking about here would provide the \$5 billion that the President has asked for and ensures that he has the legal authority he needs to get it done.

Let's back the President and the American people here in the House today and put the wall money in the funding bill. It is not going to happen under NANCY PELOSI, that much is certain. Now is the time. This is the bill, and this is the body, and we are at the right place. The American people can't afford any more delay.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY).

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, we are here to talk about the promise that we made to the American people.

As the proud son of immigrants, my great-grandmother escaped the child

bride situation in Colombia and came here with the shirt on her back and her little girl and just enough skills to make it through in America, and she did it legally.

We are a compassionate country who supports legal immigration, but we are here to talk about illegal immigration and the one chance we have left to solve that.

Border security is a bipartisan issue, and it is not just about a wall or a fence. It is about stopping things like illegal immigration and human trafficking, because seeing little girls sold into sex slavery into this country is not a compassionate thing for the American taxpayer to be a part of.

It is about declining economic conditions for America's working poor, knowing that the average high school dropout in America makes about \$25,000 a year and, over the last 20 years, that has increased the amount of people, through illegal immigration, who don't have a high school diploma by about 25 percent. Who is standing up for the working poor that were born in this country?

And then there is the abuse of the American taxpayer. Pennsylvanians, where I represent a portion of the population, paid an additional \$1.3 billion in taxes this year for things like education, incarceration, healthcare, and a whole raft of social services.

Senior citizens struggling to pay their property taxes in Pennsylvania risk losing their homes paying for those kind of things, and it is completely avoidable.

There is the rise of the opioid crisis, where fentanyl, across the border, the southern border, has increased 750 percent since the beginning of the year. I talked to my DAs today. In the two major counties I represent, that is one death a day due to opioid and fentanyl overdose.

Then there is the potential for terrorism through our southern border, where our Border Patrol says that they seize 10 terrorists a day.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of all those reasons that I have just outlined, there is still just one more that is the most important, and that is that we made a promise to the American people to secure the border. This is our last chance.

NANCY PELOSI will not do this, and the American people are counting on us to do what we said we would do. And that is why I am advocating for the funding package for the border in the CR, or I have to say "no."

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JORDAN).

Mr. JORDAN. Mr. Speaker, everyone knows the old line: Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. But we are going to have to change that line. We are going to need a new one. The new line should be: Fool the American people four times, shame on Congress.

Remember what we did in March? The March big omnibus spending bill?

We said: Oh, no. We are not going to put the border wall funding on this bill because we are going to do it in September.

Then we get to September and say: Do you know what? Wait a minute. We are not going to put it on this bill because we are going to do it on December 7.

And then December 7 has come: Wait a minute. We are not going to keep our promise. We are not going to put the border wall funding money on that bill. We are going to do it December 21.

And what did we learn today? Now they are talking about kicking it to February 8. You have got to be kidding me. Really?

I mean, February 8, when NANCY PELOSI is Speaker, I am supposed to believe—we are supposed to believe that we are then going to build the border security wall and keep our promise from the 2016 campaign? No way.

Four different times we promised something and then kicked the can down the road. I will tell you this: You know when else we should have done it? March, September, December 7.

And now do you know when we really should have done it? Last week. Last week when the President of the United States stood in the Oval Office and told Congresswoman PELOSI: NANCY, this is fine. This is fine. We don't need to go behind closed doors. Transparency is a good thing.

Let's do what we said. Let's build the border security wall that we should have passed last week. Instead of taking a 6-day weekend, we should have passed it last week.

So I am sick of the games. The House Freedom Caucus is sick of the games. More importantly—most importantly—the American people are sick of the games.

□ 2100

So just like Congressman PERRY said, let's do what we said. We make this job way, way too difficult. It is pretty simple. What did you tell the voters you were going to do? What did they elect you to do? Go do that.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, the Freedom Caucus is going to do that. We have an amendment. We have an amendment that says \$5 billion for the wall, reform our asylum laws, fix the problem—a commonsense, basic amendment that everyone in this country knows needs to be done.

And now is the time to do it. We didn't do it the four times before, but now is the time to do it. So let's get it done this week. Let's do what we said.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chairman's leadership of our group. I appreciate his Special Order tonight. We know what we have to do. Let's just do it.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree with the gentleman more. It is time that we deliver on behalf of the American people and fulfill the promises that the President made many months ago.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE), someone who has been key in that, who knows this problem better than most, because he represents a district in New Mexico.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for the time.

Mr. Speaker, I do represent the Second District of New Mexico. That is the part of New Mexico that lies on the border with Mexico.

Make no mistake about it: This issue is one that is important to the entire Nation. We are talking about a single subject, and that is securing the border. That is all the discussion is about. The rest of the spending in the bill, maybe it is right, maybe it is wrong, but that is not part of the discussion. The discussion is: Are we going to secure the border or not?

The gentleman from Ohio had it exactly right, that the President sat there and said we are going to take this in front of the American people. He said: I will take responsibility for it, and we are going to have that discussion.

But then the Speaker of this House has said we are not going to have the discussion.

We came here as Members of Congress to make important decisions, sometimes very weighty decisions, sometimes very hard decisions. Frankly, this decision is not that hard: Secure the border. That is it.

That is all we are asking for from this institution and from our friends in the Senate, but somehow we are finding that that is too hard an ask. The American people don't think it is too hard an ask.

It is not that it is a racial question. The Second District of New Mexico is 52 percent Hispanic, 60 percent overall minority. They agree. No matter how they feel on immigration, no matter how they feel on amnesty, they agree that the border must be secure. They agree that we must know who is coming here and why they are coming here.

As we watched the people gathered in Tijuana, there are concerns about exactly who makes up this group. A secure border allows us to answer those questions. An open border does not allow us to answer those questions.

So I am here tonight to stand with my friends in the Freedom Caucus to say to the Speaker, to say to the leaders, that we simply need to take up this question. We have the amendment. It is very straightforward, very simple.

Mr. Speaker, I support the amendment. I support the question: Will we secure the border? The answer should be yes.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JODY B. HICE).

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from North Carolina for recognizing me tonight.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that immigration continues to be one of the most

pressing issues that we are facing in our country today. The question of illegal immigration is not going away. In fact, it is growing. It is getting worse. It is getting more complex with each passing day, and Congress has repeatedly failed to take any action whatsoever.

We have the opportunity now in this spending bill to finally deliver results for the American people—again, something that we have not done over and over and over again.

The Department of Homeland Security has reported that, roughly, on average, 2,000 illegal aliens are crossing our southern border every day. Now we learn from Border Patrol that, in recent months, there has been an increase of 90 percent attempted illegal individuals crossing our borders compared to this time last year.

The border crisis is for real, and it is time for us to act.

The President has requested \$5 billion. That is really not a whole lot of money compared to the \$1.3 trillion that we spend in discretionary spending every year.

Look, the wall is not the whole answer, but it is the first step, because walls work. Wherever there have been walls put in place, there have been great results that have been produced: for example, a 92 percent drop in illegal traffic in San Diego since a wall was there; 95 percent decrease in El Paso; 90 percent decrease in Tucson. Walls work.

Now, look, there are other things we need to do, some practical steps, from closing the asylum loopholes, stopping chain migration, making E-Verify mandatory. There are other things, but I hear, right now, the voices of millions of Americans from my district and across the country, as we have all heard the chant: Build the wall. Build the wall. Build the wall.

We are standing here tonight as a voice for millions of Americans who feel like they have lost their voice in Washington, and we are saying it is time right now. Build the wall. Let's do it.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. NORMAN).

Mr. NORMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this Special Order.

You know, I walked in this Chamber tonight, and I thought: This brings a new meaning to "major in the minor." We have something that is as important as the sovereignty of this country in securing our borders, and here we are, at the last hour, saying we are going to get out of here before Friday on something this important.

You know, I was in line, getting some work done, and the President came on. He challenged Speaker PELOSI, and he challenged the Senator. He said: Bring the fight on. We are going to stay here. We are going to fund the wall. We are going to get the \$5 billion.

Now we hear talk that maybe we won't. We are going to pass a continuing resolution for 2 months.

I am sick of it. Nobody can fund your business month by month by month.

Here we are, abdicating our constitutional obligations to make this country sovereign.

As has been pointed out by Mr. MEADOWS and Mr. JORDAN, the drugs, all the things that come into this country—I am for immigration, but it is legal immigration. We need to sit up here as long as it takes. If it is the next 6 months, sit up here until we get it.

If we think we are going to get it when the gavel passes on January 3, it is not going to happen. I support what we are doing. Now is the time for us to have a backbone, finally, and support this country and make sovereign borders a law. Fund it.

You know, \$5 billion? How did the previous administration get \$153 billion to give to a rogue country? We can't come up with \$5 billion? It is sad, to say the least.

I support what we are doing. Hopefully, we can get this thing done. Sitting up here, it is time to fight.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time I have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 13 minutes remaining.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GRIFFITH), my good friend.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for recognizing me tonight. I appreciate it.

Recognizing that the time is drawing short, and we have lots of other people who want to speak on this issue, I will attempt to keep myself in check on the time.

Mr. Speaker, everybody knows we have to secure our border. When we talk about building the wall, we are not talking just about bricks and mortar. We are talking about securing our borders with all devices available to us, whether that be drones or smart fences like they have in Israel where they protect 17 miles of border with a fence that, if something hits it, they send people out to see what is going on.

We have to use all the tools in the toolbox. And the \$5 billion is just the start on what we need to do to protect all of our borders, but it is an important start.

We have heard about the drug crisis, and all of our districts are affected by it. A lot of times, people say in the mountains of southwest Virginia: Morgan, why are you so concerned about this illegal immigration?

Let me tell you why. The Mexican drug cartels are bringing methamphetamine into my district. They use it as a distribution area. They are the main supplier of that drug. Now that we have gotten opioids a little bit under control, and we are starting to get that where it should be, the Mexican cartels are our biggest problem in the mountains of southwest Virginia.

It is important that we secure our borders, build the wall, protect the American people, protect our borders, and protect our laws.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUDD), my good friend.

Mr. BUDD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for recognizing me tonight.

Mr. Speaker, we know our immigration system is broken and desperately in need of reform. No sovereign country in the world is scrutinized the way America is just for simply wanting to secure our borders.

For decades, the United States has taken in millions of immigrants. In fact, that number is about a million per year, and that is something we are going to continue to do.

Immigrants, historically, have been a major asset to the growth and prosperity of our country. However, the issue before America is not legal immigration but illegal immigration.

It is interesting to me that, throughout the years, Democrats have supported securing our borders. In 2006, the Secure Fence Act was signed into law by President Bush authorizing 700 miles of border fence and \$50 billion in total maintenance. That is a far stretch from the small \$5 billion, in comparison, that President Trump is asking for today.

We should remember that the Secure Fence Act passed through Congress with bold and broad Democrat support.

So in 2013, we should also remember that Senator SCHUMER himself sponsored a bill that invested \$46 billion in border security improvements that added 700 miles of border fencing. That is \$41 billion more than what President Trump is currently asking for.

So what changed, Mr. Speaker, between now and then? Simply, politics. Politics is the only thing that has changed. But, to me, securing our country's borders and making sure people feel safe should be above politics.

Our ICE agents and Border Patrol need the necessary resources to do their jobs effectively and with confidence. It is hard to plug a leak when you are working with the wrong tools. The solution is simply to shut off the water at the source.

In closing, I would pose these questions to my friends across the aisle: If now is not the time to secure our border, then when is? If not today, then when? And where do we go from here?

If we can't come together to solve a problem that both Republicans and Democrats know exists, I worry that our tribal political environment will hold the security of American citizens hostage for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my Democrat colleagues to turn back the clock and remember a time when putting the country first was more important than putting the party first.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for his friendship and for his time.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. PALMER).

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to call upon this body to fulfill its duty to protect the American people.

Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle want to claim that strengthening border security is about separating families or preventing them from immigrating to the U.S. In reality, it is about protecting the American people by stopping the flow of dangerous individuals across the southern border.

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Nielsen has confirmed that ISIS has produced written materials that encourage ISIS followers to cross our Southwest border, given the loopholes that they are also aware of, and that, on average, her department now blocks 10 known or suspected terrorists a day from traveling to or attempting to enter the United States.

The four individuals shown here, one of whom had been previously identified and flagged for insurgency/terrorism, were stopped in Panama while trying to make their way to the U.S. Thanks to a fortunate tip and coordination between U.S. and Panamanian law enforcement, these individuals were stopped.

This should be alarming to every American, especially concerning the dangerous individuals we may have missed and will continue to miss due to our lack of robust border security.

I am proud of the job our Border Patrol and law enforcement officers are doing to protect their country, and I urge my colleagues to do our duty to protect the American people from dangerous individuals by taking border security seriously and fully funding the President's proposal for border security.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CLOUD).

Mr. CLOUD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for recognizing me tonight.

Mr. Speaker, tonight I speak to the humanitarian and criminal crisis at our southern border.

This crisis has been permitted to exist because of Congress' failure to act. For over 30 years, the American people have been promised results, but they have received empty promises.

We know from history that our southern border wall works. This is not a new concept. Where we have implemented a wall, we have seen great success in curbing illicit activity.

Our Nation is a generous nation, one of the most diverse in the world, and our generosity is being taken advantage of by illegal cartels across our southern border. These cartels have created a humanitarian and criminal crisis that abuses the rule of law and costs innocent lives.

Cartels recruit and send migrants across our border, making thousands of

dollars a person, in a strategy to tax our human resources and distract from our enforcement against drug trafficking.

As the Representative of the 27th District of Texas, the southern part of my district is just 2 hours from the border.

□ 2115

I know the good men and women who serve on our southern border, and they always prioritize life. Cartels know this and take advantage of it.

Failure to complete a southern border wall and loopholes in our asylum laws have created a magnet for illegal immigration. According to DHS, around 80 percent of asylum cases that go to a hearing are rejected by the judge as illegitimate.

DHS spokesman Tyler Houlton pointed out earlier this year that smugglers and traffickers understand our broken immigration laws better than most.

The catch-and-release process, whereby migrants come into the country and are issued a date to appear in court, often years away, are released into the interior, and it is driving this humanitarian crisis. ICE reports that the number of migrants, including many women and children seeking entry, has increased dramatically in recent years. They often find themselves at risk for assault and abuse, such as rape, beatings, kidnapping, and robbery.

Tonight, Mr. Speaker, we are here advocating for an end to the humanitarian and criminal crisis on our southern border caused by Congress' failure to act. This means ending the status quo, funding border security, and closing the loopholes in our broken asylum system.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time I have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from North Carolina has 3 minutes remaining.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BABIN).

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, "securing our border" is a term that we have heard so often it has lost its punch inside the beltway. But that doesn't mean the American people have forgotten about it.

We made a promise to our folks to secure our borders, and we have to keep that promise. Without question, funding to build a wall is necessary, and now is our chance to do it. Many sections of our border cannot be secured without a wall, and Congress must act to ensure that it is built. But bad policies like catch and release must be addressed by Congress as well.

Take the recent quotes and actions from many of the migrants who have been in these caravans, abusing our catch-and-release policy to seek asylee status in order to work in our country. These migrants were demanding entrance and jobs, waving foreign flags

while burning ours, cursing our government and our President, and vowing that our laws mean nothing to them.

Are these people who share our allegiances? Should we not demand a lawful immigration system so that we can determine who we let in? Is not a secure border a prerequisite for that?

We must increase penalties for illegally crossing our border. Earlier this year, I cosponsored the Zero Tolerance for Illegal Entry Act, which would make doing so a felony. This would encourage legitimate asylum seekers to do so at authorized points of entry. This should be a component of reform.

Just this week, in a story we have seen over and over, agents arrested illegal border crossers with over 100 pounds of meth. Without our border agents, these dangerous drugs would be in our schools and in our communities.

We made a promise to our constituents to build this wall. We must prioritize the interests of the American people. I am willing to fight for this, and I hope that my colleagues are as well.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for his leadership.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, as I close out this particular Special Order, I think it is appropriate for us to remind the American people that there is a bad case of Potomac fever up here in Washington, D.C. They forget what they promised the American people, yet what they must do is not forget this time.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to back up the President. If he vetoes this bill, we will be there. But, more importantly, the American people will be there. They will be there to support him. Let's build the wall and make sure that we do our job in Congress.

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

SOMEONE PLEASE WAKE ME UP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GARRETT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GARRETT. Mr. Speaker, someone please wake me up. I think I am having a nightmare.

What if I told you that, in the Middle East now, there is a place where Christians, Muslims, Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Yazidis—women and men—all sit together at the same table, as the result of the beginnings of a democratic process where tolerance and pluralism is a core value, and where we have seen safety, security, and prosperity emerge from the ashes one of the most horrific conflicts of the modern age. What if I told you that.

What if I told you that a foreign state actor spent \$10 million a month, to our reckoning, to influence thought in Washington, D.C., alone, to tell lies about this fledgling, tolerant democracy in the Middle East.

What if I told you that the very Iranian regime that took the lives of

American women and men on the battlefield in Iraq was celebrating right now along with Vladimir Putin and Bashar al-Assad and Turkey's neo-Ottoman fascist Erdogan.

I can tell you all those things because they are true.

Someone please wake me up. I think I am having a nightmare.

I just spent my Thanksgiving and 2 weeks of my life—a lot of money and a lot of time—away from my family to meet with brave people spanning multiple ethnicities who, like the First Continental Congress, have the recognition of exactly no foreign governments as a legitimate emerging government; who are different from you and me only by virtue of the happenstance of fate that they would be born somewhere as opposed to another place; who have quite literally shed the lifeblood of their children on battlefields that most Americans have never heard of, from Deir ez-Zor, Manbij, Jarablus; people who fought, bled, and died in homes that their families had inhabited in the Kabul River valley, the Jazeera province; and who were the tip of President Trump's spear in rooting out the combat components of a radical, warped, hateful ideology embodied by Daesh or ISIS.

And today, without warning, we said good luck.

The Syrian Democratic Council is not a Kurdish experiment in north and eastern Syria. It is an experiment that was largely started by Kurds, yes, but it is an experiment that includes men and women from across the ethnic and religious diversity of the region.

What we read about in any publication that comes out of Turkey, which has about the worst press freedom on the planet, is how the PKK has been engaged in terrorist activity in Turkey, and anyone affiliated with the PKK by virtue of the accident of their birth as a Kurd is somehow a terrorist. Folks, this is not true.

I met with everyone, from chief executives down to city councils. When you go to Deir ez-Zor, where the bulk of the population is Arab, the city council is Arab. And when you go to Manbij, the leadership is Arab. And when you go to Jazeera, the leadership is Kurdish and Christian, and it is male and female.

This Chamber that we stand in, in this venerated body, exists not only because of the blood and sweat and tears of innumerable Americans not only in the Revolution but throughout our history, but also because foreigners were willing to stand up in support of an idea that was freedom and self-determination: Lafayette, Pulaski, Kosciuszko, von Steuben—German, Polish, French.

Yet again, we betray those who have shed their blood to advance American policy.

Look, don't make the commitment to begin with. It is one thing to learn that the United States has equivocated on its policy and people died. It is an-

other thing to learn that the United States is equivocating on its policy and people with whom you have broken bread are about to die.

I told them when I was there: I am here on my own time. I do not formulate American policy. I happen to be a Member of Congress, but, by God, I will stand up and be heard so that you might have the right that was bequeathed to you, not by a political administration anywhere, but by God, to live free of fear, to sleep soundly in your ancestral home, to worship or not worship as you choose.

Ain Issa is the name of the town where, by happenstance, the Syrian Democratic Council has put some functions of its government. Ain Issa translates to English as the "Eyes of Christ." You can't make this up.

In my entire life, I have been proud of the 1 in 26 luck that I had to slip from the womb the son of Lois and TOM GARRETT in the Commonwealth of Virginia, born in Georgia, in the greatest country on the face of the planet.

But how many times must we muck up the endgame: the bloodletting in Cambodia and Laos, the purges in Iraq after 1991, the betrayal of the Kurds in 1985, the ignoring of vindictive revenge killings in 2004, the encouragement and then withdrawal in 2017.

Ironically, Mr. Speaker, the Russians are far more loyal friends than the Americans are. It is beyond me.

Somebody wake me up. I am having a nightmare.

To say that ISIS is defeated and that was our sole mission is, at the very least, to exhibit a complete lack of understanding of what is going on, on the ground.

I stood on the front lines near Jarablus by a building that was shot up that day by the Free Syrian Army, who we funded, at a military post manned by people of various ethnicities. And the Free Syrian Army did this while the Turkish military watched.

Iranians seek to build a land bridge to the Mediterranean. Hezbollah is a wholly owned subsidiary of Iran—it functions in Israel—and is the only terrorist organization I know of that has taken human life on every single inhabited continent—Oceania, Australia, Asia, Europe, Africa, South America, North America. And we are just opening up the door.

Eighty-seven people were killed in Deir ez-Zor province within 24 hours on either side of the time I visited. This wasn't a long time ago. This was Thanksgiving.

This fight is long from over. Frankly, if I am an ISIS recruiter, the idea that, "Look, the Americans are leaving," will only strengthen their position.

So let me make this metaphor, Mr. Speaker. We have a patient. That patient is Syria. It is stricken with four cancers. There is the regime in Russia; there is Turkey; there is Iran; and there is ISIS. We have just eradicated the bulk of one cancer, dropped the scalpel, left the surgery room, and declared that the patient is healed.