

Frankly, the American people tuned out a long time ago. They find the proceeding simply boring, and rightly so. In fact, a recent focus group of Democrats said they don't even care about this impeachment trial. They are not interested, and they are ready to move on.

The truth is that, despite all of the repetitive accusations of coverup, quid pro quo, he said, she said, et cetera, et cetera, this is nothing more than an attempt at a soft coup against President Trump by the people who still can't get over the fact that he beat Hillary Clinton fair and square at the ballot box.

Just listen to some of the recent rants made by the impeachment managers. As one manager says: "The President's misconduct cannot be decided at the ballot box, for we cannot be assured that the vote will be fairly won."

What an insult to American voters. If we can't trust the American voters, who can we trust? Does he think they are gullible? Does he think he is better than them?

Or take the comments of another impeachment manager, a Democrat. He said, referring to President Trump: "He is a dictator. This must not stand, and that is another reason he must be removed from office."

These are insulting to the American public who chose this President over Hillary Clinton.

But these are the types of comments you would expect in a Third World country in which military coups are a common occurrence, not in the United States of America where we honor the votes and choices of the American people.

President Zelensky and President Trump both said there was no pressure or coercion, and the call transcripts have been released to the public to prove this.

But even if there had been pressure, if withholding foreign aid is an impeachable offense, why did Joe Biden threaten to do it?

As I have stated repeatedly, if the bar of high crimes and misdemeanors has been brought down so low to include President Donald Trump's so-called abuse of power, then Joe Biden should be charged for his actions in Ukraine. Instead, he gets a pass.

This impeachment trial is simply a farce. But it is an expensive and time wasting one foisted on the American people by those who do not have our country's best interests at heart.

Even the Speaker of the House, who is a Democrat, said, if there is going to be an impeachment trial, if there is going to be impeachment proceedings, it should be bipartisan, it would have to be bipartisan.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing bipartisan about this sham is the opposition to it. Democrats joined every Republican to vote against it in the House. I expect we are going to see similar results in the Senate, a bipartisan opposition to this partisan sham.

I look forward to the Senate bringing this farce to a speedy conclusion.

#### END THE USE OF TOXIC MILITARY BURN PITS

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

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address one of the most pressing health threats facing veterans across this Nation: exposure to burn pits.

Burn pits are literal pits, sometimes 10 acres large, used by the military to burn trash, medical waste, jet fuel, batteries, even human waste. As you might imagine, this creates large plumes of toxic black smoke, which can have terrible health effects for anyone exposed.

Our servicemembers and veterans who were exposed to burn pits are developing severe, debilitating pulmonary diseases like pulmonary fibrosis and constricted bronchiolitis, leaving them oxygen dependent. And young veterans are dying from rare cancers of the brain, pancreas, blood cells, and other organs.

This means that many of our servicemembers survived the battlefield but only become delayed casualties of war at home, dying due to lung and pulmonary illnesses, from cancers, from autoimmune diseases from their burn pit exposures.

If we don't act now, they will be resigned to the same fate as our Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange, who waited up to 30 years to get the help they needed. For many, it was too late.

Our veterans cannot wait. It is my objective to end the use of toxic military burn pits once and for all and give servicemembers and veterans the care they need. That is why, today, I urge a vote on two bills that would go a long way to address this critically important issue:

H.R. 4574, the Veterans' Right to Breathe Act, which would establish presumption of service-connected exposure to burn pits for nine evidence-based pulmonary diseases, including chronic bronchiolitis and others; and

H.R. 4137, the Jennifer Kepner HOPE Act, which would make veterans exposed to burn pits eligible for low-cost healthcare through the Priority Group 6 under the Veterans Health Administration.

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These bills are part of the comprehensive plan to end the use of burn pits, educate physicians and veterans on their health effects, get veterans and servicemembers exposed to burn pits the healthcare and benefits they need, and continue research to fully understand the health impacts posed by burn pits.

We cannot let burn pit exposure become this generation's Agent Orange. We must act now for veterans and for their families.

CBP DIRECTIVE FALLS SHORT

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because children and families in CBP

custody continue to be without basic humanitarian standards of care.

Late last year, Customs and Border Protection put out a directive outlining its "enhanced medical support efforts," with the objective of mitigating risks for people in CPB custody along the southwest border. But their directive for addressing medical needs falls short of even basic humane treatment to prevent the heartbreaking conditions I saw when I visited the southern border: people piled on top of each other in cold, windowless, concrete rooms, crowded with so many bodies you couldn't even see the floor; open toilets in crowded cells; and visibly sick children coughing on one another.

The conditions I witnessed were inhumane and inconsistent with our American values and our moral conscience, and the CBP directive does nothing to address them.

The directive does not include, for example, pregnant women, the elderly, or disabled individuals as vulnerable populations who need priority screening. The CBP medical directive does not address humanitarian standards for water, sanitation, hygiene, shelter, or food and nutrition, nor does it even set standards for private, safe, clean, and reliable toilets with proper waste disposal.

Last year, I wrote the House-passed H.R. 3239, the Humanitarian Standards for Individuals in CBP Custody Act. This bill sets basic public health standards for people in CBP's care, such as health screening priorities, nutrition, food standards, water, sanitation, hygiene, and reporting requirements. It makes sure individuals have essentials, such as toothbrushes, diapers, and baby formula.

Because this bipartisan bill was blocked from consideration in the Senate, these standards of care for children and families are not currently law, and the recent CBP medical directive falls short. It fails to outline proper humanitarian standards of care.

This is why the Senate must take up and pass the bipartisan bill, the Humanitarian Standards for Individuals in CBP Custody Act, to ensure CBP's treatment of children and families is consistent with our American values and the principles of basic human dignity and prevent children from dying under the custody and responsibility of CBP.

#### CELEBRATING HICKORY'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Hickory, North Carolina.

In 1870, Adolphus Shuford founded Hickory Tavern, which would later become the city of Hickory. Originally, it

featured seven businesses, seven manufacturing plants, and had a population of 330 people.

In the 1800s, Hickory was a primary trading center along the Western North Carolina Railroad, and it grew into one of the largest hubs for business manufacturing and textiles in the Southeast United States.

Today, Hickory is home to more than 40,000 people. It holds data centers operated by the world's largest technology companies, and over 40 percent of the world's fiber optic cable is manufactured there.

Hickory's history goes even beyond its industrial roots. Some other noteworthy features are: the Hickory Motor Speedway, one of the most legendary short tracks in the history of American stock car racing; the local community college, Catawba Valley Community College, which is providing some of the most excellent education offered anywhere in the country to the citizens of the area; Lenoir-Rhyne University, one of North Carolina's premier schools, which was founded in 1891; a wonderful art center; and a Minor League Baseball team, the Hickory Crawdads, which was founded 25 years ago.

While the city continues to grow, its historical landmarks still stand as a testament to its rich history. From the Propst House to Maple Grove, Union Square to the Henry River Mill Village, Hickory's legacy as a leader in textiles manufacturing and trading is ever-present.

Hickory has played a pivotal role in North Carolina's history, and it continues to make a sizeable impact on North Carolina's economy.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent Hickory, North Carolina, and I am certain it will continue to prosper and celebrate many more significant milestones in the future.

#### IMPEACHMENT TRIAL NEEDS WITNESSES

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the impeachment of President Donald Trump has forced our Nation into a constitutional crisis.

On the one hand, Democrats have led a good faith effort to discover the truth and hold President Trump and his administration responsible for their destructive and corrupt actions in Ukraine. While on the other hand, Republicans have refused outright to meaningfully engage in the fact-finding process.

In our House, Republicans have ignored the fact that Russia has invaded Ukraine, a sovereign nation. Ukraine is a scrimmage line for liberty in Europe today, a continent whose liberty we restored and paid a deep price for it.

Despite overwhelming evidence in the Senate, Republicans have complained they have learned nothing new

from the impeachment trial. Yet, they have voted over 10 times to block new evidence and witnesses.

For instance, it is clear that President Trump's former National Security Advisor John Bolton's testimony has relevance to the Senate's efforts to find the truth—the truth. Bolton has firsthand knowledge of the administration's duplicitous actions in Ukraine and President Trump's malintent. Yet, Republicans in the Senate have refused to subpoena Bolton, despite his statement that he is willing to testify.

Additionally, this week, The New York Times reported that President Trump told his former National Security Advisor John Bolton that he wanted the \$391 million in security assistance to Ukraine frozen—a nation at war—until Ukrainian officials agreed to carry out investigations into Democrats and the Bidens.

According to a manuscript written by Bolton, such a claim is relevant and warrants immediate investigation by Congress. Yet, Politico reported today that Republican leadership in the Senate remains opposed to additional witnesses, including Bolton, though dissent is emerging in their ranks.

Mr. Speaker, I feel strongly that if the Senate fails to allow additional witnesses relevant to the impeachment trial and subsequently votes to acquit, such inaction will set a dangerous and perhaps even irreversible precedent, one that allows the executive branch to ignore congressional oversight with impunity.

Today, President Trump has refused to comply with any congressional subpoenas obstructing justice, even going a step further as to block any and intimidate executive branch officials from cooperating with the House investigation.

An executive branch unaccountable to Congress, the branch of government most connected with the American people, is a dangerous prospect. We cannot allow this to become the new norm.

Ours is a nation of laws, not men or women. Laws protect us. The balance of power between our three branches of government at the local, State, and Federal levels is the only protection we have from ourselves.

Our Founders wrote into our Constitution the means to hold a lawless President accountable and remove him from office. The rule of law is sacred, and that is why no one is above the law.

Regardless of anyone's opinions of President Trump, personal affections are not the issue. The issue at hand is independent of party or politics. The question is: Who among us will sit silent and allow the voice of the people to be trampled, and who will rise up to keep the Presidency accountable to our Republic?

Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege to serve alongside public servants in both parties. While I have had disagreements with Republican colleagues on

policy, I remain immensely thankful for their bipartisanship in so many ways and willingness to engage on issues to strengthen our Nation's national security and improve the lives of working people, calling many Republicans, actually, my friends.

But that is why, Mr. Speaker, I am so disappointed today. My Republican colleagues have so far failed to act in defense of our democracy. They seem to live in an alternate reality from our own.

The American people have made it clear they want additional witnesses to ensure a fair trial. They want to hear what Ambassador Bolton and other witnesses have to say. Senate Republicans should let them testify under oath.

Finally, I enter into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD the words of Dr. Daniel Rappaport, a constituent and a distinguished medical doctor at the University of Toledo Medical Center, urging the Senate to convict President Trump.

His words: "The impeachment of President Trump has forced our Nation into a constitutional crisis. If the Senate fails to hold President Trump accountable, as is its constitutional duty, then a dangerous precedent will be set, one that empowers the executive branch to ignore congressional oversight with impunity.

"Combined with the increasing power of the executive in recent decades, in addition to the President's veto power, the capacity of the legislative branch to rein in the executive will be ever more limited, weakening the American's people will in their own government.

"This is an outcome that must be avoided at all costs. The Senate alone has the power to do what is right to preserve the balance of power between the legislative and executive branches. The Senate must vote to convict President Trump."

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

#### PAIN IS THE PRICE OF AMERICA'S HEALTHCARE

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

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, the \$3 trillion healthcare industry continues to crush the middle class. Americans are paying more than ever and getting ever less as they struggle to access care. The cost of care for both workers and employers is outpacing wage growth.

What drives the cost of care in America today is lack of transparency, consolidation, and overregulation that is leading to administrative glut. The time is now to confront these cost drivers. President Trump has addressed these exact issues in recent months.