

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the bipartisan Southeast Asia Strategy Act, of which I am a proud Democratic lead on the bill.

In 2017, Congresswoman WAGNER and I cofounded the Congressional Caucus on ASEAN to strengthen our Nation's relationships in Southeast Asia. ASEAN and its member nations are of critical importance to the United States. Enduring organizations like ASEAN will be key to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The United States is already making key investments in the region alongside allies and partners like Japan, Australia, and India—notably, the recent Quad commitment to fund, manufacture, and distribute vaccines across Southeast Asia.

The Southeast Asia Strategy Act will build on these investments by reinforcing ASEAN centrality as U.S. policy and directing the Secretary of State to develop a comprehensive plan for engaging the institution and the region it represents.

This legislation comes at a crucial time for Southeast Asia, notably amidst the deteriorating situation in Myanmar following the recent military coup.

Given the significant and rapidly developing events in the region, Congress must send a message of the importance of the region by passing this bill.

It is also important that the administration nominates a U.S. Ambassador to ASEAN as quickly as possible. It is also imperative that the administration consistently sends senior officials to regional summits. Our Nation needs a voice in Southeast Asia now more than ever.

I urge my colleagues to pass this legislation and help build stronger ties between the United States and the peoples of Southeast Asia. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. WAGNER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1083, the Southeast Asia Strategy Act, important legislation that I introduced to ensure the United States engages proactively and meaningfully in a critical region of the world.

This powerhouse region joins the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean regions and serves as a conduit for global trade. The Southeast Asian states are increasingly vital to the prosperity of the U.S. economy, generating hundreds of thousands of American jobs.

The People's Republic of China, eager to undermine U.S. interests in this key region, is aggressively working to expand its influence in Southeast Asia. It seeks to exploit its predatory investment, development, and trade policies;

illegal military installations in the South China Sea; and disinformation campaigns to coerce countries to accept its agenda.

The United States has long enjoyed strong relations with Southeast Asia, and it must now fully realize this strategic partnership. The Southeast Asia Strategic Act will ensure the United States develops and communicates a coherent regional strategy that addresses all aspects of the relationship, from trade and humanitarian goals to diplomatic and security arrangements.

We have a national interest in sustaining U.S. leadership in Southeast Asia, supporting human rights and respect for democratic freedoms, and articulating our strategic priorities.

We will find willing partners in our many friends and allies in the region that share our grave concerns regarding China's belligerence and growing power.

I thank Representative CASTRO, with whom I co-chair the Congressional Caucus on ASEAN, for working with me on this legislation. Congress' strong bipartisan support for U.S. engagement in Southeast Asia sends an unmistakable message of American resolve and leadership to the region.

Madam Speaker, I again urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1083, the Southeast Asia Strategy Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

H.R. 1083, the Southeast Asia Strategies Act, introduced by Mrs. WAGNER, is important legislation that will recommit the United States to strengthening and deepening our ties to southeast Asia and the ASEAN economic union. This bill will reinforce the United States' cooperation with countries in the Indo-Pacific region and lay the groundwork for improved engagement and increased prosperity for America and its partner nations.

Madam Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CASTRO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1083.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

TROPICAL FOREST AND CORAL REEF CONSERVATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2021

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 241) to reauthorize the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act of 1998.

The Clerk read the title of the bill. The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 241

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2021".

SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION.

Section 806(d) of the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431d(d)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

"(9) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2022.

"(10) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2023.

"(11) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2024.

"(12) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2025.

"(13) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2026."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CASTRO) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 241.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 241, the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2021, introduced by Mr. CHABOT.

In this Congress, the House Foreign Affairs Committee aims to reprioritize and redouble our legislative efforts related to the environment, conservation, and climate change. Climate change already poses a significant threat, and what we do now will significantly impact how damaging climate change will be in the years to come.

If we do not act now, we will fail to mitigate the adverse effects posed by climate change. We will see growing food insecurity, migration and conflict, threatening our shared interests and security.

President Biden has already set a positive, ambitious agenda for international climate action. His first summit, the Climate Leaders Summit, will take place this very week, on April 22, during which the United States will reclaim its leadership role in galvanizing international support for protecting our planet.

We will continue to work closely with other nations in the lead-up to the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Glasgow this November and beyond, understanding that nothing short of an international response can meet this incredible challenge.

We have our work cut out for us, no doubt, which is why I am pleased to

bring forth this excellent bipartisan measure that would reauthorize the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act. This highly successful debt-for-nature program has yielded tangible environmental benefits and returns on investment since first enacted in 1998. It offers eligible countries the opportunity to reduce debt owed to the United States when they invest in local ecologically and economically vital forest and coral reef ecosystems.

It is a win-win situation. According to the Congressional Research Service, since 1998, restructured debt agreements have saved more than 67 million acres of tropical forests in countries such as Botswana, Brazil, the Philippines, and Indonesia. They help strengthen civil society in conservation and environmental protection efforts and build public-private partnerships in developing countries, thereby advancing U.S. international development and democracy objectives.

Furthermore, these agreements help reduce the debt in these developing countries, lessening fiscal pressures, promoting capital market reforms, and stimulating economic growth while helping to protect the environment.

The world's forests are nature's lungs, and the ocean's coral reefs support a quarter of all marine life. This legislation puts in place economic incentives that can help drive good environmental stewardship, while promoting robust democracies and economic growth overseas.

I am pleased to support this important bill and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise this evening in support of H.R. 241, the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2021, bipartisan legislation that I introduced along with my Democratic colleague, Mr. SHERMAN of California, earlier this year.

Developing countries are home to some of the world's most endangered and biologically diverse tropical forests and coral reefs. These critical ecosystems support the livelihoods of local populations, not to mention an abundance of animal species. Coral reefs are critical to the world's fish stocks and are magnets for tourism and the accompanying economic growth. It is in the interest of the whole world to protect and responsibly manage both tropical rainforests and coral reefs.

Unfortunately, however, whether it is deforestation, pollution, overfishing, or some other cause, these vital natural resources are threatened across the globe.

Today's legislation seeks to safeguard tropical forests and coral reefs by revitalizing the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act of 1998. Since the introduction of this legisla-

tion 23 years ago, this effort has been led by Ohio's great Senator, ROB PORTMAN, who was in the House at that time and who is leading the effort in the Senate one more time before he leaves office. Congressman SHERMAN and I were cosponsors of that effort back in 1998, and we are proud of its results over the years.

This program has already protected, as my colleague from Texas mentioned, 67 million acres of tropical forests across the globe. In terms of carbon emission, that is the equivalent of taking 11 million cars off the road.

This program does development right. It forgives debt, which some developing nations owe the United States, in exchange for investment in local conservation. Instead of providing a handout with questionable results, the debt forgiveness comes with requirements that ensure that the money grows local economies and benefits those who rely on healthy ecosystems the most.

Also, by assisting developing countries to properly manage and sustainably develop their own resources, it follows the old adage of "teaching a man to fish" so that the American taxpayer doesn't have to keep providing the fish.

Our constituents back home are rightfully skeptical oftentimes about foreign aid because we have a lot of ineffective programs that spend their money year after year without moving countries towards self-reliance. We owe it to the American taxpayers to ensure that aid programs are targeted, effective, and come to an end. H.R. 241 is all three.

Further, due to the peculiar structure of the type of debt this program forgives, developing countries would not have been paying back the portion that we are forgiving anytime soon anyway. A lot of it has already been outstanding for 10, 20, or even 30 years. Since the U.S. is unlikely to recoup the debt in a reasonable timeframe anyway, we might as well get something in return that benefits those countries, benefits us, and really benefits the entire world and those ecosystems and those forests and the animals that reside there and the coral reefs and the fish and other life that is there. So, really, it benefits so many.

Finally, our legislation is one more tool to counter China. Whereas China's One Belt One Road initiative oftentimes produces corrupt, elite-centered, get-rich-quick debt traps, our program is exactly the opposite. It brings transparency to natural resource management by engaging civil society, focuses on the people who depend on these ecosystems for food and economic activity instead of on elites, fosters sustainable development and is debt forgiveness instead of a debt trap. The One Belt One Road initiative oftentimes gets these countries in a huge debt trap that they never get out of, and China benefits instead of the countries that one thinks might benefit from One Belt One Road.

With this program, the State Department can showcase the U.S. development model and bring real gains in the developing world. It is in the interest of the whole world to protect tropical forests and coral reefs. This program does so in a targeted, proven, sustainable way, and pays for it by forgiving debt we would never have seen repaid anyway.

In my mind, this is a win for the taxpayer, a win for the developing countries, a win for America, and a win for the whole world. I would urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I, again, thank BRAD SHERMAN, Democratic congressman from California, for his cosponsorship and his leadership on this.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, I will close by saying this is really a good bill. I thank Senator ROB PORTMAN also for his leadership on this here in the House, when he was here, and then over in the Senate. We took this up after he left the House and have been working on it for years.

I thank Mr. SHERMAN and a lot of Republicans and Democrats for working on this together. This is bipartisan legislation that really does benefit the whole world. I wish we did more stuff like this around here.

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

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 241, introduced by Mr. CHABOT, is a bipartisan bill that reauthorizes the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act.

The debt-for-nature swaps created by this program have been highly successful in generating support for tropical forest or coral reef conservation activities in exchange for relieving debt owed to the United States Government. This bill is a win-win, protecting forest and coral reef ecosystems, lessening the fiscal burden of low-income countries, and stimulating economic growth in local communities.

I hope my colleagues, both Republican and Democrat, will join me in supporting this bill.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CASTRO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 241.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HONORING ROBERT LEDER

(Mr. TORRES of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. TORRES of New York. Madam Speaker, Robert Leder, as his name would suggest, was a natural leader, loved by the thousands of students whose lives he lifted.

I, for one, would not be here were it not for Robert Leder, who set me on a trajectory that led from public housing in the Bronx to the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. My story is a mere footnote in the much larger legacy of public service that Robert Leder left behind after his passing in 2018.

Mr. Leder entered public education in the 1960s as a Spanish teacher. In the late 1970s, he rose to become the principal of Herbert H. Lehman High School in the Bronx, a position he held for nearly three decades, making him, at the time, the longest-serving educator in America's largest city. As principal, he knew the name of every student. He held everyone around him to the highest standards, but he held himself to the highest standard of all.

We, the alumni of Lehman High School, will always love you, Mr. Leder. We will never forget you.

I will not always be a Member of Congress, but I will always be the grateful student of the greatest educator I have ever known, Robert Leder. May he rest in peace.

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CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Week of the Young Child. Sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Week of the Young Child focuses on celebrating early learning, young children, their teachers, families, and communities.

This year's celebration took place from April 10th to the 16th. The National Association for the Education of Young Children first established the Week of the Young Child in 1971, recognizing the early childhood years lay the foundation for children's success in school and later in life.

Children's earliest years are the most important when it comes to shaping their learning and development. High-quality early care and educational services directly correlate to the health and well-being of our communities.

Madam Speaker, with more than 400 childcare facilities in my district, and as a senior member of the Education and Labor Committee, I understand the importance of quality early care and

education experiences as well as access to high-quality care.

Madam Speaker, let's take a moment to recognize the vital work performed by early childcare and education professionals and express our gratitude.

RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, as co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional Ukraine Caucus, I rise today with deep concern regarding the Kremlin's increased aggression toward our ally, Ukraine.

Currently, Russia is amassing troops in and close to Ukraine. Ukrainian officials estimate about 80,000 Russian troops are amassed on its border.

U.S. European Command General Tod Wolters said, the current Russian force mirrors the size of the infiltration of forces that occurred back in 2014 when Russia illegally invaded Ukrainian territory.

This aggression serves one purpose: Russia's hybrid warfare to threaten the security of the Transatlantic Alliance.

I am so grateful to President Biden for his exceptional leadership and support for Ukraine, and I agree completely that there must be serious consequences should Russia escalate further. I am also thankful for the administration's latest round of punitive sanctions on Russia given its malign behavior.

To strengthen Ukraine's deterrence capabilities, our caucus spearheaded efforts to increase Ukraine's defense assistance funding by \$25 million, up to \$275 million in fiscal year 2021, and to place mandatory sanctions on Nord Stream 2.

Our caucus stands ready to support NATO and the Transatlantic Alliance to ensure the protection of Ukraine's sovereignty.

ENDORSEMENT OF VIOLENCE IS UNCONSCIONABLE

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Madam Speaker, I rise out of great concern for the violence and looting that has taken over Minneapolis. Even more troubling is the seeming endorsement and, yes, incitement of it by Members of this body.

It is unconscionable that a Member of Congress sent to Washington to make the laws that govern our Nation would encourage Americans to disregard those laws. Yet one of our Democratic colleagues, only one day after 136 rioters were arrested, called for protesters to "stay on the street," "get more active," and "get more confrontational" against our law enforcement, urging this escalation by

asking protesters to ignore the city-wide curfew. Hours later, that inevitable escalation did occur, with National Guardsmen and police being fired upon.

These are very dangerous actions. Is this the standard by which we want this House to represent the people of this country, that incitement? I recall a lot of talk some months ago about a much lesser speech being inciteful, language must less geared toward that being inciteful, yet it happens here.

Strong action needs to be taken by Speaker PELOSI and this House against these types of words.

SECURITY ON THE SOUTHERN BORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to discuss one of the most important problems facing our country, and that is security on our southern border.

I don't think there is any question that most Americans agree that our immigration system is broken, but before we can fix it, we have to address the crisis at our southern border.

And let's be clear, what is happening at the border is a crisis. In fact, the President admitted as much recently. His commander of Public Health Service at the convention center in Dallas, when I went to visit there, maintained that they were in crisis management. You don't manage a crisis unless you are in a crisis, so it is a crisis. It is a humanitarian crisis.

The policies being put forward by this administration, basically absolutely opening the border are, in fact, inhumane. Smugglers, traffickers, foreign banks are profiting and enticing a hopeless people into sending their children or themselves to make this dangerous journey to unlawfully cross our southern border. These bad actors know how to manipulate our laws to their advantage. Putting forward policies that make it easier for them to do so is, in fact, wrong.

During the month of March record numbers of unaccompanied alien children were referred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement at the Department of Health and Human Services. The total number of people coming in without authorization is the highest it has been in 15 years. Customs and Border Protection encountered over 170,000 individuals along our southern border attempting to cross without authorization. Many of them were single adults.

Over the last month, Members from both sides of the aisle, both sides of the Capitol flocked to our southern border to see and assess the situation for