

What are Republicans doing?

I know two sitting Republican Members went to a White nationalist conference a few days ago.

**PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3967, HONORING OUR PROMISE TO ADDRESS COMPREHENSIVE TOXICS ACT OF 2021**

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 950 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

**H. RES. 950**

*Resolved*, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 3967) to improve health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. An amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of Rules Committee Print 117-33, modified by the amendment printed in part A of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution, shall be considered as adopted. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, and on any further amendment thereto, to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs or their respective designees; (2) the further amendments described in section 2 of this resolution; (3) the amendments en bloc described in section 3 of this resolution; and (4) one motion to recommit.

SEC. 2. After debate pursuant to the first section of this resolution, each further amendment printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules not earlier considered as part of amendments en bloc pursuant to section 3 of this resolution shall be considered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, may be withdrawn by the proponent at any time before the question is put thereon, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question.

SEC. 3. It shall be in order at any time after debate pursuant to the first section of this resolution for the chair of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs or his designee to offer amendments en bloc consisting of further amendments printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution not earlier disposed of. Amendments en bloc offered pursuant to this section shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs or their respective designees, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question.

SEC. 4. All points of order against the further amendments printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules or amendments en bloc described in section 3 of this resolution are waived.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RUIZ). The gentleman from Massachusetts is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. RESCHENTHALER), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

**GENERAL LEAVE**

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I just want to state what I think we are all feeling here today, and that is that our prayers are with the Ukrainian people during this very perilous time.

I want to acknowledge the unity displayed in the yesterday afternoon Rules Committee meeting when Democrats and Republicans came together and with one voice condemned Vladimir Putin's blatant aggression, his brutality, and the horrific actions the Russian state is now taking against the people of Ukraine. It was almost as if there was no distinction between political parties, and I think that is as it should be because Vladimir Putin is not a genius, as some have said, and he is not smart. He is a bully. He is a dictator.

I cochair the Human Rights Commission in Congress. We have done countless hearings on his brutality against the Russian people. He jails people he disagrees with, he kills people he disagrees with, and he tortures people he disagrees with. He truly is an international pariah.

After this latest action, he will be in the same category as Kim Jong-un in North Korea.

So I just want to acknowledge the unity yesterday in the Rules Committee, and I want my Republican friends to know how grateful I was to have us all speak as one, especially during this difficult time. I know it is important not just for the Ukrainian people but in Russia that we are speaking as one because when people start to make excuses for the Russian dictator or start to find ways to praise him, that gets played on Russian TV and exaggerated in a way to indicate that somehow we are not unified here when I believe that we are.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the Rules Committee met and reported a rule, House Resolution 950, providing for consideration of H.R. 3967, the Honoring Our PACT Act, under a structured rule. The rule self-executes a manager's amendment from Chairman TAKANO, provides 1 hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and makes in order 28 amendments. Lastly, the rule provides en

bloc authority to Chairman TAKANO and provides one motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, today we are here to stand up for our veterans. For a long time now, more and more have been speaking out—pleading—to be taken seriously about the health impacts of the toxic chemicals they dealt with while serving our country.

Many encountered water at military bases that were contaminated with toxins, like harmful forever chemicals. They breathed in toxic fumes at burn pits where jet fuel was used to incinerate things like paint, petroleum, and plastic. And they were exposed with radiation when being tasked to clean up after nuclear tests, without being given the proper safety equipment.

These were duties we demanded of them. And as a result, many veterans have been left to suffer with severe health challenges like cancers, infertility, and respiratory conditions. Many more have died, and others are just too sick to work.

**□ 1230**

We aren't talking about just a few people here, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about millions and millions of veterans who answered the call to serve.

When they asked us to take care of them, for too long, they were just brushed aside not just by Congress but also by the Department of Defense, year after year after year.

They were told the science wasn't clear. And they were told that providing the medical care that they needed and that they earned was just too high.

Maybe some bureaucrat somewhere viewed denying veterans' disability claims as an exercise in frugality. Maybe drowning them in paperwork and setting an unreasonably high bar to get benefits just became the norm. I don't know.

But that finally ends here and now, Mr. Speaker. The legislation included in this rule will cut the burdensome red tape. It will streamline the VA's review process, and it will get veterans exposed to toxins the care that they so badly need.

H.R. 3967 tasks the VA with providing standardized trainings to better handle these claims, and it requires them to conduct outreach and provide resources to veterans exposed to deadly chemicals.

Thanks to this bill, no longer will the burden to prove toxic exposure be placed on veterans themselves. And it is about damn time, Mr. Speaker.

If this bill becomes law, it will help an estimated 1.4 million veterans by fiscal year 2031. That is something that we should all be proud of.

The Honoring our PACT Act recognizes that just thanking our veterans for their service isn't enough. We must back up those words with action.

Some may suggest that we should just maintain the status quo or make the scope of this bill much, much smaller. Let me remind them that Congress made the choice to spend trillions

of dollars over the last 20 years on sending our servicemembers into harm's way. Those decisions came at a cost of more than \$6 trillion. That is trillion with a T.

How in the world, Mr. Speaker, can anyone justify spending trillions of dollars on sending servicemembers to fight abroad just to nickel and dime them on healthcare costs once they return home? That is unconscionable.

Taking care of toxic-exposed veterans is a cost of war, period. If anyone here has reservations about paying it, they should think long and hard before calling for our servicemembers to fight in another conflict halfway around the world.

Our veterans put their lives on the line for us. They made sacrifices that are hard to even imagine. They fought to protect us, and they shouldn't have to then fight their country for the benefits that they have earned.

Let's take care of our veterans. Let's pass this bill and the underlying legislation. And let's honor our veterans with more than just words.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I want to thank my good friend, the chairman of the Rules Committee, for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would just like to take a moment to recognize someone who absolutely exemplifies the bipartisanship and camaraderie of the Rules Committee staff, and that is James Fitzella. He has worked on the Rules Committee for 7 years, and I am incredibly sad to say that he is leaving us for the private sector. His commitment to this institution and working across the aisle to get things done, that attitude will be truly missed.

He served the Rules Committee with integrity, dedication, and unwavering optimism. Congressional staff are often the unsung heroes of this body and of any legislative accomplishment, and this is absolutely the truth in James' case.

I know I speak for everybody on the Rules Committee when I extend my sincere gratitude to James for his public service and wish him our very best.

I would also be remiss if I didn't recognize Jeff Gohringer, who is leaving the majority staff after being on the Rules Committee for 6 years. I am sure Chairman MCGOVERN would agree that we would be lost without the excellent work from our staff members.

I know Jeff was an absolutely critical part of the team, so I would like to also extend my best wishes to Jeff in his future endeavors as well.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the rule before us. The rule before us today makes in order H.R. 3967, the Honoring our PACT Act.

As an Iraq war veteran, I believe supporting toxic-exposed veterans should be of the highest priority.

Approximately 3.5 million veterans who served our Nation after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 were exposed to open-air burn pits and other toxins. Many of these troops now suffer from serious health issues, including rare and aggressive cancers, respiratory conditions, and other illnesses. Yet, they face significant barriers to obtaining help from the VA.

These men and women put their lives on the line to defend our freedoms. We must provide them with the care and benefits they have earned.

That is why I am disappointed that we are here considering H.R. 3967 rather than voting on the Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Act, a bipartisan bill that has already passed the Senate by unanimous consent. If we took up that bill immediately, it could be signed into law by the end of the week, ensuring swift delivery of lifesaving care for toxic-exposed veterans.

Instead, here we are, prioritizing a bill that must still undergo a lengthy analysis process and many legislative considerations. We also have to look at the impact on the current VA and those that are getting benefits now from the VA, and the backlog that exists in our VA system.

Republicans want to quickly deliver help to veterans suffering from toxic exposure. The best way to do that is to bring the Senate-passed Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Act to the House floor.

Prioritizing H.R. 3967 will only slow down the process and delay implementation of toxic exposure benefits. I, therefore, urge my colleagues to oppose this rule, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I want to thank the gentleman for his comments. I just want to say that he is right. We could probably pass the very short bill that the Republicans have put forward, H.R. 6659, and send it to the President. But our bill, which is actually more than 80 pages, goes into much more depth and covers a lot more.

Republicans want to do just a little bit. We want to actually solve the challenges that so many of our veterans face.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD the Statement of Administration Policy, which states that President Biden would basically sign the bill we are discussing here today into law.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY  
H.R. 3967—HONORING OUR PROMISE TO ADDRESS COMPREHENSIVE TOXICS (PACT) ACT—REP. TAKANO, D-CALIFORNIA AND 100 COSPONSORS

The Administration strongly supports H.R. 3967, which would expand veterans' access to health care and benefits to address the health effects of harmful environmental exposures that occurred during military service.

The President believes that our Nation has only one truly sacred obligation: to properly prepare and equip our service members when we send them into harm's way and to care for them and their families when they return

home. Far too often, military service comes with a cost, and we owe it to our veterans and their families to address these consequences comprehensively. Unfortunately, it has taken decades to understand the deleterious effects of environmental exposures—leaving too many without access to the benefits and services they need.

H.R. 3967 would make changes to the definitions for who is eligible for VA health care based on presumed toxic exposure during military service, including from burn pits, radiation, or other environmental conditions. H.R. 3967 would also make changes to the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA's) process for determining presumptive service connection and mandate several research studies related to military related environmental exposures. It would also establish new registries related to exposures, which would provide new data on the long-term impacts from environmental exposures. H.R. 3967 also would allow a Federal cause of action related to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and establish training requirements for health providers, and require an outreach plan to educate veterans about their eligibility for benefits and services related to toxic exposure.

The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to enact this legislation and ensuring it is effectively implemented. We must address the toxic legacy of environmental exposures sustained by veterans during their military service and fulfill our sacred obligation to our veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. We must also ensure that VA has the resources it needs to implement this legislation.

Mr. MCGOVERN. We have an opportunity today to move a bill forward that will pass the House, even if many Republicans will not vote for it; send it to the Senate; get them to act on it; and send to the President a bill for him to sign that will actually do the job and be more than just a press release.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCANLON), a distinguished member of the Rules Committee.

Ms. SCANLON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of today's rule.

As we work with President Biden to build a better America, we must honor our debt to our veterans for their service and sacrifice on behalf of our country.

There are obvious risks and sacrifices in military service: the physical and mental challenges, time away from loved ones, and the possibility that one may be called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice for one's country. But there are hidden risks and sacrifices as well, and our failure to address them means that, for too long, we have not met the needs of veterans who have been exposed to toxic substances during the course of their military service, as they have suffered from chronic respiratory illness, cancer, and a variety of other maladies later in life.

The most well-known example of this is Agent Orange. It took years of veterans' advocacy for the government to acknowledge and provide services and treatment for injuries caused by Agent Orange.

Even as the connections between illness and exposure to Agent Orange

have multiplied, new links have been established between exposure to other toxic substances during military service and chronic and life-threatening diseases. The burn pits used at military installations across the globe are a more recent example.

The Honoring our PACT bill enacts long-overdue support for over 3 million veterans suffering from illnesses due to exposure to toxins and radiation during military service. This comprehensive bill will cut red tape to getting veterans benefits, allowing veterans exposed to chemical, airborne, and radioactive hazards to receive full health benefits to treat illnesses related to that exposure.

We owe it to our vets to pass this bill and provide them with the benefits they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to highlight my amendment to the Honoring our PACT Act, which will provide additional funding to ensure that the VA can implement the new benefits that this bill will authorize.

I strongly encourage all of my colleagues to support the rule, the PACT Act, and my amendment when they are considered on the House floor.

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

Just a quick point of rebuttal. I would just remind my good friend from Massachusetts that passage of H.R. 3967 is not guaranteed in the Senate.

We don't have that concern when we are talking about the Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Act, which has already passed the Senate by unanimous consent. We could pass that today here on the floor this week. It could be signed into law this week. Doing anything other is simply to delay assistance to the veterans who need it most.

Now, to the topic of Ukraine. In the wake of Vladimir Putin's brutal, brutal invasion of Ukraine, the world is crying out for an alternative to Russian energy. Pennsylvania, and the rest of America's heartland, could provide that alternative.

But President Biden and Congressional Democrats refuse to let that happen. They would rather promote their radical Green New Deal agenda and continue buying oil from Putin's ruthless regime. They would rather do that than unleash domestic energy production, and that includes Pennsylvania coal, oil, and natural gas industries. They would rather do that than lower gas and heating prices for American families and strengthen our national security through becoming an energy exporter.

Republicans, on the other hand, actually want to make America energy independent once again, just like we were in the last administration.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, if we defeat the previous question, I will personally offer an amendment to the rule to immediately consider the American Energy Independence from Russia Act.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of my amend-

ment into the RECORD, along with any extraneous material, immediately prior to the vote on the previous question.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. RESCENTIALER. Here to explain the amendment is one of the bill's authors, the Natural Resources Committee ranking member and my good friend. I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN).

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, as we witness an evil empire trying to remake itself, I reflect on Mrs. Bolin's first grade class in my tiny rural school in the heartland of America and, as a 6-year-old living during the Cold War, trying to understand how crouching under a desk as part of our nuclear attack drill would save anyone. The simple truth is, it wouldn't.

Crouching, hiding, and being intimidated only emboldens Communists. Standing up strong is how you beat the evils of communism.

Last year, I had the great experience of standing at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, where Ronald Reagan spoke those famous words in 1987: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

Remarkably, less than 2½ years later, that wall came down, and by the end of 1991, the evil Soviet empire had dissolved. The Soviet Union was gone, but the seeds of the evil in the Communist government of Russia and other parts of the world still remain.

As brave Ukrainians are fighting a David and Goliath type battle of survival, we must stand strong and create a long-term plan to crush the Russian energy grip on Europe and our allies. Energy revenue feeds the Russian beast, and we have the resources and the technology to starve it to death.

Only a few years ago, the United States became energy independent. But my, how quickly things have changed.

On his first day in office, President Biden canceled the Keystone XL pipeline that could have reduced our reliance on Russian oil. But it is not just Keystone. All U.S. pipeline projects are being held up, and Russian hackers even attacked our existing pipelines with no recourse.

A week into office, the Biden administration doubled down on their anti-American energy agenda, ordering an indefinite freeze on new oil and gas leasing and, to this day, has issued zero new leases on Federal lands or waters.

President Biden's policies are choosing Russian oil and Russian jobs over American energy and our own national security. In fact, in 2021, U.S. imports from Russia reached an 11-year high, and we are sending tens of millions of our dollars every day to fund Putin's war machine.

Why are we doing this to ourselves when we have so many resources at our fingertips?

Our bill is simple, and it stands up to Russian aggression by going after their

major source of funding. It will empower U.S. domestic production by immediately approving the Keystone XL pipeline; by restarting the oil and gas leasing program on Federal lands and waters; by requiring President Biden to submit an energy security plan to Congress; by unleashing liquefied natural gas exports to displace Russian gas abroad; and, finally, requiring drawdowns from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to be replaced by increased Federal oil and gas leasing.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to stand up strong and join Mrs. McMorris Rodgers and me in cosponsoring the legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. RESCENTIALER. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 15 seconds.

Mr. WESTERMAN. I urge my colleagues to defeat the previous question so that our legislation can be considered immediately by the House of Representatives.

□ 1245

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

Mr. Speaker, we begin on a note of basically saying that it was wonderful that we were all united in standing up to Vladimir Putin and speaking with one voice. I think we need to kind of amend that at this point.

Let me just say that we need to stand with the people of Ukraine. We need to stand with President Zelensky, who has had the guts to stand up to Vladimir Putin, but also to the former President who tried to extort him and who withheld essential defensive military aid in exchange for trying to get from him some manufactured dirt on the President's son. Let's be a little bit careful about what charges we are throwing around here.

Again, I am sorry that my Republican colleagues are feeling the need to come here and play partisan politics in the middle of a global crisis, but I guess I shouldn't be surprised.

Yet, for all their criticism on how this administration is handling the crisis in Ukraine, they have been all over the map on what they would do differently. They talk about energy independence, yet they are the ones who have consistently voted against and opposed green and renewable energy here at home, which is the fastest way to achieve real energy independence.

I include in the RECORD a February 23 Washington Post opinion piece entitled "Republicans say Biden is 'weak' on Ukraine. What would they do differently?" By the way, just a spoiler alert, the answer is: They have no idea.

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 23, 2022]

OPINION: REPUBLICANS SAY BIDEN IS 'WEAK' ON UKRAINE. WHAT WOULD THEY DO DIFFERENTLY?

(By Paul Waldman)

There was a time in American history when foreign crises were considered a moment for unity. We said "politics stops at

the water's edge," meaning that partisanship had to be put aside so the country could show the world a united front, and both parties usually agreed.

The public acted that way, too. Presidents' approval ratings would rise whenever we found ourselves in any sort of conflict with a foreign adversary; this was called the "rally 'round the flag effect," and it occurred even when things went badly. For instance, President Jimmy Carter's approval ratings shot up by almost 30 points after Americans were taken hostage in Tehran.

But no more. Even the most straightforward of foreign policy challenges become yet another opportunity for the opposition to say the president is a failure and a villain, which is what Republicans are doing now as we confront Russian leader Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

But that doesn't mean the Republican Party can decide what it believes.

One of Donald Trump's legacies is that in some GOP quarters, Putin is now regarded as akin to a hero. That starts with Trump himself, who reacted to the invasion by calling Putin's aggression "genius," "smart," and "savvy." Meanwhile, Fox News host Tucker Carlson has been so relentless in passing on the Kremlin's perspective that Russian state TV regularly airs clips from his show.

That exacerbates the profoundly unsettled nature of contemporary foreign policy thinking in the GOP. The right has struggled to find a singular voice over the past 15 years or so, once the thrill of the Global War on Terror ran aground in the disaster of the Iraq War.

In the 2016 presidential primaries, Republican candidates struggled over whether and how to call the war a mistake, and where that would leave the party's traditional hawkishness. Then Trump took over, with less a foreign policy doctrine than a shifting collection of impulses, including a distrust of ambitious adventures and an obsequiousness toward Putin that can be described only as pathetic.

So how should a Republican hawk respond to the current crisis? The answer is clear: Just make it about President Biden.

The GOP critique is both blessedly free of substance and plays right into the anxieties about manhood that determine approximately 75 percent of everything Republicans do these days.

So whether you're a Putin fanboy or a cold warrior, you can agree that the real problem here is weakness. Why is this crisis happening? Because Biden is weak. What should America do now? Not be weak, because Biden is weak. Is your favorite baseball team going to win the pennant this year? They would, if Biden wasn't so weak.

"Biden weakness invited Russian aggression, Republicans say," reads a Fox News headline. Biden is "the weakest president that America has ever had," says former Trump administration ambassador to United Nations Nikki Haley. "No one fears this pathetic old geezer" says the National Review.

The House Republican Conference tweeted a picture of Biden, with the caption "This is what weakness on the world stage looks like." Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York, the third-ranking Republican in the House, tweeted, "Biden is unfit to serve as Commander-in-Chief. He has consistently given into Putin's demands and shown nothing but weakness."

Though some Republicans say the sanctions at the center of Biden's strategy should have started earlier, you'll have a hard time finding one who can specify in any detail what Biden's "weakness" toward Russia has consisted of to this point, nor what a "strong" president would be doing instead. Mounting a ground invasion to take Moscow? Launching nuclear weapons? What?

If the answer is "What Biden is doing, but, you know, more," that's not very persuasive. But as far as they're concerned, "strength" isn't something presidents demonstrate with their actions; it's more of an ineffable quality that Republican presidents possess by definition while Democratic presidents lack.

Consider Trump. Short of literally getting down on his hands and knees to shine Putin's shoes, there's almost no way you could imagine Trump having been weaker toward Putin than he actually was. Trump continually praised the Russian dictator, dismissed his misdeeds and went out of his way to denigrate NATO—just as Putin would want.

It culminated in the utterly disgraceful display at the 2018 summit in Helsinki, when Trump was asked about Russian interference in the 2016 election and declared he was taking Putin's word over the analysis of U.S. intelligence agencies, because "President Putin was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today."

It was so embarrassing that even Republicans were shocked; then-Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee said Trump "made us look like a pushover." Sen. John McCain called it "one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory." Nevertheless, today Republicans claim that when it came to Russia, Trump was a paragon of strength.

And however this crisis ends, they will insist that everything would have worked out far better if only Biden were stronger. Whatever that means.

To be clear, everyone has the right to criticize the president; having politics end at the water's edge brings its own problems. Nor is there anything wrong with intraparty differences. But rather than a lively debate over alternative courses of action, what we're seeing now from the GOP is mostly juvenile name-calling.

Not that we had much reason to expect anything different.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. ROSS), a distinguished member of the Rules Committee.

Ms. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, today, thousands of veterans struggle with the health effects of exposure to hazardous substances during their training or deployment. Congress has an obligation to provide these men and women with the resources, including healthcare services, they need to live with dignity.

The Honoring our PACT Act fulfills this duty by streamlining VA processes to receive care for toxic exposure-related illnesses, reducing the burden on all veterans. It also takes preemptive measures to ensure that the VA conducts research to track and identify emerging toxins. This will ensure that we are proactive in our efforts to safeguard the health of future veterans.

I am particularly pleased that this bill includes the Camp Lejeune Justice Act, which gives our servicemembers the opportunity to seek compensation for exposure to contaminated water at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

For decades, marines and their families stationed at this base unknowingly consumed, bathed in, and used water containing harmful chemicals and industrial solvents. As a result of their service, many veterans and their family members now suffer from serious

medical conditions, including cancer and birth defects.

For years, North Carolina law prevented these individuals from seeking relief in court. The Camp Lejeune Justice Act rights this wrong, bringing long overdue justice to affected veterans.

The Honoring our PACT Act also creates a registry of veterans exposed to PFAS, or forever chemicals, from use of fire extinguishing agents in military installations. I proposed an amendment to this section with my colleague from North Carolina, Representative ROUZER, which will require the Department of Defense to study additional sources of PFAS exposure on military bases and make recommendations to expand eligibility for toxic exposure benefits accordingly. I am grateful that this amendment was made in order. We owe our Nation's veterans an immeasurable debt for putting their lives on the line to defend our freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the rule and the underlying bill.

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

Mr. Speaker, one of the best ways that we can support the Ukrainian people, and President Zelensky by extension, is by ensuring that we have a steady supply of American energy and that we are supplying our allies in Eastern Europe. This will also deny Putin a major revenue stream.

Alarming, U.S. oil imports from Russia reached an 11-year high in 2021, accounting for more than 10 percent of the total U.S. crude oil and petroleum product imports.

Here to explain why that should concern all Americans is my good friend, my mentor, the ranking member of the Rules Committee, TOM COLE.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE).

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Pennsylvania for yielding.

It is imperative that we defeat the previous question so that we can bring up the American Energy Independence from Russia Act for immediate consideration.

Mr. Speaker, last week, Vladimir Putin sent shock waves around the world by launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Though much of the planet has rallied to support Ukraine in their heroic defense, Putin has begun to use his most potent weapon to threaten Western democracies. That weapon is dependence of much of the world on Russian oil and gas.

Not even the United States is immune from this national security threat. In 2021, according to the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers, the United States imported an average of 209,000 barrels of crude oil per day and 500,000 barrels per day of other petroleum products from Russia. It is unconscionable that we are still this reliant on imports from authoritarian countries like Russia. This reliance on bad actors for our energy supply needs poses a clear and present

danger to the security of the United States, just as it poses a threat to the security of Western and Central Europe.

At any time, Vladimir Putin could choose to retaliate on the dozens of countries that have imposed sanctions on him and his regime by simply turning off the spigot. Gas prices in the United States would undoubtedly increase, even more than they currently are, and much of Europe will be plunged into the cold in the depths of winter. That is a potent leverage for a dictator like Putin to have. We must counter this by restoring America's energy independence and helping our friends and allies to do the same.

Unfortunately, when President Biden took office, he immediately took steps that ultimately harmed America's energy independence and made us more reliant on foreign energy imports. That included his decision to cancel the Keystone XL pipeline, which was expected to transport 830,000 barrels of oil every day, and his decision to impose a moratorium on new oil and gas leasing on Federal lands, including my home State of Oklahoma. President Biden's actions have made America less energy secure and more vulnerable to foreign threats.

This is why we need the American Energy Independence from Russia Act more than ever. This bill would immediately approve the Keystone XL pipeline, would restart oil and gas leasing on Federal lands and waters, and would expand liquid natural gas exports at a time when Europe needs them the most. It would ensure an all-of-the-above energy policy that paves the way for American energy independence, and it would rightly end the ongoing vilification of America's oil and gas industry.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is simply common sense. With one bill, we can open up new sources of energy and reduce or eliminate imports of foreign sources of energy. Above all, by advancing this bill, we can improve the security of the United States, and weaken Vladimir Putin's most potent weapon in one fell swoop.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I am not going to respond, because I like the gentleman too much.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE).

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I would like to begin by thanking Chairman TAKANO for his incredible leadership on this legislation and tireless work on behalf of veterans all across our country.

H.R. 3967, the Honoring our PACT Act of 2021, recognizes the full range of military toxic exposure, from contaminated water at military bases and airborne hazards from burn pits, to radiation from atomic testing. It upholds and recognizes the promise we made to every servicemember that we would care for them should they become

wounded or sick while risking everything to protect this country.

This legislation is long overdue, and it is the least we can do for the more than 3.5 million veterans who are currently suffering without the healthcare they need and deserve.

These veterans and their loved ones should never have been forced to come to Congress demanding that we and the VA provide the care they have so clearly earned, which is why I am glad that this bill ensures that future veterans will be able to get the help they need without waiting decades for help by streamlining the VA's toxic exposure presumptions.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill.

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

Mr. Speaker, one in six American adults reported they cannot pay their full energy bill in the last 12 months. That is appalling. It is especially appalling given the fact that at our fingertips we have an abundance of energy. In Pennsylvania alone, we have oil, gas, and clean coal. We should be unleashing the American energy sector.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. HERRELL), who is here to talk more about this.

Ms. HERRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose the previous question so that the rule can be amended to consider H.R. 6858, the American Energy Independence from Russia Act offered by my colleagues, Ranking Member MCMORRIS RODGERS and Ranking Member WESTERMAN.

The Biden administration has taken seemingly every step possible since taking office to cripple the energy dominance agenda of the Trump administration that saw America become an energy-independent Nation for the first time in decades.

In New Mexico, the Biden administration has yet to hold a lease sale since taking office, which is a direct violation of Federal law. By not holding a lease sale, the Biden administration is robbing the citizens of New Mexico of revenues that could be used to improve vital services like our public education system.

By artificially reducing our energy production, we are only increasing Russia's power in the world. Since the beginning of 2020, imports of Russian oil into the U.S. have increased by nearly 300,000 barrels a day. This is a direct result of the Biden administration flipping the switch and taking disastrous executive actions that prevent energy development here at home. Our increased dependency on foreign sources of energy is causing energy prices for our constituents to skyrocket. Gas prices are up over 50 percent, which is hitting our constituents hard every time they go to the pump and every time they buy groceries or heat their homes.

If we get back to producing energy at the capacity that we are capable of, our energy supply will be secure, gas prices will fall, and economic outlook will vastly improve. Advancing innovation and increasing U.S. production is the only effective way to achieve American prosperity and reduce global reliance on Russia.

By accepting the status quo of being an energy-dependent Nation, my Democratic colleagues are willfully weakening both our national and economic security.

H.R. 6858 will change the course of American energy policy and bring back the era of American energy dominance. I urge my colleagues to oppose the previous question and support the American Energy Independence from Russia Act.

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

Mr. Speaker, two quick things. One, my friends are touting this whatever it is, this all-of-the-above approach to dealing with our energy challenges. But I am looking at this proposal, and it just seems it is the same old, same old, fossil fuels, fossil fuels, fossil fuels. I wonder who wrote this. I wonder where this came from.

Why isn't there any mention of green energy or clean energy or solar energy or renewable energy, any of the things that, quite frankly, the majority of the American people want us to do? Why isn't it here?

Well, I will make a suggestion to people who are tuning in: Follow the money. Follow the money. This is Big Oil's wish list. If you want to continue to find ourselves in circumstances, whenever there is an international crisis, that we have to kowtow to Big Oil, then listen to them.

But on the Democratic side, we want to wean ourselves off of the same old, same old. And "all-of-the-above," by the way, is not just oil, oil, oil.

The second thing I want to say is that my friends on the other side always love to talk about how much they support our veterans. Well, we actually have a bill here that will support our veterans. It is a big deal. You all received a letter from all the leading veterans' service organizations of this country saying to please pass this bill.

They don't want to talk about it. They say: Oh, support this minuscule bill, the alternative that we are putting up here, by the way, which our veterans' organizations do not prefer.

If you really want to help our veterans, if you are sincere about what you say when you say let's support our veterans, then how about voting that way. Talk is cheap around here. How about putting your vote where your rhetoric is and supporting this underlying bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH).

□ 1300

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Speaker, we ask our veterans to serve, young men and

women who sign up, serve in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and they are going knowing that they are representing us, and they will take on the challenges and the dangers of combat. They do that willingly.

But why is it that we create an extra hazard within our control by creating these burn pits and assign men and women to be breathing that toxic air? It is not right. This legislation, Honoring our PACT Act, finally acknowledges that that was wrong and that we have a duty to every one of those veterans.

In Vermont—and I know, Mr. Speaker, it is in your State as well; you have been a leader on this—there has been tragedy with cancers to young men and women, fathers, moms.

In our State, Pat Cram and June Heston both lost their wonderful husbands, Sergeant Major Michael Cram and Brigadier General Michael Heston, to cancer. Those women have started a movement in Vermont that has supported this legislation that finally is going to do for these veterans what we did for the Vietnam veterans with Agent Orange and establish a presumption that this was combat related. It is overdue, and it is necessary.

So I thank all of the men and women on both sides of the aisle who are standing up to acknowledge that our obligation is to take care of the warrior and his or her family after they have served us so well.

This is overdue legislation. Let's pass it by unanimous consent.

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Speaker, just three quick points in rebuttal. First and foremost, I myself am a veteran of the Iraq war. I was there for 6 months, actually, in 2009.

If we would just pass the Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Act that the Senate passed by unanimous consent, we could pass that and put it on the President's desk at the end of this week. There is nothing standing in our way except the Democratic Party on this.

Also, I would just remind my good friend from Massachusetts that my motion does not prevent the House from considering the Honoring our PACT Act. It doesn't. It simply amends the rule to also allow for consideration of the American Energy Independence from Russia Act.

I am sure everyone on the other side of the aisle would agree that lowering gas and heating prices for all American families and ending our dependence on Russian oil is of the utmost importance. In fact, I just got an alert that a gentleman from my colleague's State General Assembly just put forward a bill on the floor of the General Assembly of Massachusetts to stop the importation of Russian oil.

Sixty percent of the natural gas our country imports actually goes to Massachusetts. People don't realize that. But if New York would get out of the way and allow Pennsylvania to have a pipeline from Pennsylvania to New

England, the New Englanders wouldn't need dirty Russian oil. They could use Pennsylvania natural gas. But I digress. We can and should find the time this week to add the American Energy Independence from Russia Act to our agenda.

Lastly, ad nauseam, I have heard bill after bill after bill from the leftists across the other side of the aisle on electric vehicles, and yet again I am reminded that the Republicans are the real party of science because if you look at the actual science, an electric car will generate just 23 percent fewer greenhouse gas emissions than a gasoline-powered car.

In fact, if you were to take every gas-powered car on the face of the planet and get rid of it, it would only mean a mere 1.8 percent decline in total emissions. This is fake science. We have alchemy and chemistry. We have astrology and we have astronomy. We have the Democrat Party and we have the Republican Party.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. ARMSTRONG), my good friend, to talk more about this.

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Mr. Speaker, my hometown of Dickinson, North Dakota, is in the southern part of the Bakken oil patch. It is where we unleashed this revolutionary technology of shale hydraulic fracturing, horizontal drilling, and producing natural gas. But you know what else? Eighteen miles away from my childhood hometown is an ethanol plant. Seven miles to the west is a biodiesel plant. Thirteen miles south, fourteen miles south is the largest wind farm in North Dakota generation of Brady I and Brady II. About 80 miles to the northeast we are figuring out how to strip rare earth metals out of lignite coal so we can be less dependent on Russia and China in all of those issues.

The people who work and live in my communities grow all the cereal grains, and the by-products from the ethanol plant are fed as feedstock to our cattle industry, so I don't need lectures from anyone on all-of-the-above energy, particularly when the left's version of all-of-the-above energy is solely wind, solar, rainbows, unicorns.

Here is the dirty little secret: The world is going to burn more carbon in 2 years whether we shut down domestic production or not, and this naive and idealistic viewpoint that if we shut down American industry, American ingenuity, then the rest of the world will follow along is fundamental differential to the fact we are watching it play out in real time.

Our strategic adversaries and, indeed, our enemies will fill this space—that is the fact—because the world needs these products, and they are going to continue to utilize these products. But at least welcome this: We are going to do nothing to reduce global carbon emissions because the atmosphere doesn't recognize countries' borders.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to defeat the previous question, allow this

to go back, and let us do what we were doing so well until the last year, developing American energy, allowing it to be utilized, rather than energy from our adversaries.

I can tell you one last thing, and then I will close. In the last year, we haven't had a Federal lease sale in North Dakota. Congressional Democrats have tried to ban the transport of liquefied natural gas by rail, and so let's be honest about how we got here so we can get there in the future.

Mr. McGOVERN. It is amazing, Mr. Speaker, we are here talking about a major veterans bill, and the gentleman couldn't even bring himself to mention veterans once in his statement.

To the gentleman from Pennsylvania, talking about taking all cars off the road, who is talking about that? I will tell the gentleman that if we go ahead with what he wants to do on the Keystone pipeline, that is equivalent to adding another 5 million cars on the road. That is what that would mean to our environment.

My Republican friends, if they want to think small when it comes to veterans, have at it. Veterans' organizations are watching. We are hearing from veterans all across the country who want this bill passed. They want us to pass this comprehensive bill. We will do that.

If you want to do your minuscule bill, you have a substitute, you can vote for it. It is in your substitute. We want to actually do something in a comprehensive way to meet the concerns that our veterans have expressed for years and years and years. If you want to take a pass, go ahead. That is what you do on our most important issues. This probably is no exception.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE).

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule for the Honoring our PACT Act, which includes the Camp Lejeune Justice Act. This legislation would allow marines and their families who were exposed to contaminated drinking water at Camp Lejeune over 34 years—34 years of neglect and denial—finally to pursue their long overdue day in court.

Toxicity rates in Camp Lejeune's water were staggering. They ranged from 240 to 3,400 times what is permitted by today's national safety standards. This greatly increased the risk of cancers, adverse birth outcomes, and other medical tragedies. And now many veterans and their families are suffering from no legal recourse.

The Camp Lejeune Justice Act will correct an anomaly in North Carolina law by providing a legal pathway for affected veterans and their families to pursue fair compensation, which would already be permitted had their exposure occurred anywhere else except the State of North Carolina.

Today's effort is a culmination of the decades-long bipartisan campaign to



provide servicemembers affected an opportunity for justice long deferred. First by Congressman Brad Miller and Senator BURR, as well as the late Congressman Walter Jones.

I am also grateful for the tireless advocacy of the affected marines and their families, the sustained efforts of diverse groups of supporters, and my congressional colleagues, including the bill's sponsors, Congressmen MATT CARTWRIGHT and GREG MURPHY.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the adoption of the rule for this Honoring our PACT Act and with it the adoption of the Camp Lejeune Justice Act, a critical step to honor the promises we have made to our veterans.

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. SCALISE), my good friend and the Republican whip.

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Pennsylvania for yielding. First of all, opposing the previous question, the bill that is going to be coming up later is a very partisan bill. We could actually bring up the Senate bill for our veterans that passed the Senate unanimously. Imagine in these times when a bill passed the Senate unanimously, and Democrats in the majority won't even bring that bill up, which clearly is the way to help our veterans.

But there is something more important that we can do today, dealing with the crisis in Ukraine. There are many crises in America, but in Ukraine Putin is running roughshod over the people of Ukraine, carpet bombing cities. One of the ways he is fueling his war is with oil that America and other countries are buying because President Biden took American energy off the table.

There are very specific things President Biden does that if we reject this previous question, we can turn around and bring up this legislation by my colleagues, the gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. RODGERS) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN), that actually open up American energy and take leverage away from Putin and also take billions of dollars away from Putin that he is using to finance the war.

Let's talk about a few of those very specific things we can do with rejecting the previous question to bring up this important energy legislation. When President Biden came in office, he did a number of very specific things to undermine American energy. Not energy all over the world. He is begging OPEC and Russia to produce more oil. Think how tone deaf that is, begging Russia to produce more oil. Let's open up our American energy reserves that President Biden shut off. Let's approve LNG exports so we can help Europe get energy from America, not from Russia. President Biden hasn't approved a single LNG facility in over a year or pipeline. Let's get rid of the red tape that they are using. Do you know that Russia right now is making \$700 million a

day by selling oil to America, EU, and U.K.? \$700 million a day to fund his war against Ukraine. Let's end it by opening up American energy reserves. Reverse all these radical policies by President Biden that are emboldening Putin. Let's reject this.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I would remind the gentleman that President Biden didn't try to extort President Zelensky by withholding money to get him to manufacture dirt on one of his political opponents. But I find this a little bit comical.

My Republican friends say that they want to bring up this Senate bill, which is much narrower than what we are doing right now, yet they want you to defeat the previous question not so they can bring up that Senate bill, but so they can bring up this giveaway to the oil companies. Again, follow the money. Follow the money. This is a bill that was written in some back room in some oil company and, quite frankly, it is unconscionable. They never let a crisis go to waste.

Today we are talking about trying to help our veterans, and it would be nice if on this one issue of helping our veterans we could all come together, but I guess that is asking too much.

I now yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. CARTWRIGHT).

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I could not be prouder that the Honoring our PACT Act includes my bill, the Camp Lejeune Justice Act, and let me tell you why I wrote this bill. Between 1953 and 1987, two generations of marines and marine families and employees at Camp Lejeune were poisoned by the water at Camp Lejeune. Poisoned by water that by today's standards in health, 240 to 3,400 times the level of acceptable toxins was in that water. This was water that the marines drank. It was in the mess halls. It was water that they showered with. It was water that they drank out from the water buffaloes and filled their canteens from while on exercise. This is water that was poisoned, and it not only poisoned the water of marines but also the marine families and the employees at Camp Lejeune.

Mr. Speaker, when marines volunteer for Marine duty, they know they are up for something dangerous. They know that the Marines pride themselves on being the first to fight. They know they are going to be in harm's way at some point, but when they went to Camp Lejeune for combat training, they didn't realize what their real enemy was going to be. It was going to be leukemia, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, aplastic anemia, liver cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Parkinson's disease. Not only the marines, but their families were subject to this from the water.

I would like to thank the people who helped put together this bill, DAVID PRICE, GREG MURPHY, the Reverend William Barber, the veterans service organizations, 151 Republicans and

Democrats who came together on this bill.

Folks, at long last, all of these great marines, these great Americans will get a shot at justice. I urge a "yes" vote on the PQ, "yes" on the rule, and let's vote "yes" on the Honoring our PACT Act and the Camp Lejeune Justice Act.

□ 1315

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Speaker, just one point in rebuttal to my good friend from Massachusetts: Republicans do support toxic-exposed veterans. Yesterday, I personally offered an amendment in the Rules Committee to bring up the Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Act. By the way, that passed unanimously in the Senate. We could again be doing that right now. That doesn't stop us from debating the current bill. We can walk and chew gum at the same time, but the only thing that is delaying getting the Senate version of this bill on to the President's desk at the end of this week is the Democratic Party. We could pass that bill this week.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES) to talk about oil and gas and energy issues.

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for yielding.

I just heard my friends on the other side say, let's follow the money. Let's follow the money.

Mr. Speaker, right now under this administration, we have gone from buying approximately 76,000 barrels of crude oil a day to surging to 198,000 barrels of crude oil every single day. If you add in other petroleum products, Mr. Speaker, let's follow the money. The additional \$22 million a day that we are giving to Vladimir Putin, if you add it all up, we are giving him \$7 billion a year. \$7 billion a year that goes toward the \$65 billion Vladimir Putin puts towards military spending every single year.

Yes, let's follow the money.

I hear my friends on the other side talk about emissions, oh, we can't do these things because it is going to cause greater emissions.

Let's once again look at the facts, Mr. Speaker. Under the previous administration, on average, emissions went down 2½ percent a year. Under President Biden they have increased 6.3 percent every single year.

Let's follow the money.

Do you know who is paying that money? It is the Americans that can least afford it, whether it is the \$12 extra every single time they are filling up their vehicle with gas, whether it is the 700 to \$1,700 a year in extra electricity payments that Americans are paying this year to heat their homes.

Mr. Speaker, yes, let's follow the money because the people in America that can least afford it, they are the ones that are paying the bill for these irresponsible, ill-advised energy policies that, Mr. Speaker, you can go back

and look at the RECORD, we are the ones who advocated otherwise.

Here is the deal: This administration has stopped offshore production, prevented new lease sales, prevented on-shore production. This majority has tried to impose a \$10,000 per year per mile pipeline fee, tried to raise royalty fees, increased severance taxes on domestic energy.

Do you think Vladimir Putin is doing the same thing with Russian energy? I can answer that, Mr. Speaker: Absolutely not.

The policies that this bill fixes are the errors that this administration and this majority in Congress made in imposing this energy crisis on us in raising energy prices for Americans that can least afford it.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the facts don't result in the narrative that my friends on the other side are trying to establish. Let's be clear on why we have an energy crisis in America, why we are dependent upon Vladimir Putin for energy, why we are funding the military atrocities that he is carrying out in the Ukraine right now, and let's support this bill, this legislation that Congresswoman MCMORRIS RODGERS and Congressman WESTERMAN have pushed to ensure that we can have a clean American energy future.

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD an April 28, 2021, Military.com article titled: "VA Secretary Wants More Vets Sickened by Burn Pits to File Claims, But Many Are Still Being Turned Away," and I include in the RECORD an April 12, 2021, "NBC News" article titled: "Veterans Face Uphill Battle to Receive Treatment For 'Burn Pit' Exposure."

[From Military.com, Apr. 28, 2021]

VA SECRETARY WANTS MORE VETS SICKENED BY BURN PITS TO FILE CLAIMS, BUT MANY ARE STILL BEING TURNED AWAY

(By Steve Beynon)

Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough wants more veterans who believe they were sickened by exposure to burn pits overseas to seek help from the department, despite many being turned away.

"We're urging vets to come forward with their claims," McDonough said at a press briefing Monday. "Our commitment is to treat each claim with the care it deserves. As we get more claims, we can aggregate those claims to draw bigger conclusions."

As of March 31, the VA had denied 72% of burn pit claims, according to agency data obtained by Military.com. Between June 2007 and March 31, the VA processed 15,640 disability compensation claims related to burn pit exposure. Of those, 3,510 veterans had at least one burn pit issue granted.

The top three diagnoses related to burn pits are bronchial asthma, chronic bronchitis and allergic rhinitis, according to department data. The most common reasons for a veteran to be denied is not having a diagnosed medical condition or being unable to connect the condition to their service—43.1% and 42.8% of denials, respectively.

But the data doesn't reflect the scope of the issue. The number of patients filing claims might be disproportionately small given VA estimates that 3.5 million veterans

have been exposed to burn pits since 1990. It is unclear how many are sick due to their exposure or have died as a result.

McDonough suggests that more data is needed, and he wants more veterans to seek help from the VA so officials can get a better grasp on the issue.

The burn pit data also could be inherently flawed. To get the data, the VA had to use text mining, searching for keywords such as "burn pit" and "burn pits" in its patient databases, according to department records. This means patients coming forward with issues related to burn pits might not automatically be listed as burn pit patients if that phrase wasn't used in their records.

Out of the 2.5 million Global War on Terrorism veterans, 781,384 have filed claims related to respiratory issues. According to VA data obtained by Military.com, 63% were granted. Of all the GWOT veterans, 42,686 filed for claims related to cancer; 37% of those claims were granted.

The VA's research shows GWOT veterans are three times more likely than non-deployed veterans to file claims related to respiratory issues and twice as likely to file claims for cancer.

"Although the GWOT-deployed and GWOT non-deployed population sizes are relatively the same, the GWOT-deployed cohort has more than two times the number of service-connected cancers," according to the agency's findings.

Burn pits are often referred to as the post-9/11 generation's Agent Orange, referencing the bureaucratic maze and uneven claims process veterans have to navigate, and what could be a decades-long legislative fight to issue easy-to-access health care and disability compensation.

The House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees and advocacy groups have made toxic exposure the top issue this year. Congress is looking at some two dozen bills, ranging from incremental improvements to sweeping health care bills for all 3.5 million veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic environments.

But it's unclear what can actually make it to President Joe Biden's desk. Some lawmakers and advocates are concerned over what is very likely to be a huge tab to cover the cost of opening the VA up to a huge swath of new patients.

[From NBC News, April 12, 2021]

VETERANS FACE UPHILL BATTLE TO RECEIVE TREATMENT FOR 'BURN PIT' EXPOSURE

(By Kenzi Abou-Sabe and Didi Martinez)

During Marine veteran Scott Evans' two tours in Afghanistan, his work on a specialized team that used dogs to sniff out explosives led him to spend large chunks of time around open-air pits where trash was burned.

In August, Evans, 33, of North Carolina, received devastating news: he had terminal pancreatic cancer. The diagnosis placed him among a growing number of military veterans who say they have developed serious and sometimes fatal diseases after facing prolonged exposure to burn pits at overseas bases.

The pits were a common feature at military bases during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a crude answer to the basic logistics problem of how to deal with piles and piles of trash. Everything from electronics and vehicles to human waste was regularly doused in jet fuel and set ablaze, spewing toxic fumes and carcinogens into the air.

The Department of Defense estimates that roughly 3.5 million service members could have been exposed to burn pits. The Department of Veterans Affairs has denied about 75 percent of veterans' burn pit claims, including Evans', because it does not acknowledge

a connection between conditions like asthma and cancer to exposure to the flaming garbage piles.

Veterans say that at the same time they face resistance while seeking treatment from the VA, they have also been let down by civilian medical providers who often lack an understanding of the existence and dangers of burn pits.

"Over the next decades, I'd be shocked if we didn't see spikes in disease in these patients," said Dr. Tom Abrams, an oncologist at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute who has treated two veterans affected by burn pits.

"Whether it's cancer, respiratory illness or some other disease that has yet to make itself known, I think we have to be on the lookout and really be aware that these veterans are at very high risk."

Abrams and other medical experts acknowledge that it's exceedingly difficult to draw a definitive link between burn pits and the conditions veterans are reporting, but they note that ample evidence already exists showing that long-term exposure to toxic smoke can lead to serious health issues.

A VA spokesperson said it "follows the science on questions of health outcomes of military exposures" and is conducting a review of the hazards of burn pits.

The spokesperson referenced a 2020 report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine that found none of the 27 respiratory health outcomes it reviewed met the criteria for "sufficient evidence of an association." The evidence for respiratory symptoms such as chronic persistent cough and wheezing met the criteria for "limited or suggestive evidence of an association," the spokesperson added.

A Pentagon spokesperson said the Defense Department and VA are "continuing to fund studies to provide more evidence on the potential long-term effects of burn pit exposure."

Lawmakers in Washington have taken up the cause, introducing multiple bills aiming to change the way the VA deals with veterans who think they're suffering from a burn pit-related illness.

On Tuesday, advocates and legislators led by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., and the comedian Jon Stewart will take to Capitol Hill to rally in support of a measure, which would force the VA to expand care and benefits to veterans affected by certain burn pit-related illnesses.

In an interview with NBC Nightly News' Lester Holt, Stewart said the situation echoes the aftermath of the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, when first-responders were coming down with serious illnesses and health officials were slow to recognize them as being caused by toxins swirling in the air at ground zero.

"What the first responders were standing on top of was essentially a burn pit," he said. "The jet fuel from the planes ignited it, but it was all those materials from the World Trade Center."

Stewart got involved in the effort after being approached by Rosie Torres, the founder of the nonprofit Burn Pits 360. Torres started advocating for veterans suffering from toxic exposure-related illnesses after her husband, an Army veteran, was diagnosed with constrictive bronchiolitis.

"I would challenge any congressperson who says, 'Well, we're going to wait for the science to be settled,' to dig a hundred-yard pit in the middle of a town where your constituents live, and burn everything in that town with jet fuel," Stewart said. "And then come and tell me that, 'Yeah, they're cool with it, because there's a lot of confusion about whether or not the science is settled that this is harmful to your health.'"



For most veterans who think they are suffering from a burn pit or other toxic exposure-related illness, getting the VA to acknowledge their condition and treat them has been a losing battle. Veterans must prove to the VA that they were exposed to a burn pit during their service, and that the exposure caused their condition.

Further complicating matters, veterans affected by toxic exposure often find themselves against the clock when it comes to gaining access to health care through the VA. If veterans don't seek treatment during an initial five-year period in which the VA offers combat veterans free health care—and experts say many of the diseases that stem from toxic exposure typically manifest slowly—they have to wait for their claim to be approved before getting care at a VA facility.

Even if they do meet the burden of proof and have their claim approved, veterans say the approval process can take months to years, wasting precious time for those with terminal illnesses.

Gina Cancelino, whose husband, Joseph, died of an aggressive form of testicular cancer in 2019, said they only learned about the possible link between burn pits and the disease months before he passed away.

"I said, 'Hon, burn pits, burn pits in Iraq,'" she recalls telling the former Marine Corps gunnery sergeant. "'Look, I'm reading about this. Were you near these?' And he's like, 'Yeah, I'm pretty sure I was.'"

Joseph Cancelino, who worked as a New York City Police Department sergeant, had deployed to Iraq in 2003 during the first wave of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Now, his wife has made it her mission to piece together his exposure to burn pits.

"Had we known earlier that this was an issue, maybe he goes annually and gets checked," Gina Cancelino said. "Maybe we find it earlier, and we don't give it a chance to harbor in there, and fester in there. So I'm disappointed. I'm disappointed in the lack of communication."

Gen. Michael Heston was one of the rare few whose claims were approved. He served three tours in Afghanistan with the Vermont Army National Guard, and died in 2018 after a battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 58 years old.

Heston's wife, June, said she remembers her husband questioning the safety of the burn pits while he was still deployed. At one of the bases where Heston was stationed, she said, the burn pit was initially near the airfield, but the smoke and soot were interfering with the jet engines, so it was moved to another area of the base, closer to where troops lived and worked.

"He just couldn't understand," she said. "If it's doing that to a jet engine, well, why would you think it would be OK to be moving [it] closer to human beings that are breathing that in?"

When Heston started complaining of back pain and rapidly losing weight in 2016, it took doctors 10 months to deliver a diagnosis.

By that time, the cancer had metastasized to other parts of his body.

Abrams, the Dana-Farber oncologist, had never heard of burn pits before treating Heston. When Heston first explained them, Abrams said, he was shocked.

"I was just horrified because I thought that was probably one of the most toxic kinds of things you could possibly have," Abrams, who is also a faculty member at the Harvard Medical School, said. "It's extremely unhealthy to be exposed to the products of massive combustion for years on end."

Abrams ultimately came to the conclusion that Heston's cancer was likely caused by

his exposure to toxic substances in Afghanistan, and wrote a letter spelling that out to bolster his application for VA benefits.

"Most patients are diagnosed [with pancreatic cancer] in their mid- to late-60s or early 70s," Abrams said. "He had no risk factors, he was not a diabetic, he was in excellent shape. And he had this long term, very significant toxic exposure that was certainly not something that was common at the time."

The VA ultimately acknowledged that Heston's cancer was due to his toxic exposures during service, due in large part, June Heston thinks, to Abrams' letter. But a letter like that is not easy to come by, experts say, because doctors are tasked with treating an illness, not investigating its cause.

"It's very difficult to definitively say that X causes Y," Abrams said. "But on some level, I think it's important to at least acknowledge that exposure to high levels of toxic smoke is a contributor to lots of diseases in general. And I don't think you need to necessarily pore through the data for years to make at least that kind of general claim."

Andrew Myatt deployed to Iraq in 2004 as a combat engineer with the Army National Guard, disarming improvised explosive devices, or IEDs. He believes the acute lymphocytic leukemia he was diagnosed with in 2019 is connected to his exposure to burn pits in Iraq, but when he applied for health care and benefits, the VA denied his claim.

Myatt, 53, said he'd be lost without the help of Anita Ritchie, the senior national service officer at the nonprofit Wounded Warrior Project, who is helping him gather evidence for an appeal.

"Toxic exposure is one of the few instances where there's not a lot of people in the civilian world who know anything about this stuff," Ritchie said.

Myatt said he is happy with his current private health care, but getting the VA to accept that his cancer was related to his service would ensure he has access to medical care in the future.

"If this [cancer] shows up 20 years from now, when I'm retired and living someplace, then I can go to them for help," he said.

In 2014, the VA created a burn pit registry to start tracking the long term health effects for service members who were exposed to burn pits and other airborne hazards. Since then, nearly 240,000 current and former service members have joined.

But the practice hasn't stopped. In an April 2019 memo to Congress, the Defense Department acknowledged that it had nine active burn pits at bases throughout the Middle East.

Legislators and advocates are hopeful that this will be the year that burn pit reform makes its way through Congress in part because of a unique connection to President Joe Biden.

In the past, Biden has suggested that his son Beau's deployment to Balad Air Base in Iraq may have had something to do with his brain cancer diagnosis.

Balad Air Base had one of the largest burn pits, spanning more than 10 acres. "Because of exposure to burn pits—in my view, I can't prove it yet—he came back with stage 4 glioblastoma," Biden told a Service Employees International Union convention in 2019.

But for veterans like Scott Evans, who said he was told he had between six months and a year to live, legislation may not come soon enough.

Evans first contacted the VA medical center closest to his home last April after his weight began to plummet and the whites of his eyes had turned yellow. But he said he was told he was ineligible because there was

no evidence his condition was connected to his service and he didn't qualify for financial need.

He was eventually able to start receiving care at the VA in July due to a different condition. The following month, he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer at age 32.

Evans said he tries not to dwell on how things may have been different if he had been able to access VA care last April.

"Would [the tumor] have been operable? What would the outcome have been of it?" he said. "For me, it's done and over with, we can't change that. But the big thing that I would like to see happen is that if somebody comes in and they need help, and they're a veteran, be able to get that help right away. And let's ask questions later."

Still, Evans said he has no regrets over his military service.

"Even knowing what I know now, and knowing the consequences, I'd still do exactly the same thing, because it was about the guys you're with," he said, pausing to collect himself. "The thing I'm most proud of is everybody who walked behind me has all their limbs, and came back safe. And if the cost of it was getting cancer, that's fine."

Mr. MCGOVERN: Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN).

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, and still I rise. And I rise today understanding that the greatness of America will not be measured by the number of nuclear-powered submarines we have. Its greatness won't be measured by our B-1 bombers or our number of soldiers in uniform. The greatness of our Nation will be measured by how do you treat the persons who fly the B-1 bombers; how do you treat the persons who will take on the challenges of the world who become the front line of democracy; how do you treat them when they return home? This is how the greatness of America will be measured.

The greatness of America will be measured by what kind of housing do we give them, do we help them to transition from military life to a job in civilian life? The greatness of America will be measured by the kind of insurance that they get so that they can have the best healthcare the world can afford.

This bill, this legislation, among other things, expands healthcare services for a larger group of veterans who were exposed to toxic substances, Agent Orange, for example. Many men have died and suffered and didn't get the healthcare that they earned because we allowed a nebulous notion as to what Agent Orange was doing to them to persist. There is a presumption now.

This bill increases the number of veterans without service-connected disabilities who can receive healthcare. If I had my way, you would get all of your healthcare whether service-connected or not. But I don't have my way. But I am going to support this bill because I want my record to show that when I had the chance to help the veterans, I did what I could, and I voted "yes." I didn't cop out. I stood tall with them. I want my record to show that I came to this floor and encouraged my colleagues to vote "yes."

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Speaker, I have talked a lot today about the Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Act, which is again, the Senate version. That legislation carries the support of leading veteran service organizations, VSOs, including Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Wounded Warrior Project, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and the American Legion, as well as the Military Officers Association of America.

Again, that Senate version passed unanimously. We could be running that here today and get it on the President's desk at the end of the week. The only thing that stands between getting help to veterans right now in terms of the burn pit issues is the Democrat Party's refusal to just run the Senate version of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY), the Republican leader.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding, but more importantly, for his service to our Nation, and when he talks about that bill, you think, in Congress, when can you find something that is bipartisan?

Here you have something come out of the Senate that Republicans and Democrats both agree upon. Republicans on this side of the aisle will vote for that. The only thing holding it up for these veterans are the Democrats. They know the bill they are going to produce won't go anywhere, and hopefully, we can come back and get this done, and it will go to the President's desk. It would have been nice for the President to have a bill before he came for the State of the Union, so he could actually sign something, but unfortunately, politics again gets in the way.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the rule and to support Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS' and Mr. WESTERMAN's legislation.

The crisis in Ukraine is a crisis of American energy security.

Over the past decade, we have had every opportunity to lead. During the previous administration, we were energy independent and an exporter of energy for the first time in 50 years.

Today, however, we have an administration that crippled domestic production. This administration has increased its daily reliance on Russian oil by 34 percent.

As every American is glued to their television to see what is happening in Ukraine, to see the bombing of innocent children and women, there is no one American who would want any of our money to go to fund that. But in this administration, you had actually done that, increased the production of oil and natural gas coming from Russia to America. Meanwhile, it slow-walked oil and natural gas exports to our allies in Europe. In doing so, it made Europe more reliant on Putin.

Today, 40 percent of natural gas and 25 percent of crude oil in Europe comes from Russian. The Biden administra-

tion has made the free world dependent on despots for oil and natural gas from Russia.

We all know that is shameful.

As an economic and energy superpower why are we relying on dictators when we should be supplying the world?

If you are like me and you are concerned about the environment, do you realize that American natural gas is 42 percent cleaner than Russian natural gas? That crude oil could have come from Canada and been refined in America if President Biden hadn't pulled the plug on the Keystone Pipeline. But instead, he allowed Putin to have Nord Stream 2.

For those at home that are wondering, what is the Nord Stream 2 pipeline? It is another pipeline built by Russia to go in to supply natural gas to Europe, but it goes around Ukraine because the current pipeline goes through Ukraine, and Ukraine gets part of the money.

But with this new administration and President Biden going to meet with Mr. Putin, what did he do? He waived the sanctions. But when President Biden watched Putin put hundreds of thousands of men along the border of Ukraine there was an amendment offered in the Senate to put sanctions on Nord Stream 2. People wondered; did it pass? It came close, but it failed.

Do you want to know why it failed? Because the Biden administration used all their political will to lobby against it passing. And more of American millions of dollars went to fund Putin who uses it for his military.

That natural gas that goes to Europe, it could have come from America, from our Federal lands and waters where President Biden hasn't approved a single new lease—not one; he has actually shut them down—and if we had continued the energy policies of the Trump administration, we would actually be safer today and Putin would have less money to fund his military weaponry. Our allies would be safer today, and American families would be paying less for cleaner energy. In California it is more than \$5 a gallon, as you know, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if you can remember back when when it was much less.

Now, I hear from our colleagues on the other side that the reason American resources must stay in the ground is climate change. I listened to Mr. Kerry be interviewed as Russia invaded Ukraine, and he was concerned. This former Secretary of State, now helping in this administration, I thought he would be concerned about the men and women in Ukraine. He was concerned with; would Putin still work with climate change? I think you should tell that to the Ukrainian people. I don't think one of them is concerned about that right now.

Now, I hear our colleagues when they talk about climate change, but if they really studied it, the truth is what I told you before, American natural gas

is 42 percent cleaner than Russian natural gas. And we can guarantee you this, we are not invading Ukraine. We won't use the resources to carpet-bomb, to shoot innocent women and children.

If you are concerned about the environment, like I am, you should support this bill. You could, Mr. Speaker. It immediately approves the Keystone Pipeline because we have waited long enough and can't afford to wait a minute longer. It removes all restriction on liquid natural gas exports so we could become an arsenal of energy for the free world. And it restarts the leases on Federal lands and waters which are being held up by the Biden administration.

□ 1330

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. You have the majority here on the floor. You have the Biden administration. It is in the power of your party. But those six permits that sit at the desk of the Secretary of Energy that could take money away from Putin, provide American jobs, and provide Europe with cleaner natural gas from America still sit there to this day because somehow you think it is better for climate change.

Mr. Speaker, a vote for this bill is a vote to produce more energy for our allies. It means American jobs. It means our allies don't have to deal with Putin, be held hostage to him. It means Putin will not have millions of dollars from Americans to buy the weaponry that he uses to kill innocent people in Ukraine.

A vote for this bill is a vote to provide relief for working families at the pump. It means Americans won't have to pay the high prices they are today.

I know at the White House, when they were asked this question, they said it is okay that the price is high because that way somehow it helps them with climate change if they could get more renewable energy.

Mr. Speaker, that is a tax on all Americans, especially low-income. But I don't know, in this administration, they have the highest inflation we have had in 40 years. Somehow, they must think that is positive, too.

Mr. Speaker, in this new administration, when you have crime, we have a border that is not secure. People are coming across the border that are on the terrorist watch list. We now have more fentanyl in America today than at any time, enough to kill every single American seven times over.

Mr. Speaker, I know you would care about this because you know, today, the number one cause of death of those between the ages of 18 to 45 is fentanyl. You know where it comes from, the chemicals of China, across the border of Mexico that no longer is attended to.

Mr. Speaker, I know the President of your party has put the Vice President in charge, and she has been there one time—one time. Every city in America has become a border city today every single weekend.

Mr. Speaker, you know this based upon your background. You see the deaths that are happening. It is unwanted. It is unneeded. And we could do better.

Mr. Speaker, a vote for this bill is a vote to deprive Putin of a major revenue stream.

It is not difficult. There won't be any pressure. All Members have to do is walk onto the floor, take the card out of their pocket, put it in the little box. And if you are somebody that because you are afraid of COVID, you are still home, or you are on a boat, you could still vote by proxy with this majority.

What you could do is you could vote for this bill. You could vote to make America energy independent. You could lower the gas prices. You could take the money out of Putin's hands that he uses to kill innocent people.

Everybody in the world is watching. Mr. Speaker, the sad part, I bet if this bill was on the floor in any country in Europe, it would be 100 percent voted for. I will be watching. I think America will be watching.

Would we stand for America and for freedom? Would we stand for President Zelensky, who didn't take the advice of President Biden and leave his country, who doesn't ask for men and women from America to come to fight? He just asks to provide some weapons so they can defend against Putin.

Mr. Speaker, the sad part about that is every day that we allow crude or natural gas to come from Russia, American money is going to Putin. Let's stop that and stop that today.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, the world is watching. And I am not going to be lectured by someone who takes their marching orders from Donald Trump, who said that Putin's invasion of Ukraine was a genius and savvy move. I wish the gentleman would have condemned that.

Listening to that speech, you would think that Joe Biden invaded Ukraine. I mean, he spent all this time criticizing Joe Biden, John Kerry, and everybody else but hardly criticized Vladimir Putin.

You know, look, I also wish, because I think it would be helpful for this country and a signal to the world, if the gentleman who just spoke would reprimand Members of his own party who cozy up to white nationalists and go to pro-Putin rallies. That would send a signal to people in this country and to people around the world on whose side we are on.

Bottom line is, the people of Ukraine are being invaded by a brutal dictator, Vladimir Putin. And when their standard-bearer, Donald Trump, was in charge, he spread propaganda about Ukrainian interference in the 2016 election, which was a lie. He ousted a well-regarded U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine because they weren't doing what he wanted to in terms of finding dirt on his political opponents. He froze military assistance to Ukraine; they said nothing. He withheld a White House

meeting with Zelensky, turned Ukraine policy over to Giuliani—I could go on and on and on.

We are not going to be lectured by them. Instead, we are going to move forward and pass a bill to help America's veterans, with or without them.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Speaker, so just a quick history lesson. The Obama-Biden administration sent Ukraine blankets and well-wishes. The Trump administration sent Javelin missiles. That is the big difference.

You know, I have said numerous times standing up here that the Democratic Party is a party of political science. I could be even more generous. The Democratic Party is also a party of false choices and false narratives. The Democrats have presented us with a false choice when it comes to U.S. energy and also a false narrative.

Let me be clear: We can unleash domestic energy and be good stewards of the environment. Thanks to American energy innovation, thanks to the energy sector, the U.S., at least under President Trump, was actually reducing carbon emissions. In Pennsylvania, for example, thanks to natural gas, our energy sector has reduced emissions by 41 percent since 2005.

Again, it is an absolutely false choice. It is a false narrative that we cannot unleash the American energy sector and be good stewards of the environment. In fact, quite the opposite. We actually are good stewards of the environment when we are using clean natural gas, particularly from Pennsylvania.

But here to talk more about that issue is my good friend, the ranking member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce and one of the authors of the American Energy Independence from Russia Act, CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. RODGERS).

Mrs. RODGERS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge immediate consideration of the American Energy Independence from Russia Act.

Innocent blood is being spilled in Ukraine as we speak. Women and children are being separated from their fathers. Democracy is under attack. Freedom must prevail. What do the people in Ukraine want? They want self-determination and independence from Russia.

Mr. Speaker, Russia's economy is entirely dependent upon energy production and exports. Putin uses energy and pipelines as weapons, threatening to cut off supplies or hike prices when the West confronts Russia's aggression. Russia's energy exports fund its military and its current attack on Ukraine. America, not Russia, is the world's number one energy producer. We should act like it and lead.

President Biden must restore American energy dominance and use energy

resources to help Ukraine and Europe fight back. We shouldn't be buying a single barrel of oil from Russia, and our allies shouldn't be beholden to aggressors that attack their freedom. Europe should have the choice to buy American energy and say no to Russian pipelines and Nord Stream 2.

That is why Congressman BRUCE WESTERMAN and I are leading on the American Energy Independence from Russia Act. This bill flips the switch on American energy. We need more pipelines, including Keystone XL, so this bill immediately approves the Keystone XL pipeline so that we can import crude oil from Canada, not Russia.

It also removes all restrictions on U.S. energy exports to deliver natural gas to our allies in Europe, and it restarts oil and gas leasing on our Federal lands and offshore waters.

This is how we shut down Putin's war chest, stand by Ukraine, empower our allies, protect our national security, and create jobs here at home.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to say "no" on this previous question and "yes" on the American Energy Independence from Russia Act.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers at this time, and I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I am an Iraq war veteran. I was in Baghdad for 6 months in 2009. I can tell you that I am committed to ensuring the men and women who served our Nation receive the care and benefits they deserve. It is of utmost importance to me as a Member of this body and as an Iraq war veteran.

That is the reason why I am so disappointed in my friends across the aisle. I am disappointed that instead of considering the Senate-passed Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Act—which, again, could immediately be sent to the President's desk—House Democrats are prioritizing legislation that is still a long way away from enactment and will delay benefits for toxic-exposed veterans.

Let me be clear. We can get help to veterans. We can get this bill to the desk of the President by the end of this week. The only thing standing in the way are my friends on the other side of the aisle.

It is for that reason I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on the previous question and vote "no" on the rule.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude, I want to thank and acknowledge Jeff Gohringer, who has served as the communications director for the House Committee on Rules in both the majority and minority over the last 6 years. Today is his last day with the Committee on Rules, and I speak for Members and staff on both sides of the aisle when I say to Jeff that we are grateful

for your years of service in this institution. We wish you well in your future endeavors, and you will always have a home here.

I also thank James Fitzella, who is leaving as well. The staff are incredible on the Committee on Rules, and James will be dearly missed.

Mr. Speaker, let me just close by saying that we heard a lot on the other side and barely a mention about our veterans. The gentlewoman from Washington, who came on the floor just recently and read the oil company talking points, couldn't even bring herself to mention veterans once.

The bill that we are talking about here today is to make sure veterans who have been exposed to toxic chemicals, who get cancer, who get other ailments, get the healthcare they need.

You would like to think that we could all come together on it. The gentleman from Pennsylvania keeps on talking about this narrow bill. I mean, they are not even serious about it because if they were, they would have used the previous question vote, which would give them the right to control the floor, to bring that up. But they didn't. Instead, they are bringing up an oil company's wish list.

This really is obnoxious. I get it. They don't like President Biden, and they will let no crisis go by without trying to make it about President Biden.

But let me just say this: We should be together in standing with the people of Ukraine, and we should be together in standing with our veterans.

The material previously referred to by Mr. RESCHENTHALER is as follows:

#### AMENDMENT TO HOUSE RESOLUTION 950

At the end of the resolution, add the following:

SEC. 5. Immediately upon adoption of this resolution, the House shall proceed to the consideration in the House of the bill (H.R. 6858) to strengthen United States energy security, encourage domestic production of crude oil, petroleum products, and natural gas, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. The bill shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and on any amendment thereto to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce; and (2) one motion to recommit.

SEC. 6. Clause 1(c) of rule XIX shall not apply to the consideration of H.R. 6858.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question on the resolution.

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

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 221, nays 202, not voting 9, as follows:

[Roll No. 49]

#### YEAS—221

Adams	Garcia (IL)	O'Halleran
Aguilar	Garcia (TX)	Ocasio-Cortez
Alfred	Golden	Omar
Auchincloss	Gomez	Pallone
Axne	Gonzalez,	Panetta
Barragán	Vicente	Pappas
Bass	Gottheimer	Pascarell
Beatty	Green, Al (TX)	Payne
Bera	Grijalva	Perlmutter
Beyer	Harder (CA)	Peters
Bishop (GA)	Hayes	Phillips
Blumenauer	Higgins (NY)	Pingree
Blunt Rochester	Himes	Pocan
Bonamici	Horsford	Porter
Bourdeaux	Houlahan	Pressley
Bowman	Hoyer	Price (NC)
Boyle, Brendan	Huffman	Quigley
F.	Jackson Lee	Raskin
Brown (MD)	Jacobs (CA)	Rice (NY)
Brown (OH)	Jayapal	Ross
Brownley	Jeffries	Roybal-Allard
Bush	Johnson (GA)	Ruiz
Bustos	Johnson (TX)	Ruppersberger
Butterfield	Jones	Rush
Carbajal	Kahele	Ryan
Cárdenas	Kaptur	Sánchez
Carson	Keating	Sarbanes
Carter (LA)	Kelly (IL)	Scanlon
Cartwright	Khanna	Schakowsky
Case	Kildee	Schiff
Casten	Kilmer	Schneider
Castor (FL)	Kim (NJ)	Schrader
Castro (TX)	Kind	Schrier
Cherfilus-	Kirkpatrick	Scott (VA)
McCormick	Krishnamoorthi	Scott, David
Chu	Kuster	Sewell
Cicilline	Lamb	Sherman
Clark (MA)	Langevin	Sherrill
Clarke (NY)	Larsen (WA)	Sires
Cleaver	Larson (CT)	Slotkin
Clyburn	Lawrence	Smith (WA)
Cohen	Lawson (FL)	Soto
Connolly	Lee (CA)	Spanberger
Cooper	Lee (NV)	Speier
Correa	Leger Fernandez	Stansbury
Costa	Levin (CA)	Stanton
Courtney	Levin (MI)	Stevens
Craig	Lieu	Strickland
Crist	Lofgren	Suozi
Crow	Lowenthal	Swalwell
Cuellar	Luria	Takano
Davids (KS)	Lynch	Thompson (CA)
Davis, Danny K.	Malinowski	Thompson (MS)
Dean	Maloney,	Titus
DeFazio	Carolyn B.	Tlaib
DeGette	Maloney, Sean	Tonko
DeLauro	Manning	Torres (CA)
DelBene	Matsui	Torres (NY)
Delgado	McBath	Trahan
Demings	McCollum	Trone
DeSaulnier	McEachin	Underwood
Deutch	McGovern	Vargas
Dingell	McNerney	Veasey
Doggett	Meeks	Vela
Doyle, Michael	Meng	Velázquez
F.	Moore (WI)	Wasserman
Escobar	Morelle	Schultz
Eshoo	Moulton	Waters
Españolat	Mrvan	Watson Coleman
Evans	Murphy (FL)	Welch
Fletcher	Nadler	Wexton
Foster	Napolitano	Wild
Frankel, Lois	Neal	Williams (GA)
Gaetz	Neguse	Wilson (FL)
Gallego	Newman	Yarmuth
Garamendi	Norcross	

#### NAYS—202

Aderholt	Biggs	Carey
Allen	Bilirakis	Carl
Amodei	Bishop (NC)	Carter (GA)
Armstrong	Boebert	Carter (TX)
Arrington	Brady	Cawthorn
Babin	Brooks	Chabot
Bacon	Buchanan	Cheney
Baird	Buck	Cline
Balderson	Bucshon	Clyde
Banks	Budd	Cole
Barr	Burchett	Comer
Bentz	Burgess	Crawford
Bergman	Calvert	Crenshaw
Bice (OK)	Cammack	Curtis

Davidson	Jackson	Pence
Davis, Rodney	Jacobs (NY)	Perry
DesJarlais	Johnson (LA)	Pfleger
Diaz-Balart	Johnson (OH)	Posey
Donalds	Johnson (SD)	Reed
Duncan	Jordan	Reschenthaler
Dunn	Joyce (OH)	Rice (SC)
Ellzey	Joyce (PA)	Rodgers (WA)
Emmer	Katko	Rogers (AL)
Estes	Keller	Rogers (KY)
Fallon	Kelly (MS)	Rose
Feenstra	Kelly (PA)	Rosendale
Ferguson	Kim (CA)	Rouzer
Fischbach	Kinzing	Roy
Fitzgerald	LaHood	Rutherford
Fitzpatrick	LaMalfa	Salazar
Fleischmann	Lamborn	Scalise
Fortenberry	Fox	Schweikert
Franklin, C.	LaTurner	Scott, Austin
Scott	Lesko	Sessions
Fulcher	Letlow	Simpson
Garbarino	Long	Smith (MO)
Garcia (CA)	Loudermilk	Smith (NE)
Gibbs	Lucas	Smith (NJ)
Gimenez	Luetkemeyer	Smucker
Gonzales, Tony	Mace	Spartz
Gonzalez (OH)	Malliotakis	Staubert
Good (VA)	Mann	Steel
Gooden (TX)	Massie	Stefanik
Gosar	Mast	Steil
Granger	McCarthy	Steube
Graves (LA)	McCaul	Stewart
Graves (MO)	McClain	Tenney
Green (TN)	McClintock	Thompson (PA)
Greene (GA)	McHenry	Tiffany
Griffith	McKinley	Timmons
Grothman	Meijer	Turner
Guest	Meuser	Upton
Guthrie	Miller (WV)	Valadao
Harris	Miller-Meeks	Van Drew
Harshbarger	Moolenaar	Van Duyne
Hartzler	Mooney	Wagner
Hern	Moore (AL)	Walberg
Herrell	Moore (UT)	Walorski
Herrera Beutler	Mullin	Waltz
Hice (GA)	Murphy (NC)	Webster (FL)
Higgins (LA)	Nehls	Wenstrup
Hill	Newhouse	Westerman
Hinson	Norman	Williams (TX)
Hollingsworth	Obenholte	Wilson (SC)
Hudson	Owens	Wittman
Huizenga	Palazzo	Womack
Issa	Palmer	Young

#### NOT VOTING—9

Bost	Gohmert	Taylor
Cloud	Mfume	Weber (TX)
Gallagher	Miller (IL)	Zeldin

□ 1417

Mr. STEWART changed his vote from "yea" to "nay."

So the previous question was ordered. The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

#### MEMBERS RECORDED PURSUANT TO HOUSE RESOLUTION 8, 117TH CONGRESS

Aguilar (Correa)	Gonzalez,	Nehls (Cawthorn)
Babin (Norman)	Vicente	Pfleger (Ellzey)
Barragán	(Correa)	Pocan (Jayapal)
(Correa)	Gosar (Greene)	Raskin
Blumenauer	(GA)	(Cicilline)
(Beyer)	Granger (Van	Roybal-Allard
Cárdenas	Duynne)	(Takano)
(Gomez)	Grijalva (Garcia	Rush (Jeffries)
Carter (TX)	(IL))	Scott, David
(Cawthorn)	Johnson (SD)	(Jeffries)
Crist	(Armstrong)	Sessions
(Wasserman	Johnson (TX)	(Duncan)
Schultz)	(Jeffries)	Sires (Pallone)
Cuellar (Correa)	Kahele (Correa)	Strickland
DelBene (Kuster)	Kelly (PA)	(Jeffries)
Deutch (Rice	(Keller)	Suozi (Beyer)
(NY))	Kirkpatrick	Trone (Connolly)
Doggett (Beyer)	(Pallone)	Underwood
Doyle, Michael	Lawson (FL)	(Jeffries)
F. (Connolly)	(Soto)	Van Drew
Evans (Brown	Manning (Beyer)	(Reschenthaler)
(MD))	McEachin	Veasey (Beyer)
Fallon (Jackson)	(Wexton)	Wilson (FL)
Fletcher	Meng (Kuster)	(Cicilline)
(Wexton)	Miller (WV)	
	(LaHood)	

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

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

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 220, nays 200, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 50]

#### YEAS—220

Adams	Garcia (TX)	Ocasio-Cortez
Aguilar	Golden	Omar
Allred	Gomez	Pallone
Auchincloss	Gonzalez,	Panetta
Axne	Vicente	Pappas
Barragán	Gottheimer	Pascarell
Bass	Green, Al (TX)	Payne
Beatty	Grijalva	Perlmutter
Bera	Harder (CA)	Peters
Beyer	Hayes	Phillips
Bishop (GA)	Higgins (NY)	Pingree
Blumenauer	Himes	Pocan
Blunt Rochester	Horsford	Porter
Bonamici	Houlihan	Pressley
Bourdeaux	Hoyer	Price (NC)
Bowman	Huffman	Quigley
Boyle, Brendan F.	Jackson Lee	Raskin
Brown (MD)	Jacobs (CA)	Rice (NY)
Brown (OH)	Jayapal	Ross
Brownley	Jeffries	Roybal-Allard
Bush	Johnson (GA)	Ruiz
Bustos	Johnson (TX)	Ruppersberger
Butterfield	Jones	Rush
Carbajal	Kahele	Ryan
Cárdenas	Kaptur	Sánchez
Carson	Keating	Sarbanes
Carter (LA)	Kelly (IL)	Scanlon
Cartwright	Khanna	Schakowsky
Case	Kildee	Schiff
Casten	Kilmer	Schneider
Castor (FL)	Kim (NJ)	Schrader
Castro (TX)	Kind	Schrier
Cherfilus-	Kirkpatrick	Scott (VA)
McCormick	Krishnamoorthi	Scott, David
Chu	Kuster	Sewell
Ciçilline	Lamb	Sherman
Clark (MA)	Langevin	Sherrill
Clarke (NY)	Larsen (WA)	Sires
Cleaver	Larson (CT)	Slotkin
Clyburn	Lawrence	Smith (WA)
Cohen	Lawson (FL)	Soto
Connolly	Lee (CA)	Spanberger
Cooper	Lee (NV)	Speier
Correa	Leger Fernandez	Stansbury
Costa	Levin (CA)	Stanton
Courtney	Levin (MI)	Stevens
Craig	Lieu	Strickland
Crist	Lofgren	Suozzi
Crow	Lowenthal	Swalwell
Cuellar	Luria	Takano
Davids (KS)	Lynch	Thompson (CA)
Davis, Danny K.	Malinowski	Thompson (MS)
Dean	Maloney,	Titus
DeFazio	Carolyn B.	Tlaib
DeGette	Maloney, Sean	Tonko
DeLauro	Manning	Torres (CA)
DelBene	Matsui	Torres (NY)
Delgado	McBath	Trahan
Demings	McCollum	Trone
DeSaulnier	McEachin	Underwood
Deutch	McGovern	Vargas
Dingell	McNerney	Veasey
Doggett	Meeks	Vela
Doyle, Michael F.	Meng	Velázquez
Escobar	Moore (WI)	Wasserman
Eshoo	Morelle	Schultz
Espallat	Moulton	Waters
Evans	Mrvan	Watson Coleman
Fletcher	Murphy (FL)	Welch
Foster	Nadler	Wexton
Frankel, Lois	Napolitano	Wild
Gallo	Neal	Williams (GA)
Garamendi	Neguse	Wilson (FL)
Garcia (IL)	Newman	Yarmuth
	Norcross	
	O'Halleran	

#### NAYS—200

Aderholt	Arrington	Banks
Allen	Babin	Barr
Amodei	Bacon	Bentz
Armstrong	Baird	Bergman

Bice (OK)	Green (TN)	Moore (UT)
Biggs	Greene (GA)	Mullin
Billirakis	Griffith	Murphy (NC)
Bishop (NC)	Grothman	Nehls
Boebert	Guest	Newhouse
Brady	Guthrie	Norman
Brooks	Harris	Obenoltz
Buchanan	Harshbarger	Owens
Buck	Hartzler	Palazzo
Bucshon	Hern	Palmer
Budd	Herrell	Pence
Burchett	Herrera Beutler	Perry
Burgess	Hice (GA)	Pfluger
Calvert	Higgins (LA)	Posey
Cammack	Hill	Reed
Carey	Hinson	Reschenthaler
Carl	Hollingsworth	Rice (SC)
Carter (GA)	Hudson	Rodgers (WA)
Carter (TX)	Huizenga	Rogers (AL)
Cawthorn	Issa	Rogers (KY)
Chabot	Jackson	Rose
Cheney	Jacobs (NY)	Rosendale
Cline	Johnson (LA)	Rouzer
Clyde	Johnson (OH)	Roy
Cole	Johnson (SD)	Rutherford
Comer	Jordan	Salazar
Crenshaw	Joyce (OH)	Scalise
Curtis	Joyce (PA)	Schweikert
Davidson	Katko	Scott, Austin
Davis, Rodney	Keller	Sessions
DesJarlais	Kelly (MS)	Simpson
Diaz-Balart	Kelly (PA)	Smith (MO)
Donalds	Kim (CA)	Smith (NE)
Duncan	Kustoff	Smith (NJ)
Dunn	LaHood	Smucker
Elizy	LaMalfa	Spartz
Emmer	Lamborn	Stauber
Estes	Latta	Steel
Fallon	LaTurner	Stefanik
Feenstra	Lesko	Steil
Ferguson	Letlow	Steube
Fischbach	Long	Stewart
Fitzgerald	Loudermilk	Tenney
Fitzpatrick	Lucas	Thompson (PA)
Fleischmann	Luetkemeyer	Tiffany
Fortenberry	Mace	Timmons
Fox	Malliotakis	Turner
Franklin, C.	Mann	Upton
Scott	Massie	Valadao
Fulcher	Mast	Van Drew
Gaetz	McCarthy	Van Duyen
Garbarino	McCaul	Wagner
Garcia (CA)	McClain	Walberg
Gibbs	McClintock	Walorski
Jimenez	McHenry	Waltz
Gonzales, Tony	McKinley	Webster (FL)
Gonzalez (OH)	Meijer	Wenstrup
Good (VA)	Meuser	Westerman
Gooden (TX)	Miller (WV)	Williams (TX)
Gosar	Miller-Meeks	Wilson (SC)
Granger	Moolenaar	Wittman
Graves (LA)	Mooney	Womack
Graves (MO)	Moore (AL)	Young

#### NOT VOTING—12

Balderson	Gallagher	Miller (IL)
Bost	Gohmert	Taylor
Cloud	Kinzing	Weber (TX)
Crawford	Mfume	Zeldin

□ 1437

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I was unavailable to vote in the House. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on rollcall No. 49 and "nay" on rollcall No. 50.

#### MEMBERS RECORDED PURSUANT TO HOUSE RESOLUTION 8, 117TH CONGRESS

Aguilar (Correa)	Crist	Fallon (Jackson)
Babin (Norman)	(Wasserman)	Fletcher
Barragán	Schultz	(Wexton)
(Correa)	Cuellar (Correa)	Gonzalez,
Blumenauer	DelBene (Kuster)	Vicente
(Beyer)	Deutch (Rice)	(Correa)
Cárdenas	(NY)	Gosar (Greene
(Gomez)	Doggett (Beyer)	(GA))
Carter (TX)	Doyle, Michael	Granger (Van
(Cawthorn)	F. (Connolly)	Duyn)
	Evans (Brown	Grijalva (García
	(MD))	(IL))

Johnson (SD)	Miller (WV)	Stauber
(Armstrong)	(LaHood)	(Bergman)
Johnson (TX)	Nehls (Cawthorn)	Strickland
(Jeffries)	Pfluger (Ellzey)	(Jeffries)
Kahele (Correa)	Pocan (Jayapal)	Suozzi (Beyer)
Kelly (PA)	Raskin	Trone (Connolly)
(Keller)	(Ciçilline)	Underwood
Kirkpatrick	Roybal-Allard	(Jeffries)
(Pallone)	(Takano)	Van Drew
Lawson (FL)	Rush (Jeffries)	(Reschenthaler)
(Soto)	Scott, David	Veasey (Beyer)
Manning (Beyer)	(Jeffries)	Wilson (FL)
McEachin	Sessions	(Ciçilline)
(Wexton)	(Duncan)	
Meng (Kuster)	Sires (Pallone)	

#### ELECTING A MEMBER TO A CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Republican Conference, I send to the desk a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 955

*Resolved*, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR: Mr. Jacobs of New York.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUAL TO THE AFGHANISTAN WAR COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CORREA). The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to Section 1094(c)(2)(A)(xv) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 (Public Law 117-81), and the order of the House of January 4, 2021, of the following individual on the part of the House to the Afghanistan War Commission:

Ms. Shamila Chaudhary, Washington, D.C.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. After consultation among the Speaker and the majority and minority leaders, the Chair announces that, when the two Houses meet tonight in joint session to hear an address by the President of the United States, only the doors immediately opposite the Speaker and those immediately to her left and right will be open.

No one will be allowed in the Hall of the House except for Members of Congress, other invitees, and credentialed staff members. All Members, invitees, and staff are required to follow the COVID protocols stated by the Sergeant at Arms in consultation with the Office of Attending Physician.

All seating for the joint session will be assigned by name, both on the floor of the House and in the House gallery. Members will be required to sit in their