

County with a mission to restore hope and dignity to women and children who have fallen victim to trafficking and sexual abuse.

With the proceeds raised, Teresa funds scholarships for victims of abuse and supports global initiatives such as Operation Underground Railroad. Operation Underground Railroad works to save children around the globe from sexual exploitation.

Teresa offers a space for healing and creativity for those who desperately need it, using the wonders of Iowa's landscape as a space for renewal and rebirth.

Mother Teresa once said: "Be kind and merciful. Let no one ever come to you without coming away better and happier."

Through her work, Teresa not only believes this statement to be true, but she also practices its teachings daily.

I commend Teresa on all her dedication and hard work in helping vulnerable members of our community while donating her time and resources to help turn traumatic experiences into something beautiful.

#### CELEBRATING STEPHANE CONCEPCION AS GUAM'S 2023 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

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

Mr. MOYLAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate a remarkable educator, Guam's 2023 Teacher of the Year, Ms. Stephane Concepcion.

She has been educating young minds for more than a decade and currently teaches fourth grade at Talofoto Elementary School.

Ms. Concepcion's commitment to her students and dedication to her craft have earned her the recognition and admiration of her colleagues and community.

Her passion for teaching is evident in her students' success, and she is a shining example of what an excellent teacher should be.

Congratulations to Ms. Concepcion for being named Teacher of the Year. Thank you for making a positive impact on our island's youth and education system. We look forward to more of your great work in the years to come.

#### PUSH BACK AGAINST GOVERNMENT CONTROL

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, the so-called Green New Deal has reared its ugly head again, thanks to the Biden administration and its allies in Congress.

Their newest attempt to prop up this failed radical agenda involves the banning of gas cooking appliances that millions of American families rely on every day.

Make no mistake: This harebrained scheme is about more government control; more control over the lives of Americans; more control over what we do and, ultimately, how we think. What is the next domino to fall?

Mr. Speaker, if this were to happen, American families would be crushed by high electricity bills and costly appliances in the name of climate activism.

House Republicans have introduced the Save Our Gas Stoves Act and the Gas Stove Protection and Freedom Act to combat this madness. We must push back against more government control in our lives.

#### STOP THE WEAPONIZATION OF GOVERNMENT

(Ms. GREENE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. GREENE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, today I announce that I am writing an appropriations rider to defund Jack Smith, Special Counsel, his office, and the investigation.

This is a weaponized government attempt to take down the top political enemy and leading Presidential candidate of the United States, Donald J. Trump. We cannot allow the government to be weaponized for political purposes.

I would also ask all of my colleagues to join me in this effort. We have to use the power of appropriations to stop the weaponization of government, especially in light that we know that there are others who are guilty of true crimes. Never forget that former Secretary of State and Senator Hillary Clinton had classified documents on Anthony Weiner's laptop, who was convicted of sexting a minor inappropriate pictures.

This is not how classified documents should be handled. There should have been an investigation done into that.

Don't forget Joe Biden's documents that are sitting in his garage next to his Corvette where the door opens and closes.

Mr. Speaker, America sees this for exactly what it is, and we will not allow it to stand.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 9 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1600

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY) at 4 o'clock and 1 minute p.m.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or votes objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

#### CALLING FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF EVAN GERSHKOVICH, A UNITED STATES CITIZEN AND JOURNALIST, WHO WAS WRONGFULLY DETAINED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN MARCH 2023

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 377) calling for the immediate release of Evan Gershkovich, a United States citizen and journalist, who was wrongfully detained by the Government of the Russian Federation in March 2023, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

#### H. RES. 377

Whereas United States citizen Evan Gershkovich is a reporter for the Wall Street Journal;

Whereas Evan Gershkovich is an accredited reporter, with a history of working in Russia for the Moscow Times, Agence France-Presse, and the Wall Street Journal;

Whereas Evan Gershkovich is known to his family, friends, and colleagues as someone who is adventurous, curious, and who has an abiding love for Russia and its people;

Whereas Evan Gershkovich, a trailblazing and intrepid journalist, actively reported on stories across Russia, including the vast wildfires across Siberia, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian economy, and the Government of the Russian Federation's unlawful invasion of Ukraine;

Whereas, on March 29, 2023, Evan Gershkovich was arrested in Yekaterinburg while reporting on behalf of the Wall Street Journal;

Whereas, on April 7, 2023, the Government of the Russian Federation charged Evan Gershkovich with espionage;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation has failed to publicly provide evidence of Evan Gershkovich's criminal action to credibly render a charge of espionage;

Whereas the last time an American journalist was detained on allegations of espionage in Russia was in 1986 during the era of the Soviet Union;

Whereas, on April 10, 2023, Secretary of State Antony Blinken designated Evan Gershkovich wrongfully detained by the Government of the Russian Federation; and

Whereas, on April 17, 2023, the United States was joined by 46 United Nations Member States in a joint statement expressing deep concern over the detention of Evan Gershkovich by the Government of the Russian Federation: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) calls on the Government of the Russian Federation to immediately release Evan Gershkovich, who has been wrongfully detained since March 2023;

(2) urges all United States executive branch officials, including President Joseph

R. Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs Roger D. Carstens, to raise the case of Evan Gershkovich and to press for his immediate release in all interactions with the Government of the Russian Federation;

(3) urges the Government of the Russian Federation to provide full, unfettered, and consistent consular access, in accordance with its international obligations, to Evan Gershkovich while he remains in detention;

(4) urges the Government of the Russian Federation to respect the human rights of Evan Gershkovich;

(5) urges the Government of the Russian Federation to respect the rights of accredited journalists to freely and independently report the news without fear of arbitrary detention or reprisal;

(6) urges the Government of the Russian Federation to desist from detaining, imprisoning, and otherwise seeking to intimidate journalists in order to curtail or censor an independent press;

(7) condemns the Government of Russia Federation's continued use of detentions and prosecutions of United States citizens and lawful permanent residents for political purposes;

(8) calls for the immediate release of Paul Whelan, who has been wrongfully detained in Russia since December 2018;

(9) expresses continued support for all American citizens and lawful permanent residents detained in Russia and abroad, including Marc Fogel, who faces a politicized, excessive sentence for his alleged offense, Vladimir Kara-Murza, who has endured multiple attempts on his life and years of persecution by the Putin regime, and others; and

(10) expresses sympathy for and solidarity with the families of Evan Gershkovich, Paul Whelan, and all other American citizens and lawful permanent residents wrongfully detained abroad for the personal hardship experienced as a result of the arbitrary and baseless arrest and detention of their loved ones.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on this measure.

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

There was no objection.

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

Evan Gershkovich is an American citizen and a respected Wall Street Journal reporter. He is the son of two Soviet-born Jewish exiles who fled Russia to avoid persecution. He is a loving little brother.

What he is not, Mr. Speaker, is a criminal. Yet, on March 29, he was arrested by the corrupt Putin regime and charged with espionage. No evidence has been presented to back up this accusation because there is no evidence.

Evan is innocent. He was simply doing his job, reporting on the news in Russia, but we know that the war

criminal Putin doesn't like that. He doesn't want his own people to know about the atrocities that he is committing in Ukraine. He doesn't want them to know about the corruption within his own government or how he has turned their country into an international pariah.

Vladimir Putin knows that a free press is a pillar of democracy, that a strong fourth estate will hold officials accountable, so he arrested Evan with the intention of not only silencing him but of scaring other journalists to remain silent, too.

I assure Evan's friends, his coworkers, and especially his family, who I have met with, that we will continue our fight every day until we bring him home to you.

As the father of five children, I cannot begin to imagine the pain and suffering Evan's family is feeling right now. I had the opportunity to meet Evan's mother, Ella, recently. Like any mother, she was very worried about her son and this situation, but she was also very determined to do anything she could to bring him home.

She thanked me for the efforts of our committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee, and others on Capitol Hill who are doing everything we can to help their son.

Just as unfortunate, our next resolution, on Paul Whelan, makes clear that Evan's family is not the only one suffering through this nightmare. We are also awaiting information from the State Department about the arrest of yet another American citizen in Russia over this last weekend.

The Putin regime is increasingly brazen in using political detentions to seek leverage over the Biden administration, and it must be made clear that the use of American citizens as political pawns will not go unpunished. These Americans deserve to be home with their families instead of in Russian prisons.

Today's bipartisan resolution condemns the Putin regime for their illegal imprisonment. It calls on the Biden administration to prioritize bringing home all American citizens who are wrongfully detained overseas.

Today, we send a strong message to Vladimir Putin that America, Republicans and Democrats alike, will not tolerate his corrupt regime holding U.S. citizens hostage under false pretenses.

America, Mr. Speaker, stands with Evan and with every American who is wrongfully detained overseas, and we will not rest until all of them are brought home.

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

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this bipartisan resolution, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am a strong supporter of H. Res. 377, calling for the immediate release of Evan Gershkovich, a United States citizen and journalist

who was wrongfully detained by the Government of the Russian Federation in March 2023.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman MCCAUL for working with me to introduce H. Res. 377 in a bipartisan fashion. We may disagree on many issues in this body, but it is essential that the safe return of American citizens wrongfully detained overseas is not one of them. I appreciate the cooperation and the work together that Mr. MCCAUL and I do on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Evan Gershkovich, a journalist working in one of the most difficult media environments in the world, has dedicated his life to truth. His reporting has shed light on Russia's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, the struggling Russian economy, and its horrific war against the people of Ukraine.

With his detention, Russia has once again stooped to the lowest of lows, detaining an American journalist for the first time since the Cold War. He is detained on baseless charges to gain political leverage and further silence the brave members of the independent press who are undeterred by Russian threats.

Evan, like Paul Whelan, like Brittney Griner, like Trevor Reed before him, continues to be denied his rights by Russian authorities, who are throwing up roadblock after roadblock to prevent our Embassy from getting access to him while he remains in detention. The sham legal processes he is subjected to are conducted without evidence, without transparency, and without due process.

While the administration, with the unanimous support of this Congress, was able to secure the release of Trevor and Brittney, we must continue to do everything, and I mean everything, in our power to ensure that Evan and Paul are brought home safely to their families, as well.

For as long as necessary, we must state unequivocally that we stand with Evan, that we stand with Paul, that we stand with their families suffering tremendous emotional and financial strain as a result of their detentions. By passing this resolution, we can do just that.

I support this measure and hope we can continue to work in a bipartisan fashion with the executive branch on this and other critical legislation to better support Americans like Evan and their families. I encourage my colleagues, all of us, to join in supporting this measure.

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

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I reserve the right to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, there is no more sacred responsibility of government than to ensure the safety and well-being of the American people and ensure that their

human rights are respected. Tragically, the authoritarian regime in the Kremlin has taken to the practice of using that commitment against us, taking our citizens hostage for political leverage.

In last year's State Department authorization act, which passed in the annual NDAA, we included additional tools for the State Department to address hostage taking. These include quicker notifications to Congress, expanded whistleblower rewards programs, and greater resources for the State Department. I look forward to these changes being put to use.

In Evan's case, we can take an important step by passing this resolution and condemning hostage diplomacy in the strongest possible terms. We must continue to express support for the efforts of the administration to secure Evan's return and demonstrate our commitment to Evan and Paul, and all other Americans wrongfully detained overseas, for as long as it takes.

As I close, I again thank Chairman McCAUL for partnering with me on this important resolution. I hope my colleagues will join us unanimously in supporting this resolution.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, let me also thank the ranking member, Mr. MEEKS, because what makes this committee so special, in my opinion, is that we know how important it is to speak with one voice, as one country, not as a divided nation. When it comes to Mr. Putin and what he is doing to our Americans over there, we are united with one voice.

Mr. Speaker, Evan's case marks the first time since the Cold War that a journalist has been wrongfully charged with espionage on Russian soil. It is clear that Putin and the corrupt Kremlin will do anything to silence those who seek to expose the truth.

A man of integrity, Evan put the truth ahead of his own safety. He was dedicated to shining a light on the vast corruption and the war crimes of Russia.

Make no mistake, Evan's work posed a threat to Mr. Putin and his cronies, so they did what they always do when threatened: They silence their critics.

It is absolutely unacceptable for Putin to hold Americans hostage as diplomatic pawns. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it is happening way too often now.

As I said before, America stands with Evan, and we will not rest until he is home.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. McCAUL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 377, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Mariel Ridgway, one of his secretaries.

#### CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO IMMEDIATELY RELEASE UNITED STATES CITIZEN PAUL WHELAN

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 272) calling on the Government of the Russian Federation to immediately release United States citizen Paul Whelan.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

#### H. RES. 272

Whereas United States citizen Paul Whelan is a resident of Novi, Michigan, and a veteran of the Marine Corps;

Whereas, on December 22, 2018, Paul Whelan traveled to Moscow, Russia, for the wedding of a personal friend;

Whereas, on December 28, 2018, the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation arrested Paul Whelan at the Metropol Hotel in Moscow and charged him with espionage;

Whereas the Federal Security Service has never provided any evidence of supposed wrongdoing with respect to Paul Whelan;

Whereas Paul Whelan was imprisoned in Lefortovo Prison and was held in pretrial detention at the prison for more than 19 months after his arrest;

Whereas a Moscow court extended Paul Whelan's pretrial detention multiple times without publicly presenting justification or evidence of wrongdoing;

Whereas even Vladimir Zherebenkov, the lawyer appointed by the Federal Security Service to represent Paul Whelan, said on May 24, 2019, "[The Federal Security Service] always roll[s] out what they have, but in this case, we've seen nothing concrete against Whelan in five months. That means there is nothing.";

Whereas then-United States Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Jon Huntsman, responded on April 12, 2019, to a question about the detention of Paul Whelan, "If the Russians have evidence, they should bring it forward. We have seen nothing. If there was a case, I think the evidence would have been brought forward by now.";

Whereas then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on May 14, 2019, and urged him to ensure United States citizens are not unjustly held abroad;

Whereas the Kremlin has refused to provide Paul Whelan with full access to his lawyer, and the so-called evidence against Paul Whelan and any evidence he has seen is in

Russian, a language Whelan does not read or speak;

Whereas the Lefortovo pretrial detention facility and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to provide medical treatment for Paul Whelan's medical condition, despite being aware of its worsening state, resulting in emergency surgery on May 29, 2020;

Whereas Paul Whelan was wrongfully convicted on June 15, 2020, and sentenced to 16 years in a Russian labor camp by a three-judge panel, in a trial witnessed by United States Ambassador John Sullivan, who referred to the trial as "a mockery of justice" due to the denial of a fair trial and the exclusion of defense witnesses;

Whereas, in August 2020, on an unknown day, Paul Whelan was secretly transferred to camp IK-17, a penal labor camp in Mordovia, Russia, where he is forced to work 6 days a week in a garment factory;

Whereas Ambassador John Sullivan, while visiting Paul Whelan at the labor camp in Mordovia, stated that "Russian authorities . . . have never shown the world evidence of his guilt", and reiterated his call for the Russian authorities to correct this injustice and release Paul Whelan;

Whereas Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on February 4, 2021, and urged him to release United States citizens detained in the Russian Federation, including Paul Whelan and Trevor Reed, so that they are able to return home to their families in the United States;

Whereas, in August 2021, Whelan was released from a month-long stay in a solitary confinement at the IK-17 penal colony in the region of Mordovia;

Whereas, on April 27, 2022, the House of Representatives unanimously passed a bipartisan resolution calling for the release of Whelan;

Whereas Secretary Blinken "pressed" the Kremlin to accept an offer by the United States that would bring Paul Whelan and Brittney Griner home in July 2022;

Whereas, in November 2022, Paul Whelan was unable to contact his family for more than a week, during which time Russian authorities claimed Whelan had been sent to the hospital;

Whereas Russian authorities refused to release Paul Whelan as part of the prisoner exchange in December 2022;

Whereas Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated, "His detention remains unacceptable, and we continue to press for his immediate release at every opportunity"; and

Whereas President Biden stated that his administration had "not forgotten about Paul Whelan," and promised to "keep negotiating in good faith for his release". Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) implores the Government of the Russian Federation to immediately release Paul Whelan from imprisonment;

(2) implores the Government of the Russian Federation to comply with international treaty obligations and provide unrestricted consular access to Paul Whelan while he remains imprisoned in the Russian Federation;

(3) calls on the Government of the Russian Federation to provide Paul Whelan and all other political prisoners their constitutionally afforded due process rights and universally recognized human rights;

(4) expresses the sincere thanks of the United States to the Governments of Canada, Ireland, and the United Kingdom for their support in attempting to release Paul Whelan; and