

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

(5) expresses sympathy to the family of Paul Whelan for this travesty to justice and personal hardship and expresses hope that their ordeal can soon be brought to a just end.

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.

□ 1615

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which 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.

Mr. Speaker, on December 28, 2018, U.S. citizen and Marine Corps veteran Paul Whelan was wrongfully arrested in Moscow and charged with espionage.

This is just one of the many examples where an American is used as a political pawn by the Kremlin—where they disguise hostility and human rights abuses as justice. Paul was held in pretrial detention for 19 months, and on June 15, 2020, he was sentenced to 16 years in a Russian labor camp.

Paul was never provided with any real evidence of guilt. Defense witnesses were excluded. He was denied a fair trial, including the opportunity to defend himself properly or even communicate with his family.

Last month, on May 16, Paul reached day 1,600 of illegally being held hostage in the Russian Federation for a crime he did not commit.

Mr. Speaker, Paul is innocent, yet he remains behind bars to this day. Since his illegal incarceration, Paul has not received adequate medical care and has been denied regular access to his attorney. He has been designated as “wrongfully detained” by the U.S. Department of State. U.S. Ambassador John Sullivan accurately described Paul’s wrongful conviction as “a mockery of justice.”

Make no mistake, there is no such thing as justice in a country that is controlled by a despot. This resolution shows that we have not forgotten, and we will never forget Paul, and that we will keep advocating for his immediate release.

The U.S. Congress will not sit by as Americans are held hostage by the war criminal in the Kremlin. We will not rest until Paul and every wrongfully detained American is home safely with their families.

During consideration of the prior measure, we discussed Russia’s wrongful detention of the Wall Street reporter, Evan Gershkovich.

Another politically motivated imprisonment I must mention is Vladimir

Kara-Murza, a legal U.S. permanent resident twice poisoned by the Kremlin. He is a relentless advocate for democracy and human rights and was recently sentenced to 25 years in prison for his criticism of Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Sadly, this is what happens when you contradict the state-run media in a totalitarian state. His reward for pursuing the truth and standing up, exposing Putin’s brutality and corruption, was imprisonment.

The vengeance of the Kremlin knows no bounds.

Putin must stop using Cold War tactics to target innocent Americans as diplomatic pawns. I call for the immediate release of all Americans wrongfully detained abroad.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this resolution so Paul and his family know that the United States Congress stands with them with one voice, Republican and Democrat, chairman and ranking member, and will do everything in our power to make sure that Paul is returned safely to his home and to his family.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 272, calling on the Government of the Russian Federation to immediately release United States citizen Paul Whelan. I thank Representative HALEY STEVENS for her continued work and tireless advocacy for her constituent, Paul Whelan, and other Americans wrongfully detained overseas.

As I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to speak on this measure, I regret just how familiar it feels. For the third time, we are considering this resolution on the floor of the House of Representatives calling for Paul’s release and expressing solidarity with him and other Americans wrongfully detained abroad.

Russian authorities wrongfully detained Paul Whelan, an American marine veteran, more than 1,600 days ago on baseless charges for which no evidence was ever provided and subjected him to a sham, secretive trial.

For more than 4 years, Mr. Speaker, Paul has endured persecution, denials of his lawful rights, and the withholding of critical medical treatment while the Kremlin seeks to use him as a pawn for political gain.

For more than 4 years, Mr. Speaker, Paul’s family has had to suffer this injustice, demanding his release, and pleading with us, the United States Government, to do everything in our power to bring him home.

Like Evan Gershkovich whose resolution we are also considering on the floor today, Paul’s only crime is being an American. Tragically, only the Kremlin can release him from this detention and the suffering it has caused

Paul and his family, but we in the United States Congress and the United States House of Representatives are not powerless to make a difference and support the administration’s effort to bring Paul and others like him home.

This resolution today is one step that we can take to demand that the Russian Government forego the horrific practice of using the lives and freedoms of American citizens as political bargaining chips, demanding Paul’s release, and raising his and other cases at every available opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, we must pass this resolution calling for the release of Paul Whelan for the third straight Congress and continue to advocate forcefully and unequivocally for his release. We must continue to call out Russia for its illegal and reprehensible hostage taking and warn Americans about the dangers of traveling to Putin’s lawless fiefdom.

In last year’s NDAA, we boasted notification and transparency at the State Department pertaining to wrongfully detained and added crucial new whistleblower rewards provisions that would deter further hostage taking and help bring imprisoned Americans home to their families where they belong.

Mr. Speaker, we must continue to do everything we can and bring Paul to his family here at home in the United States of America.

I strongly support this measure, Mr. Speaker, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Again, I thank Representative STEVENS for introducing this resolution, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL), the vice chair of the Financial Services Committee, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Intelligence Committee, and a cosponsor of the resolution.

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman and the ranking member for their work in bringing these important resolutions to the floor, and I stand in strong support of them in calling for the release of Evan Gershkovich and Paul Whelan. I thank my great colleague, HALEY STEVENS, for our work together as co-chairs of the Task Force on American Hostages and Americans Wrongfully Detained Abroad here in this House, and I am grateful for her relentless advocacy for Paul and his family.

While we continue our work to get Americans out of these countries that are holding them only because they have a blue passport, I believe more has to be done, Mr. Speaker, to stop this trend that you can simply take and wrongfully hold an American with impunity.

Mr. Speaker, listen to these statistics from the Foley Foundation’s 2022 report: 175 percent increase in the incidents of U.S. nationals being wrongfully detained compared to the previous decade; a 60 percent increase in

the average duration of a U.S. national's captivity over the past 11 years.

Mr. Speaker, 75 percent of U.S. nationals currently wrongfully detained are held by who? Iran, China, Venezuela, Syria, Russia.

From 2012 to 2022, an average of 34 Americans were wrongfully held by foreign governments each year.

Now, when you put that in contrast to the decade of 2001 to 2011, there were only five. This is the chairman's point: There was a 580 percent increase in the past 10 years of Americans being taken and held hostage—mostly by governments. It is shocking.

The number of releases of Americans is not keeping up with new detentions. While the Levinson Act and our current hostage response efforts are important pieces to ensuring better transparency for our detainee families who are at home suffering—I think that process has significantly improved in the recent years, and I thank the State Department for that—it is still clear that adversarial countries believe they can take and hold an American with impunity.

We must do more. While we work on doing more, I will continue to come to this House floor and support resolutions like the ones we are voting on today. They are critically important to show the families and the wrongful detainees that the U.S. House stands with them and demands their release.

Mr. Speaker, I call on all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support Paul and Evan and their families with their votes today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding me the time.

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STEVENS), who has been fighting for Paul Whelan's release.

Ms. STEVENS. Mr. Speaker, I am so grateful to the exceptional leadership of the House Foreign Affairs Committee for shepherding this resolution to the floor and calling on the Russian Federation to immediately release Paul Whelan.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman MCCAUL, Ranking Member MEEKS, our subcommittee leadership, Chairman KEAN, and Ranking Member KEATING for their steady bipartisan urgency in the consideration of H. Res. 272.

Paul Whelan has been wrongfully detained by the Kremlin since I was first elected to Congress in the winter of 2018.

The first time I introduced this legislation demanding that Russia release my constituent, I was eager to assure Paul and his family that his government was behind him.

The second time, I was heartbroken that he was still waiting for justice.

Now, during the third Congress of Paul's detention, I am furious.

Throughout Paul's detention, the Russian Government has repeatedly violated his rights, denied him proper medical care, and refused to provide any evidence to substantiate the charges against him.

Paul was held in pretrial detention for over 18 months in the notorious Lefortovo Prison. Then his trial was held behind closed doors, and his defense was prohibited from calling witnesses—a sham trial.

Paul now serves a 16-year sentence of hard labor in a prison camp where he has been since August of 2020, facing unbelievably harsh conditions, injury, and illness. Here in the United States, we can't even fathom the conditions that he faces on a daily basis.

Today, we have the opportunity as a Congress to denounce Paul's wrongful imprisonment and to stand up to Vladimir Putin and his Kremlin cronies.

We will continue to come together as a Congress to make it clear that American citizens will not be used as political pawns by Mr. Putin, period. End of story.

I have said before that Paul's detention was the canary in the coal mine for the lawlessness that we now see on a global scale from Mr. Putin.

Since Paul's detention, Mr. Putin has seized marine veteran Trevor Reed, basketball star Brittney Griner, and most recently, The Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, the first reporter to be unlawfully detained by Russia since the Cold War.

□ 1630

Today, I am also proud to recognize the citizens who have taken up the fight to return their loved ones hand in hand with the United States Government. As co-chair of the Hostage Task Force alongside Mr. FRENCH HILL, we are standing up to these attacks on Americans for simply being Americans. I thank Mr. HILL for helping to fight for Paul.

I have spoken several times on this House floor about my deep admiration for Paul's sister, Elizabeth Whelan, who has become a true partner to my office and the people of Michigan's 11th District.

In late April of just this year, Elizabeth joined America's U.N. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield in a session of the U.N. Security Council that was being chaired by Russia's Foreign Minister.

In stunning testimony, she called on him directly to release her brother. Looking him straight in the eye, Elizabeth stressed that she didn't even know what her brother looked like anymore. Coverage of this event made it all the way to Paul's prison in Russia, strengthening his resolve and reflecting the bravery of his sister.

That is the incredible family that Paul comes from. The fortitude of the Whelan family should be an inspiration to all Americans. Every single day I see them stand up for freedom, democracy, and justice. They are fearless, and they are the reason Paul will come home.

This is deeply personal to me, and it should be to all Americans. Not a single day goes by that I do not think about Paul and his family. Their pain

is unimaginable, and no family should endure what the Whelans have.

It has been my mission to see Paul returned to Michigan and be reunited with his family and his beloved dog, Flora, a golden retriever who has outlived her breed by many years and is now 15. She is waiting for her owner to come home.

I thank my fellow Members of Congress for their continued advocacy on behalf of Paul, as well as all the families of hostages and wrongful detainees who are facing the unthinkable every single day.

If Paul is watching, he knows we are praying for him, we are rooting for him, and we will not stop fighting for him.

If Vladimir Putin is watching, he knows that the world's strongest democracy and the seat of the world's power is united against him today.

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

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Michigan.

Ms. STEVENS. Mr. Speaker, if Vladimir Putin is watching, he should know that the United States will not stand by and watch as his lawless regime continues its reign of terror.

Release Paul Whelan now. Release Evan Gershkovich. Mr. Putin should end his years of human rights abuses and his illegal war against Ukraine. Enough is enough.

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

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL).

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear friend and the chairman and the entire House Foreign Affairs Committee for knowing the importance of this.

I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 272. With this resolution, we are reaffirming, as a House, as an institution of the U.S. Government, our unwavering commitment to bring Paul Whelan home.

Paul has been wrongfully imprisoned in Russia for more than 4 years. He is a native Michigander. Representative STEVENS and I now share him. He is my constituent, but he has got two women you don't want to tick off and are not going to stop until we bring him home.

His parents are my constituents and our entire Michigan delegation—we don't put a party in front of it—stands united in this effort. His imprisonment continues to be an affront to due process, international law, and human rights.

We have witnessed increasingly bold and reckless action by Russia in wrongfully detaining American citizens. This is unjust, it is unconscionable, and it is unacceptable. Our people are not political pawns.

We must pursue every avenue to secure his immediate release, and I will work with everyone here and throughout our government to make that happen.

Paul needs hope. I hope he sees all of us today. His family desperately needs hope. This House of Representatives needs to send a strong message to the Russians that Paul is not a pawn in international relations, and we all want him home. The House needs to tell Paul and his family today, we need to send a message that we aren't forgetting you, we are fighting hard, and we will never give up.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge all of my colleagues to support this important resolution. This is an opportunity for this body to once again demand, with one unified voice, the immediate release of Paul Whelan. It is far beyond time we bring him home.

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

Mr. Speaker, for far too long, Paul Whelan has suffered at the hands of the regime in the Kremlin. For far too long, he has been forced to endure the horrific conditions in a Russian labor camp, wondering when he will finally be able to see his family again. For far too long, he has been left to wonder whether he has been forgotten by the government that the Kremlin is using him to extort.

By passing this legislation and taking other important steps to support Paul, to support Evan, and other Americans wrongfully detained overseas, we can speak with one voice, a single voice, that the United States Government will not rest until he and others like him are finally brought home to their families.

One voice, that is what we will do today. I know that my colleagues will join me in support of this very important resolution.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I first thank Ranking Member MEEKS for his support. We do speak with one voice, as one Nation, against this hostage taking by foreign nation adversaries.

I thank Representative STEVENS for her passion on this issue and for introducing this resolution and being a co-chair of that important caucus. I also thank my dear friend, Mrs. DINGELL, who represents the family and, obviously, the passion of the family. I can only imagine what it must feel like to have your son, family member, detained in one of the worst prisons in the world.

This happens too often. We are seeing this trend way too often now. It is not just Russia; it is China and Iran and Venezuela. It is a disturbing trend, Mr. Speaker, to take Americans hostage and hold them as political pawns for either a change of policy or an exchange of a prisoner that has no relation to the offense of the American. You can't tell me that what happened to Brittney Griner, whose offense was so meager, the idea she had some sort of small

amount of—whatever it was, a vape pipe, and then in exchange, a major Russian arms dealer. But that is what they do and that is what they want.

We need to stop this, and we need to provide the deterrence to stop this. The world continues to watch in horror as Vladimir Putin's crimes and atrocities in Ukraine continue. That is a lot of what this is all about. Paul Whelan is a marine. Evan is a Wall Street Journal reporter.

Just reporting the truth gets you thrown in prison in Russia. What were they reporting about? The indiscriminate bombing and killing of civilians, to the mass graves I saw in Bucha, to torture chambers, to mobile crematoriums. Think about that, Mr. Speaker. We haven't heard about something like that in quite some time, probably since my father's generation and my father's war.

What we are witnessing today is a genocide. If you rise up in protest or report the truth, you will be put in prison. I condemn this aggression in the strongest possible terms. I, along with the other Members on both sides of the aisle, will continue to fight to hold these perpetrators accountable.

We must also condemn the Russian dictator's practice of exploiting them as political pawns. As I have said, it has happened way too often. It is time to get Paul out of this Russian gulag, which is what it is, and back to his family in Michigan.

Today, all of us stand in this body with one voice, united as Americans, in condemning Russia's illegal detention of Paul Whelan. Congress will not rest.

As Congresswoman STEVENS said to Mr. Putin, if he is watching this, and to Paul Whelan, if he has the opportunity to watch this, we want them to know that we here in Congress will not rest until all Americans wrongfully detained in Russia are returned to their families.

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. 272.

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.

SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS ACT

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill

(H.R. 3099) to establish in the Department of State the position of Special Envoy for the Abraham Accords, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3099

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Special Envoy for the Abraham Accords Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that the policy of the United States, as enacted in section 104 of the Israel Relations Normalization Act of 2022 (division Z of Public Law 117-103), with respect to the Abraham Accords remains unchanged.

SEC. 3. SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS.

Title I of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2651a et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"SEC. 64. SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS.

"(a) SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS.—There is established within the Department of State a Special Envoy for the Abraham Accords (in this section referred to as the 'Special Envoy'), who shall serve as the primary advisor to, and coordinate efforts across, the United States Government relating to expanding and strengthening the Abraham Accords. The Special Envoy shall report directly to the Secretary of State and shall hold the office at the pleasure of the President.

"(b) NOMINATION.—Pursuant to subsection (j)(1) of section 1, the Special Envoy shall be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, and may be appointed from among the officers and employees of the Department except that such officer or employee may not retain the position (or the responsibilities associated with the position) held by such officer or employee prior to such appointment simultaneously with the position or responsibilities of the Special Envoy.

"(c) RANK AND STATUS OF AMBASSADOR.—The Special Envoy shall have the rank and status of ambassador.

"(d) DUTIES.—The Special Envoy shall be responsible for—

"(1) encouraging countries without diplomatic relations with Israel to establish formal diplomatic, economic, security, and people-to-people ties;

"(2) seeking to expand and strengthen existing relationships between Israel and Muslim-majority countries, including those outside the geographic scope of the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau of the Department of State, to ensure that all parties reap tangible security and economic benefits for their citizens;

"(3) building on existing efforts, including the Negev Forum, to help foster enhanced cooperation between Israel and Muslim-majority countries on shared priorities including as relates to trade, agriculture, and water security;

"(4) providing diplomatic support for Israel's integration into cooperative efforts related to regional security; and

"(5) coordinating lines of effort across the United States Government, including the regional and functional bureaus within the Department of State, and conducting appropriate diplomatic engagement with foreign governments, nongovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders determined appropriate by the Special Envoy in order to