

NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ and Congressman MIKE HONDA. I thank all of them.

IRAN SANCTIONS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, on Wednesday, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs will hold a long-overdue markup of the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act. Some of our colleagues are focusing exclusively on Iran's nuclear ambition, as it was the nuclear program in itself that was the catalyst for the concern.

But if Iran were comprised of a responsible, democratic government, would we be as apprehensive about their nuclear activities? Of course not. But we are talking about an Iranian regime which just this year conducted two missile tests and continues to work on the range of its missiles and on enabling them to carry a nuclear payload. We are talking about a regime whose leaders throughout the years have made it abundantly clear that they will stop at nothing to destroy the Jewish State of Israel. We are talking about an Iran which for nearly three decades has been designated by our U.S. Department of State as the world's leading state sponsor of global terrorism. The clerical regime is fomenting bloodshed and promoting chaos in the West Bank and Gaza and Lebanon and the Persian Gulf, as well as in Iraq, where it is actively assisting in the murder of our U.S. soldiers.

On the battlefields of Afghanistan, Iran is also playing a deadly subversive role. As early as 2002, allegations emerged that Iran was supporting insurgent groups in Afghanistan, including its former archenemy, the Taliban. However, the first significant report of Iranian weapons in Afghanistan came in April of 2007. Then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace, announced: "We have intercepted weapons in Afghanistan headed for the Taliban that were made in Iran."

Since 2007, several large shipments have been seized near the Iranian border. U.S. officials say that Iranian-made weapons have been found in Afghanistan and used by Taliban-led insurgents. These weapons have included Tehran's signature roadside bomb, the explosively formed penetrator, EFP, AK-47s, as well as C-4 plastic explosives and mortars.

On August 29 of this year, just a few days before General McChrystal submitted his request to this administration, Afghan and NATO forces uncovered a weapons collection in Herat with EFPs, Iranian-made rockets and dozens of blocks of Iranian C-4 plastic explosives.

In the August 2009 declassified, leaked version of his assessment, General Stanley McChrystal stated that: "Iran plays an ambiguous role in Afghanistan, providing developmental as-

sistance and political support to the Afghan government while the Iranian Qods force is reportedly training fighters for certain Taliban groups and providing other forms of military assistance to insurgents."

We cannot allow Iran to undermine U.S. efforts and kill our soldiers in Afghanistan. We cannot allow Iran to return Afghanistan to the status of a failed state and pave the way for attacks against the West using Afghanistan as its launching pad. We cannot allow Iran to develop nuclear weapons capabilities which threaten the United States and our allies.

If we are to be vigilant in protecting the lives of our men and women—military and civilian—in Afghanistan, we must increase the pressure on the Iranian regime and impose immediate sanctions on Iran. This should be our first option.

We don't have the luxury of time, to wait for an eventual Iranian response to U.S. diplomatic overtures. We cannot wait for the U.N. Security Council to come around. We cannot wait for our European and other allies to decide to do the right thing. The United States must lead by example. It is time to cut off the Iranian regime's economic lifeline. As such, we should not stop at this week's Foreign Affairs Committee markup.

I urge the majority to bring the strongest possible form of the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act to the floor next week for a vote, followed by quick Senate action so that it gets to the President's desk before the end of the year. We must do this now.

HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I came to Congress with a purpose, a purpose of working to preserve the way of life that we live in Kansas. I was born and raised in Kansas, and my home and family are still in Kansas. I never moved to Washington, D.C. because I love the sense of community and belonging that Kansas communities offer. Access to quality, affordable health care is one of those things that determine whether our communities survive and whether we have a future. This is why the current health care reform debate is so important to me, and I am extremely concerned about the direction that we are going.

During his campaign, President Obama stressed transparency and accountability in the health care debate. He said, I'm going to have all the negotiations around a big table and that the negotiations will be televised on C-SPAN so that people could see who is making the arguments on behalf of their constituents and who is making the arguments on behalf of drug companies or insurance companies.

But now the transparency that the President promised us is nowhere to be found, as several Democrat senators and White House staff hole themselves away to draft the health care reform bill behind closed doors. I understand the Democrats' desire to merge the two Senate committee bills, but this process concerns me because in this closed office, the future of health care for Kansans is being decided.

Does this small group understand the problems that cutting Medicare reimbursement rates will pose for Kansas hospitals, doctors, nurses and other health care providers? Kansas hospitals operate on razor-thin margins because they are already dramatically underpaid by Medicare. If these rates are further reduced, as the current reform bills propose, Kansas hospitals may be forced to close and access to health care for Kansans will be reduced.

Is this small group considering commonsense ideas that have been proposed by Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle that would make quality coverage more affordable and more accessible for more Americans? Some of those ideas that we have talked about include placing as much emphasis on wellness as we do on illness by giving employers and insurers flexibility to reward individuals who improve their health and manage their disease; encouraging medical students to become primary care physicians and nurses and incentivizing them to care for patients in underserved communities; permitting the sale of insurance across State lines, establishing high risk pools and reinsurance pools to address preexisting conditions and providing incentives to low-income families to retain or purchase private health insurance that best meets their needs; reforming our medical liability system to reduce frivolous lawsuits that lead to inflated insurance premiums and the practice of defensive medicine; encouraging health care savings by offering individuals health savings accounts that enable families to take ownership of their health; and upgrading our outdated health records system through the use of new technology to streamline costs and reduce medical errors.

It is my hope that these issues are being addressed as the President and Democrat leaders craft the health care reform bill. I have traveled across my State, and I have heard many Kansans who have worries. They are concerned about their health care and about the future of their State and country. Kansans and all Americans deserve to know what their Representatives are voting on, and they deserve the assurance their business will be conducted in a deliberate and open way.

The President has expressed a desire to explore a wide range of options for health care reform. Kansans want commonsense reforms that enhance our current system and reduce health care costs. What we do not want is the trillions in new deficit spending, reduced