

So why would the United States want to endorse this behavior and reward the companies, working with the government, that have unleashed this violent assault on workers' rights?

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That, after all, is what a trade agreement is really about, a partnership. This is not a partnership the United States of America should enter into.

I'm voting "no" on the Colombia free trade agreement. I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on the Colombia free trade agreement.

I believe the facts are simple. Voting for the Colombia free trade agreement is a vote for violent union busting, for driving people from their land, for setting the American working man and woman up to compete on an unlevel playing field that will cost us jobs and livelihoods. I know that it is difficult to look at these pictures and hard to accept the reality of the danger to people who speak up in Colombia.

But we cannot ignore the facts, and in Colombia, trade union activists are targeted for assassination and murder. That's not an easy fact to accept, but it's a fact. Approving the free trade pact with Colombia says that the United States can live with this fact. It brings the blood of union activist victims from Bogota to Washington. That blood won't be easily washed away.

Let's think about the movements for freedom happening from Cairo to Damascus to Tripoli. We applaud them. We congratulate the protesters.

When the union leaders in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Puerto Rico stand up for their rights against oppressive State governments, my Democratic colleagues, they applaud those workers. When angry Tea Partiers bash our government and talk about individual rights, my Republican colleagues applaud them.

Well, today we have a chance to do more than applaud. We can side with the people who are standing up for freedom in Colombia. I suggest that everyone in the House who has ever celebrated, applauded, or supported a popular, pro-democracy movement in the U.S. or abroad think long and hard before they vote "yes" on the Colombia free trade agreement.

Because what we see is what we get when it comes to free trade in Colombia. We get a partnership with a country where speaking your mind is a death sentence. I want free trade, but I'm for an agreement that builds commerce while protecting commerce, environment, and the rights of farmers and men.

This is not that agreement. This is an agreement that turns a blind eye to violence and oppression and injustice.

So I ask my colleagues to do what Alejandro and Anna who were murdered cannot do: say "no" to FTA with Colombia.

GRIDLOCK EXISTS IN UNITED STATES CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, I stand once again to make a plea to our spiritual leaders throughout the United States to be heard and to speak out against the gridlock that exists here in the United States Congress.

I do this feeling very comfortable since we open up our session with a prayer and as everyone can see and many have taken for granted, it says: "In God We Trust."

Clearly, the protesters have caused quite a bit of inconvenience for my colleagues and the constituents in New York, but the fact remains that they speak out for a frustration that most all Americans have. Uncertain as to what the future holds for them, many have lost their jobs, their savings, pulled their kids out of school; and they are frustrated that we in the Congress hardly talk to each other because of the depth of polarization.

And yet beyond the politics of it all, whether it's Democrats or Republicans, when you think about it, this recession can only be stopped and unemployment lowered by a combination of two things, the reduction of our spending and the raising of revenue in order to increase not only the confidence that people have but the necessity of having economic growth so America can regain its status among civilized nations.

Yet we find very little movement here because there's some that have already embarked on the 2012 campaign. They do that even though millions of Americans are suffering painfully, seeking relief now and not waiting until the end of next year.

It seems to me, whether we are dealing with the Koran or whether we are dealing with the Bible or the Torah, one thing is abundantly clear, that those who believe in a superior force would know that one of the things that we have a moral obligation to do is to take care of the vulnerable among us.

This great Nation now has broken all records in terms of our middle class actually being shrunk as people are forced into poverty. One out of every five kids in the United States of America is born into poverty, and we find that a smaller number of people in our country are controlling nearly half of the wealth.

There's something wrong with that equation, and certainly this is the time to fill that vacuum. For those who believe there's no direction to the protesters, there may not be direction, but they certainly expect that their government should be there for them. Their government is gridlocked. Our spiritual leaders could encourage them not just to pray, but to become active, find out who the Members are that represent them in the Congress, ask them to be voting on these bills that can create economic growth or can create jobs.

And so whether you're Protestant or Catholic or Jews or gentiles or Mormons or Muslims, this is the time that America needs you. This is why our Forefathers have never written out religion. While it cannot dictate which religion, if any, you should have, certainly we do have freedom of religion.

And as the protesters have a constitutional right in order to speak out to release their frustrations, I think we have a spiritual responsibility to take those parts of the proclamations that they're making, the protestations that they're making, and those parts that take care of trying to get the vulnerable to get a fair shake out of this economic disaster we find ourselves in, let us take care of our aged, our sick, those that are in poverty.

Let Social Security and Medicaid and Medicare be something that's not a gamble, but something that the American people can depend on.

Let the churches and the synagogues and the mosques and the temples be open so people can express themselves, and let this Congress attempt to be more civil in recognizing that we have a responsibility that goes beyond the election. We have a responsibility to the American people. So I conclude my remarks and make my plea.

HONORING GENERAL DUNCAN J. McNABB

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. COSTELLO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor and privilege to pay tribute to a leader and a warrior, General Duncan J. McNabb, commander of the United States Transportation Command. General McNabb is retiring after honorably serving this great Nation for over 37 years with a distinguished career.

General McNabb graduated from the United States Air Force Academy in 1974. As a command pilot, he has more than 5,600 flying hours in transport and rotary wing aircraft. In addition, General McNabb has held command and staff positions at squadron, group, wing, major command and Department of Defense levels and is considered the finest mobility and logistics expert in the Department of Defense.

I have had the pleasure of working with General McNabb from 2005 to 2007 when he assumed command of the Air Mobility Command at Scott Air Force Base in the congressional district that I am privileged to represent and, again, when he returned to Scott Air Force Base to be the commander of USTRANSCOM in 2008.

USTRANSCOM is a critical part of our military operations. It provides the coordinated transportation, distribution and sustainment, which projects and maintains our national power. As a global combatant commander, General McNabb has made supporting the American warfighter his top priority.