

aisle last year to pass the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act, a bill to hold Iran accountable for its ongoing support for terrorism, ballistic missile proliferation, and human rights abuses. This legislation passed the Senate with an overwhelming bipartisan majority of 98 to 2. Ultimately, it served as the base text of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, which addressed a wide range of hostile behavior from not just Iran but from Russia and North Korea as well. This bill calls for the administration to develop a comprehensive regional strategy to deter conventional and asymmetric threats. We are fast approaching the deadline for that strategy.

More importantly, however, we have heard the President say for more than a year that he was going to develop a plan to hold Iran accountable. Thus far, we have seen nothing more than tough talk. The reality is that this administration has yet to fully implement critical provisions of this law that could substantively counter Iran's nefarious behavior. The bill gives the President the authority to target human rights abusers, including those complicit in the ongoing repression of protesters, but he has yet to use that authority. The bill also authorizes the President to go after those individuals and entities that are violating international arms embargoes, exporting hateful ideologies and weapons across the region and fomenting violence and chaos against innocent civilians in Syria and Yemen, but he has yet to go after these actors.

While the administration designated Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps under terrorism authority—something I applaud—it has not effectively targeted actors associated with the IRGC.

All of my colleagues know that I was deeply skeptical and strongly opposed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. I voted against the JCPOA precisely because I thought it was a mistake to roll back sanctions on Iran without the total dismantlement of its nuclear infrastructure. However, refusing to certify Iran's compliance with a deeply flawed deal, as the President did in October, does little to address its shortcomings. The President's move in October was a hollow attempt to fulfill a campaign promise while continuing to let Iran enjoy the benefits of the JCPOA and continue its non-nuclear malign activities throughout the region. Furthermore, this decision was carried without a clear path forward and without specific proposals that could have garnered critical international support.

At the end of the day, the Trump administration's actions may have actually left the United States with less leverage to address Iran's far-reaching, nefarious behavior in the Middle East, whether it be its support for terrorism, its human rights abuses, or its illegal ballistic missile development. None of

these critical security challenges are addressed simply by not certifying the JCPOA, nor does it move us toward a comprehensive international strategy for the nuclear program Iran plans to resume immediately following this agreement's expiration. In short, the President's own lack of policy has squandered whatever leverage he may have hoped to gain.

Furthermore, the President has severely disadvantaged himself by gutting the very instruments in his national security apparatus that should be taking the lead on Iran and all foreign policy matters. As an architect of the sanctions networks that crippled Iran's economy and forced its leaders to negotiate with the international community, I know how essential our diplomatic arsenal is to confronting Iran.

The President, however, seems committed to hollowing out those agencies and offices that are in the best position to advance our diplomatic interests. The Trump administration, for example, has shuttered the office of sanctions policy at the State Department. The Office of Foreign Assets Control at the Treasury Department is now woefully understaffed. As the President publicly talks about supporting democracy, his administration has scrapped funding for human rights and democracy programs and even removed the word "democracy" from USAID's mission statement.

Meanwhile, Iran continues to increase its presence in Iraq, to maintain support for the terrorist organization Hezbollah, and to take credit for Bashar al-Assad's murderous grip on power in Syria.

The United States must be willing to work with its allies if we are serious about holding Iran accountable. We should be corralling our allies in Europe to begin treating all of Hezbollah's entities as terrorist organizations. We should be moving our allies toward the development of a comprehensive international strategy for addressing Iran's nuclear ambitions once the JCPOA expires.

Finally, this administration must prioritize the release of American citizens unjustly arrested and detained in Iran. Today, Princeton University student Xiyue Wang, a scholar from one of the most renowned academic institutions in the world, in my home State of New Jersey, remains in prison under ridiculous charges of espionage. Similarly, Siamak Namazi, a former student of Rutgers University in New Jersey, remains in prison, along with his father, a former UNICEF employee. And Robert Levinson remains missing after more than 10 years.

In short, this President's approach toward Iran thus far has been a disjointed mix of campaign promises, bluster, and confusing signals to our allies—not a serious consideration of how to effectively confront an existing and growing threat.

So, as we approach a legally mandated deadline for the President to

present Congress and the American people with a sound policy to confront a real threat, I call on the President to make use of our incredible national security establishment, to consult experts who can help formulate a strong, sound policy capable of confronting Iran's destabilizing behavior in the Middle East, and to implement a strategy that will effectively confront Iran's continued support for international terrorism, its belligerent ballistic missile tests, and its ongoing public and brutal abuses of human rights within its own borders and around the world.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, Republicans just passed the largest tax reform package in 30-something years, and middle America will go home in February with bigger paychecks than they did—I say in February because it will not take that long for the IRS to update their software. They will go home with more money in their pockets.

If there has been a theme in the Trump administration, it is that they want those working Americans, those middle-class Americans, to do better under this President than they did in the previous 8 years. That tax reform package is part of that, and I am amazed that my Democratic colleagues objected to it. They objected to middle-class Americans having more money in their pockets, in their take-home pay, for no other reason, I think, than to resist President Trump.

OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS LEASING PROPOSAL

Mr. President, what I am about to speak about speaks to better jobs and better wages for working Americans, for those middle-class families.

This afternoon, the U.S. Department of the Interior released the Trump administration's draft proposed program for offshore oil and gas leasing. This proposal would mean more affordable energy made right here in the United States of America. That is good news for American workers and families. I commend President Trump and Interior Secretary Zinke for their commitment to supporting American workers and making America energy dominant.

For decades, past administrations have handcuffed American energy manufacturers by restricting offshore leases to the western and central Gulf of Mexico. You could only drill there, not elsewhere. Past plans left 90 percent of U.S. offshore resources off limits to energy producers and in the process said no to thousands of good-paying American jobs and billions of dollars in offshore investments—when I say "offshore," I mean off the American shore