

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chairman Loychik, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present HR 104, a resolution condemning the Biden Administration's ill-planned withdraw of our American troops and citizens from Afghanistan. 13 of America's best and brightest were killed, including Petty Officer 3rd Class Maxton Soviak of Berlin Heights, Ohio. These actions placed many more Americans at risk. It also placed those Afghani citizens who helped us over the last 20 years in danger.

When I was a member of Congress, I had the opportunity of visiting Afghanistan many times. On my first trip in 2005, I witnessed young girls with back packs holding their mother's hands as they walked to school. I was thrilled because young women were finally given the opportunity to receive an education. They walked freely with their mothers with uncovered faces and unaccompanied by a man.

On another trip, I met women entrepreneurs. These women made clothing, handbags, jewelry, and more that were being sold in the local market. These items found their way into US shops thanks to the various NGO's working on their behalf.

Women used to have no voice in government or society. However, in 2012, I met women who were working inside Afghanistan's government in an official capacity – they were elected or appointed officials. After many centuries women finally had a voice.

All this has changed since we left. I am not here to question whether or not American should have left. I do not think we should have been in a forever war. Rather, I am condemning the way we left. President Biden said our departure would not be another Saigon moment. He was wrong. This departure was worse than the evacuation in Saigon.

By pulling the might of our military out first, we put our American citizens and allies in Afghanistan in danger. There should have been plans to evacuate people out over a period of time and not rushed. Waiting until the last minute to begin evacuating made it even more difficult for those needing visas and other documents before they could leave. Closing our airbase and letting the Taliban control the airport created an opportunity for unnecessary delays in addition to the loss of life. It also made it impossible to get every American out.

We left hundreds of Americans in Afghanistan. Without military planes, these citizens need visas before they can get on a commercial flight. Since we no longer have an established Embassy in Kabul, this has proven to be an almost impossible task. These Americans are now in “safe houses,” some traveling by foot in order to leave. This Administration fails to provide accurate reports as to the number actually left behind.

We also left without billions of dollars of our military equipment. Now the Taliban terrorists have control of American-made helicopters, uniforms, and weapons.

Women who finally had a voice now must return to a 7th century way of life. In many parts of Afghanistan they must be completely covered, not being allowed to leave their village without an escort and no longer able to earn an income or receive an education. If they show defiance, they likely will be punished. Some may be physically scarred and may be put out of their homes to beg on the street.

The new government has placed known terrorists in power. This makes the threat of another 9/11 real. We cannot afford to ignore this hasty and ill-planned departure.

This resolution honors those who sacrificed their lives for us. These are the brave men and women who went above and beyond to defend our freedom and give the people of

Afghanistan that same freedom we enjoy. We must make sure we never forget them. It urges Congress to fully investigate the actions that led to the failure of this departure and the collapse of the Afghanistan government. Finally, it asks that those responsible be held accountable and condemns President Biden for these failures. I am happy to answer any questions.