

hours at one. It will inform you in ways that go way beyond the mere numbers.

We need to understand why 1.6 million children are homeless at least one night in the year and why the number of homeless children enrolled in public schools has risen 72 percent since 2006.

Our inaction is crippling working families, single mothers, and veterans who have sacrificed so much for this Nation. I call on my colleagues today to take the homeless shelter challenge.

Talk to your constituents who do not have a home, and meet the families who are failing because of our indifference and our inaction.

VENEZUELA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to lend my voice to those who are being brutally silenced by the Nicolas Maduro regime in Venezuela.

After 15 years of suffering under Hugo Chavez's rule, the people of Venezuela have watched their liberties continue to be violently stripped away as Maduro further radicalizes the country's failed policies.

These policies produce the highest inflation rates in Latin America, leading to shortages of such basic goods as milk and toilet paper, and sending Venezuela into a desperate downward economic spiral that worsens every day.

The corruption that is enabled by the Maduro government and its supporters has also contributed to a society that is plagued by rampant violence. In this country of 30 million inhabitants, nearly 25,000 homicides were committed last year alone.

Worse still, the vast majority of these murders went unpunished, creating a climate of impunity that leaves ordinary citizens paralyzed by fear and hopeless about their own future and the future of their country.

As if this was not harsh enough, Mr. Speaker, Venezuelans are now facing the regime's repressive and violent actions. Weeks ago, Maduro and his cronies unleashed a bloody crackdown on students as they demonstrated against the regime's failed policies and peacefully demanded their basic human rights and democratic freedoms.

These students are expressing the sentiments of millions of Venezuelans who are sick and tired of the regime's destructive policies and fear for what may happen next. These students were exercising freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, yet Maduro responded to their brave calls of liberty with tear gas, rubber bullets, beatings, and live ammunition.

As the number of Venezuelan protesters swelled to the millions, Maduro has only stepped up the violence and his attempts to silence his critics by censoring radio and social media platforms.

By controlling the flow of information and the major media outlets, Maduro perpetuates his absurd conspiracy theories which cast blame on everyone, but himself, for this crisis of democracy in Venezuela.

Through the use of intimidation, unjust detentions, and violence, Maduro has followed the familiar playbook of other rulers who fear the desire of their citizens to live in freedom and under the rule of law.

This is especially the case with the brutal Castro tyranny, which has the biggest stake in keeping Maduro in power because of its mutual disdain for freedom, for democracy, for liberty, for the rule of law, and because of Castro's dependence on Venezuelan oil.

We have witnessed the Castro regime parachute in their own hired guns to help the Maduro regime continue its oppressive tactics against the people of Venezuela.

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Since the countrywide protests began on February 12, Maduro's regime has murdered at least 14 Venezuelans, injured or unjustly detained hundreds more, and committed the worst abuses against protesters as stories of torture and other human rights violations continue to pour in.

This relentless repression will continue and intensify unless the United States and the international community speak with a unified voice and help to promote the rule of law, the human rights, and the democratic aspirations of the Venezuelan people.

I hope that we will be able to say that we did not stand idly by as the Venezuelan people were brutally repressed and that we had a voice in making sure that people knew what was going on in Venezuela. I hope that we will be able to say that we stood for justice, that we stood for peace, that we stood for human rights, that we stood for freedom, and that we stood for the rule of law at the moment when these were needed the most.

THE NEW CHANCE FOR A NEW START IN LIFE ACT OF 2014

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I do believe that we in this country have an obligation, commitment, and duty—and just simply out of friendship—to be concerned about the American people in the many ways that they come to this Congress or to their Members of Congress or to their elected officials. After contributing over the years to make America great, when they are in their time of need, it is most appropriate for us to respond.

It is now going on almost a year that we have not responded to hardworking Americans who, over the years, have contributed taxes. Maybe some of them are veterans who served in the United States military and are willing to

make the ultimate sacrifice, and now in their time of need we are fiddling and dillydallying. Unfortunately, we are doing so because our friends on the other side of the aisle cannot recognize that, but for the grace of God, there go I.

No, these individuals are not standing in line to get unemployment insurance. They are standing in line to apply for jobs. Because the people who are eligible for unemployment insurance are individuals who have worked most every day of their life, but, unfortunately, they have found in times of economic upswings and downswings, maybe because of their training or maybe because of being a recent veteran, that they are not able to get a job immediately.

This Congress has delayed over and over again where our friends on the other side of the aisle and those Republicans in the other body claim that they cannot offer one vote to be able to pass unemployment insurance.

These individuals need our commitment, America's commitment, as they have given a commitment to us. Right now in America, there are now 48 million Americans living in poverty, 22 million children. Some of the individuals here were not at minimum wage, but they are individuals that are working and making minimum wage and can't make it either.

We must confront these issues. There must be the attitude of the Good Samaritan in this Congress. I have introduced H.R. 3888, the New Chance for a New Start in Life Act of 2014. It provides grants to nonprofits and State and local governments to train individuals for the emerging industries, the new jobs, so that individuals such as those waiting in line for employment can find employment. I would like to add that legislation as we move forward on the extension of unemployment insurance—1.3 million, 1.5 million and growing, because every week some individual who is unemployed maxes out on the 26 weeks of what they get in unemployment insurance in the State. That is why this is called emergency unemployment insurance. That is why it is called insurance, because it covers individuals who have worked, who have contributed and who have worked.

So it is disappointing that we are here again not being able to extend the unemployment insurance again, not being able to put on the floor of the House and get a vote for increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10, a bill that has been filed for more than a year, and to be able to look working families directly in the eye and suggest that they can survive on less than the increase of the minimum wage.

There are businesses that will support this. There are businesses who recognize that, as they provide for their employee, that employee churns into the economy. That employee is a consumer. That employee tries to buy a house or pays their rent or goes out and buys items for their children or for their elderly parents or for themselves.

Why don't we understand that investment is what America is all about? Because America is not broke, and we have the opportunity to invest and to create more research and development, but we are living under the umbrella with the big elephant in the room—sequencer. That doesn't make sense, because this country is one of the richest countries in the world.

I can assure you that, if we invest in America, we will create jobs, and those jobs will then churn the economy again and continue to bring down the debt. I don't know why a commonsense approach to building this economy up should not be the direction of this country.

Yesterday, I spoke at a high-speed rail summit. It is very clear that a building of high-speed rail will create thousands of jobs and increase mobility of Americans, but yet the image is that we are broke, and that is a very sad commentary.

As I listened to the ads that were utilized in my State of Texas, individuals not running for Congress or the United States Senate but running for State offices, all they can talk about is standing up against Obama. I want to stand with President Obama and stand with him to build this country and make it greater. That should be the message: invest in people. That is what will make America the Nation that all have looked to.

AID FOR UKRAINE

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I first want to recognize Annie Lowrey and Michael Gordon—they are reporters from The New York Times—because I will summarize their article and plagiarize other portions of it in talking about Ukraine.

The world watched in wonder, concern, excitement, and sometimes horror, and marveled at the tenacity and the resiliency of the Ukrainian people. However, Ukraine is in desperate need now of billions of dollars—and quickly. Its economy is shrinking; its government treasury is empty; its foreign exchange funds are low; and its banking system is fragile. Which brings us to the point of: What are the next steps?

The first step is for the Ukrainian people to organize an interim government. I call upon them to do it as rapidly as they can so that the international community has someone then to negotiate with and deal with some of these pressing matters, and that they go into a positive direction in doing that.

The second thing is for the capitals of Brussels and Washington, D.C., to take immediate action to help offset some of these dire financial constraints that Ukraine has.

I want to applaud Secretary Kerry for already trying to address this and floating the idea of \$1 billion that

would then go to immediate aid, and I want to call upon the European Union, headquartered in Brussels, and all the individual European countries to do the same. It is important now for this financial faith and confidence so that the people of Ukraine can continue to move forward and develop some financial security in this transitional period.

This is also critical in that this occurs as a bridge before the International Monetary Fund weighs in. The International Monetary Fund obviously needs to have a stable government to deal with. It also needs to have—and will ask for—reforms, transparency, rule of law, and some financial controls to get the ledger solidified in Ukraine, and that is what they should do.

So the important aspect of this debate is that the individual countries that have concern about the stability of what were formerly called the captive nations, the Eastern Bloc, now countries that want to be in the European community of free, democratic institutions, that there has to be a bridge so that, obviously, the chaos that has been involved in the country of Ukraine will not continue post the departure of their President and so that stability can reign.

I call upon the people of Ukraine to keep the faith and work hard and move forward on these reforms. I call on the governments—as I mentioned before, my own government, and the governments of the European Union—to offer immediate assistance, and I call for the International Monetary Fund to move as expeditiously and as quickly as possible to help stabilize the situation in Ukraine.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF TUSKEGEE AIRMAN CAPTAIN LEON "WOODIE" SPEARS

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

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Each February during African American History Month, Americans come together to celebrate the important contributions of African Americans throughout the Nation. I am proud to share the remarkable story of one of my constituents, Hayward resident, Captain Leon "Woodie" Spears.

Growing up near an airfield, young Woodie always dreamed of flying. After attending college, he was given the opportunity to achieve his dreams. Woodie was among the few selected to join other young African Americans in Alabama at the Tuskegee Airfield, where he was trained to fly. During training, Woodie overcame very tough odds, battling prejudice and racism, to earn his wings and the honor of serving with the Tuskegee Airmen.

Following training, then-Lieutenant Spears was sent to Italy at the height of World War II, serving with the all-African American 332nd Fighter Group.

Woodie's tensest moment came in March 1945, when his plane was hit by antiaircraft fire at 32,000 feet. He was forced to make an emergency landing in Germany, only to be taken prisoner later by the German Army. Later, Woodie was able to locate Russian forces and found his way back to safety.

Captain Spears and his fellow Tuskegee Airmen proved themselves in battle abroad, but upon returning home, they faced another battle—the struggle for equality. Denied basic human dignity, they fought back. With like-minded citizens, they changed America for the better, and, of course, that fight, their struggle, still continues today.

For their brave service during World War II, the Tuskegee Airmen were collectively awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2007. Captain Spears was among those present to receive this prestigious honor.

After Captain Spears' military career, he dedicated his life to public service, toured the country to share his military experiences during the time of segregation, and spoke up for equality for all. Although Captain Spears is no longer with us, we are reminded of the life motto he lived by: Dare to dream.

Captain Spears is just one of many African Americans with a unique story that makes our country what it is today. The story of Captain Spears reminds us that the United States has come a long way, but that we still have a much longer way to go to truly reach equality for all.

I will not rest until all Americans have an equal opportunity to achieve their dreams.

A RESPONSE TO TWO U.S. SENATORS REGARDING PUERTO RICO STATEHOOD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. PIERLUISI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the junior Senator from Mississippi and the junior Senator from West Virginia spoke on the Senate floor about Puerto Rico's political status. Because Puerto Rico is a territory and not a State, we have no Senators who can respond to these two Senators on the Senate floor. So, as the only elected representative in Congress of the 3.6 million U.S. citizens that live in Puerto Rico, I respond now.

The Senators discussed the referendum that was held in Puerto Rico in November 2012. However, neither Senator mentioned that, on the first question in that referendum, 54 percent of voters said they do not want Puerto Rico to be a territory, which means that my constituents no longer consent to the current status.

Likewise, neither Senator noted that, during a Senate hearing on the referendum held last August, the senior Democrat and the senior Republican on the Committee on Energy and