

from charging the residents of Russell and Clinton Counties for water from Lake Cumberland; and a permanent fix to ensure healthcare benefits for retired coal miners.

Though I am disappointed in many parts of the overall bill and the appropriations process as a whole, I am very happy with the badly needed items successfully addressed for my district in this short-term funding bill. For that reason and because I do not ever want to see a government shutdown, I will vote "yes" on the short-term omnibus.

I will continue to work hard for conservative principles and fiscal discipline. I will continue to demand transparency through the appropriations process. I came here to get things done for the people of my district. I am sure I will never get 100 percent of what I want, but I will always try. At the end of the day, I will try to build consensus and do the things that Congress is supposed to get done, whether it be tax reform, healthcare reform, or to fund the government.

We have many responsibilities in this great body, and I pledge to be one Representative who works with our President and every Member of this body to make America great again.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF MIAMI-DADE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, as we approach Peace Officers Memorial Day, I would like to honor the service and the sacrifice of law enforcement officers in my south Florida community who bravely lost their lives in the line of duty. On April 29, through the project that is called Project Honoring Every Resting Officer, or Project HERO, the Miami-Dade Police Department embarked upon its annual mission to pay tribute to the memory of each fallen officer in every department.

By placing an American flag and a Blue Line flag at the resting location of these valiant men and women in uniform, we remember their sacrifices and ensure that their memories will be immortalized.

I would like to thank the director of our fine police department, Juan Perez, for spearheading this noble cause on behalf of the families, friends, and colleagues of all of our fallen officers and also for Director Perez's work in making our community a safer place in which to live.

I encourage all south Floridans to also remember the fallen and to attend the Miami-Dade Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Ceremony on May 4 at 7 p.m. at Tropical Park.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTION OF PORTMIAMI

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I recently visited PortMiami, one of the prime economic engines in Miami-Dade County.

Located in my congressional district, PortMiami is known as the cruise capital of the world. With its exclusive geographic location, the port is accessible to many international markets. In 2016, it handled an impressive 9 million tons of cargo and close to 5 million passengers.

With such large numbers, we can already imagine the powerful impact of PortMiami. It grows our economy. It creates jobs in Miami-Dade County and, indeed, throughout our great State of Florida.

Recent investments in infrastructure have been instrumental in guaranteeing that PortMiami remains a world class cargo and cruise port.

Throughout my years in Congress, I have been a strong supporter of our port. A project to dredge the channel to accommodate megacontainer vessels was completed in 2015. Also, four gantry cranes were purchased in order to operate the higher cargo volume. The completion of a tunnel has also accelerated the port's capacity to increase the volume of trucks that travel to and from the marine terminals, further strengthening the competitiveness of PortMiami.

PortMiami is currently undergoing some additional infrastructure projects, such as a new cruise terminal, security enhancements, and cargo yard-related improvements, all very important so that PortMiami continues to be a world class cargo and cruise port.

The Port of Miami is very important to my congressional district, to our south Florida economy, and I will continue to embrace this enterprise and economic force for our residents.

LUPUS AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, May is Lupus Awareness Month. Lupus is an autoimmune illness that has the ability to attack any part of the body and unfortunately has no cure yet.

According to the Lupus Foundation of America, more than 1.5 million Americans, including my lovely stepdaughter Katharine, are living with lupus; and millions have already sadly lost their battle with this terrible disease.

So this month, we raise awareness and educate our communities about lupus; and we also thank the researchers, doctors, and scientists who work around the clock to research, diagnose, treat, and eventually cure this disease.

I would like to highlight the wonderful work that the Sylvester Cancer Center at my alma mater, the University of Miami, is doing to get closer to finding safer and more effective treatments.

I have been honored to join forces with the Lupus Foundation and my colleagues in the Congressional Lupus Caucus to secure new Federal funding to advance lupus research, education, and awareness. These funds will help foster new scientific breakthroughs to better understand the disease and to help patients living with lupus.

Finally, I want to recognize the hard work and the dedication of caregivers and advocates who raise awareness for lupus who create a better life for those impacted by this terrible disease.

In particular, I want to highlight the Florida Chapter of the Lupus Foundation. From their local Walks to End Lupus to their tireless advocacy on behalf of patients and caregivers, they have been an instrumental source of hope, guidance, and comfort to those living who have been transformed by this disease.

So I invite our entire south Florida community to join them and the Miami Marlins on May 10 at Marlins Park for Lupus Awareness Night.

Mr. Speaker, this month, let us remember those who we have lost and those who are currently impacted by this terrible disease. Let us thank the advocates and caregivers, empower researchers, and, most importantly, let us work together for the day when no one will be diagnosed with lupus.

□ 1030

VENEZUELA REFUGEE ASSISTANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COMER). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CURBELO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, for over a decade, thousands of Venezuelans were forced to flee the brutal Chavez dictatorship, and the situation has only worsened under his hand-picked successor, Nicolas Maduro.

Over the last several years, the people of Venezuela have increasingly spoken out against the Maduro regime, and time and time again he has attempted to silence them. In the last few weeks alone, the world has seen countless examples of the regime's thuggish tactics, unethical behavior, and lethal force against innocent civilians.

Top opposition leaders like Leopoldo Lopez remain locked up in Maduro's prisons, while the dictator continues to stop at nothing to try and control all branches of government. Thousands of opposition protesters have been arrested and dozens have been left for dead or killed.

So in response to this continued political crisis, I have joined with my colleagues DARREN SOTO, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, and DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ to introduce bipartisan legislation allowing Venezuelan nationals who have made a new home in the United States to remain here if they choose to do so, since it is too dangerous to return to their home country.

Instead of returning to the instability and uncertainty in Venezuela, these individuals would be granted legal permanent residency, so long as they do not have a criminal record and have never been involved in the persecution of others, eliminating any possibility of human rights violators or

Chavista thugs accessing our legal immigration system.

The people of Venezuela deserve the American people's support and admiration for their continued fight against the brutal Maduro anti-American regime. Honest and hardworking Venezuelans who would be persecuted or imprisoned unjustly should they return to their country should be allowed the opportunity to take refuge here in the United States.

FLOOD INSURANCE REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the critical issue of reforming and reauthorizing the National Flood Insurance Program. For my constituents in south Florida and the Florida Keys, and for coastal communities across the country, flood insurance is an absolute necessity to protect against natural disasters. But the program is flawed and saddled with \$23 billion of debt.

We have a unique opportunity in the coming months to address the issues that matter most to our constituents, providing for optimal coverage at rates that are affordable to policyholders and based on accurate flood maps. There are numerous solutions I am studying, such as expanding the use of Write Your Own policies and growing the private insurance market, as long as strict oversight protocols are established and a Federal backstop is in place.

We should also promote stronger building standards for new construction projects that will better withstand flooding and strong winds. In Florida, we are a payee State, a donor State into the NFIP, but have also adopted strong building standards to reduce cleanup costs after the damage of a natural disaster has been done.

As Congress works to reform the NFIP, I will find commonsense solutions with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure our constituents have access to reliable coverage at fair and appropriate rates.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the seven Miami-Dade County schools that were recently named to the USA Today's top 100 public schools in the country, including Archimedean Upper Conservatory Charter School in my own district.

The rankings are based on graduation rates, reading, and math scores on State standardized tests, including how low-income and minority students fared in comparison to the State average, and the number of students taking college-level advanced placement courses and scoring well on the corresponding tests.

As a former Miami-Dade County Public School Board member, I am incredibly proud to see the tremendous growth and success of these schools in south Florida. MDCPS was in the midst of a financial and moral recovery when I was on the board just a few years ago; and during my time there,

we improved the quality of education and put students and teachers first, resulting in major gains in student performance and graduation rates.

Today, Superintendent Carvalho and the board continue to make great progress. The teachers, staff, administrators, and parents at these schools are working to ensure our students have the best education possible.

Congratulations on this honor. I look forward to visiting the Archimedean Owls back home in the very near future.

NEW DETAILS ON IRAN DEAL PRISONER SWAP

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

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, we recently learned troubling details surrounding the terms of the Obama administration's nuclear deal with Iran from early last year. As I have said before, the more details we learn about this deal, the more apparent it is that it was neither prudent nor transparent.

The safety and security of the American people and our allies around the world should remain a top priority for the United States. But we are learning, according to reports, as part of this prisoner swap with Iran in 2016, the Obama administration released seven prisoners and dropped charges and international arrest warrants of 14 fugitives, many of whom had been directly involved in supplying Iran with U.S.-built equipment or sensitive information that could be used for military systems, primarily Iran's nuclear program.

The administration downplayed the security threat that these men posed. In a variety of ways, these individuals deliberately worked to undermine the United States and smuggle American military technology to Tehran.

In one instance, a man was allegedly part of a conspiracy to steal sensitive software information from a defense contractor in Vermont. Another one of the men was in the middle of serving an 8-year prison sentence on charges related to a separate conspiracy to provide satellite technology and hardware to Iran.

Three of the fugitives were allegedly working to lease an aircraft from Boeing for an Iranian airline that authorities say supported Hezbollah, which the United States, of course, has designated as a terrorist organization.

And the list goes on as these are just a few of the cases. All of this poses a serious threat to our national security as sensitive military information and technology could be used to bolster Iran's weapons programs.

As you may recall, this comes after we learned last fall that, as a part of the deal, the United States paid \$400 million that was contingent on Iran releasing four American hostages. This broke from longstanding United States

policy to not pay ransoms to rogue nations because it encourages bad actors like Iran to take more hostages. Again, this was not made known to Congress or the American public. We only learned about it nearly a year after the deal was finalized.

What makes this most concerning or more disconcerting is the Obama administration's lack of transparency on the backgrounds of these prisoners. These are not merely civilians or businessmen, as the President and his officials referred to them on multiple occasions. The administration left the impression that these individuals were nothing more than violators of sanctions and not as dangerous as they truly were. Each of these men pose very real threats that the administration hid from the American people.

This isn't a partisan talking point, Mr. Speaker. Even President Obama's own Justice Department had accused many of these men of being involved in terrorist activities.

I support diplomatic efforts with Iran, and I am hopeful that we can continue to engage in diplomacy and secure a good deal at some point, but this latest news continues to exemplify why both Republicans and Democrats could not and did not support this deal.

Iran continues to push every boundary, exploit every loophole, and avoid as much oversight as possible, all while it is antagonizing the rest of the world. It continues to reap the benefits of this deal at the expense of our national security and that of our allies, such as Israel.

We continue to learn something new and bad about this deal that wasn't shared with Congress or the public. Our national security is too important to put at risk, and no President's legacy is worth taking that risk. This new information validates many of the concerns that led to the bipartisan opposition to the nuclear deal.

RECOGNIZING THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE OF GRETA JOYNES AND CHRIS SARLEY

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to come down to the floor to recognize and thank two of my major staffers in my office who are leaving to pursue other opportunities. The first one is Greta Joynes.

Greta recently left as my legislative director; and as you know, Mr. Speaker, that is your top adviser in the legislative field. So not only running the legislative office, she also had some personal expertise in the telecommunications regions.

But Greta is from northern Illinois, north of I-80, originally from the Chicagoland area, and is a graduate of Northern Illinois University, NIU. She started as a staff assistant in 2003 and worked her way up through the ranks, as I said, becoming legislative director