

And what has this House of Representatives done? Nothing. Not even a hearing. Now, we can blather on forever about all sorts of things. We can have 50 investigations of this or that day in and day out. But can we take an action on something that is staring us in the face, which is the forest fire crisis in the Western United States right now?

Come on. Wake up and smell the smoke before it is too late. Take action. Pass this bicameral, bipartisan reform supported by the President of the United States. Give us the resources we need to fight these fires and to prevent future fires so we won't have more years like this.

PUERTO RICO'S POLITICAL STATUS

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

Mr. PIERLUISI. Madam Speaker, I rise to provide an update on Puerto Rico's political status, which is an issue of national significance.

Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States. Territory status is undemocratic. Although Puerto Rico is home to more American citizens than 21 States, island residents cannot vote for President, are not represented in the Senate, and have one nonvoting Delegate in the House.

Territory status is also unequal. As a recent GAO report confirms, Puerto Rico is deprived of billions of dollars each year because it is treated worse than the States under a range of Federal programs. Every objective observer understands that territory status is the underlying cause of the economic, fiscal, and demographic crisis that has enveloped Puerto Rico. History teaches a simple lesson: no people have ever reached their potential while being deprived of political rights and denied equality under the law. Puerto Rico is no exception to this rule.

If the people of Puerto Rico wish to discard territory status, there are two—and only two—paths forward. The territory can become a State on equal footing with the other States, or the territory can become a sovereign nation, either fully independent from the U.S., like the Philippines, or with a compact of free association with the U.S. that either nation can terminate, like the Republic of Palau. If Puerto Rico becomes a sovereign nation, future generations of island residents would not be American citizens and would receive reduced Federal support.

In a 2012 referendum sponsored by the Government of Puerto Rico, a majority of my constituents expressed their opposition to territory status, which means that Puerto Rico is being governed without its consent. Statehood received more votes than territory status, which is unprecedented. And statehood obtained far more votes than either of the two nationhood options,

which demonstrates that Puerto Rico has no desire to weaken or break the bonds forged with the United States over nearly 12 decades.

At my urging and in response to this landmark vote, the Obama administration proposed an appropriation of \$2.5 million to fund the first federally sponsored referendum in Puerto Rico's history with the stated goal being to resolve the territory's status. Earlier this year, Congress approved this appropriation with bipartisan support.

Although the law does not specify how the ballot should be structured, it does require the Department of Justice to ensure that any option on the ballot is compatible with the Constitution, laws, and public policy of the United States. Therefore, the ballot cannot contain the status proposal known as "enhanced commonwealth" that one political party in Puerto Rico has consistently put forward over the years and that Federal officials—including the Obama administration, Senators WYDEN and MURKOWSKI—have just as consistently rejected as impossible.

Moreover, the ballot should not contain the current territory status as an option because it was rejected in the 2012 referendum. It is the primary source of Puerto Rico's problems, and it does not resolve the island's status since, as long as Puerto Rico remains a territory, it has the potential to become either a State or a sovereign nation.

Last week, the Governor of Puerto Rico announced his intention to use the \$2.5 million to conduct a federally sponsored vote by the end of 2016. I have proposed that the Federal funding be used to hold a yes-or-no vote on whether Puerto Rico should be admitted as a State, just as Alaska and Hawaii did. This approach would yield a definitive result that nobody could reasonably question, and it has broad congressional backing, garnering support from 135 Members of the House and the Senate.

If the Governor of Puerto Rico resists this approach, he will face a problem. The party he leads has never been able to agree upon a status proposal that does not conflict with U.S. law and policy.

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But let me be clear. If a vote does occur, statehood advocates will show up in force. Any time, any place, an army of men and women will be there to seek equality and justice, and we will prevail.

PASS TERRORISM RISK INSURANCE ACT REAUTHORIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MOORE. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of a clean Terrorism Risk Insurance Act reauthorization. Many of us on the House Financial Services Committee have worked on a bipar-

tisan basis. Let me repeat that and let me emphasize that. We have worked on a bipartisan basis for more than a year to put a bill before this House that can pass. We have worked cooperatively because the lessons of 9/11 revealed to us the raw exposure that this country faces and our economy faces as insurers exited terrorism risk insurance after 9/11.

But, unfortunately, some other Members are working on a partisan basis to derail the terrorism risk insurance program. Now, unfortunately, this fringe minority is more interested in promoting antigovernment ideology than governing on behalf of the American people and securing for Americans a safe harbor in the event of nuclear, biological, chemical, or other acts of terrorism. The dysfunction of the Tea Party-driven agenda—it thrives on crisis after crisis, whether it is flood insurance or the debt ceiling or keeping the government open or passing a transportation bill. They just thrive on keeping this place in chaos.

And here we have, once again, some must-pass legislation. Terrorism risk insurance has bipartisan consensus, bicameral support, and how does the Tea Party-driven leadership in this House respond to the attempts to reason with them regarding the urgency of passing a clean reauthorization of TRIA without the unworkable triggers and the bifurcation provisions? What we get is an arrogant rebuff, channeling Dirty Harry: You gotta ask yourself, do you feel lucky?

Colleagues, this is not instructive. And be clear, colleagues, the Tea Party is not just symbolically throwing tea overboard, but their antigovernment agenda is again throwing the American economy overboard. I mean, we have real world knowledge of what happens if TRIA is not reauthorized.

Following the September 11 attacks, the insurance industry met their claims and liabilities related to the attacks, but quickly, reinsurers and primary insurers withdrew from terrorism risk insurance. The resulting lack of coverage led to the loss of 300,000 jobs as economic activity slowed without coverage.

You hear them say that they want more private capital in the market, but their bill has exactly the opposite impact by diminishing market capacity. In fact, the RAND Corporation estimates that the terrorism risk insurance saves the government and taxpayers money that otherwise would be spent on disaster assistance following an attack. In the case of an attack as destructive as 9/11, the study estimates TRIA saves the Federal Government \$7.2 billion.

At this point, not even the majority of the Republican majority can have their voice heard in this House. I just don't understand why this House has to be constantly held hostage to a fringe minority of the majority that has no interest in governing.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that TRIA is the orderly response to a