For instance, bonds issued by the central government received priority payment under the Puerto Rico Constitution, which was authorized and approved by Congress. Accordingly, when the Governor asserted that Puerto Rico cannot pay its debts, the sweeping nature of his comments raised many practical and legal questions and generated considerable anxiety.

Mr. Speaker, the crisis in Puerto Rico is real, and it must be confronted with composure, competence, and candor. To this end, I want to articulate a simple truth, but one that is often overlooked: namely, the challenges we face are structural in nature and, therefore, require structural solutions, at both the Puerto Rico and the Federal level.

Within Puerto Rico, more discipline by the territory government is imperative. We must learn to live within our means. Puerto Rico's political leaders have shown the capacity to develop sound strategies, but have not always demonstrated the same ability to effectively execute those strategies. Performance, not planning, is the problem. We can do better, and for the sake of our constituents, we must do better.

Mr. Speaker, honest self-appraisal and self-criticism are essential, but cannot be limited to Puerto Rico. If the American public is under the impression that Puerto Rico is solely to blame for this crisis, it is profoundly mistaken.

The source of the problem in Puerto Rico is not its people, who are talented and hard-working, nor is it our political leaders, who are no better or worse than their counterparts in other U.S. jurisdictions who at times also overpromise and underdeliver; instead, the root cause of the problem is our political status, which has given rise to a system of severe and entrenched inequality that makes it exceptionally difficult to succeed and exceptionally easy to fail.

The direct link between Puerto Rico's political status and its economic problems was explored at a recent congressional hearing. The hearing served to underscore that there are more American citizens in Puerto Rico than in 21 States, that they serve in the U.S. military in large numbers, but that they cannot vote for President or Senators and have only one nonvoting Delegate in this House.

The hearing highlighted that, as a territory, Puerto Rico can be and often is treated worse than the States under Federal laws, from Medicaid to the earned income tax credit to chapter 9 of the Bankruptcy Code. To compensate for the deficiency in Federal economic support, the Puerto Rico Government has borrowed heavily, which explains the excessive debt.

In recent years, 250,000 island residents have moved to the States, and these numbers are only growing. Once in the States, they are entitled to full voting rights and equal treatment under the law, rights they were denied in Puerto Rico.

Mr. Speaker, this is an intolerable situation. My constituents have tolerated it for too long, and they will tolerate it no longer. They voted for statehood in a local referendum in 2012, and they will vote for statehood again in even greater numbers in a Federal referendum in 2017.

My message to my colleagues is simple. If you give us the same rights and responsibilities as our fellow American citizens and let us rise or fall on our merits, we will rise; but, if you continue to treat us like second-class citizens, don't profess to be surprised when we fall.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 6 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Shane Hall, First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Oklahoma, offered the following prayer:

Holy and awesome God,

We give You thanks today for every good gift, for we know that every good gift comes from You.

We give You thanks today for the United States of America and the freedoms found within her borders.

We give You thanks today for the men and women of this Congress whom You have placed in positions of leadership in our Nation

May You give them wisdom, which can only come from You, to legislate in such a way that the laws of this Nation might conform to Your will.

Impart within each of us a desire to seek You in all things pertaining to life and eternal life. May we love You, our God, with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind; and may we love our neighbor as ourselves.

For it is in the name of Jesus we pray.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. EMMER) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING REVEREND SHANE HALL

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. RUSSELL) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. RUSSELL. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor and privilege today to have with us to provide the opening prayer my pastor and good friend, Shane Hall, from Del City, Oklahoma.

Although Shane was born in Brook, Indiana, he actually grew up in Burns Flat, Oklahoma. He is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University, with a secondary in education. He also got a master's of divinity with biblical languages from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He has pastored a half-dozen churches in Oklahoma and Louisiana, and he is currently the pastor of my home church, First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Oklahoma.

He also serves on the executive committee of the entire Southern Baptist Convention, and he is a member of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma board of directors.

His wife, Misty, and his two daughters, Macy and Mallory, are wonderful people that, if you are ever in Oklahoma, I encourage you to attend services and get to know them.

Thank you for allowing us to make his introduction this morning.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee). The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

HONORING THE LIFE OF TINO TRUJILLO

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address