

Puerto Rico, in urging Republican leadership to make good on the promise that action will be taken by March 31st to allow the U.S. territory to restructure its debt. This agreement made last night is welcome news as we cannot continue to ignore the urgency of the mounting fiscal and economic crisis facing Puerto Rico.

On behalf of all Puerto Ricans, including the more than 12,000 who reside in my home state of Alabama, I remain disappointed that a deal to enable the territory to restructure its debt and keep its schools, hospitals, and roads open and functioning past January 1 was not included in the Omnibus. The sovereignty of the Puerto Rican people is our responsibility.

I represent parts of Jefferson County, Alabama, a political subdivision which became the biggest U.S. municipal bankruptcy in 2011. While we all can agree bankruptcy isn't a cure-all and it definitely has its limits, it is often necessary to begin the process of dealing with an unimaginable debt load. Puerto Rico should have the same power to avail themselves of the federal remedies and negotiate directly with their bond holders as every U.S. state has.

Puerto Rico is the third-largest issuer of municipal bonds in the U.S. and now has a debt totaling \$72 billion, amounting to \$20,000 for every man, woman, and child on the island. As over 50 percent of Puerto Rico's citizens live in poverty, default will potentially lead to a humanitarian crisis.

At no cost to us, we can allow the U.S. territory to restructure its debt and declare bankruptcy, ultimately keeping the basic functions of government open and avoiding real social and economic harm to the American citizens living on the island.

But we can't stop there. We all must remain committed to assisting Puerto Rico in a long-term solution to the economic and social challenges the island has been facing for far too long.

The island territory of Puerto Rico has already suffered a decade of economic stagnation, high unemployment, and cuts in every program from higher education to health care. The government of Puerto Rico has closed 160 schools in the past two years and is spending \$2,000 less per student than the average spent in the states. It has laid off 21 percent of its employees since 2008 with further cuts projected in 2016. The Puerto Rican people can ill-afford more cuts. We in Congress must do our part.

We should prevent further crisis by giving our U.S. territory of Puerto Rico the ability to restructure its debt and deal with the root causes of the crisis just as all U.S. states have the ability to do.

I want to commend the leadership of LUIS GUTIÉRREZ, NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ, Leader PELOSI, JOSÉ SERRANO, and PEDRO PIERLUISI for their tireless commitment to the people of Puerto Rico and all Hispanic Americans. It is because of their efforts that Republican leadership has agreed to take action by March 31st. We all need to follow their lead in standing up for the American people who live, work, and raise their families in our territories.

Today I stand with the Puerto Rican people in urging this body to work together on a bipartisan, commonsense restructuring bill that provides economic hope to the people of Puerto Rico.

## HONORING THE 2015 STARS OVER DULLES AWARD RECIPIENTS

### HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 18, 2015*

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce for its ongoing dedication to local businesses and our community and to congratulate the 2015 "Stars Over Dulles" Award recipients.

This year, at the 20th Annual Stars Over Dulles Awards Luncheon, the Chamber will honor those extraordinary businesses, non-profit organizations and citizens who have dedicated their talents and activities to enhancing our economy and our community.

As the former Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, and now as a Member of Congress representing this community, I have been proud to partner with the Chamber on promoting the region's pro-business climate and celebrating the service that so many individuals and businesses provide to our community.

I am pleased to submit the following recipients of the 2015 Stars Over Dulles Awards:

Public Service Star: Presented to Delegate Thomas Rust (86th District) for more than 30 years of public service, including as Chairman of the House of Delegates Transportation Committee and as Mayor of Herndon.

Veterans Star: Presented to Col. Paul Patton, USAF (Retired) of CACI, whose life of service has extended far beyond his time in the Air Force and serves as an example for others to follow.

Community Stars: Presented to Doug and Annie Downer and Laura and George Price for their organization of the beverage shifts during the World Police and Fire Games, during which they found the personnel for 391 volunteer shifts.

Innovation Stars: Presented to Bruce Blechl, Jerome Williams, Bill Knight, and Barry Biggar for their presentation to Fairfax County of the idea to host the 2015 World Police and Fire Games.

STEM Star: Presented to The Childrens Science Center for their opening of a new laboratory in Fair Oaks this summer. The lab is a major addition to our region's ability to encourage a new generation of STEM learners.

Housing Star: Presented posthumously to Bill Lauer, founder of Tetra Partners, for his tireless work to end homelessness in Fairfax County. Bill was a driver of Fairfax County's efforts to preserve affordable housing and the Initiative to End Homelessness, built homes himself, and was about to become president of Cornerstones before his untimely death.

Deal of the Year: Presented to The Town of Herndon for its managing of the sale of the Ashwell property, which will allow the town to consolidate its plans to redevelop the downtown area.

Technology Star: Presented to Peter Jobse of the Center for Innovative Technology, who is retiring this year after leading the Center for almost 40 years.

Global Business Star: Presented to Trade Center Management Associates, home to the International Trade Center, for providing a dynamic forum for trade promotion in the heart of the nation's capital.

New Business Star: Presented to Stone Springs Hospital Center, which opened a brand new facility earlier this year to provide needed care to thousands of individuals with the help of their dedicated staff and resources.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the 2015 Stars Over Dulles Award recipients and in thanking these businesses and individuals for their many contributions to our region's economic success and quality of life. These contributions are among the many reasons why Fairfax County is one of the best places in the country in which to live, work, and raise a family. I commend them on their awards and wish them great success in all future endeavors.

## REFLECTING ON THE NEED FOR THE WORLD'S RECOMMITMENT TO RECOVERING THE CHIBOK GIRLS

### HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 18, 2015*

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to address the House for one minute and to revise and extend my remarks.

Today is the last day that the House will be in session this year and it is imperative that we pause for a moment before we depart to our various homes to reflect on the fact that 612 days have passed since the Chibok girls were kidnapped from their dormitories in the middle of night.

To keep these girls on our minds, all of us here in Congress have worn red every Wednesday to signal the urgency of rescuing, recovering and reintegrating these young women back into the arms of their parents.

I have met with the Nigerian President and was part of a delegation to Nigeria to engage local leaders, activists, businesses and families of the kidnapped girls on strategies for recovering and reintegrating the Chibok girls and many others who have been kidnapped.

These girls are not throwaways and the world cannot and should not forget them.

We must continue to press on in our concerted efforts to assure these daughters of the world that we still care, that we are committed to bringing them back home and will work to reintegrate them back into our community with open arms.

As founder and Co-Chair of the Caucus on Nigeria and Co-Chair of the Congressional Children's Caucus, the rescue, return and reintegration of the kidnapped Chibok girls continue to be my top priority.

I believe that with our commitment, just as the Aboke girls were recovered after being kidnapped in Northern Uganda by the Lord's Resistance Army, the Chibok girls will be rescued, returned home and reintegrated back into the human family.

This is why I have introduced H. Res. 528, legislation that enjoyed bipartisan support of my colleagues including Representatives CHU of California, LEE of California, DOLD of Illinois, HAHN of California, KELLY of Illinois, FUDGE of Ohio, WATSON-COLEMAN of New Jersey, SEWELL of Alabama, BROWN of Florida, THOMPSON of Mississippi and my good friend Ms. WILSON of Florida.