

Congress must act responsibly for the fact that we expect Puerto Rico to pay its obligation, but we force her to play by a particular set of rules. Puerto Rico cannot declare bankruptcy because Congress passed a law saying that she could not. Puerto Rico is under the choke hold of the Jones Act, a law passed right here in this room, without any consultation with the Puerto Rican people, that says, by law, Puerto Rico cannot shop around for the best deal on shipping. No. They must buy the most expensive, which means double the import costs and an estimated \$500 million extra on Puerto Rico's food bill alone.

When it comes to producing for themselves, a large chunk of the best agricultural land—the land that sustains and feeds a nation—is taken away from them for U.S. military bases. Thirteen percent of the land is gone.

Puerto Rico is a tropical island, but a lot of its fruit and vegetables and almost all of its food is imported. We must allow Puerto Rico to create an agricultural economy, allowing Puerto Ricans to feed themselves. The economy produces goods the people do not consume, and the people consume goods that they do not produce.

Even when the U.S. is caught re-hashed stealing water from Puerto Rico's freshwater supply—not paying a dime for it—what happens? The U.S. Government is not held responsible or made to pay. When the military bombs and pollutes Vieques and Culebra, does the U.S. Government feel any obligation to restore it? Not really.

So, Mr. Speaker, when Congress talks about Puerto Rico's debt, I say we look at the totality of the debt—the part owed to Puerto Rico, not just the part Puerto Rico owes to Wall Street. Every soldier she has sent to war, every time the U.S. has stepped in to override her courts and her government, these debts add up but are not accounted for.

Now, what is the solution that everyone in Washington is lining up behind? A Federal control board. Imagine that. An island that cannot determine its own destiny. It has to play an economic game with a stacked deck and all the rules rigged against her. What is the solution in Washington? Take away what little autonomy they have left.

If Congress were smart, we would find a way to get out of the way. Free Puerto Rico's people to unleash their inherent, hardworking character, spirit, and dedication. Free Puerto Ricans to work and toil and build and create. Free Puerto Rico so that she can build a sustainable economy that keeps her people at home in the land of their birth and their heritage.

We cannot get sidetracked by seeing Puerto Rico's economic health exclusively through the lens of food stamps, Medicaid, government programs, and further dependency on Washington. We must make the conversation about jobs for Puerto Ricans, jobs that build the economy, the tax base, and the self-sufficiency of the island.

Mr. Speaker, Puerto Rico's problems were a long time in the making, but I have utter confidence in Puerto Ricans' ability to solve them if we in the Congress begin to listen to them, work with them, and recognize them as equal partners.

We must free Puerto Rico so that the Puerto Rican people can free themselves.

KURDISH PESHMERGA

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 recognize the important efforts made by the Kurds and the Peshmerga in the fight against ISIS.

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter said last December: "The Kurdish Peshmerga have been exactly what we have been looking for in this whole fight in Iraq and Syria, namely a capable and motivated force that we can enable."

As you know, Mr. Speaker, we need to do more to combat ISIS on the ground and also to help our allies who are willing to join us in this effort. ISIS is a brutal evil, and it is one of the greatest threats to both our national security and to the security of our allies in the region.

We continue to read reports of ISIS raping women, beheading captives, and brutally torturing their prisoners; and ISIS' alleged use of chemical weapons against the Kurds in Iraq and Syria reaffirms the danger posed by this terrorist group. During the conflict against ISIS, the Kurds tell me that at least 1,600 Peshmerga forces have died and thousands more have been wounded, and we see some of these pictures here on this graphic.

We are thankful to all of the members of the Peshmerga who are fighting to eradicate the evil of ISIS, including several all-women units who are proud to fight for their people's freedom. These are the hardships that they all endure.

Unfortunately, the Peshmerga still don't have the proper weapons, the proper equipment—most of which is over 30 years old—and they are still running low on ammunition. In fact, the Peshmerga are using captured ISIS tanks to roll through minefields, while ISIS is using American equipment that they have picked up after overturning Mosul.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the legislation introduced by the chairman and ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which would authorize the direct provision of weapons to the Peshmerga, a bill which our committee passed unanimously in December.

The Peshmerga have already proven to be one of the most capable forces on the battlefield, and making sure that they are strong, making sure that they are well-equipped is crucial to defeat-

ing the ISIS threat that confronts us all. The Peshmerga are continuing to fight despite not being paid for months, with uncertain logistical backup, and with inadequate weapons and equipment—three strikes against them.

The Peshmerga need our help, and we must get them what they need in order to have them continue to be successful. The Peshmerga provides safe havens for Muslims, Christians, Yazidis, and people of any religious minority who have been oppressed. According to the Kurds, about 300,000 Syrian refugees and 1.5 million internally displaced persons are in the Kurdistan region, where there is a growing humanitarian crisis.

I will turn to the other poster that I have, Mr. Speaker, their fighting forces.

The burden of war and the responsibility of caring for 1.8 million additional people have pushed the Kurdistan region's economy to the brink of collapse. My friend, Igor Pasternak, recently briefed me on his visit to the Black Tiger Peshmerga base south of Mosul on the ISIS front line, and he introduced me to the Kurdistan Regional Government's representative to the U.S., Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman.

Ms. Rahman's parents were sentenced to death by Saddam Hussein because they refused to bow down to his tyranny, and instead they fought for Kurdish liberation and for human rights. Her parents lived to see Saddam's downfall, and her father continued his leadership role in the Kurdish region's struggle before being tragically assassinated by Islamic extremists in 2004.

In the Iraq city of Erbil, Sami Abdul Rahman Park honors Ms. Rahman's father and, more importantly, recognizes the immense oppression suffered by the Kurdish people.

I am pleased that KRG Representative Rahman is in the gallery today.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to announce that I will soon be introducing a resolution to honor the brave men and women of the Peshmerga and their families who are fighting bravely against the brutal evil of ISIS and to stand with the Kurdish people as they continue to endure great hardships during this war.

God bless each and every one of them.

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VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE

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

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, since 1970, more Americans have been killed from domestic gun violence than all the Americans killed in every war going back to the American Revolution.

If all the victims of gun violence since 1970 were put on a wall like the Vietnam Memorial, it would contain