

But the damage and danger does not end with hyperinflation. The International Monetary Fund reports Venezuela is experiencing “widespread shortages of essential goods, including food, exacting a tragic toll.” Grocery stores have rows and rows of empty shelves. Venezuelans can’t find food to feed their families and form long lines outside of stores, hoping to buy whatever is in stock, from sugar to shampoo.

In response, Socialist President Maduro has ordered police to limit consumers to two shopping days per week at government-owned food stores. One frustrated Venezuelan shopper noted: “It is exasperating, but it is the only way to get food in Venezuela.”

Inflation and food shortages are only the tip of the iceberg. When supplies run out, when jobs can’t be found, violence erupts. In just 1 month in 2014, violent street riots killed 43 Venezuelans, blocking citizens from accessing food, transportation, and medical services. Occupied buildings were torched, injuring hundreds.

Venezuela is now one of the most violent countries in the world, with a chilling 82 homicides per 100,000 population, roughly 20 times worse than America’s homicide rate. Caracas, Venezuela’s capital, is the world’s most violent city, with a war-zone-like 120 murders per 100,000 citizens.

Venezuela’s insolvency has forced it to slash defense spending by 34 percent, putting Venezuelan citizens at even more heightened risk of loss of life.

Venezuela’s tragedy is not because it is a resource-poor country. To the contrary, Venezuela has more proven oil reserves than any country on Earth, even more than the entire oil-rich North American continent.

Venezuela’s collapse is because of two things. First, Venezuela decided to experiment with socialism, an economic model that has failed every country that has tried it. Second, Venezuela’s politicians were seduced by the lure of out-of-control spending financed by more borrowing and higher debt, the same temptation Washington politicians have succumbed to for decades.

America must learn from Venezuela and every other country that has been financially irresponsible. Mr. Speaker, time is running out. Washington must balance the budget before America’s debt burden spirals out of control. America cannot wait until our financial crisis is lost and it is too late to prevent the debilitating insolvency and bankruptcy that awaits us.

I pray the American people will be good stewards of our Republic in 2016 and elect Washington officials who both understand the threat posed by deficits and debt and have the backbone to fix it. Mr. Speaker, America’s future depends on it.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS HURTS REAL PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about a crisis in my home State of New Mexico, a crisis that has hurt real people who rely on the Medicaid program for lifesaving care.

Mr. Speaker, almost 3 years ago, the New Mexico Human Services Department, with the support of Governor Susana Martinez, claimed that it had credible allegations of fraud and suspended Medicaid payments to 15 behavioral health providers. This move wiped out the behavioral health system in a State where there are already significant provider shortages.

I want to take a minute to talk about what that really means. That means if you are a person who struggles with schizophrenia but manages it effectively with regular treatment, that regular treatment stops and you go back to square one. That means that if you are someone who has been diagnosed as bipolar, who has finally found a trusted provider, someone who has brought some stability and comfort to your care plan, you no longer have access to that person.

The loss of services is devastating, and I have seen it firsthand. There is a constituent who typically calls my office every day, multiple times a day. He calls my office. He calls other members of the delegation, the mayor’s office, and the chief of police. But from time to time the calls stop. They stop because this individual, who can be the most warm-hearted person I know, is in jail. He has a mental illness and a substance abuse problem and can be belligerent when he feels threatened, so he sometimes has run-ins with local law enforcement, and he ends up in jail because the system is failing him. He is not receiving the services he needs.

Our jails and sometimes our emergency rooms have become the de facto behavioral health system in our State because, when you don’t have the infrastructure to care for individuals with behavioral health issues, that is where people end up.

Mr. Speaker, I am, frankly, appalled that people in my home State are being treated in this way, but if you can believe it, it gets worse.

Last month, the New Mexico attorney general completed his review of the allegations and found that there did not appear to be a pattern of fraud. Thirteen of the 15 providers accused of fraud have now been cleared, and the people of New Mexico are left to wonder why, why a whole State’s behavioral health system was wiped out and a large population of vulnerable individuals left to fend for themselves. I think they deserve answers.

I have been working with my colleagues in the New Mexico delegation, pushing the Centers for Medicare and

Medicaid Services to exercise Federal oversight and ensure accountability since the payment suspension was announced. We have sent multiple letters, made phone calls, held in-person meetings with officials at every level at CMS and HHS, and I have to say I am extremely disappointed by their lack of engagement.

We sent another letter to CMS in February sharing the attorney general’s report and asking that they conduct a Federal investigation, and we are going to continue pushing for accountability and working to make sure this never happens again.

I plan to introduce legislation that would ensure network adequacy and continuity of care in a State’s Medicaid program, and I know my colleagues have legislation in the works as well.

Mr. Speaker, I have spent my entire career fighting for vulnerable New Mexicans, people who are voiceless in the political process. It would be easy to ignore them, as so many have done, because they are too busy struggling to survive to engage in the political process. It would be easy, but it would be wrong.

This is the most egregious abuse of power I have seen in my decades of government service, and I will not sit idly by while the most vulnerable among us suffer. We must have action. We must have accountability.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in calling for a long overdue Federal investigation of the behavioral health provider suspension in New Mexico.

NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND THE FARC

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 speak against the ongoing negotiations in Havana between the Government of Colombia and the terrorist group known as the FARC.

This draft agreement contains alarming provisions that could empower the ringleaders of the world’s largest cocaine cartel and undermine America’s security interests in the region.

It would also make American taxpayers foot the bill, through their tax dollars, in support of this bad agreement that effectively whitewashes human rights abuses while the administration of President Obama seeks more than \$70 million to help implement this proposal.

This agreement diminishes the FARC’s responsibility for its role in drug trafficking as well as the thousands of murders and kidnappings and other innumerable crimes that the FARC has perpetrated against the Colombian people by allowing the soldiers and the leaders of the FARC to avoid any jail time for all of those crimes.

To make matters worse, this agreement creates an equivalency between

the FARC and innocent civilians, categorizing both as actors in the conflict, when it has been civilians who have been the victims of the FARC's narco-terrorism and the FARC's brutality.

□ 1015

As if that were not awful enough, Mr. Speaker, to equate innocent victims with the FARC in the courts of law, the draft agreement goes even further by allowing those very same violent drug dealers and insurgent leaders to not only stand for election to public office, but also to use the proceeds of the drug trade, the kidnappings, and all of the other illicit sources to fund their campaigns. This is incredible.

But the flaws in this deal don't end there, Mr. Speaker. This agreement will prevent the United States from extraditing any FARC members who have been accused of crimes against American citizens. This is especially troubling when we consider that many of the FARC members may receive immunity.

It would not surprise me if the Obama administration uses this deal as an excuse to drop the FARC from our list that designates the FARC as a foreign terrorist organization.

The Obama administration has never met a bad deal that it did not want to say yes to, especially if the deal empowers tyrants or acquiesces to terrorist demands. This puts our credibility and our national security at risk.

But what is really driving these requests is the Obama administration's continued quest to appease the Castro regime. This is the same Castro regime whose weapons systems from China to Cuba was intercepted by the Colombian Government just last March and which were suspected of being intended for the FARC.

While negotiations were taking place, they were doing this illicit arms shipment. Incredible. It is the same Castro regime that, for decades, has supported the FARC and trained many of its leaders in the terror camps.

Mr. Speaker, Cuba has no interest in a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Colombia. The Castro regime is only interested in leveraging a strengthened and legitimized FARC as a dominant player in Colombia.

The proposed deal as well as those requests by Colombia of the U.S. Government are not only dangerous to our Colombian partners, but they are also dangerous to our national security and our interests in the region.

I urge my fellow Members of Congress to speak out against this terrorist group, the FARC, as well as to block any attempts by our administration to go soft in these negotiations because this weak position could threaten our safety and block American citizens from receiving their rightful justice.

I urge my colleagues to block attempts by the Obama administration to use U.S. taxpayer dollars for this

agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC.

A reinforced FARC with established political legitimacy sets a dangerous precedent for other organizations with similar dangerous aspirations and anti-American objectives in the region.

Let's not force our constituents to pay for this flawed and dangerous deal with terrorist groups.

GUN CONTROL

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

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, on February 25, in Hesston, Kansas, a disgruntled coworker killed Renee Benjamin, 30; Josh Higbee, 31; and Brian Sadowsky, 44, with an imported Serbian AK-47-type assault weapon.

ATF has the power to ban these weapons. President George H.W. Bush demanded a ban in 1989. Ironically, his son, President George W. Bush, was pressured by the NRA when he took office to repeal the importation of the assault weapon ban.

Today I am introducing the Imported Assault Weapons Ban, a bill that would ban the importation of these assault weapons once and for all. This continued bloodshed must stop. But, somehow, my colleagues continue to accept outrageous violence as part of everyday life.

In February 2016—just last month—there were 35 mass shootings, which is to say 35 acts of violence where four or more people were wounded or killed. That is more than one per day.

Here are the real people who died because of gun violence in February. Sadly, I don't have time on the floor today to name those who were injured, but those who died include the following:

Marvin Douglass Lancaster, III, age 21, was killed while in an adult club on February 6 in Tampa, Florida. Christopher Houston, 20, was also shot there and died later.

Carlos Doroteo, 49, was killed while walking in his neighborhood on February 6 in Los Angeles, California.

Jennifer Jacques, 42; Arthur Norton, 58; and Phinny Norton, 60, were killed by Jennifer's 19-year-old son Dylan in their home on February 6 in Uvalde, Texas.

Ernesto Ayber, 29, was killed on February 7 in Rochester, New York.

Joseph Villalobos, 22, and Jonathan Avila Rojas, 33, were killed inside a nightclub on February 7 in Orlando, Florida.

Carlos Bates, 29, and Isaiah Major, III, 43, were killed at a Mardi Gras parade on February 7 in Pass Christian, Mississippi.

Dwight Hughes, Jr., 21, was killed on February 7 in Chicago, Illinois.

Trisha Nelson, 28, was killed by her fiancé, who was angry about parking, as she fled their car on February 12 in Plymouth, Minnesota. Her fiancé was later killed in a shootout with police.

Armando Curiel, 17; Raul Lopez, 19; and his brother Angel Lopez, 20, were killed in an SUV on February 18 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Michael Broadnax, 41, was killed in a driveway on February 19 in Vallejo, California. His son, Bomani Broadnax, 22, died later of his injuries.

Officer James Lee Tartt, 44, was killed in a shootout on February 20 in Iuka, Mississippi. His family had just moved into their new home just a month earlier.

Manual Ortiz, 28, was killed at a bar on February 20 in Tampa, Florida. He had a month-old son.

Mary Lou Nye, 62; Mary Jo Nye, 60; Dorothy Brown, 74; and Barbara Hawthorne, 68, were killed in a parking lot on February 21 in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The gunman then killed Rich Smith, 53, and son Tyler Smith, 17.

Emma Wallace, 37, was killed in a car on February 21 in Hazelwood, Missouri.

The Buckner family, including mother Kimberly, father Vic, 18-year-old daughter Kaitlin, and 6-year-old daughter Emma, were killed at their family home on February 23 in Phoenix, Arizona. Their son, the shooter, was killed by police.

A deputy sheriff, Corporal Nate Carrigan, 35, was killed while serving an eviction notice on February 24 in Bailey, Colorado.

Lana Carlson, 49, and her sons Quinn, 16, and Tory, 18, as well as their neighbor, Donna Reed, 68, were killed at their home by Lana's husband on February 25 in Belfair, Washington.

Crystal Hamilton, 29, was killed by her husband on February 27 in Woodbridge, Virginia. Officer Ashley Guindon, also 29, was killed while responding to the scene. It was her first shift as a police officer.

An unidentified man was killed in a parking lot on February 28 in Riverside, California.

May the dead rest in peace, the wounded recover quickly and completely, and the bereaved receive comfort. These are the faces of Americans gunned down because we lack the guts to do anything about gun violence.

WASTE, FRAUD, AND ABUSE IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I came back to Washington, as my colleagues did, and I saw the headlines in Politico that said: Hill GOP on the Hot Seat Ahead of Recess. It was a piece about the leadership's effort to pass a \$1.7 trillion budget.

Mr. Speaker, we are headed off a fiscal cliff, with over \$19 trillion in debt. Yet, Congress keeps driving toward that cliff.

Like most Members of Congress, I go home every weekend. I live in eastern North Carolina. I am very active in my district. I talk to many people, from