

greater acceptance of those strategies by the Puerto Rican people and greater success in the long run—that does not get Congress off the hook.

Puerto Rico, like the United States, needs this Congress to fund the President's request for funding and also for the Federal Government to do its job. In Puerto Rico, this includes the Environmental Protection Agency addressing toxic landfills that dot the island, which are breeding grounds for mosquitos but have been overlooked by the EPA.

A generation of children in Puerto Rico and all over the United States are counting on the U.S. Congress to protect them from the Zika virus, and I hope this Congress puts politics aside and rises to the occasion. They are American citizens on the island of Puerto Rico. They will be coming to the United States when they need health care.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD the op-ed piece I wrote for The Hill newspaper on Zika and Puerto Rico.

[Sept. 12, 2016]

U.S. AND PUERTO RICO MUST COOPERATE ON  
ZIKA

(By Rep. Luis V. Gutiérrez)

The rapid spread of the Zika virus in Puerto Rico is a very, very big problem for the U.S. and Puerto Rico but the colonial relationship between the U.S. and Puerto Rico is making it a lot worse. The reason this matter is so important to the United States—beyond the obvious concern for the well-being of our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico, of course—is that thousands of U.S. tourists and visitors go back and forth to Puerto Rico and thousands of Puerto Ricans leave the Island permanently for life in the U.S., driven out by the financial crisis gripping the Island. Zika is the first mosquito-borne virus known to cause birth-defects and to be sexually transmitted, so an outbreak of the magnitude that has already hit Puerto Rico is a public health crisis for the United States as well.

If you talk to average Puerto Ricans on the Island as I often do, they are not experiencing Zika as a big issue. They do not think the threat is real. Most people who are infected feel no symptoms and the negative consequences only affects pregnant women—or so most people think. Puerto Ricans, having lived with mosquito transmitted diseases for decades, have become immune to dire warnings from so-called experts and some are resigned to the false notion that nothing can be done.

Even with 13,791 cases reported, an estimated 2,000 pregnant women already infected and a disease trajectory that indicates 20–25% of the population will be affected this year, Puerto Rico has resisted guidance or help coming from Washington.

Why? The colonial attitude of the U.S. towards Puerto Rico and the understandable response to such treatment effects the psyche of the population. A half-century of Navy target practice bombing on the inhabited Island of Vieques (among other places in and around Puerto Rico) was followed by decades of U.S. government denials that cancers and environmental destruction in Vieques were connected to the U.S. government's actions. History is informative: Previous public health interventions from Washington included forced sterilization of women of my mother's generation. This treatment as second-class (at best) citizens

of the United States deeply impacts the Puerto Rican psyche, with long term effects. And this is helping Zika spread.

Now, a control board imposed by the U.S. government through Congress' PROMESA legislation is preparing to take over decision-making that will determine the future of all Puerto Ricans living on the Island. Distrust of Washington is at an all-time high in Puerto Rico, based on my observations.

And unfortunately, this is making it harder for health officials to do what needs to be done to control the Zika outbreak. Unlike in Miami, Florida, there was a swift and sharp backlash from Puerto Ricans when the idea of spraying Naled—an insecticide—was raised. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) sent a shipment to the Island in anticipation of the Island requesting help, but the backlash in local media ranged from basic environmental concerns all the way up to elaborate conspiracy theories that a fictitious colonial genocide of the Puerto Rican people was at hand.

In reality, CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden has personally assured me that Naled is a pesticide used widely for a long time—including in Miami and other U.S. cities—with very few consequences for people. The consequences for the environment and other insects—including bees—can be minimized through sensible application of Naled. But, in this era of deep distrust, none of the facts are reassuring to Puerto Ricans. The Naled shipment, if it is still in Puerto Rico, remains unused. Due to years of random unchecked chemical pesticide use by private providers, mosquitos in Puerto Rico are highly resistant to common chemical strategies. Naled was one of the only effective options currently available. Mosquitos breed quickly, bite quietly and thrive in urban and rural areas—sometimes hitting four or five people in a single meal—so the spread of the disease in Puerto Rico is happening astonishingly quickly.

Part of the problem can be addressed if the CDC and Puerto Rico work together to build on the success they have had in addressing the Dengue Fever virus, another mosquito-borne disease that—like Chikungunya—has hit Puerto Rico hard. The CDC scientists have provided research and resources to combat Dengue for over 35 years.

An important first step would be for Puerto Rico to create an integrated, comprehensive mosquito control center, but given the financial crisis in Puerto Rico, this will only happen if the federal government funds it and the Puerto Rican people accept it. A group of international and local technical experts in vector control management met in San Juan in May of 2016 and came to this same conclusion. The potential to control and eliminate the Zika-carrying mosquito from Puerto Rico is possible with a well-funded mosquito control center that implements an integrated comprehensive vector management approach using safe, effective and innovative strategies. Miami and every major U.S. jurisdiction has a vector control unit and Miami's sprang into action to address the outbreak there, including spraying with Naled. Such a unit provides the infrastructure and expertise to address an outbreak like Zika, manage its spread, and is constantly working to provide protection from mosquitoes that cause diseases like Dengue and Chikungunya, which are endemic in Puerto Rico.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) could help by addressing the crisis of more than two dozen toxic municipal landfills that seem to be flying under EPA's radar. These are breeding grounds for mosquitos and the Island's government needs help to address these hazards, as I and others have noted to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy.

This must be combined with an investment to address the immediate needs of those infected and to help women avoid or delay pregnancy. Access to modern, effective, reversible birth control has been late in coming to the public health system in Puerto Rico, but access is growing. Women's reproductive health is a critical need, but for Republicans in Congress, contraception and women's health care are lightning rods that tend to induce divisiveness or paralysis or both.

The most important thing Congress can do is stop squabbling and fund the President's request for a national strategy to fight Zika, which would include funding to help Puerto Rico address the 17 disease at ground zero. Doing nothing is what this Congress is good at, but there comes a time when Republican leaders need to put their country before their party—even in an election year—and let the resources and experts of the federal government fight this disease.

Let us prevent as best we can an outbreak that will be tremendously costly in lives and hardship in the decades to come. Congress must act now. The CDC must be allowed to act now. The next generation, the future of Puerto Rico, is likely to be born with reduced brain capacity, birth defects and a range of developmental disabilities. Let's face it, in the arena of evolution—the mosquitos are winning. Puerto Rico—and Puerto Ricans—must understand how serious this really is and address it aggressively with all tools at their disposal, including help from the federal government. We need to act in concert for the good of Puerto Rico and the United States.

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, The Denver Post Editorial Board published a piece supporting the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act, H.R. 2646. Their endorsement joins 72 other papers, including The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and the National Review.

I thank my colleagues from Colorado, Representative MIKE COFFMAN and SCOTT TIPTON, who were both cosponsors of H.R. 2646. Their State, unfortunately, is all too familiar with the realities of mental illness and the tragedies that come along when there is no treatment for those who suffer from it.

In Colorado, every 8 hours, one person dies by suicide. Their suicide rate is one of the highest in the country. Sadly, Colorado has also witnessed more mentally troubled mass killers than most, including James Holmes, who, in 2012, took 12 innocent lives at a movie theater in Aurora; and Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, who murdered 12 of their fellow students, one teacher, and went on to take their own lives at Columbine High School in 1999.

Mental health and the tragedies that occur before treatment are not restricted to one State, however. The Denver Post recognizes this when they report that “more than 11 million adults suffer from a mental illness, and almost half of them do not seek treatment or cannot find it.”

Mr. Speaker, since the facts make it clear that major mental health reform is needed for our entire Nation, reform must be a priority for all elected Members of Congress on both sides of the Capitol, for we represent the entire Nation.

The House heard the American people when we passed H.R. 2646 in July with overwhelming, near unanimous bipartisan support. If the Senate won't listen to the House, or me, maybe they should listen to The Denver Post Editorial Board. They write:

"One of the best attempts to improve America's mental health crisis in decades will stall if the U.S. Senate does not get its act together before it goes on another month-long break. Freshly back from vacation, senators should pass . . . Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act . . . the bill sailed through the House with overwhelming bipartisan support . . . its prospects in the Senate are murky . . . Congress is tantalizingly close to accomplishing something that will address the nation's deplorable treatment of the mentally ill. It should not fall victim to the hyperpartisan gun debate."

Mr. Speaker, if the Senate won't listen to The Denver Post, The Wall Street Journal, or The Washington Post, will they listen to the voice of the American people?

We have the daily addition of 118 lives lost to suicide. Since September 1, it has been 1,400. Since the House passed the bill, over 8,000 people have died of suicide. There is also the daily addition of 959 families who join thousands mourning individuals with mental illness who have lost their life in one form or another. Since we passed the bill, the total lives lost is 65,212.

More lives will be lost if we do not fix this broken mental health system that is so desperately in need of repair. It is time that the Senate listen to the voices of the millions who are crying out for help. And for today's new total of 959 more lives, tomorrow is too late.

Millions of Americans are pleading with the Senate: do not go home at the end of this month without passing a bill that the House can also pass and get signed into law. The Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act is just that law. We need the Senate to vote this week, not another day. Where there is help, there is hope.

#### NATIONAL LANDS AND MONUMENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. O'ROURKE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss our national lands and monuments and explore both our accomplishments and some of our future opportunities.

As you know, the Antiquities Act was passed 110 years ago. Ten years later, in 1916, the National Park System was created. And since then, there have been 151 national monuments cre-

ated, 84 of them by Republican Presidents—the majority of those by Republican Presidents—showing that this act and its impact is truly bipartisan and American in every sense.

I would also like to call your attention to the accomplishments of our current President, Barack Obama, whom historian Douglas Brinkley calls a Theodore Roosevelt for the 21st century, owing to his commitment to preserving our national heritage, protecting our public places, and ensuring that, whether it is of importance because of its value for wilderness, cultural, or historical impact, we are ensuring all Americans have a chance to enjoy and appreciate our heritage.

I also rise today, Mr. Speaker, to suggest a way that the President can continue this legacy and set the stage for the next 100 years.

Castner Range, pictured behind me, in El Paso, Texas, is 7,000 acres in the heart of the Chihuahuan Desert rising into Rocky Mountain peaks that start at the southern end of that national mountain chain and has rare plant and animal species that distinguish it as a place worthy of preservation.

Ending in 1966, Castner Range was used as a bombing range, but in the 50 years since then, it has been preserved in its natural state. This is an incredible opportunity to ensure that we pass on Castner Range and all that it means to us as a country to not just this generation, but the generations that follow.

Castner Range, beyond the rare plant and animal species, has 10,000 years of recorded human history. There are petroglyphs dating back to 8,000 years ago, literally showing the impressions that this land made on the first Americans who were neither U.S. citizens, Mexican citizens, or really had any citizenship at all. That is particularly poignant, given the fact that Castner Range is part of the world's largest binational community.

El Paso, with its sister city, Ciudad Juarez in southern New Mexico, join 3 million people of two countries, two cultures, two traditions, two languages and become one at this point. Furthermore, El Paso, Texas, is 85 percent Mexican American and happens to be one of the poorest communities in our country.

This is a chance for this President to open up public lands to ensure that we have access and participation by everyone in this country and to ensure that our national monument visitors reflect the communities and the growing, changing demographics in this country.

I also think that it is important to know that this community is unified in ensuring that we protect, preserve, and pass on Castner Range to future generations. Twenty-seven thousand El Pasoans have signed letters to the President. Despite its relative poverty, \$1.5 million has been raised by individual donors to complement whatever Federal investment is necessary. The

largest school district has made a commitment to ensure that every fourth grader has access to Castner Range, should it be preserved, that it is part of their curriculum, and that they travel to Castner Range to explore and appreciate its wonder.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, here are some larger themes that the preservation of Castner Range could tie into. It is a cold war relic. It is also a former artillery site. Following the President's recent travel to Laos, which saw more armaments rain down on it than any other part of the world, we have a chance to develop the model of how to turn former conflict sites into places of public use, into examples of peace, and into standards for preservation. That could happen in the United States, where we can set the world standard, and it can happen here at Castner Range.

There are a few national monument ideas that I think make a lot of sense. There is the expansion of the Grand Canyon, Bears Ears, and Gold Butte. And then there is Castner Range. I think the President's attention to these areas and the ability to offer access to more Americans to ensure everyone has a chance to access our national parks and national monuments and to set the standard for preservation and the future of American cities is too good of an opportunity for this President to pass up.

#### AMERICA'S FINANCIAL OUTLOOK WORSENS WITH FY 2017 CR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BROOKS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I have given numerous House floor speeches warning of a looming and debilitating American insolvency and bankruptcy.

In order to drive home the dangers, I have cited Greece, where young adult unemployment nears 50 percent, overall unemployment approximates the worst America suffered during the Great Depression, and public pensions have been slashed by almost 50 percent.

I have cited Venezuela, where inflation last year was 275 percent, is estimated at 720 percent this year, and deadly street and food riots are common.

I have cited Puerto Rico's default on \$70 billion in debt, credit rating cut to "junk bond status," abysmal labor participation rate of less than 40 percent, and closure of over 100 schools.

While House Republicans can boast that they helped cut the \$1.3 trillion deficit that we inherited in 2011 to \$439 billion in 2015, that boast now rings hollow. According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the fiscal year 2016 deficit is ballooning by \$151 billion, to \$590 billion.

Absent correction, the CBO warns that in 2024, America will embark on an unending string of trillion-dollar-a-year deficits. Absent correction, the