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Today, U.S. crude imports have dropped 7.5 million barrels per day, as we rely on that increased domestic production and our friends in Canada.

Lifting the ban has allowed us to be in competition with the two highest producing crude oil countries in the world, Saudi Arabia and Russia. According to the International Energy Agency, this year, the United States is expected to surpass Saudi Arabia and rival Russia as the world's leading producer of crude oil.

This comes as Germany is working with Russia on a pipeline that will deliver more than 50 billion cubic meters of natural gas from Russia to Germany. During the recent NATO summit in Brussels, President Trump was right to strategically question Germany's further reliance on Russia's natural gas.

Our liquefied natural gas and oil delivered to the Adriatic, North Sea, and Baltic seaports offer our allies in Europe strategic diversification both from OPEC and from Russian dominance for our friends in Western and Central Europe, their consumers, and their industries.

Mr. Speaker, America is better off. I commend President Trump for raising this important issue on his recent trip to Europe, and I am proud of our work in Congress to enhance America's global energy leadership.

RECOGNIZING DR. DAN TULLOS

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a good friend and a key figure in education and communication sciences in Arkansas, Dr. Dan Tullos.

Dr. Tullos recently retired from Harding University, where he served since 1979 as a professor, program director, and chair of the Communication Sciences and Disorders Department. Under his guidance, the communication sciences and disorders program has grown from a major offered under the oversight of the Department of Communication to a separate department with two undergraduate majors and a graduate program.

Throughout his career, Dan has been honored by his colleagues, students, and industry leaders with well-deserved recognition and awards. Most notably, he was the 2015 recipient of the Frank R. Kleffner award, which recognizes an individual's outstanding contributions to communications.

For his devotion to youth development, education, scouting, and a better world that has improved the lives of countless individuals across Arkansas and the globe, I congratulate Dr. Tullos on his great career and his retirement.

HONORING PAT DOWNS

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an outstanding leader who has transformed the realm of nonprofits in Arkansas, Pat Downs of the United Way of White County.

Pat retired earlier this year as the executive director of the organization

after 29 years of service. Her selflessness, passion, and work ethic inspire all who collaborate with her in White County, around the community, and in the workplace.

Helping raise more than \$11 million for associated agencies, Pat's decades of leadership had an indelible impact on central Arkansas. I thank Pat for her outstanding service to the United Way and send best wishes for her future endeavors.

SOCIALIST POLICIES SABOTAGE VENEZUELA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS) for 3 minutes.

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Mr. Speaker, the United States was founded on the fundamental principles of individual liberty and that all are created equal. As the late President Reagan once said: "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction."

We see this sad truth in nations around the world. So many live under the dark shadow of oppression. They are called captive nations.

I was recently introduced to a young man with big dreams named Tito. He is from Venezuela, and he is currently pursuing his master's at Washington State University. Life is tough in Venezuela, and it became very difficult for him when he was going through a routine checkup and found that his white cell blood count was too high. Unfortunately, he wasn't properly diagnosed because the healthcare system is woefully inadequate. Even help had been denied.

It wasn't until he was able to fly to Houston to have a bone marrow test and was diagnosed with leukemia that he got the help that he needed.

Once, Venezuela was not only the richest country in South America, it was one of the top 20 richest countries in the world. Today, it is one of the most economically oppressed. The IMF is reporting that inflation could top 1 million percent by year's end.

Chavez and Maduro have managed to sabotage this once vibrant and prosperous democracy with socialist policies, corruption, and authoritarian rule. Chavez once said that he was "convinced that the path to a new, better, and possible world is not capitalism. The path is socialism."

Today, in that new world, the government is telling its citizens to eat their own pets, lest they starve to death. What was once a vibrant cultural center and top tourist destination is the crime capital of the world. The average citizen has lost 20 pounds. Instead of a better world, there is a refugee crisis, and millions are fleeing to neighboring countries.

The promises never materialized, and the people are suffering, people like Tito.

Maduro's stubborn pursuit of socialism is hurting millions. Of course,

Maduro would not be able to cling to power were it not for Cuban support. And then you have other countries like Nicaragua ruled by the tyrant Daniel Ortega, where we have seen the elimination of the freedom of press and suppression of habeas corpus rights.

We, as Americans, must stand in solidarity with people who long to be free. We must support legislation like the Venezuelan Humanitarian Assistance and Defense of Democratic Governance Act that passed the House overwhelmingly last year.

We must have a strategy to help the people of Venezuela. We must do more to ensure that authoritarian regimes do not have the financial capacity to keep oppressing their people.

This story has been repeated throughout history where socialist leaders rise to power, offering promises that are never kept. The people suffer.

It is a reminder of why America is so unique. The fruits of our labor belong to us, we the people, not the government. That is why freedom is so important.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Lasky, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 2278. An act to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide grants to improve health care in rural areas.

S. 2779. An act to amend the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001.

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 36 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CURTIS) at noon.

PRAYER

Right Reverend Bishop Irinej Dobrijevic, Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Eastern America, New Rochelle, New York, offered the following prayer:

Lord God Almighty, God of justice, we offer You our sincere thanksgiving and heartfelt prayer for and with those whom You have graciously vested in governance of these United States of America.

Enable the Members of the House of Representatives, elected by the people and for the people, to present equitably the diverse interests of our citizens and those from the expanse of the world who reside, labor, and study here.