

honor of Virginia State Trooper Jay Ferland, a devoted public servant, who along with Trooper Philip Battel saved a family of three from a house fire in Saltville, Virginia.

When I first learned of their bravery, news reports failed to mention Trooper Ferland's involvement. On January 2, I spoke of this incident and only mentioned Trooper Battel. However, both men are deserving of our recognition.

To recap, in the early hours of Friday, December 28, 2012, Trooper Ferland and Trooper Battel were in search of a stolen car that had been involved in an earlier police chase when they noticed off in the distance an orange hue. They decided to investigate. When they reached the area in question, much to their surprise, Troopers Ferland and Battel saw a home engulfed in flames. They banged on the door, but when there was no answer, they made the selfless decision to enter the home and investigate.

Their actions in the house awoke its three residents who had no idea that their home was burning down around them, leading to their ultimate escape from the burning house and from the fire. Because of their bravery, the family was saved, and all are in good health. Their lives were saved, and the lives of two of their pets were also saved. The heroic actions of Trooper Ferland and Trooper Battel in service to the community are to be commended, and I am honored to be here today to pay tribute to them.

Please join me in thanking Trooper Jay Ferland and Trooper Philip Battel for all they have done for the people of southwest Virginia. The Virginia State Police, as my experience has shown over the years, always respond in fine fashion and rise to the occasion. Trooper Ferland and Trooper Battel are among just two of the many law enforcement officers to note in the long and proud history of the Virginia State Police.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the Virginia State Police, Trooper Ferland, Trooper Battel, and the good work and heroism of all the officers in the Virginia State Police.

PARITY FOR PUERTO RICO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. PIERLUISI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow I will reintroduce two bills: the first to extend the SSI program to Puerto Rico, and the second to provide fair treatment to Puerto Rico under TANF.

SSI provides assistance to blind, disabled, and elderly individuals with low incomes. Congress has chosen not to extend the program to Puerto Rico, which instead receives a limited block grant. The average SSI payment to residents of the States is \$500 a month, while the average payment to residents of Puerto Rico is just \$70.

The TANF program provides payments to needy families with children. The territories are not eligible for certain TANF grants. Moreover, Federal law imposes a cap on the aggregate funding that a territory can receive under a combination of safety net programs, including TANF. My legislation would eliminate this cap, which has not been increased since 1996, and make the territories eligible for TANF grants they do not currently receive. Equality under TANF would mean at least \$40 million in additional funding for Puerto Rico each year.

Those who seek evidence of how Puerto Rico is harmed by its territory status need look no further than the treatment it receives under SSI and TANF. I will fight to secure parity under these two programs. But as long as Puerto Rico remains a territory, it will be an uphill battle.

Mr. Speaker, Puerto Rico recently held a referendum on its political status. Under the current status, the 3.7 million American citizens living in Puerto Rico cannot vote for the leaders who make their national laws and are treated unequally under those laws, as the examples of SSI and TANF well illustrate.

The ballot had two questions. On the first question, voters were asked if they wanted Puerto Rico to remain a territory. Of 1.8 million voters, 54 percent said they do not want the current status to continue, while 46 percent say they do.

On the second question, voters were asked to express their preference among the alternatives to the current status. Of the 1.4 million people who chose an option, 61 percent voted for statehood, 33 percent for free association, and 5.5 percent for independence.

□ 1020

The 834,000 votes for statehood on the second question exceeded the 828,000 for the current status on the first question. For the first time ever, more people in Puerto Rico want to be a state than to continue as a territory.

True to form, defenders of the status quo have tried to distort the results of this referendum, making claims that are intellectually dishonest and divorced from the facts. These critics ignore the results of the first question and argue that, because close to 500,000 people left the second question blank, statehood did not prevail in the referendum.

Let me be clear so there is no confusion. A majority of voters in Puerto Rico soundly rejected the current status. Among the three alternatives, statehood won a decisive victory, and statehood obtained a greater number of votes than any other status option, including the current status.

Mr. Speaker, at yesterday's inauguration, President Obama invoked the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain

unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

President Obama then emphasized, while these truths may be self-evident, they have never been self-executing; that while freedom is a gift from God, it must be secured by His people here on Earth.

To uphold this Nation's core principles and values, the President and Congress must respond to the democratic expression of their fellow citizens in Puerto Rico, who have withdrawn their consent to a political status that makes them second-class citizens and who have made clear that they aspire to have full democratic rights and full equality under the law. None of my stateside colleagues in Congress would accept territory status for their own constituents, so they must recognize and they must respect that the American citizens I represent no longer accept it either.

THE DEBT CEILING

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

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen testified before the House Armed Services Committee that America "is maintaining nearly historic fiscal deficits and national debt. Indeed, I believe that our debt is the greatest threat to our national security. If we as a country do not address our fiscal imbalances in the near term, our national power will erode, and the costs to our ability to maintain and sustain influence could be great."

Admiral Mullen is right: debt caused sequestration. Debt and sequestration will slash our uniformed personnel to their lowest levels since before World War II; will reduce our Navy to the smallest number of operational vessels since World War I; and will cut our Air Force to the smallest number of operational aircraft in its history. In sum, debt is putting America's national security at risk.

Last week, on January 17, the Comptroller General of the United States delivered to President Obama a Government Accountability Office report on America's financial health. I have reviewed many government audits and financial statements during my three decades in public office. I have never seen warnings as stark as those given by the GAO to President Obama. Some lowlights of the GAO report are striking and deserve emphasis.

In fiscal year 2012, the Federal National Mortgage Association and Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, commonly known as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, reported about \$85 billion in net valuation losses. The Federal Government's Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation's liabilities exceeded its assets by about \$34 billion. The Postal Service "finished the year with

a reported net loss of almost \$16 billion." The Federal Housing Administration reported that its liabilities exceeded its assets by about \$15 billion.

Mr. Speaker, America is on a path to insolvency and bankruptcy, an event that will debilitate our country. America has incurred four consecutive, unsustainable trillion-dollar deficits and is in the midst of a fifth consecutive trillion-dollar deficit. America's national debt exceeds \$16 trillion. Interest on our debt is well in excess of \$200 billion per year. To put our debt service burden in perspective, that is more than four times what the Federal Government spends on all highway and transportation infrastructure projects in America each year. Unless Washington becomes financially responsible, future debt service will escalate and even more money will be spent on debt service rather than on programs that serve Americans.

America's Comptroller General issued a stern warning to President Obama:

The comprehensive, long-term fiscal projections show that, absent policy changes, the Federal Government continues to face an unsustainable path. Over the long term, the structural imbalance between spending and revenue will lead to the continued growth of debt held by the public as a share of GDP. This means the current structure of the Federal budget is unsustainable.

America's current path and Federal budget are unsustainable. Absent changes, Federal Government insolvency and bankruptcy are certain to result and cause an economic disaster unrivaled in America's history. This week, the House of Representatives faces a vote to increase America's debt ceiling. Pending legislation raises the debt ceiling by roughly \$300 to \$400 billion. What protection from the risk of insolvency and bankruptcy does America get in return?

Are there any spending cuts? No.

Are there policies that spur economic growth and result in revenue increases? No.

Does this proposal help fix in any way the trillion-dollar deficits that threaten America with financial ruin? No.

Mr. Speaker, I can only speak for me. I will not vote to raise the debt ceiling unless significant efforts are made to fix the underlying problem of deficits and accumulated debt that force debt ceiling votes and risk America's future. I will not vote to raise the debt ceiling unless, first, Congress passes a substantive balanced-budget constitutional amendment that solves the debt problem for future generations or, second, we implement sizable spending cuts that help get our financial affairs in order.

I take this stance full well knowing the adverse economic effects of a failure to raise the debt ceiling but also knowing, Mr. Speaker, that those effects pale in comparison to an insolvency and bankruptcy of the America I love.

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 10 o'clock and 27 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Thank You, God, for giving us another day.

The people's House gathers today after a day of celebrating the greatness of our American experiment of self-government, and as the administration gathers for prayer even now at the National Cathedral, we gather here to ask Your blessing.

The difficult work of governing now resumes. Bless the Members of this assembly with wisdom, patience, and good will as they tackle the ongoing issues challenging our Nation.

We thank You again for the inspiration of our Nation's Founders and the legacy they left us with. May the Members of this assembly, and all Americans, be worthy of that legacy. And may all that is done this day be done for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. FRANKEL) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

REMEMBERING THE HEROES OF APOLLO "1"

(Mr. OLSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, on September 12, 1962, at Rice University, President John Kennedy committed America to put a man on the Moon by the end of the decade.

Unfortunately, tragedy struck America at 6:31 p.m. on January 27, 1967. During a ground test of the *Apollo* crew module, a fire broke out. Within a few minutes, three brave space pioneers had lost their lives.

We lost Roger Chaffee, who was training for his first mission into space. We lost Gus Grissom, the second American in space behind Alan Shepard; and we lost Ed White, the first American to do a space walk, and the man my elementary school in Houston was named after.

Two-and-a-half years after the *Apollo 1* fire, Neil Armstrong put his left foot on the Moon. It was a giant leap for mankind, one that would not have happened without the sacrifice of the *Apollo 1* crew. May the world always remember these heroes.

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF ROE V. WADE

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision by the Supreme Court. This decision is the firewall that protects women's health and the turning point that moved women's health forward.

On this 40th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, we reaffirm the constitutionally protected right of every woman to safe and legal health care. Women are nurturers, but when life places a woman in the most difficult of circumstances, the choices she needs to make should be free from government interference.

Over the years, I have been proud to stand with many of my colleagues as we have beaten back repeated attempts to chip away at women's rights set forth in *Roe v. Wade*. Over the last 2 years, we have seen the most extreme and repeated attempts to take away a woman's right to her health care.

In the most recent Congress, we found ourselves defending a woman's right to access contraception. We opposed a bill that would have allowed women to die if the emergency room employee who came to her aid had a