

practices. Well, we all know about the IRS being accused of going after groups that they disapprove of.

Today and late yesterday afternoon, two more incidents arose that show that this administration is about punishing their opponents and taking care of their friends. The first incident revolves around the Environmental Protection Agency. There is a system in the Federal Government called the Freedom of Information Act in which individuals, groups, and other entities can request of the Federal Government to obtain information about regulations, things that the Federal Government is doing; and if the group asks for a waiver of fees to obtain that information, they can obtain the information free.

Well, because of a lawsuit filed by the Competitive Enterprise Institute, we now find out that EPA routinely grants fee waivers to its favored left-wing groups who demand a more intrusive and powerful EPA, but systematically deny waivers for free information from any group that EPA disagrees with. In fact, the headline says that EPA gives information for free to groups it agrees with 92 percent of the time, but it denies fee waivers for groups that it disagrees with 93 percent of the time. We cannot afford a government that systematically goes against groups that it opposes and yet rewards groups that it favors.

I want to give you another example that came about yesterday. More than 573,000 birds are killed by the country's wind farms each year, including 83,000 hunting birds such as hawks, falcons, and eagles. Now, nearly all the birds being killed are protected under the Federal environmental laws which prosecutors have used to generate tens of millions of dollars of fines and settlements from businesses, including oil and gas companies and electricity generators over the past 5 years. As a matter of fact, BP oil company was fined \$100 million for killing and harming migratory birds during the 2010 gulf oil spill. And PacifiCorp, which operates coal plants in Wyoming, paid more than \$10.5 million in 2009 for electrocuting a number of eagles along power lines in its substations.

Yet this administration has never fined or prosecuted a wind energy company, even those that flout the law repeatedly. Instead, the government is shielding the industry from liability and helping to keep the scope of the deaths secret.

So there is clearly a double standard in this administration. If you kill an eagle and you happen to be a private business or you are a power generator or you're an oil company or a chemical company, you're going to be fined. But if you're a wind energy company, even though the bird you killed may be protected under the Endangered Species Act, you're going to be protected. America will not stand for a government that rewards its friends and punishes its opponents in this discriminatory fashion.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR IN SRI LANKA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (DANNY K. DAVIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the fourth anniversary of the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka on May 18, 4 years ago. Although the war has ended and all of those who care about the well-being of this country are indeed glad and delighted, there remain high levels of suspicion among many Tamils who still feel that they are being denied equal rights, equal protection under the law, and are being treated as second-class citizens.

A large number of Tamils fled the country, left their homeland, during the war; and many have not returned to their homes. Peace is present, but there still exists many hard feelings. Therefore, I urge that the government and the Tamil community find as many ways as possible to promote peace and live in harmony with equality, equal justice, and equal protection under the law. Mr. Speaker, I wish the country well on its peaceful coexistence.

□ 1040

INTRODUCTION OF PUERTO RICO STATUS RESOLUTION ACT

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

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, today, joined by a bipartisan group of my colleagues, I am introducing the Puerto Rico Status Resolution Act. This bill is a response to the results of a referendum held in Puerto Rico in November. The first question asked voters if they support Puerto Rico's current territory status, which deprives my constituents of the most fundamental democratic rights. Fifty-four percent said "no."

The second question asked voters for their preference among the three alternatives to the current territory status. Of those who chose an option, 61 percent favored statehood. More voters said they want Puerto Rico to become a State than to maintain the current status, which is unprecedented.

The White House has recognized the importance of the results, which is why the President is seeking an appropriation to conduct the first federally authorized vote in Puerto Rico's history, intended to "resolve" the territory's future status.

The legislation I am filing today is consistent with the President's budget request and serves as a blueprint for how the vote conducted pursuant to that appropriation could be structured.

After outlining the rights and responsibilities of statehood, the bill authorizes a ratification vote on whether Puerto Rico should be admitted into the Union as a State. If a majority of

voters affirm Puerto Rico's desire for statehood, the bill provides for the President to submit legislation to admit Puerto Rico as a State after a reasonable transition period. The bill also expresses Congress's commitment to act on such legislation.

Now, I want to speak directly to the men and women who voted for statehood in November. Our movement has become a predominant force in Puerto Rico. Every day, we grow stronger. Like you, I believe that justice delayed is justice denied. And, like you, I find it difficult to be patient. But we fight with our heads as well as our hearts. Perfecting our Union requires passion, but it also demands perseverance. There are no shortcuts on the path to statehood, and politicians who suggest there are are leading us to a dead end.

The statehood movement is powerful because we are united by a single principle, the principle of equality. The November vote has fortified our spirit and renewed our sense of purpose. We will not shy away from a fight. History teaches that once a people have chosen democracy, self-government and progress, they are unlikely to reverse course. Rest assured, now that the people of Puerto Rico have withdrawn their consent to second-class citizenship, the question is not whether, but when, Puerto Rico will obtain equality through statehood.

To my colleagues who represent States, I know you will respect my constituents for seeking the same rights and responsibilities as your constituents. This respect must take the form of concrete action. The U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico have made their choices heard, and they deserve a meaningful response from their national government.

There is overwhelming evidence that territory status has affected Puerto Rico's political, economic, and social development; and it has become clear that the status quo does not serve the national interest, either. The U.S. succeeds when Puerto Rico succeeds; when the island is strong, stable and secure; and when its residents do not feel obligated to relocate to the States to achieve their dreams. From the U.S. perspective, a robust and resilient State of Puerto Rico would advance the national interest.

The position of every President since Harry Truman has been that their administration would accept whatever status choice is made by a majority of Puerto Rico's voters. The U.S. Government is a champion of democracy and self-determination around the world, and it must adhere to those principles with respect to its own citizens. This is essentially true in light of the service that generations of men and women from Puerto Rico have rendered to this Nation, most notably in the Armed Forces, but in so many other ways as well. In a very real sense, Puerto Rico has earned the right to be equal, and equal we will become.

Puerto Rico has been called the shining star of the Caribbean. The time has

come for our star to shine, alongside the others, on the Flag of the United States of America.

GOVERNMENT OPPRESSION OF PATRIOTS

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, early last year, I spoke with businesswoman Catherine Engelbrecht, also founder of True the Vote and King Street Patriots in Houston, Texas. True the Vote is a nonpartisan organization whose purpose is to train poll workers to uphold voter integrity at the polls, because, despite what many say, voter fraud is rampant in America. King Street Patriots is a group of liberty-minded, patriotic individuals in Houston who meet weekly to discuss what's going on here in Washington.

Catherine told me that both of these groups and her family had not only been harassed by liberal progressive groups but also by the Federal Government. It all began when Catherine applied for nonprofit status in 2010 for True the Vote and King Street Patriots. So began the tidal wave of government inquiries and harassment.

In a recent interview, Catherine said this:

We applied for nonprofit status in 2010. Since that time, the IRS has run us through a gauntlet of analysts and hundreds of questions over and over and over again. They've requested to see each and every tweet I've ever tweeted and each and every Facebook post I've ever posted. They've asked to know every place I've ever spoken since our inception, and to whom, and everywhere I intend to speak in the future.

We have learned that the IRS has even asked these groups, Mr. Speaker, for donor lists.

Mr. Speaker, this level of detail goes well beyond the business of the IRS, and it didn't stop there. The Federal Government's snooping included six visits by the FBI, as well as multiple unannounced visits from OSHA and, yes, even the ATF. Mr. Speaker, you may remember the ATF. Those are the ones responsible for smuggling guns into Mexico. How ironic it is they want to audit American citizens but lose track of guns where they were purposely sent to the drug cartels.

In any event, in addition to True the Vote, Catherine and her husband were also personally audited. Keep in mind Catherine and her husband have owned a small family business for 20 years and have never been audited by the IRS until all of this. Why now? It seems very coincidental.

I asked that question when I submitted a FOIA request on behalf of True the Vote and King Street Patriots to FBI, OSHA and the ATF asking if they were under criminal investigation. The reply from these agencies was that none of these individuals were under criminal investigation. Well, if they're not, why are they being treated

like criminals? Just because they question government.

Mr. Speaker, Catherine is not alone. The IRS has admitted to systematically targeting certain groups who have opposing views from the administration. According to USA Today, between February 2010 and May 2012, only one Tea Party group was granted tax-exempt status from the IRS. But during that same 2-year period, the IRS has approved dozens of liberal and progressive groups for their tax-exempt status. Coincidence? Yeah, right.

Not only does this behavior of the IRS threaten individual freedom and violate the Constitution; I think it may be criminal. It is unlawful for any Federal agency to use its law enforcement and its investigation power as a means to harass and target certain individuals whose political views differ from any administration. It would appear that such actions are also in violation of Federal law and the equal protection and due process protections guaranteed in the Constitution.

Private citizens should not be punished for questioning government. This is America, not a Third World dictatorship or the Soviet Union.

□ 1050

This type of government oppression and political opposition is disturbing. I've written Attorney General Eric Holder to request him to direct the U.S. Office of Special Counsel to investigate any potential violation of the Hatch Act that may have occurred by IRS employees. I've also asked Attorney General Holder to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate all of this.

No government should be requiring citizens to furnish their schedules, donor lists, personal communications or political beliefs to any government agency. No government agency—whether it's the IRS, the FBI, the ATF, or OSHA—should be used as a tool to suppress those who are considered “opposition groups” and dare to question our government.

The IRS is abusing its power to tax by harassing and punishing those who have been “taxed enough already.”

And that's just the way it is.

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

PRINTING OF PROCEEDINGS OF FORMER MEMBERS PROGRAM

Mr. McHENRY. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the proceedings during the former Members program be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and that all Members and former Members who spoke during the proceedings have the privilege of revising and extending their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

The following proceedings were held before the House convened for morning-hour debate:

UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION OF FORMER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS 2013 ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS

The meeting was called to order by the Honorable Barbara Kennelly, vice president of Former Members of Congress Association, at 8:05 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Lord God of history, and our salvation, when former Members return to Congress it must be similar to any American opening the Bible or their holy book at random. By doing so, people of the Book read between the lines, see the story of America, and rejoice.

Congress, too, holds old and familiar stories, strong exhortations, repeated corrections, and consoling confirmation of hopes that speak anew of love, patriotism, and light. Looking at Congress once again, these former Members, still Your stewards, hear the praise of Psalms, the lament of Job, and are strengthened by the sentiments of Gideon as well as Paul, the commands of Moses and the prayers of Jesus.

As the Good Book binds people into community, You tie together the years of Congress and make of them a prophetic voice that reverences the past, speaks to the present, and holds promise for the future.

May all former Members be rewarded for their contributions to this constitutional Republic and continue to work and pray that the goodness and justice of this beloved country be proclaimed to the nations.

Quicken life, promise, and fortitude in all here gathered that we may bring joy to the present age and long for eternal happiness, calling upon Your holy name, now and forever.

Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Hon. Barbara Kennelly 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.

Ms. KENNELLY. The Honorable STENY HOYER will now address us.

Mr. HOYER. “Address us” overstates what I'm going to do, but I'm always so pleased to be with all of you. And I was kidding on saying that.

I want to tell you frankly, on the Republican side, you guys look so much better than you did when we served together, and we want all of you back on our side of the aisle. We're voting to re-elect you.

But I am so pleased to be here with all of you. I had the opportunity to say just a few words yesterday, but I particularly wanted to be here, and I don't