

If Puerto Rico desires statehood, I cannot identify any moral basis upon which Congress could decline that petition, especially in light of the enormous contribution that island residents have made in our Armed Forces over generations. How could the U.S. Government, a champion of democracy and self-determination around the world, disregard those principles with respect to its own citizens without losing credibility at home and abroad?

The second reason that statehood is in the national interest is economic. Last year, the GAO published a report about the fiscal impact of statehood on the Federal Government. The report confirms that statehood will enhance quality of life in Puerto Rico, but it also alleviates any concern that statehood would have an adverse impact on the U.S. Treasury. As the GAO explains, new Federal outlays to Puerto Rico would be significantly counterbalanced by new Federal revenues generated from the island.

The truth is this: this Nation will benefit when Puerto Rico's economic economy is strong, when its residents do not need to move to the States to achieve their dreams or vote for their national leaders, when individuals in businesses on the island flourish, and when the corporate and individual tax base expands. The U.S. stands to gain from the state of Puerto Rico's success, just as it currently pays a severe price for the territory's shortcomings.

Finally, let me turn to the political dimensions of this debate. The evidence indicates that either national party could be competitive on the island. I am a proud Democrat, but the pro-statehood party I lead includes hundreds of thousands of equally proud Republicans. Voters in Puerto Rico have elected two Republican Governors and numerous Republican senators, representatives, and mayors at the local level. I can say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle that they should not view the prospective State of Puerto Rico as either a blessing or a curse for their party's fortunes but, rather, as an opportunity.

Statehood is not only in Puerto Rico's interests; it is also in the national interests. Statehood will make Puerto Rico stronger, and it will make the United States a more perfect Union.

God bless Puerto Rico, the next State of the United States of America.

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 43 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: God of the universe, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

Lord, You have promised to be with all people wherever they are, whatever their need. We reach out in prayer for the homeless, the poor, those anxious about the future, those who are ill, or those to whom freedom has been denied.

Bless the Members of this people's House. Inspire them, as representatives of the American people, to labor for justice and righteousness in our Nation and our world, mindful of Your concern for those most in need.

For all the riches of our human experience, O Lord, we give You thanks. Make us aware of our responsibilities, as stewards of Your divine gifts, and empower us with Your grace to faithfully and earnestly use our talents in ways that bring understanding to our communities and to our Nation, and peace to every soul.

May all we do 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.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. CARTWRIGHT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. CARTWRIGHT 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

A GREAT IDEA: 529 PLANS

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I believe in an opportunity economy, where hard work, education, innovation, and risk are rewarded, and we empower individuals, not government.

Imagine what determination and a degree can do for today's young people, provided they have a variety of choices to meet their needs and good information about the investment they are making.

Paying for college is hard work, and it is getting more difficult as tuition and fees continue to increase at rapid rates. Luckily, American families have an investment tool known as a 529 plan to help them save for their child's college education.

Last week, the House approved bipartisan legislation to expand, strengthen, and improve 529 plans, which nearly 12 million families have utilized to help plan for their child's education.

With student loan debt surpassing credit card debt, we need to do everything we can to encourage American families to save for college and invest in their child's future.

MANUFACTURED POLITICAL CRISES

(Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Democrats in the House stood united to ensure that the Department of Homeland Security was funded for the remainder of the year.

After bringing our Nation's security and public safety to the brink of shutdown twice in the last 2 weeks, the Speaker finally relented and allowed the will of the majority of the House of Representatives to be heard on the floor. All Democrats and a good number of responsible Members on the other side joined together to make sure that Homeland Security was funded for the remainder of the year.

It is completely unacceptable that we have seen, since this Congress has convened, manufactured political crises that divert us away from the real issues that the American people want us to take up.

Americans at home are worried about making ends meet. They work harder and harder and can't seem to get ahead. They can't seem to save for retirement. They can't guarantee that their young kids are going to have the opportunity to attend college. That is what they want us to take up.

We cannot continue manufactured political crises intended to pander to the most extreme voices in this body.

BINYAMIN NETANYAHU'S ADDRESS TO CONGRESS

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, it was an honor to have Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu speak to a joint session of Congress yesterday. Israel is one of our country's closest allies, an essential partner in restraining Iran's nuclear threat and combating

the growing threat of terrorist groups like ISIL Daesh.

Hearing Prime Minister Netanyahu speak out against radical Islam and warn the world about the threat of a nuclear Iran, I was reminded of another great leader who addressed Congress nearly 75 years ago. Winston Churchill and Binyamin Netanyahu are the only two foreign leaders to address a joint session of Congress three times.

Like many, I believe Prime Minister Netanyahu is the Churchill of our time. Both men had to fight against global threats of unmatched and barbaric proportions but also stood firm to other world leaders advancing a strategy of appeasement over strength. I only hope that we heed Netanyahu's words now before it is too late to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.

In conclusion, God bless our troops. And may the President, by his actions, never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

JUDGE EUGENE FAHEY, NEW YORK STATE COURT OF APPEALS

(Mr. HIGGINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, on February 9, the nomination of Judge Eugene Fahey of Buffalo to a seat on the New York State Court of Appeals was confirmed.

I have known Gene for many years, starting when we were colleagues on the Buffalo Common Council. Gene went on to judicial service, first as a city court judge and later as a trial and appellate justice of the New York State Supreme Court. Gene's decisions include a landmark ruling affirming the validity of New York's marriage equality statute.

As colleagues on the council, Gene and I had many conversations about public service, though rarely about where our respective careers might take us. It is with tremendous pride that we now see Gene taking a seat as an associate justice on the most celebrated, top-level State court in the United States. His service will be a great credit to those whom he is sworn to serve.

Mr. Speaker, in Justice Eugene Fahey, the New York Court of Appeals gains a towering intellect, a booming voice, a compassionate heart, and an accomplished lead guitarist.

My best wishes go to Gene; his wife, Colleen; and their daughter, Ann.

DHS FUNDING AND THE PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the House voted with bipartisan support to pass H.R. 240, legislation to fund the Department of Homeland Security through September 30, 2015.

It is our constitutional duty to ensure that our country remains safe, and playing politics with Homeland Security funding, when the world is as dangerous as it is today, is simply unacceptable. Make no doubt about it, it is critically important to stop the President's actions on immigration. But at a time like this, it would be gravely irresponsible to allow the Department of Homeland Security to shut down, or even to have the appearance of that.

When the executive and legislative branches of our government are in disagreement, the judicial branch must play referee, and that is exactly what took place when a Federal judge sided with a complaint filed by 26 States in opposition to the President's move toward amnesty.

Now that our Federal courts have halted President Obama's executive actions, further rulings will closely examine how the President has overreached his constitutional authorities.

Mr. Speaker, considering all of the facts, voting "yes" on Homeland Security funding yesterday was the right decision. However, this does not compromise my position of standing strong against the President's executive actions.

FUNDING DHS

(Mr. CARTWRIGHT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise with some relief to note that yesterday, we did come together to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security. A number of us came together and ignored the extremist shutdown crowd and did the responsible thing and funded this Department.

I regret that the Department had to spend millions of dollars to prepare for a shutdown that it anticipated having to go through. Nevertheless, this is a Department that protects our Nation at a time when ISIL is executing journalists and aid workers and Christians and Muslims, when al Shabaab is threatening our Nation's biggest shopping mall. We need the Department of Homeland Security. And I say, Bully.

Let us continue to do the responsible thing and fund our departments, including the Department of Homeland Security.

IRAN

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

Mr. STUTZMAN. Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that we cannot trust the tyrannical regime in Iran. For many years, our own State Department has determined that Iran is one of the world's leading state sponsors of terrorism.

As Prime Minister Netanyahu reminded us yesterday, the Iranian Government has consistently called for the

destruction of Israel and has referred to the United States as the "Great Satan." Does this sound like a negotiating partner that we can trust?

If anyone is unwilling to acknowledge their support for terror groups like Hezbollah or their hateful words toward America and Israel, then consider how this regime acts toward its own people. They stifle dissent by restricting the most basic political freedoms within their borders—the freedoms of speech, assembly, and press. They often jail opposition leaders and journalists and hold them without cause.

If Iran wants to be considered a legitimate power, they should stop arming and aiding terror groups and open up their political system to prove to the world that they are committed to freedom and peace. They can start by releasing all political prisoners, including Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian, who has been unjustly imprisoned for over 200 days. These steps should be taken before the U.S. continues to negotiate any nuclear deal.

PLAYING PARTY POLITICS

(Mr. AGUILAR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. AGUILAR. Mr. Speaker, last week we were pushed to the brink of shutting down the Department of Homeland Security, the agency tasked with safeguarding our homeland from threats here and abroad, all because Congress couldn't do its job. Only weeks after horrific attacks in Paris and with news of ISIS every day, the House majority risked the national security of our country to play party politics.

We cannot continue to govern in crisis mode, threatening the safety of American lives, jobs, and our homeland, so my colleagues can score political points. Enough is enough.

Threatening to shut down DHS was reckless, unnecessary, and completely avoidable. The House majority's games have forced Congress away from its most critical priority, working for middle class families to create jobs, improve transportation and infrastructure, invest in education, and protect programs for our seniors. It is time to stop playing political games and get back to what the people elected us to do.

HONORING MAJOR TRENT COLESTOCK, UNITED STATES ARMY

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Army congressional liaison to the U.S. House of Representatives Major Trent Colestock. The Army has recognized his patriotism, abilities, and his demonstrated potential for increased responsibility, and