

Land Management, unless the Federal budget is balanced for the year in which the land would be purchased. The same would go for the Secretary of Agriculture. Unless the Federal budget for the given year is balanced, no net increase in the land acreage may be included in the National Forest system.

Now, Mr. Speaker, some in this body may wonder why I have chosen to take up this charge in the 114th Congress. For my friends on both sides of the aisle, many of whom may not be too familiar with life out West, let me give you some background.

Just before I arrived in Washington, the national debt was over \$18 trillion. As a former small business owner, the Federal Government's spendthrift habits and utter disregard for the American taxpayer's hard-earned dollars continues to frustrate me today. Like countless Nevadans, it pains me to watch as we saddle our grandchildren with such an unsustainable debt burden, borrowing against the very future we are responsible for providing them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my father always said: Don't come to me with a problem unless you have a solution to fix it. I don't pretend to have all the answers on the biggest issues facing this government and this country, but I do bring the private sector, Western sensibility to tackling the problem before we get too far out of hand. That is why I am introducing the LAND Act.

Simply put, the bill tells the Federal Government that responsibly and efficiently managing the 640 million acres of land it already controls must be a higher priority than acquiring even more private, State, and tribal lands. Think about that number for a moment, Mr. Speaker: 640 million acres. That is roughly one-third of the United States. And on those acres that the Federal bureaucracy has kept within its iron grip, there is currently existing an estimated deferred maintenance backlog of \$23 billion—that is with a B.

So what does that tell the American people, Mr. Speaker? It tells them that the Federal Government has bitten off more than it can chew, and it cannot be trusted to serve as a responsible steward of even more of our lands and resources.

Mr. Speaker, I am a Nevadan. The Federal Government controls more than 81 percent of my State, and I think I speak for most of my constituents when I say enough is enough. It boggles the mind to think that each of the 640 million acres the Federal Government controls is too valuable to be parted with in order to improve overall management, let alone the fact that the Feds want to acquire even more land on top of an already embarrassing maintenance backlog.

The Departments of the Interior and Agriculture like to tout how important land acquisition is for conserving species, providing spaces for recreation, and preserving culturally significant sites. My bill would allow them to continue to acquire land as a tool for these

purposes, but it would require them to focus their efforts on lands that truly need oversight by turning over unnecessary land to those who are best able to manage it—the States.

Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. The Department would have the opportunity to net more acreage under the aforementioned agencies' jurisdictions under my bill. That is, so long as the Federal budget is balanced for the given year. I do not believe this is too much to ask. Where I come from, in the private sector, if you don't have a successful business plan and you don't budget well, you go out of business.

We all know that the BLM, Fish and Wildlife, and the Park Service aren't going out of business anytime soon, much to my chagrin, but at least we can force them to behave more like one on the land they currently control by ensuring that our tax dollars no longer go towards more land for these agencies.

At a time when our debt continues to soar, we can ill afford irresponsible budgets like the Interior's \$13 billion request. We need to get our fiscal house in order, and we can help that process along by passing my bill. Let's allow State, local, and tribal governments to invest in developing their lands, creating jobs, and growing the economy instead of letting them fall in disrepair on the Federal Government's watch. Let's pass the LAND Act.

#### PUERTO RICO HOSPITAL MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENT EQUITY ACT AND THE PUERTO RICO MEDICARE PART B EQUITY ACT

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

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, today I am refiling two bills to eliminate disparities that Puerto Rico faces under the Federal Medicare program.

At the outset, I want to make clear that the only reason that I have to introduce these bills is because Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. I look forward to the day when Puerto Rico becomes a U.S. State, when it is automatically treated fairly under Federal programs, and when the island's elected officials no longer need to implore Congress to treat our constituents the same as their fellow American citizens. That is why, 6 weeks ago, I introduced legislation that would provide for Puerto Rico's admission as a State once a majority of island voters affirm their desire for statehood in a federally sponsored vote. The bill already has 80 co-sponsors and strong bipartisan support.

The first bill I am filing today involves Medicare part A, which covers inpatient hospital services. The Federal Government reimburses hospitals who admit Medicare patients under a system known as the inpatient prospective payment system. The payment made to the hospital is intended to cover the operating and capital costs

that a hospital incurs in furnishing care. Each hospital is paid a base rate, which can then be adjusted upwards based on a variety of factors.

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Every hospital in the States, whether in New York City or rural Alaska, is paid the same base rate, about \$5,870. In Puerto Rico, however, hospitals are paid a base rate that is just over \$5,000, about 14 percent lower than the base rate for stateside hospitals.

This adversely affects patient care in Puerto Rico and the financial stability of island hospitals. The American Hospital Association has endorsed my legislation to eliminate this unprincipled disparity, and I urge my colleagues in Congress to enact it into law.

The second bill I am filing today involves Medicare part B, which covers doctors' services and outpatient hospital services. Puerto Rico is the only U.S. jurisdiction where individuals who become eligible for part A are not automatically enrolled in part B, but rather must opt in to receive part B coverage.

Individuals who do not enroll in part B during the 7-month initial enrollment period, which begins several months before they turn 65 and ends several months after they turn 65, are required to pay a late enrollment penalty. The penalty is significant and lasts for as long as that individual receives Medicare.

This system has operated to Puerto Rico's detriment. There are tens of thousands of seniors on the island who enrolled late in part B, and each year, they pay millions of dollars in late penalties to the Federal Government.

There are also over 100,000 seniors in Puerto Rico who are enrolled in part A but not in part B. When those individuals seek to enroll in part B in the future, they, too, will be required to pay lifetime penalties.

I am working to address this issue on both the administrative and the legislative front. I persuaded the Federal Government to improve the written materials they make available to island seniors so that they are better informed about the part B enrollment period and the financial consequences of late enrollment.

In addition, I am refiling legislation today that would convert Puerto Rico from the Nation's only opt-in jurisdiction to an opt-out jurisdiction, just like every other U.S. State and territory.

My bill would also reduce the late penalties now being paid by Puerto Rico seniors who enrolled late and authorize a special enrollment period during which island seniors who do not have part B could enroll on favorable terms.

I urge my colleagues to support the bills I am filing today. Until the day that Puerto Rico becomes a State and is treated equally as a matter of course, I will continue to fight for fair treatment for my constituents under all Federal health programs.

The 3.5 million American citizens of Puerto Rico deserve no less.

#### CHRISTIANS ATTACKED IN PAKISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HARDY). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, it seems now, more than any time in recent history, Christians around the world are being singled out and persecuted.

Most recently and unfortunately were occurrences in Pakistan, where two churches were targeted by suicide bombers. The two attacks that occurred resulted in the deaths of 14 people and injured at least 70.

The bombings were obviously coordinated as they occurred fairly close in proximity and time. One suicide bomber detonated inside one church, and the other was stopped at a security checkpoint and detonated when being tackled by a guard.

Pakistan, whose track record of protecting religious minority groups is spotty at best, has a history of attacks on Christians.

In an op-ed piece I wrote in *The Washington Times* in February, I discussed the suffering of Christians and other religious minorities around the world.

Last November, a mob of 1,200 in Pakistan lynched two Christians accused of burning a Koran, and a judge sentenced a Christian to death for blasphemy.

The State Department's International Religious Freedom Report for 2013 highlights Pakistan's inability to protect the religious minorities under its jurisdiction. The report speaks of Pakistan's enforcement of blasphemy laws that restrict religious freedom and are the symbols of religious intolerance.

While the government is vocal of its condemnation of attacks on Christians and other religious communities, it has not taken proper steps to ensure the attackers of such atrocities are brought to justice. Again, it seems to be that words matter more than actions to them. Pakistan is by far not the only country to possess such a dismal record of protecting Christians.

In my op-ed, I speak of China and North Korea as countries that target Christians. Across the Middle East and North Africa, Muslim terrorist organizations search out Christians and kill them in violent and graphic ways, only because the person chose to pray to a different God.

Fellow Americans, when you think about what I have just said, when you think about the freedom that we have here, the very essence of our religious freedom in America is the freedom for all to express their religious beliefs or express none at all; yet all over the world, countries such as Pakistan, Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS

and others—who have no part in a civilized society and need to be banished and done away with in a civilized society—choose to horrendously kill someone for whom they pray and the faith that they have.

Explain to me how you are supposed to worship a God that says it is okay to behead 16 Christians or to blow up their church or desecrate their facilities. It is something that must be addressed.

You see, these atrocities should not just startle those of religious faith and of nonreligious faith as well; they should startle and shock the world to realize that this is something that must cease.

For me, it is personal. As a Christian, as one of faith, my faith is described to me as being one in Christ with other believers. For me, when one is beheaded, we are all persecuted, including those here in our comfort in America.

You see, religious freedom is not just something that we talk about in the comfort of America, but must be rung loud and true throughout the world.

You see, having a member of a common faith that is being decapitated, burned alive, impaled, or crucified, these are family members to me, but in the reality to the world, as the poet has once said: "Any man's death diminishes me."

What a tragedy it takes on when it takes the form of religious intolerance by people who want their own views believed.

You see, I desire now that the President seriously take into consideration the recommendation of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. It provides recommendations to Congress and the President about the lack of religious freedoms in other countries and advises the White House on nonlethal actions that can be taken against those countries.

Since 2002, they have recommended that Pakistan be named as a "country of particular concern." The designation of "country of particular concern" allows the government to use non-military policies to encourage a country to increase protection for religious minorities.

I strongly encourage the White House to consider looking into designating Pakistan as a "country of particular concern."

I ask the question to this administration and to the world: How many more Christians have to be blown up, how many more have to be beaten in prison, how many more have to have their heads taken off before we act?

When I deployed to Iraq, I saw the multitude of faiths and lack of faith. I have seen it come together and understand what we are fighting for. When we talk about those who act in the name of a God and are Islamic extremists who want nothing but to eradicate the rest of the people's beliefs, this is something that cannot be tolerated. I cringe when I think of this.

While I disagreed many times with the decisions made at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, I ask that this administration take this very seriously and consider religious freedom for all around the world.

#### 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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

Mr. DOLD. Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to thank my good friend for raising an important issue about religious freedom. It certainly is critical.

As we look at some of the atrocities that are happening around the world, Mr. Speaker, I want to rise today to talk about the Armenian genocide that happened nearly 100 years ago. This year actually marks the 100th anniversary.

As the eyes of the world focus on ISIS and the brutal killings of innocent Christians in the Middle East, we must recognize the horrors of the past if we hope to avoid repeating them in the future.

Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, during which the Ottoman Turks systematically exterminated over 1.5 million Armenians and Christian minorities. This genocide is a fact and cannot be ignored. It is settled history.

Turkey, however, has never accepted the responsibility and has continued to hide behind its brutal tactics that shroud violations of human rights. Even as 11 of our NATO allies and 42 U.S. States have recognized Turkey's leading role in this atrocity, this body has yet to do so.

The continued campaign of denial sets a dangerous precedent that makes future atrocities, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, more likely. While ordering his military leaders to attack Poland, Adolf Hitler rationalized: "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"

Mr. Speaker, if we deny that these atrocities exist, we actually perpetuate the potential that it may happen again. We must join the international community to speak with a unified voice against this genocide.

Our bipartisan Armenian Genocide Truth and Justice Resolution, H. Res. 154—just dropped—would send an unequivocal message that we will never forget those that were lost, nor will we tolerate human rights abuses of any kind.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I rise to remember the 100th anniversary—on April 24, to be specific—of the Armenian genocide. I call on our colleagues in the United States Congress to speak out by passing the Armenian Genocide Truth and Justice Resolution so that we can end the denial once and for all.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair