

PHMSA's. After all, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has power to impose civil penalties of a million dollars per day. Compare that to PHMSA's relatively paltry \$200,000 a day. But that doesn't explain PHMSA's failure to even start civil penalty cases.

Even as pipeline incidents increase, PHMSA started fewer civil penalty cases in 2014 than in the past 10 years and proposed 73 percent fewer fines. For the few fines that are proposed, PHMSA does that behind closed doors where the public is not welcome.

ExxonMobil dumped 63,000 gallons of oil into Yellowstone River in 2011 but managed to argue that the original \$1.7 million fine should be put down to \$1 million. Why did PHMSA allow this? Nobody knows.

Though I've talked about San Bruno, I want to emphasize that the lack of adequate pipeline safety measures is a nationwide problem, not a Bay Area or California problem. In 2011, a leak from an 83-year-old cast-iron main in Allentown, Pennsylvania, caused a blast that killed 5 people. In 2012, a gas pipeline explosion outside of Charleston, West Virginia, destroyed several properties. In 2014, a leak in a 127-year-old pipeline in Harlem, New York, killed 8 and injured 50 more. In each incident, we see the same, recurring problems—aging infrastructure and inadequate inspection. How many more of these tragedies do we need before we get serious about pipeline safety?

The saddest part about this whole situation is that we know how to prevent pipeline leaks and explosions. The National Transportation Safety Board has been saying the same thing for years, after so many deaths and the destruction of property and the environment. We need automatic or remote control shutoff valves. We need existing pipelines to accommodate internal inspection tools. We need PHMSA to be a strong voice for safety for the public and we need industry to cease being apologists for lethal incompetence.

Like so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, I'm tired of PHMSA's excuses and prevarications. I'm frustrated that Congress seems powerless to induce PHMSA to take its job seriously. That's why I'm looking into legislation that will provide PHMSA with the proper encouragement to do its job. It's time for the toothless kitten to wake up, smell the leaking gas, and take decisive action.

#### SAVE OUR WATER

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

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, California is now in the fourth year of the worst drought on record. Hydrologists estimate it is the worst drought in 1,200 years. The Sierra snowpack today is just 5 percent of normal. One of our largest reservoirs, the New Melones Reservoir on the Stanislaus River, is at just 22 percent of its capacity, with the rainy season now officially over.

Water rationing is in effect in many communities. Many Californians face \$500 fines if they take too long in the

shower or spill a gallon of water on their sidewalks. And yet in the last several weeks, the Bureau of Reclamation has released about 10 billion gallons of what precious little water remains behind the New Melones Dam in order to nudge a handful of steelhead trout toward the ocean. That is enough water to meet the annual residential needs of a human population of about 300,000 for the whole year.

How many fish are affected? Well, biologists estimate that it will affect the offspring of about 29 steelhead trout on the Stanislaus River, a few hundred smolts, almost all of which will be eaten by predators long before they reach the ocean; and that assumes that they won't swim toward the ocean on their own, as they have been doing without our helpful assistance since time immemorial.

Put in financial terms, with water selling for \$700 per acre-foot, the cost of this ridiculous exercise is about \$21 million. But the real cost will be felt in the fall if the rains don't return. At that point, these releases guarantee there will be no water left for human beings or for fish.

All this occurs after a compromise without which Lake Tulloch, below New Melones, would have been drained below the water intake pipes that serve a population of nearly 10,000 human beings.

When are we going to wake up to the lunacy of these current environmental laws and the ideological zealots who are administering them? Who in his right mind would dump enough water to meet the annual residential needs of a population of 300,000 human beings in order to nudge toward the ocean the offspring of maybe 29 steelhead trout—it could be as few as 6—in the worst drought in 12 centuries? Yet that is precisely the policy of this administration.

President Obama has authority under the existing Endangered Species Act to convene a process to suspend these laws during the drought. Governor Brown also has the authority to request the President to act, yet despite repeated calls to do so, neither has responded. Ironically, before we built these dams, in a drought like this, there would be no rivers and there would be no fish.

Nor is this waste limited to just one reservoir and one river. The Bureau of Reclamation is ordering pulse flows throughout the State, completely uncaring of the impact on the rapidly endangered species called homo sapiens.

Mr. Speaker, 3 weeks ago I introduced H.R. 1668, the Save Our Water Act. It simply provides that during an extreme drought the requirements of massive environmental pulse flows are suspended. I want to urge speedy consideration and passage of this act, but I fear it will not come in time to prevent the exhaustion of our remaining water supply.

I warned of this practice last year, and I appealed to State and Federal

water managers to suspend these water releases during the drought. Sadly, I was unable to rally much public interest, I think in large part because few people actually believed that our water policy could possibly be so foolish.

Well, they believe now. We are now reaching a crisis that can no longer be ignored, and Californians are now starting to realize that our environmental laws long ago passed from the realm of reason to the realm of ideological extremism.

Droughts are nature's fault. Water shortages are our fault. We once built dams to store water from wet years so that we would have it in dry ones, but the same radical environmental laws that are squandering our existing water supply have also obstructed the construction of any major new storage since 1979, while the State's population has nearly doubled.

Dr. Johnson once said that when a man is to be hanged in the morning, it concentrates his attention remarkably. Well, if any good comes out of this drought, it may be that the American people finally have awakened to the damage these laws have done and are ready to change them and change the zealots in government who are responsible for them.

□ 1030

#### AN UPDATE ON THE PUERTO RICO STATEHOOD ADMISSION PROCESS ACT

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

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, for the sixth time this year, I rise to discuss Puerto Rico's political status.

I am an optimist about Puerto Rico's future. The island is blessed with natural beauty, a rich history, a vibrant culture, a sophisticated and diverse private sector, and talented and hard-working professionals who can compete with anyone, anywhere.

But my optimism is tempered by realism. Because to change the world for the better, you must first see the world as it is. And the reality is that Puerto Rico's potential is being squandered. Puerto Rico should be a blooming flower, but instead it is withering on the vine.

Puerto Rico is ensnared in the worst economic crisis in its history. The island's healthcare system is in a precarious state, the territory's homicide rate—despite recent improvements—still far exceeds that of any U.S. State, and residents of Puerto Rico are relocating to the States in record numbers.

I have heard it argued that leaders in Puerto Rico should concentrate solely on the immediate problems at hand and set aside the issue of political status until those problems are resolved or their severity is reduced. This argument has superficial appeal, but it is completely wrong. All of Puerto Rico's

major problems are directly linked to our status. They are rooted in the unequal treatment that Puerto Rico receives because it is a territory.

If you want to understand why Puerto Rico has always had higher unemployment and poverty than any State, you must recognize that the territory is excluded from the earned income tax program, partially excluded from the child tax credit program, excluded from the Supplemental Security Income program, and treated unequally under the Federal nutrition assistance program.

If you want to understand why Puerto Rico has high debt, you must realize that the territory government has borrowed so heavily in the bond market in order to compensate for its disparate treatment under Federal programs.

If you want to understand why patients in Puerto Rico received inadequate care, why physicians and hospitals are not fairly compensated, and why the cost of providing health care is disproportionately borne by the Puerto Rico Government rather than shared equitably with the Federal Government, you must grasp that Puerto Rico is treated in a discriminatory fashion under Medicaid, traditional Medicare, Medicare Advantage, and the Affordable Care Act.

If you want to understand why drug-related violence is pervasive in Puerto Rico, then you must come to terms with the fact that Federal law enforcement agencies have dedicated insufficient personnel and equipment to Puerto Rico because States invariably take priority over territories when it comes to the allocation of finite resources.

To solve its deeply entrenched problems and to reach its enormous potential, Puerto Rico must receive equal treatment. And to receive equal treatment, Puerto Rico must become a State. To pretend otherwise is just that: to pretend.

That is why less than 3 months ago I introduced H.R. 727, the most forceful statehood admission bill for Puerto Rico in history.

I am proud to report that the bill is likely to obtain its 100th cosponsor as early as today. Cosponsors come from 31 States, the District of Columbia, and the four other territories. They are both Democrats and Republicans. Indeed, about 1,900 bills have been introduced so far in this Congress, and H.R. 727 has more bipartisan support than over 99 percent of them.

Every Member who cosponsors this bill is standing up for a powerful principle, which is this: the people of Puerto Rico are American citizens who have enriched the life of this Nation for generations.

My constituents have fought—and many have died—for a flag that contains 50 stars, but no star that represents them. If they reaffirm their desire in a federally sponsored vote to become a full and equal member of the American family, they have earned the right to be first-class citizens.

#### SHEPHERD'S MEN

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

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Mr. Speaker, 13 men, 911 miles, and 1 week to make a difference.

A group of brave warriors known as the Shepherd's Men set out on a journey that will take them from the Freedom Tower in New York City to the Shepherd's Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

Every day, servicemen and -women from across our country return from the fields of combat only to fight another battle at home. While this battle may not include heavy artillery or enemy combatants, it is just as devastating.

Post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, and traumatic brain injuries are disorders that take years—and sometimes a lifetime—to heal. These enemies invade the mind and cause unspeakable pain for those suffering and for their families.

For this reason, 13 brave men, whose mission is to raise awareness and funding for those with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries, have accepted the arduous task of running from the Big Apple to the Peach State.

With each step forward, the Shepherd's Men are one step closer to reaching their goal of raising \$250,000 for the Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative, a comprehensive rehabilitation program that provides assistance and support for servicemen and -women who have sustained mild to moderate traumatic brain injury and PTSD from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

While the wounds may have been inflicted years ago, the scars still remain, and that is why the Shepherd's Men run 911 miles with 22-pound packs strapped to their chests.

These courageous men do not run for their own glory, but for their fellow servicemembers whose lives may be forever changed by the effects of these conditions.

Today, one out of five servicemembers returning home from Iraq or Afghanistan have been diagnosed with one of these debilitating conditions. If left unchecked, these injuries could be life threatening. As our servicemembers return home from Active Duty, it is important for them to know that they do not suffer alone.

This morning, the Shepherd's Men are a few steps closer to reaching their final destination. As the Sun rose gently against the backdrop of the Iwo Jima Memorial, the Shepherd's Men arrived in our Nation's Capital. It was here—at the place that memorialized one of the most historic moments in our history—where I joined the Shepherd's Men for a short 1-mile run out of their 911-mile journey.

As I stood in the shadow, Mr. Speaker, of the Iwo Jima Memorial, one of the Shepherd's Men following our run came up to me and said: When we go into combat, we know that we may not

come back out. And I lost many of my men in combat, and I can accept that, but what is hard is when these men survive combat, and they come back home and lose their life to these debilitating conditions. That is hard to swallow.

As a veteran of the United States Air Force, I am extremely grateful to the unwavering commitment the Shepherd's Men have shown to defend their fellow servicemen and ensure that they have the resources they need to begin their road to recovery.

Although the road may be long and fraught with setbacks, people across this Nation are going the extra mile to ensure our servicemembers are given the help they deserve.

To the Shepherd's Men, Godspeed on the rest of your journey, and thank you for your commitment to our Nation's military.

#### HONORING BISHOP WALTER SCOTT THOMAS, SR., AND HIS FORTY YEARS OF SERVICE TO GOD

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor, admiration, and respect that I take this time to honor one of this Nation's most distinguished citizens, Bishop Walter Scott Thomas, Sr., in recognition of his 40 years of service to God as a pastor, mentor, and community leader.

I am honored to rise today to share with my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives the accomplishments of this remarkable man.

For the last 40 years, Bishop Walter Scott Thomas, Sr., has faithfully served as the pastor of the New Psalmist Baptist Church located in the Seventh Congressional District in Baltimore, Maryland. Bishop Thomas is a Baltimore native who was called to proclaim God's Word to the world.

He received a bachelor's of science degree from the University of Maryland in economics, a master's of divinity degree from Howard University School of Religion, and a doctor of ministry degree from St. Mary's Seminary and the University of Baltimore.

In 1975, Bishop Thomas was called to pastor the New Psalmist Baptist Church. He is a devoted leader who cares about the needs of his congregation, the community, and the world.

Under his dynamic leadership over the last four decades, New Psalmist Baptist Church has grown to serve several thousand members. His vision and message of "empowering disciples" has inspired thousands to make a positive impact in their personal lives, communities, the State of Maryland, the country, and the world.

He is an influential leader who graciously uses his gifts to serve clergy and religious leaders. From 1999 to 2002, Bishop Thomas served as the president