

OPIOID BILLS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the action the House is taking this week to combat the crisis of opioid abuse.

As a registered nurse, I have seen the grim reality of the addiction from all sides. I have witnessed its grip on families—the way it slowly steals the life behind its victims' eyes and how what was thought to be a quick fix can easily spiral into a deadly experience.

We all know that addiction is an equal opportunity destroyer of potential. It does not care about your race, gender, income, or political party. Therefore, the solutions that we offer in Congress must also reach across artificial boundaries to help all who are touched by this epidemic to get back on their feet.

I am proud that, all told, the House will take up 18 bills this week that are aimed at combating opioid abuse. Among these solutions is a bill creating an interagency task force to ensure healthcare professionals have up-to-date guidelines and best practices for treating patients with acute and chronic pain. This is critically important as 17 percent of opioid users today get their highs from medications that are legally prescribed to them by a doctor.

The House also passed legislation that makes it safer for veterans to seek pain management care. Specifically, the bill would require the VA employees who prescribe opioids to receive education and training on pain management while also calling for a government watchdog report on the VA opioid use and treatment.

Importantly, for me as a nurse, Congress has additionally taken steps to protect newborns from the exposure to addictive opioid drugs while in the womb. This includes legislation to authorize residential treatment grant programs for pregnant and postpartum women who have substance abuse problems, as well as a bill calling for a government study on the prevalence of neonatal abstinence syndrome and offering recommendations to improve access to treatment.

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While these bills offer an important starting point, Congress cannot single-handedly legislate away the threat of opioid abuse. It takes willing partners in our community to help raise awareness and intervene before addiction sets in.

I was reminded of this recently when I visited and met with the Smith County Anti-Drug Coalition back in my district. This organization is going into schools to arm young people with the facts about drug abuse. They are providing drop boxes in the public spaces so citizens can safely dispose of unused medication, and they are working with law enforcement to ensure that their

efforts are as effective as possible. We can never underestimate the importance of nonprofits and volunteer-supported organizations like this.

Mr. Speaker, opioid addicts are not bad people trying to be good. They are sick people trying to get well. When we come together with an eye on the solution and an emphasis on personal responsibility, we can find victory over this preventable disease and help those who are hurting to reassemble their lives and regain their pursuit of the American Dream.

HOUSTON FLOODING

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

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I and a host of colleagues find ourselves on a mission of mercy. This is a mission of mercy, Mr. Speaker, for people who are suffering in Houston, Texas, and the surrounding area.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Congressman GENE GREEN, the original cosponsor of H.R. 5025, the 2016 Tax Day Floods Supplemental Funding Act. I want to thank Congressman JOHN CULBERSON for being the first person to sign on, such that the bill has become bipartisan. It is a bipartisan piece of legislation.

I want to talk about suffering today, Mr. Speaker, because a good many people in Houston, Texas, are suffering for a multiplicity of reasons. I will share just a few.

Before I do this, I want to remind friends and colleagues that tonight, after the Republican hour and the Democratic hour, my colleagues and I will take to the floor to say much more about what is happening in Houston, Texas.

For now, I want to mention the suffering, because suffering can teach us that which we can learn no other way. Some things bear repeating. Suffering and pain can teach us that which we can learn no other way. It is one thing to sympathize and to say, "There but for the grace of God go I" and understand that there is suffering associated with that statement, but it is another thing to empathize because you had the experience associated with the suffering that goes along with the statement, "There but for the grace of God go I."

So in Houston, Texas, a good many people are suffering because they have had their homes flooded not once, but twice—some even more. They are suffering because some of them were just getting back into their homes, and their homes were flooded again. They are suffering because they have lost their means of transportation, the ability to get to work, to sustain the livelihood that causes them to have the ability to take care of themselves and their families.

There is suffering in Houston, Texas. They are suffering because they don't know what the future holds. They don't

know what next year will bring or next month will bring because these 100-year floods are happening quite regularly in Houston, Texas. So they are suffering in Houston.

I want my colleagues and my friends to know, Mr. Speaker, that this suffering is something that we can mitigate. We may not be able to eliminate it totally, completely, and absolutely. No one can stop all of the flooding all of the time, but there are projects that have been authorized that we are currently funding on a piecemeal basis. There are projects that, if completed, Mr. Speaker, would mitigate the flooding. We have a piecemeal approach to a problem that requires a wholesale solution. There is suffering, and we could eliminate much of this suffering. That which we cannot eliminate, we can mitigate.

The suffering I have called to your attention thus far, Mr. Speaker, involves property, real and personal. But I also want to mention the ultimate pain that is being endured by a good many in Houston, and that is losing someone whom you love to circumstances that could have possibly been eliminated.

Eight lives, possibly nine—I am told that there may be another—eight lives were lost, Mr. Speaker. Eight people lost their lives to flooding in Houston, Texas, in the tax day flood, so-called because it occurred on the last day to pay your taxes. Eight lives were lost. The family members of these persons who lost their lives are suffering in Houston, Texas.

So I come to the floor with an appeal to my colleagues. We ask that you kindly give consideration to H.R. 5025, the 2016 Tax Day Floods Supplemental Funding Act, that has now some 60 cosponsors. But it is more than a bill, Mr. Speaker. It is an opportunity to eliminate suffering in Houston, Texas.

I will close with this. I mentioned that suffering can teach us that which we can learn no other way. One of the things that I have learned is that, when a storm hits the East Coast and people are suffering, as a Member of Congress, I have to be there for them. When we have the tornadic activities and people suffer, I have to be there for them. Mr. Speaker, I want people to remember that suffering will teach you that which you can learn no other way.

God bless you, and God bless our great country.

TENNESSEE RADIO HALL OF FAME

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

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor this year's inductees to the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame.

Tennessee has a long history in the radio broadcast industry, dating back to the early 1920s. It has since grown to nearly 450 stations which, collectively, reach almost 7 million people.

Tennessee's radio outlets have served as a shining example, providing a consistent source of quality information, while never forgetting the core reason for their existence, which is to serve our growing communities. In light of that, I would like to take a moment to recognize this year's Radio Hall of Fame inductees—Harry Chapman; Warren Medley; Dave Overton; Aaron Robinson, Sr.; Charlie Scott; and Cal Young, Jr.—all of whom, collectively, made decades of significant broadcast contributions prior to their death.

In addition, I would like to recognize Maxine Humphreys, Cathy Martindale, and Bart Walker.

Also, I would like to highlight those from my district in Chattanooga—Chattanooga's very own Billy Joe Poindexter of WUSY, US 101; Keith Landecker of Power 94; Earl Freudenberg of WDTN AM 980; and station of the year, WUSY, US 101—all of whom continue to make significant contributions to the radio industry.

On a personal note, when I was a lawyer in my district, I had a radio show. During that time, I had the privilege of working with Earl Freudenberg on the *Dynamo of Dixie* on AM 1310. I learned much from Earl during that time, and I am proud to call him a friend. Needless to say, I enjoyed my radio years in the Chattanooga community immensely.

Again, I would like to congratulate this year's Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame inductees.

POLICE WEEK

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

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Mr. Speaker, this is Police Week, a week which offers all of us an opportunity to honor those who selflessly keep our community safe.

"To protect and serve," that is more than just a slogan on the side of police cars across the country. It is a promise, a promise that brave men and women in uniform keep every day as they uphold law and order in our cities and towns.

But to be able to protect and serve us, our law enforcement needs the tools and resources that are vital to successfully doing their job. And, unfortunately, some of that essential lifesaving equipment that they need to protect us and to protect themselves has been stripped away.

Last June, President Obama arbitrarily and unilaterally decided to limit the 1033 surplus equipment program, a Federal program that provides lifesaving Defense Department equipment to State and local law enforcement agencies.

Because of this ill-conceived action, I am hearing from the sheriffs, police chiefs, and law enforcement officials throughout the 18 counties that I am fortunate to represent. I am hearing about how the safety of the brave men

and women in blue and their departments are being compromised by the President's action.

It is clear that the President's decision to unilaterally cut access to lifesaving equipment was a knee-jerk reaction that put politics in front of public safety, and that is something that we simply can't let happen.

So in response, Mr. Speaker, I have introduced the Protecting Lives Using Surplus Equipment Act to stop this action dead in its tracks and to ensure that any changes to this program are the result of a data-driven debate here in Congress, not through some arbitrary, unilateral action by the President.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in standing up against this administration's attack on law enforcement safety by supporting my bill and making sure that our police have the equipment they need for their own safety and for the safety of the American people. They deserve nothing less.

NEW YORK STATE'S REJECTION OF THE CONSTITUTION PIPELINE

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

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Mr. Speaker, during the winter months, natural gas demand in New York City outstrips the ability of existing pipelines to deliver natural gas from the nearby Marcellus gas field in Pennsylvania. This capacity limitation can cause gas prices to spike during cold weather. For example, on January 22, 2014, when the price in the Marcellus was \$3.50 per thousand cubic feet, the New York City price was \$123. I want to repeat that; \$3.50 in the Marcellus, and in New York City the price was \$123.

Constraints on natural gas make electricity more expensive. High energy prices are especially hard on the poor. Businesses suffer and jobs are lost when they lack abundant supply of affordable, clean energy. However, there is a shovel-ready solution: build the Constitution pipeline to bring more of Pennsylvania's Marcellus gas to New York.

You would think that New York would welcome a new supply of clean, economical natural gas to lower consumer costs. However, on April 22, New York's State Department of Environmental Conservation denied the construction of the Constitution pipeline needed to deliver more Pennsylvania gas.

For several years, the Constitution Pipeline Company, a group led by Williams Partners, located in my district, has been developing an \$875 million privately funded project to build a pipeline from Pennsylvania to Albany to deliver gas to the Iroquois pipeline and to consumers in New York State and in New England.

□ 1100

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued a certificate of public convenience and necessity for the Constitution pipeline in 2014. I want to repeat that. FERC approves of the pipeline. According to the company, FERC's final environmental review of the proposed pipeline concluded that environmental impacts would be reduced to "less than significant levels." A year and a half later, the State of New York decided to deny certification necessary to issue construction permits.

The Williams Group worked with the State for 3 years, including two 1-year extensions requested by the State, and yet the State asserted that information provided by the company concerning the 250 or so stream crossings was incomplete.

The company refuted the State of New York's assertions, saying: "Completely contrary to the New York DEC's assertion, we provided detailed drawings and profiles for every stream crossing in New York, including showing depth of pipe. In fact, all stream crossings were fully vetted with the DEC throughout the review process. We are appalled . . ."

Amazingly, Federal regulations provide no recourse to challenge a State's rejection of a section 401 certification, so Constitution Pipeline may need to initiate legal action to contest the decision. The decision has every appearance of political motivation. The Wall Street Journal called it "Cuomo's Energy Jobs Veto."

One has to wonder if the Governor of New York really wants to help the poor and if he can recognize a shovel-ready job when he sees one. This pipeline project would create 2,400 construction jobs and infuse \$130 million of labor income into the region, in addition to providing a reliable supply of clean energy. The real victims in this matter, Mr. Speaker, are the people of New York.

Hopefully, political agendas that threaten to deny New Yorkers the benefits of the Constitution pipeline will be confounded. In the meantime, the message from New York's executive branch is that would-be energy suppliers to New York State need not apply. It appears to be time for consumers and their representatives to make their views known in Albany and for Congress—that is us—to revisit the pipeline permitting process.

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 11 o'clock and 2 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.