

there is a reason they elected Republican majorities.

If we don't, if we can't get our act together, then I fear the consequences will be catastrophic, both as a policy matter and a political matter.

I urge my colleagues: Let's do what we said we would do. Let's cut taxes. Let's bring back jobs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

PUERTO RICO

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I rise today to talk about the dire humanitarian situation in Puerto Rico and to challenge this country to end a century of discrimination against the Puerto Rican people.

While the fleeting media attention may have waned, the desperation of the people of Puerto Rico has not. The lackluster response from the Trump administration is an outrage. It has been more than a month since the hurricane, and 80 percent of the island's electricity is still out. Roads and bridges have collapsed. Homes have been destroyed. Of the 67 hospitals that are open, less than half of them are operating with electricity. Families are searching far and wide for clean drinking water, and some have been drinking water from wells at a Superfund site.

This kind of inhumane response would never ever be permitted in a U.S. State. But one doesn't even have to look at other States to evaluate this response; we can look abroad. Within 2 weeks of the earthquake in Haiti, there were 17,000 U.S. military personnel on the ground in that country. Two weeks after Hurricane Maria made landfall in the United States, the United States had deployed only 10,000 troops to respond to the disaster in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

News broke yesterday that the state-owned electric company on the island, PREPA, refused to operationalize mutual aid agreements with electric companies on the U.S. mainland. That is a standard step in normal disaster response. Fault lies with PREPA, but how on Earth did FEMA and the Trump administration allow that to happen, leaving millions of Puerto Ricans in the dark and in danger for almost a month? It is beyond comprehension, and it speaks to the failure of the U.S. Government's response.

The truth is that Hurricane Maria exposed far more than just immediate physical damage; the hurricane also laid bare a very simple truth that is plain to every resident of the island and every Puerto Rican living in my State. The truth is this: The United States has been screwing Puerto Rico for over 100 years, and this is just the latest, most disgusting chapter.

There is an undercurrent in the discourse about Puerto Rico that is as pernicious as it is ahistorical. You will hear people, like President Trump, say that Puerto Ricans are wholly responsible for the financial mess they find

themselves in and that Puerto Rico should just pull itself up by its bootstraps. The rewriting of history ignores the fact that the Federal Government and Congress have had our hands tightly wrapped around those very bootstraps since 1898.

The United States acquired Puerto Rico from Spain through the Treaty of Paris in 1898, when the United States defeated Spain in the Spanish American War. Puerto Ricans didn't ask to be part of the United States; we acquired the island. A century ago, Congress extended U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans. In 1950, Congress recognized the island's limited authority over internal governance, and Puerto Rico became formally known as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Being a commonwealth or a territory is permanent second-class status. Without access to the same healthcare reimbursement, the same infrastructure funding, the same education dollars as other States, Puerto Rico starts every single race 50 feet behind the rest of America. These built-in disadvantages are designed to hold Puerto Rico back. They have been in place for 100 years to keep Puerto Rico from being a true economic competitor with the mainland.

Believe me, the Puerto Rican people have done everything they can to overcome this discriminatory treatment. There is an entrepreneurial, never-say-die spirit in Puerto Rico. I know this because no State has a greater percentage of residents with Puerto Rican roots than Connecticut. But despite the strength of the Puerto Rican people, they are stuck because Washington has tied their hands behind their backs by taking away the right to vote in Federal elections, virtually guaranteeing that Puerto Rico's economic disadvantage will never ever be remedied. It is a black hole from which Puerto Rico and the other four U.S. territories can never escape.

Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens—despite the fact that recent polling suggests that half of Americans don't know this—but they can't vote for President. They have no voting representation in Congress. Think about it this way: Americans with a mainland address can vote if they move to Mongolia or Sierra Leone, but if they temporarily take up residence in a U.S. territory like Puerto Rico, they miraculously lose their right to vote.

There are real, practical consequences to this lack of representation. We are watching the most egregious example right now. Do you really think that if Puerto Rico had two U.S. Senators, 80 percent of the island would still be without power a month after the hurricane? By the way, Puerto Rico has more citizens than 21 States that have a total of 42 Senators in this body. Do you think a President would denigrate and insult Puerto Rico the way President Trump has if it had electoral votes?

The botched response to Maria is just the latest attack on the island, perpet-

uated by a Congress that can afford to ignore a big part of the United States that has no voice in Congress to object.

For over six decades, the U.S. Navy pummeled the island of Vieques, just off Puerto Rico's coast, with ordnance, using it as a bombing range for military exercises. Those weapons allegedly contained uranium, napalm, and Agent Orange. Today, people who live on Vieques are eight times more likely to have cardiovascular disease and seven times more likely to die of diabetes than others in Puerto Rico. Cancer rates on Vieques are much higher.

If you want to know why Puerto Rico has been in a decade-long recession, look no further than Congress. More than 50 years ago, the U.S. Government launched several initiatives to help spur economic growth on the island. It was a good thing. Ironically enough, the initiatives were collectively called Operation Bootstrap. One of the tools that were used to spur economic growth was a tax break to allow U.S. manufacturing companies to avoid corporate income taxes on profits that were made in Puerto Rico. Manufacturers descended on the island in droves, and the entire economy in Puerto Rico became oriented around those companies. But what Congress gives, Congress can take away, especially if the entity you are taking from has no meaningful representation in Congress. In 1996, Congress phased out the tax breaks. Guess what. It sucked the island's tax base away, cratering Puerto Rico's economy for the next two decades.

It is worth noting that Puerto Rico is not blameless for the financial situation that it is in. There definitely has been a fair share of mismanagement on the island. Bad decisions have been made. Saying that Puerto Rico is only a victim of schemes of the mainland is not true. But the same can be said of fiscal mismanagement and bad decisions in other U.S. States. But a century of underinvestment in Puerto Rico has been a big part of the story as to how they arrived at this situation. And unlike all those other U.S. States, Puerto Rico has no way of rectifying the past misdeeds because its toolbox to reckon with its past is limited to what Congress sticks in the toolbox, and that toolbox doesn't provide access to the Bankruptcy Code.

As a result, Congress passed PROMESA, which created this financial oversight board on the island. Puerto Rican bondholders on Wall Street, who bought the bonds for pennies on the dollar, are now challenging the current oversight board's legitimacy, with the hope of being paid before the island gets relief. These practices of the bondholders, who have been circling the island for years, are made more menacing because they are spending boatloads of money lobbying Congress. Just watch TV at night in Washington, DC, to see their ads. They know that the people of Puerto Rico have no voice here, have no votes here.

Now it looks as though other predators are circling. News came out this week that a small, two-person company in Whitefish, MT, somehow, some way, got a no-bid \$300 million contract to restore power in Puerto Rico from the island's power authority—the same power authority that refused the help of experienced electric companies that actually know how to turn the power back on. How does something like this happen? It turns out that the little town in Montana is the home of the new Secretary of the Interior.

Get ready, because this is just the start. President Trump and his billionaire cronies are going to use this disaster to enrich themselves. The Whitefish power contract given to a friend of the Secretary of Interior—with two people employed at that company—is just a scratch on the surface of what is to come.

Puerto Rico has been getting screwed for decades. None of this is new. None of this is unpredictable. If you think this is just one century-long string of rough luck, you are ignoring the last critical aspect of Puerto Rican history.

Back in 1901, when the U.S. Supreme Court decided that even though residents of the territories lived in the United States, they shouldn't be able to enjoy full constitutional protections, the Supreme Court was pretty explicit about why these citizens in places like Puerto Rico deserved this second-class treatment. Justice Henry Brown, who authored the separate but equal doctrine, held that Puerto Rico and the other territories didn't need to be afforded full rights under the Constitution because the islands were "inhabited by alien races, differing from us in religion, customs, laws, methods of taxation, and modes of thought." That, my friends, is racism defined. And it is both past and present when it comes to the rationale for the historical and continued mistreatment of the people of Puerto Rico.

It is time for that mistreatment to change—not just by doing right by Puerto Rico at this moment, at their hour of need. Yes, it is time for President Trump to command that FEMA and the U.S. military and the powers that be in Puerto Rico turn the lights back on right now. Congress should give Puerto Rico every cent they need.

I am glad that we came together this week to approve the latest round of emergency aid, but it is long past time that we addressed the second-class treatment we have given the people of Puerto Rico for decades. Even that racist 1901 Supreme Court decision contemplated that the territories' unequal status could only be justified temporarily. It is time to untie the hands of the Puerto Rican people and ensure that they have full economic and political rights.

I hope my colleagues will join me in this conversation in the coming months. It is just as important as the one we are having on emergency response because if anything good can

come from the disaster of Hurricane Maria, maybe it is that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

#### HEALTHCARE

Mr. UDALL. Madam President, Republicans have spent months trying to repeal the Affordable Care Act. They knew that tens of millions of Americans would lose their care, they knew it would betray our Federal trust responsibility to Native Americans, and they knew it would throw one-fifth of our economy into chaos. TrumpCare failed because the American people opposed it. Americans spoke out against it in record numbers. TrumpCare failed to pass four times. We hope that now we have put that to bed and we can move on.

But rather than listening to millions of Americans, President Trump has responded by sabotaging the Affordable Care Act. His reckless behavior is already causing chaos in the marketplace. His actions have hiked up the cost of premiums. He has sent out-of-pocket costs through the roof. Instead of helping Americans get better healthcare, he has put it out of reach for millions.

I commend my colleagues Senator ALEXANDER and Senator MURRAY. They have found a bipartisan solution to this new healthcare crisis caused by our President. I urge Leader McCONNELL to put it onto the floor.

The Affordable Care Act isn't the only healthcare program at risk. The President and Republicans are letting funds run dry for other critical health programs. Last month, the Children's Health Insurance Program expired. CHIP insures almost 9 million children across the country, including over 11,000 kids in my home State of New Mexico. The Community Health Centers Program also expired last month.

Republicans failed to extend the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Services. That is one of the most effective health programs that we have. Without it, more than 1,000 New Mexico parents could miss out on home visits. They will not get crucial information about how to nurse their newborns, recognize healthy behavior in infants, and teach basic skills to their children. The Special Diabetes Program for Indians is also set to expire in December.

I urge Republicans to work with us to reauthorize these critical healthcare programs. We need to act urgently. We can get this done by Thanksgiving or earlier if we work together.

Madam President, I want to talk about CHIP first.

CHIP provides comprehensive health insurance for kids whose families do not quite qualify for Medicaid but who cannot afford private insurance. CHIP covers basic medical care, like immunizations, prescriptions, routine checkups and dental visits. Thanks to CHIP, the rate of uninsured kids in America has dropped from 14 percent to 4.5 percent.

CHIP has been a lifesaver for some families. This is Colton. He is from the small town of Anthony, NM. Colton was 8 years old when he was diagnosed with cancer. Fortunately, the cancer was treatable, and he was insured by CHIP. So the cost of his treatment and medications were covered. Without CHIP, Colton's family would have had to have paid hundreds of dollars a month for his treatment, which is the cost of a month's rent.

Families should not have to choose between lifesaving care for their children and a roof over their heads.

Colton's father wrote to the Santa Fe New Mexican, and it read:

Watching my son battle for his life was almost more than I could bear. I couldn't imagine dealing with the stress of scraping together everything we had to cover the medical bills if we didn't have coverage. Having [CHIP] allowed us to focus on what was truly important—Colton's future and being there for my family as we went through this life-changing experience.

But, now, States are looking at contingency plans. New Mexico has reserves but only until next spring. Some States will be forced to cover all of the cost in just a few months, and others are preparing to send notices to families that their coverage will end. No parent who is already in crisis because of a sick child should have to go through that. CHIP was a bipartisan success story. I hope that we can get back to working together on this.

The 50-year-old Community Health Centers Program delivers comprehensive healthcare services to some of our Nation's most vulnerable individuals—schoolchildren, people experiencing homelessness, agricultural workers, and our veterans. In New Mexico, 17 of these clinics serve 333,000 patients in 90 underserved and rural communities.

The Community Health Centers are also important to the economy in rural communities. In New Mexico, they employ almost 3,000 people across the State. These clinics cannot sustain a 70-percent funding cut if Federal support is canceled. Many would be forced to shut their doors.

I recently visited one of these clinics—the De Baca Family Practice Clinic in Fort Sumner, NM. It provides high-quality medical services to over 3,000 patients. Over one-fifth of its patients are children, and another one-fifth are seniors, but if funding runs out, the De Baca Family Practice Clinic will be forced to start laying off essential medical staff and to reduce its hours.

Clinic director Lisa Walraven told me: "You simply cannot reduce funding by 70 percent from a small frontier healthcare facility and expect anything other than a significant loss of access to care."

Both CHIP and community health centers provide preventive care to underserved communities throughout New Mexico. They are supporting our healthcare system to ensure that we don't let any families fall through the cracks.