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Today, U.S. crude imports have dropped 7.5 million barrels per day, as we rely on that increased domestic production and our friends in Canada.

Lifting the ban has allowed us to be in competition with the two highest producing crude oil countries in the world, Saudi Arabia and Russia. According to the International Energy Agency, this year, the United States is expected to surpass Saudi Arabia and rival Russia as the world's leading producer of crude oil.

This comes as Germany is working with Russia on a pipeline that will deliver more than 50 billion cubic meters of natural gas from Russia to Germany. During the recent NATO summit in Brussels, President Trump was right to strategically question Germany's further reliance on Russia's natural gas.

Our liquefied natural gas and oil delivered to the Adriatic, North Sea, and Baltic seaports offer our allies in Europe strategic diversification both from OPEC and from Russian dominance for our friends in Western and Central Europe, their consumers, and their industries.

Mr. Speaker, America is better off. I commend President Trump for raising this important issue on his recent trip to Europe, and I am proud of our work in Congress to enhance America's global energy leadership.

RECOGNIZING DR. DAN TULLOS

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a good friend and a key figure in education and communication sciences in Arkansas, Dr. Dan Tullos.

Dr. Tullos recently retired from Harding University, where he served since 1979 as a professor, program director, and chair of the Communication Sciences and Disorders Department. Under his guidance, the communication sciences and disorders program has grown from a major offered under the oversight of the Department of Communication to a separate department with two undergraduate majors and a graduate program.

Throughout his career, Dan has been honored by his colleagues, students, and industry leaders with well-deserved recognition and awards. Most notably, he was the 2015 recipient of the Frank R. Kleffner award, which recognizes an individual's outstanding contributions to communications.

For his devotion to youth development, education, scouting, and a better world that has improved the lives of countless individuals across Arkansas and the globe, I congratulate Dr. Tullos on his great career and his retirement.

HONORING PAT DOWNS

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an outstanding leader who has transformed the realm of nonprofits in Arkansas, Pat Downs of the United Way of White County.

Pat retired earlier this year as the executive director of the organization

after 29 years of service. Her selflessness, passion, and work ethic inspire all who collaborate with her in White County, around the community, and in the workplace.

Helping raise more than \$11 million for associated agencies, Pat's decades of leadership had an indelible impact on central Arkansas. I thank Pat for her outstanding service to the United Way and send best wishes for her future endeavors.

SOCIALIST POLICIES SABOTAGE VENEZUELA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS) for 3 minutes.

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Mr. Speaker, the United States was founded on the fundamental principles of individual liberty and that all are created equal. As the late President Reagan once said: "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction."

We see this sad truth in nations around the world. So many live under the dark shadow of oppression. They are called captive nations.

I was recently introduced to a young man with big dreams named Tito. He is from Venezuela, and he is currently pursuing his master's at Washington State University. Life is tough in Venezuela, and it became very difficult for him when he was going through a routine checkup and found that his white cell blood count was too high. Unfortunately, he wasn't properly diagnosed because the healthcare system is woefully inadequate. Even help had been denied.

It wasn't until he was able to fly to Houston to have a bone marrow test and was diagnosed with leukemia that he got the help that he needed.

Once, Venezuela was not only the richest country in South America, it was one of the top 20 richest countries in the world. Today, it is one of the most economically oppressed. The IMF is reporting that inflation could top 1 million percent by year's end.

Chavez and Maduro have managed to sabotage this once vibrant and prosperous democracy with socialist policies, corruption, and authoritarian rule. Chavez once said that he was "convinced that the path to a new, better, and possible world is not capitalism. The path is socialism."

Today, in that new world, the government is telling its citizens to eat their own pets, lest they starve to death. What was once a vibrant cultural center and top tourist destination is the crime capital of the world. The average citizen has lost 20 pounds. Instead of a better world, there is a refugee crisis, and millions are fleeing to neighboring countries.

The promises never materialized, and the people are suffering, people like Tito.

Maduro's stubborn pursuit of socialism is hurting millions. Of course,

Maduro would not be able to cling to power were it not for Cuban support. And then you have other countries like Nicaragua ruled by the tyrant Daniel Ortega, where we have seen the elimination of the freedom of press and suppression of habeas corpus rights.

We, as Americans, must stand in solidarity with people who long to be free. We must support legislation like the Venezuelan Humanitarian Assistance and Defense of Democratic Governance Act that passed the House overwhelmingly last year.

We must have a strategy to help the people of Venezuela. We must do more to ensure that authoritarian regimes do not have the financial capacity to keep oppressing their people.

This story has been repeated throughout history where socialist leaders rise to power, offering promises that are never kept. The people suffer.

It is a reminder of why America is so unique. The fruits of our labor belong to us, we the people, not the government. That is why freedom is so important.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Lasky, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 2278. An act to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide grants to improve health care in rural areas.

S. 2779. An act to amend the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001.

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 36 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CURTIS) at noon.

PRAYER

Right Reverend Bishop Irinej Dobrijevic, Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Eastern America, New Rochelle, New York, offered the following prayer:

Lord God Almighty, God of justice, we offer You our sincere thanksgiving and heartfelt prayer for and with those whom You have graciously vested in governance of these United States of America.

Enable the Members of the House of Representatives, elected by the people and for the people, to present equitably the diverse interests of our citizens and those from the expanse of the world who reside, labor, and study here.

Guide those who deliberate and legislate on our collective behalf in the spirit of unity, openness, and understanding. Allow their hearts ever to be open to the resounding cry of those who earnestly pledge indivisible liberty and justice for all.

May they be enlightened by Your precepts and motivated in their altruistic service to our Nation and its people. Bless and preserve them and us, Lord. This we pray in Christ Jesus, through the holy spirit.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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 pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BISHOP) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan 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.

WELCOMING BISHOP IRINEJ DOBRIJEVIC

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to express my appreciation to Bishop Irinej of the Serbian Orthodox Church for coming to lead the opening prayer on this special day.

Mr. Speaker, 100 years ago, July 28, President Wilson declared a national day of prayer for the Serbian people and their fight during World War I.

Bishop Irinej has a long career of service, both to God and the church, as well as the Serbian American community. His work has taken him around the world. Formerly, he was a bishop of Australia and New Zealand, and before that, he spent years serving the church in Serbia.

For most of his career, he has been a dedicated educator, teaching at Loyola University in Chicago and as a member of the orthodox church's theological faculty in Belgrade.

Perhaps most notably today is his work to improve the ties between the Serbian diaspora and the Serbian state.

Bishop Irinej plays an important role in bringing us all together with God's love. It was my honor to invite him to share his faith with us today.

Thank you, Bishop Irinej, for that prayer, and may God bless Serbia and the United States of America.

And that is just the way it is.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

THANKING MATT BLACKWELL

(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 is with sincere gratitude and appreciation that I have the opportunity to recognize Matt Blackwell, former senior legislative assistant for South Carolina's Second Congressional District. I will always appreciate Matt for his years of service on behalf of the people of South Carolina.

A native of Aiken, South Carolina, and a USC graduate, Matt worked on a wide variety of issues, including energy, tax, financial services, transportation and infrastructure, and budget and appropriations. Beginning as an intern in the office in 2013, it has been an honor to work with such a dedicated public servant.

It is with mixed feelings, but great happiness, that the office bids Matt farewell. He will be doing amazing work in his new role as legislative director for Congressman NEAL DUNN of Florida, a distinguished graduate of Washington and Lee University of Lexington, Virginia.

I know his parents, State Representative Bart and Paula Blackwell, and family members join me in recognizing his achievements.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN AVIATION

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

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, since 1987, the number of pilots in the United States has decreased by 30 percent. Demand for pilots is up and the supply of trained pilots is down. Throughout the aviation industry, there is a desperate need for trained aviation employees.

One way we can help end the shortage is to create paths for minority training. African Americans are significantly underrepresented in the aviation industry. They represent only 9 percent of airline mechanics and service technicians, 2 percent of aircraft pilots and flight engineers, and 12 percent of air traffic controllers. Creating opportunities to diversify the aviation field will help the critical shortage of pilots and aviation employees.

Soon, I will be introducing a bill to establish an African American advisory board within the FAA. The advisory

board will engage African American students through aviation training, mentorship, education, and outreach programs.

I urge my colleagues to join me in my effort to decrease our Nation's pilot shortage by tapping into an underutilized population and creating a more inclusive aviation industry.

HONORING ROSARIA MARTINICO

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

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable constituent from Rochester Hills, Michigan, Rosaria "Sara" Martinico.

She joined so many other brave women to help the war efforts during World War II as one of the original Rosie the Riveters. She served the country by working on B-17 bombers for a good portion of the war.

Last Sunday, Mrs. Martinico reached a milestone. Born in 1910, during the William Howard Taft Presidency, she celebrated her 108th birthday in Rochester Hills alongside her 2 daughters, 8 grandkids, 18 great-grandkids, and 12 great-great-grandchildren. That is five generations of family.

Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to represent such an outstanding and honorable person, and I would like to wish Mrs. Martinico a very happy 108th birthday and thank her for her outstanding service as the original Rosie the Riveter.

AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS MONUMENT

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

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the work of a committee in western New York dedicated to constructing the only monument in the Nation honoring African Americans who served in the United States military during times of war. This long-overdue tribute acknowledges the selfless sacrifice of our veterans, many of whom served our Nation while being denied equal rights at home.

The African American Veterans Monument, to be located in the Buffalo and Erie County Military Park, will feature 12 illuminated black pillars, representing U.S. military conflicts, and is designed to give visitors an experience that is reflective, educational, and inspirational.

The monument is being designed by a local, young, talented artist, Jonathan Casey. I have asked the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture to collaborate with local project leaders on this first-in-the-Nation African American Veterans Memorial.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the veterans, the artist, and New York State