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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BACON).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 8, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DON BACON to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

PUERTO RICO 6 WEEKS AFTER HURRICANE MARIA

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

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, Monday I returned from my third trip to Puerto Rico since Hurricane Maria devastated the island almost 2 months ago.

I wish I could report that a lot of progress is being made, but I can't. It is still a disaster, and it is a stain on the reputation of the United States of America.

Most places don't have power. Generators, the sound you hear humming

in every corner of the island like metallic coquis, are running ragged from overuse.

In many places, the water is not on because the power is not on to pump it, and drinkable water mixes with sewer water all over the island. As you can see from this picture, people are tapping mountain springs and, in this case, are using it mostly for laundry, thank goodness, because the mountain water in many cases is contaminated from humans and animals.

This man is a police officer, first responder, but he is learning to make do just like every other Puerto Rican family. Everywhere you go, you see Puerto Ricans making do.

So think about your life without power, cell service, water, lights, fans, in some cases food. Imagine the dialysis patient or the elderly man in an electric wheelchair who uses oxygen tanks to breathe. I met those people in Puerto Rico.

How do you get to physical therapy or regular prenatal visits when there are still roads and bridges that have simply vanished?

On the one hand, when I am in Puerto Rico, I am confronted by the very best of mankind, the people who are helping strangers, feeding their neighbors, and pitching in wherever they can.

On the other hand, when I am in Puerto Rico, I am confronted with the human tragedy of people who, like all of us, depend on the government for basic assistance and help after a major disaster and have received nothing.

Yes, the damage is massive, but there is no task Americans cannot accomplish if we put our minds and backs into it.

Mr. Speaker, this is the Head Start building in Loiza. As you can see, the roof is torn up and there is metal sheeting that was blown around. The people in Loiza are forming a brigade to rebuild the structure so they can reopen the Head Start building.

One of the things I was doing in Loiza was bringing money to get them started, raised by the Puerto Rican Agenda in Chicago from the people of Chicago. Individuals in Chicago are investing in the well-being of people in Loiza. They have never met them, but they are investing in them.

They are not calling in expensive contractors or companies from Montana, and they are not waiting for the folks from FEMA or the U.S. military. They are not waiting for Donald Trump to grant Puerto Ricans a little more time now that he has made it clear that he will not personally give them his grade A help forever. Nope. The people of Chicago are getting help to the people of Puerto Rico before any official resources are coming to their rescue.

It boggles the mind that it has come to this.

Here is another more difficult case. A bridge and a road were washed away by the storm. This is near Jayuya, Puerto Rico, but it could be almost anywhere on the island. More than 6 weeks after the storm and nothing, not even orange cones or a guardrail to keep people from driving off into danger.

If you live up the side of this hill, you are not going anywhere any time soon until something changes, because the Army Corps of Engineers has decided just to not show up and are missing in action.

Mr. Speaker, I should not have to give this speech almost 2 months after the storm. We should have accomplished much more. The people of Puerto Rico pretty much understand that President Trump doesn't want to help them and really doesn't care.

The passports and documents that they have that say citizens of the United States should have been printed with small print that says: Yes, Puerto Ricans are citizens of the U.S. for the purposes of being drafted and going to war, but not when it comes to being helped.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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