

great lawmen like Deputy U.S. Marshal Bass Reeves helped lay the foundation that shaped Fort Smith's role in the history of the U.S. Marshals Service. Reeves was one of the most well-respected lawmen of all time. To recognize his efforts, the Bass Reeves Legacy Initiative raised money to honor him with a monument in the community's downtown.

Reeves' career is well documented, as are the stories of Fort Smith during this period. In 1968, Charles Portis depicted Fort Smith's role in taming the West in his book "True Grit," which portrays a teenage girl's efforts to avenge her father's death with a U.S. Marshal by her side.

The bond between the community and the U.S. Marshals Service is strong and continues today, as Fort Smith will be the home of the future U.S. Marshals Museum scheduled to open in 2019. Part of its collection will include a gun and badge that belonged to Bass Reeves.

The national historic site and other organizations have done an exceptional job of keeping the community's history alive. Promoting its history in this way will also have positive benefits for the future. Fort Smith is a city with an incredible story to tell in its faith communities, its schools, its industries, its arts, and its culture.

The community is marking its bicentennial with events throughout the year that include an attempt to break the world record for a lip dub video at the Old Fort Days Rodeo Parade and the city's first fort building competition for kids.

I was pleased to contribute to the time capsule, and I am looking forward to seeing many old friends at our high school reunion. A lot has changed since my days at Northside High School as a Grizzly, but the steadfast resilience and spirit of the citizens of Fort Smith have remained.

I am proud to be a native of Fort Smith and look forward to the events during this year-long celebration. It is home to a growing university, new medical school, and vibrant new industries.

I know Fort Smith is starting the 21st century on a solid foundation. We have much to celebrate from the past, but even more to look forward to in the future. We are forever grateful to the men and women who have encouraged the community's progress and implemented their ideas to shape the city for the next generation.

Dr. Jerry Stewart is one such leader, who led a life dedicated to public service. He had a successful career as a pulmonologist and served as CEO of Cooper Clinic, leading the growth and development of one of the region's top medical care providers. After his retirement, he helped underserved patients at the Good Samaritan Clinic in River Valley Primary Care.

He was well respected in the medical community and admired for his influence beyond the walls of the clinic. His

influence was felt across the community as a leader in civic organizations and community boards, including serving on the Fort Smith Public School Board and as chairman of the board for the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce and the Fort Smith United Way. Truly, the list goes on and on.

Dr. Stewart passed away December 26, but his legacy will live on. I appreciated and valued his friendship and, like so many others, will greatly miss him.

Fort Smith was blessed with Dr. Stewart's leadership and his guidance. It continues to be fortunate to have talented leaders with a vision and dedication to make this great city even better.

Congratulations to the members of the 200th anniversary committee for all of their hard work in planning to celebrate 200 years of Fort Smith history. I am excited for the community as it comes together to recognize and commemorate this historic milestone and wish all the very best as the events take place throughout 2018.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Connecticut.

PUERTO RICO RECOVERY EFFORT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here to talk about our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico. Even as the Northeast is gripped by a storm of impressive proportions, Puerto Rico is still recovering from the hurricane that hit that island 106 days ago.

I visited Puerto Rico with my friend and colleague, Senator MURPHY, yesterday and the day before, to bring back to my colleagues a fact-based report on how the recovery effort is going and how ample Federal support has been.

I come to the floor today furious and frustrated. The people of Puerto Rico have a right to be furious, as well, because they have been denied the basic help and relief that this great Nation—the greatest in the history of the world—owes to all Americans.

Let there be no doubt that the people of Puerto Rico are our fellow Americans. They have fought in our wars. They have come to the mainland and gone back, contributing to our communities, as well as theirs.

They are in our communities in Connecticut, which has the highest concentration of people from Puerto Rico and their descendants of any State in the country. We are proud of the Puerto Ricans in Connecticut and of the Puerto Rican families and people who are coming from the mainland in an exodus unmatched in recent history.

The reason for that out-migration is that Puerto Rico is in the midst of a

humanitarian and economic crisis. Let me repeat that. Puerto Rico is in a humanitarian and economic crisis 106 days after Hurricane Maria.

It is still in triage. Half of the population lacks reliable electricity. Almost half lacks drinkable, healthy water. The tourist industry—the lifeblood of its economy—is shrinking and struggling. About half the hotels still are not open, and the unemployment rate is well above 10 percent—double the rate of unemployment here on the mainland. Housing continues to be a major problem. Of the homes that need temporary relief, only half of them have been provided the blue tarps because they have not been delivered.

I want to pay tribute to the first responders, the Corps of Engineers, and FEMA workers, as well as the National Guard from Connecticut and elsewhere who are on the ground serving and sacrificing for their fellow American. They lack the support they need in resources and commitment from the administration and from this Congress. Resources and support have been denied them because of a lack of will, not a lack of money.

Many of the schools there are shuttered, and students have been denied the privilege to continue their education. The healthcare system of the island is still in shambles. Primary care is struggling to recover because of the lack of electricity. A doctor's office simply cannot run without electricity, nor can manufacturing plants be operated without a reliable source of power.

In restoring power, the Corps of Engineers has provided generators in places where formerly there were plants actually producing power. Generators are a temporary source of power, not a reliable permanent source. Transmission is still down in many parts of the country.

To add insult to injury, Puerto Rico is stuck with a tax as a result of the action of this Congress and the administration—a tax imposed only on manufacturing in foreign countries. Puerto Rico is treated as a foreign country for purposes of the 12.5 percent tax on certain manufacturers. That is simply unconscionable. Manufacturing plants will soon be facing the decision of whether to stay or go, and many of them will go, adding to the unemployment situation there.

It is heartbreaking and gut-wrenching to visit this island and to walk in a neighborhood, as Senator MURPHY and I did on Wednesday night, and find darkness after the sun goes down—total darkness, except for a few isolated lights here and there. How can students study? How can parents care for children?

On that Tuesday night, we walked through a neighborhood in downtown San Juan that was dark because of the lack of electricity. There simply are not enough generators for every home to have one. Generators, themselves, are only a stopgap source of power.

The human faces and voices are gripping and riveting from the suffering

that people in Puerto Rico—our fellow Americans—still endure. The lack of Federal commitment and response is shameful and disgraceful.

There are steps that we must take immediately. In the short-term relief package that is coming to us from the House of Representatives, we must make sure that some of that aid—a significant proportion—is specifically targeted to Puerto Rico. The number requested by the Governor is \$94 billion. It is a number that is fully and amply supported by fact. The total package coming from the House is only \$81 billion, and it is supposed to cover expenses in Florida and Texas as well as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. So that number has to be vastly increased. Longer term, there must be a change in the Tax Code to eliminate that 12.5 or 13 percent tax that discriminates against Puerto Rico as if it were a foreign country and as if the residents in Puerto Rico were citizens of another country. They are Americans.

The Medicaid formula must be changed so that it is fair to Puerto Rico. The 20 percent commitment that now goes to Puerto Rico, unlike other States, must be increased so as to treat Puerto Rico, in fact, as if it were a State and so that it is given an adequate match.

These kinds of commonsense steps must be the beginning of more than just repair and more than just rebuilding. It must be a full recovery with a vision for the future.

I have proposed, with Senator SANDERS and others of our colleagues, a Marshall Plan for Puerto Rico. That is the kind of commitment that is necessary. The \$150 billion includes not only the \$94 billion that is necessary to repair and recover right away but a longer term plan to enable the island to be back on its feet financially, to recover from the near bankruptcy that it is enduring, to able its institutions to function fully, and to permit its healthcare system to rely on electricity from plants that are powered in an economic and environmentally friendly way.

There is, sadly, the hint also of potential corruption in the Whitefish contract that now has been withdrawn and in the Bronze Star contract for tarps that is under review. Investigations must be concluded quickly and thoroughly so that we are assured that Federal dollars are being used honestly and effectively.

We must make a commitment to use the island's natural advantages. Electricity is essential. It is not a luxury, not a convenience. It is vital. It is the lifeblood of that island economically and humanly. One of the island's great advantages is its sunlight. Solar has to be used more effectively and widely as a source of power.

My hope is that we can make this disaster relief program a Marshall Plan-like program for the island in the long term with bipartisan support.

There is nothing political about a neighborhood in darkness, about chil-

dren unable to go to school, about health facilities closed, electricity lacking, and water undrinkable. These are basic needs that we have an obligation to come together on both sides of the aisle and meet.

I hope that we will do so and that we will match the resilience and resolve that I saw in meeting with Governor Rosselló and all of his team. The island's residents and FEMA and other Federal workers were also there.

Governor Rosselló has provided the kind of courage and commitment that are necessary to lead his people in this time of challenge. We must match the courage and strength of the residents on the island with equal resolve here that we will meet the needs of our fellow Americans and that we will keep our commitment, as we do always in times of crisis, to rebuild and to recommit and make sure that we leave no one there behind.

I am proud that we are working with Governor Rosselló. After meeting with him yesterday and after meeting with him in the wake of the hurricane when I first visited—I had the privilege of flying over the island, and I saw the devastation, with whole villages destroyed, houses and community centers completely razed—progress has been made. Governor Rosselló is to be commended for his continuing perseverance, as well as the people of Puerto Rico in their resolve and resilience, but we must now do our part and match that resilience and resolve with a true commitment that we will leave no American behind and keep faith with the people of Puerto Rico.

I am proud that many in the Puerto Rican community in Connecticut have shared their stories with me, and I look forward to returning to them this weekend and sharing my stories with them of their families and their friends on that island.

It is a beautiful island that has such great promise and so embodies the future of our Nation in its patriotism and its dedication to the ideals of America.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

TAX REFORM BILL AND HEALTHCARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, when we were debating the tax relief law—the tax reduction law, the tax cut law—Republicans predicted that it would be very good for the people of our country. Democrats like NANCY PELOSI predicted that it would be “Armageddon.” She said it would be the “end of the world.” Well, that was just last month, and it is already very clear to me that we have won the argument. People across the country are seeing the benefits. Thanks to this Republican tax relief law, NANCY PELOSI is seeing that hard-working Americans have actually won as a result of this law being passed.

Businesses around the country have begun turning those tax cuts into higher wages for many workers. Almost

every day there is another business announcement about bonuses of more than \$1,000 for workers. We are seeing it for hundreds of thousands of workers at businesses all across the country. They are raising wages and also investing millions of dollars back into the workers who make the companies so productive for our country.

Democrats are just wrong about tax reform. I am hearing it at home as I visit with people and stop in the drugstore and the grocery store around the State of Wyoming. They are saying: Look, anybody who does the math sees that it is a good deal for them. It doubled the standard deduction, lowered the rates, and raised the child tax credit. All of these things have been very, very helpful, certainly, to people in my State of Wyoming.

It is interesting listening to Democrats because they think they have great ideas, and they are just proven wrong about the facts. One of the ones I want to talk about today is something that the Senator from Vermont has been talking about with regard to healthcare. He has essentially wanted to scrap the U.S. healthcare system and replace it with a government-run system.

As he said, the current system under ObamaCare is the most bureaucratic, inefficient, and expensive system in the world. He often points to a single-payer system—sort of what they have right now in Great Britain. Of course, who would be paying for that? That would be the American taxpayers dealing with the incredible expenses of a program like that.

I want to point out what is actually happening today in Great Britain, in the system that the Senator from Vermont—the father of an American single-payer plan, one that a number of Democrats have signed on to—where the authorities in Great Britain just told hospitals to cancel 50,000 operations in January and to put them off until next month because they are just too busy doing other things. So scheduled operations were canceled. Now, these are surgeries for things like cataracts, knee replacements, and hip replacements.

Facilities are turning away all but the most urgent cases in need of care. They are closing outpatient clinics. Why? Because it is winter, and it is flu season, and the British healthcare system, based on a single-payer, taxpayer-run system, is not prepared to deal with the needs of the people of that country.

So hospitals across the country of Great Britain have canceled surgeries that have been planned and for which people had decided to take off time from work to have done according to their schedules. Forget it; they have been delayed.

One doctor in England actually said that they are seeing, in his words, “third-world conditions”—third world conditions, describing the British healthcare system today. This was an