

Puerto Rico (Mr. PIERLUISI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, after 8 years, this will be my last floor speech as the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico in Congress. I want to thank my constituents for giving me the opportunity to serve as their voice in Washington. They are enduring difficult times, but they never lose their hope, dignity, or appreciation for life's blessings.

I also want to thank my colleagues in the House and the Senate. I respect your dedication to public service, energy, and commitment to the causes you champion. In addition, I want to thank my staff, which has served me and the people of Puerto Rico with skill, passion, and loyalty.

Most importantly, I want to thank my wife, Maria-Elena; my four children; and the rest of my family. They have walked alongside me on this journey through the peaks and valleys, and my love for them cannot be captured with words.

It is impossible to condense 8 action-packed years into 5 minutes. However, if there is a central theme to my tenure as Resident Commissioner, it has been "fighting the good fight" on behalf of the 3.4 million American citizens in Puerto Rico, who have been treated unfairly for too long.

In an example of baptism by fire, the battle began almost as soon as I assumed office in 2009, when Congress was debating the stimulus bill known as ARRA. Even as I was still learning to navigate my way through the Capitol, we managed to secure virtually State-like treatment for Puerto Rico, injecting almost \$7 billion into the island's economy when we needed it most.

The fight continued the following year with the Affordable Care Act, which resulted in the largest funding increase in history for Puerto Rico's Medicaid program. Separately, we secured legislative and administrative action that eliminated many of the disparities that Puerto Rico faced under the Medicare program.

I am also proud of our work to combat drug-related violence in Puerto Rico, requiring the Federal Government to prepare the Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy and persuading Federal lawsuit agencies to increase their resources in Puerto Rico. The number of homicides on the island was cut in half between 2011 and 2015. But this is not about statistics. It is about preserving human life.

Moreover, I have tried my best to serve those who have served us. Residents of Puerto Rico have a rich military tradition, and no unit exemplifies their courage and character better than the 65th Infantry Regiment, which fought the enemy on the battlefields and discrimination in the barracks. After we enacted legislation to award them the Congressional Gold Medal, these warriors—now in the twilight of their lives—stood beside Presi-

dent Obama as he signed the bill into law and were honored at a ceremony in the Capitol, one that I will never forget.

The toughest fight of my tenure came earlier this year when Congress and the White House worked together to enact legislation, called PROMESA, to prevent the Government of Puerto Rico from collapsing. Nobody was pleased that such legislation was necessary, and nobody liked every provision in the bill, but I firmly believe that PROMESA, if properly implemented, provides a path to a better future for Puerto Rico.

I close with this thought: Puerto Rico's current territory status, which gives Congress license to treat my constituents like second class citizens, is undignified and unsustainable.

Following a 2012 local referendum in which island residents expressed their opposition to the current status and their support for statehood, Congress enacted legislation that provided funding for the first federally sponsored referendum in Puerto Rico's history. The significance of this achievement has yet to be sufficiently appreciated. Puerto Rico should use this authority to conduct a vote on whether the territories should become a State. If the people of Puerto Rico ratify their support for statehood, as I expect they will, it will be incumbent upon Congress to implement that result. This country, which was founded on the principles of equality and justice, must live up to its creed.

May God bless Puerto Rico and the United States of America.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO JOSE ABEYTA

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

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Mr. Jose Abeyta of Montrose, Colorado, who passed away on November 14, 2016. Jose is survived by his wife, Loretta, whom he married 40 years ago, and they have two sons, Lenny and Juan.

Jose was a personal friend of mine and was a beloved member of his community. He served our country proudly during the Vietnam war from 1969 to 1971, as a fixed wing mechanic for the Army's 358th Aviation Detachment. He received an honorable discharge after serving for 2 years. Mr. Abeyta was a hero for the time he spent in the Army, but the life he lived after his service showed us what an honorable man and model citizen he truly was.

Jose married Loretta 1 month after returning home from Vietnam, and they moved to Colorado Springs, where he went to school and earned a degree in sociology at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Mr. Abeyta paid his own way through school. He and Loretta then moved back to Montrose, where he began his career as a probation officer. He later ran suc-

cessfully for the city council in 2006 and served as the mayor of Montrose in 2009.

Mr. Speaker, it was not just his work that defined who Mr. Abeyta was. It was the devotion to serving others. As a husband, a father, a war veteran, a little league coach, and a public servant, he lived a life full of selfless service and stood as an example for all Americans to live by. He started out as the new guy in Montrose, and he ended up serving as the mayor, which speaks volumes about the impact he had on his community.

Mr. Speaker, I am saddened by Jose's passing because he was an irreplaceable figure in Montrose, but I am grateful that I had the opportunity to know him. His family is in my thoughts and prayers, and I hope that the community of Montrose will continue to celebrate his tremendous accomplishments in the weeks and months to come. Jose Abeyta will be missed.

END HUNGER NOW

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, on the Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving, back in Massachusetts, I participated in the seventh annual Monte's March, which is a 43-mile walk to raise awareness about hunger in our community and to raise money for The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

The leader of this remarkable event is Monte Belmonte, a well-known local radio personality with WRSL, the River, and a committed activist on behalf of those who are most vulnerable. This year, the march raised a record \$211,213. This translates into over a half a million meals for individuals and families who struggle with food insecurity. I was impressed by the stamina of all of those who walked and by the incredible generosity of the community.

The sad reality is that there is no congressional district in the United States that is hunger free, and those who battle hunger defy stereotypes. Some are homeless; some are jobless; but there are many who work but who earn so little that they can't afford to put food on the table on a regular basis for their families.

While food banks and food pantries and charitable organizations are vital in our efforts to combat hunger, they cannot do it alone. We need a strong commitment by our government to do its part. Indeed, I would argue that we have fallen way short of doing what is needed to ensure that no one goes hungry. Those whom I marched alongside during Monte's March are good people who understand what it means to truly be part of a community.

I want to thank, first and foremost, the incredible Monte Belmonte and all of the people at the River, including Mark Lattanzi, Joan Holliday, Michael Sokol, Kaliis Smith, Dave Musante,