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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. HARDY).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 15, 2016.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CRESENT HARDY 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 5, 2016, 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, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

NEW MEXICO'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, 3 years ago in my home State of New Mexico, our behavioral health system was thrown into crisis when the State froze payments to 15 New Mexico behavioral health providers, resulting in the eventual closure of some and replacement by 5 Arizona providers.

This transition and turmoil caused many New Mexicans to fall through the

cracks. As a result, too many families are hurting, too many people are suffering, and too many New Mexicans have been unable to access the care they need.

To date, 13 behavioral health providers have been exonerated of fraud, the charges leveled by the State of New Mexico as the reason to cut off funding. But the damage has been done. That is why, along with my colleagues, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM in the House and Senators TOM UDALL and MARTIN HEINRICH, I have called for a Federal investigation into this unwarranted and reckless disruption of services to some of our most vulnerable citizens.

I am also working with the delegation on legislation to prevent something like this from ever happening again. I am working to strengthen a behavioral health system that is currently in shambles through legislation that will provide enhanced funding to States that prioritize behavioral health infrastructure, data, and access. If we want States to build and maintain strong behavioral health systems, then we must provide States with the necessary support.

During our many conversations with CMS on the crisis and its impact on New Mexicans, it has been clear there is a lack of meaningful data that is needed to hold policymakers accountable. It is unacceptable that after months and months of requesting State-provided data on the behavioral health system in New Mexico, CMS would simply determine this data to have "significant limitations."

A report from New Mexico's Legislative Finance Committee identified similar concerns. The report stated that the amount and quality of utilization data collected by the State of New Mexico had "deteriorated, leaving the question of whether enrollees are receiving more or less care."

Without access to meaningful data, we cannot determine how best to in-

vest to strengthen our behavioral health system, and we cannot possibly know if we are doing enough to ensure that the most vulnerable are being protected. What we do know is New Mexico's behavioral health system has been needlessly broken and that a full accounting is necessary to rebuild it and ensure that this will never happen again.

AMERICA MUST LEARN FROM VENEZUELA

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

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, America has led the world culturally, scientifically, militarily, in freedom, and in many other ways, but if America does not stop its overspending and binge borrowing, then we are doomed to follow the footsteps of countries that chose to be financially irresponsible and are condemned to suffer the same dire consequences.

America need not speculate on our fate. Rather, America must learn from bad example countries, such as Venezuela, a socialist country that has already walked the financially irresponsible path America, unfortunately, is on.

Venezuela suffered the world's highest inflation rate, at 275 percent, in 2015. According to the International Monetary Fund, Venezuela's 2016 inflation rate will be 720 percent. Compare that to America, where 3 to 5 percent inflation causes concern.

To put Venezuela's inflation rate in everyday terms, let's apply it to things we buy. If a gallon of milk costs you \$3 today, it will cost you \$21 a year from now. If a pound of ground beef costs you \$4 today, it will cost you \$28 a year from now. A new car that costs you \$25,000 today will cost you \$175,000 a year from now.

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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