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No. 25

House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 15, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable VIRGINIA FOXX to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, 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 each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

ALLOW FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE TO REIGN ONCE AGAIN ON THE ISLAND OF PUERTO RICO

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

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Madam Speaker, this next Sunday, February 19, I will be joining thousands of Puerto Ricans in Old San Juan behind the banners of Casa Pueblo, labor unions, environmental groups, and many other leaders of Puerto Rico's civic society. The people will exercise their democratic right to demand redress from their government. In this particular instance,

they're demanding clear explanations of the many contradictions, misleading statements, and scandals associated with the natural gas project popularly known as Gasoducto and misnamed by the Puerto Rican regime as Via Verde, or the Green Way.

Now, it looks like that regime, which fired tens of thousands of public sector employees alleging that there was no money to pay their salaries, has wasted more than \$50 million on a project that was never needed, was never practical, and was never supported by the public, a project that many think may now be dead. It is also a project with a history of troubling insider deals and suspect relationships.

Madam Speaker, I will proudly march with thousands of people from across the island as we make our opposition to the Gasoducto clear. We will start at the Capitolio—the Capitol Building—in Old San Juan at 10 a.m. and march to the Fortaleza. That's the Governor's mansion.

One of our key messages is to the Federal Government and, specifically, to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I wrote to the Secretary of the Army asking for an investigation of this very cozy relationship between the Jacksonville, Florida, district office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Florida-based consulting company made up mostly of retired Corps of Engineers staffers hired by the Puerto Rican regime in order to advocate for the pipeline.

I'm still waiting for a response to my request; but in the meantime, I ask why does the Corps waste taxpayers' money continuing to evaluate a gas pipeline for which there is no gas? Why are we still considering a costly pipeline instead of a more affordable alternative? Why are we still considering a project that has raised serious objections from the U.S. EPA and the Fish and Wildlife Service and environmental groups across the country? Why are we

still considering a project opposed by no less than 70 percent of the people on the island of Puerto Rico?

The public has turned against the project, its price tag, its danger, and its complete lack of justification. Key decision-makers in the private sector and in the Federal Government and in the Puerto Rican Government, even up to and including the Governor himself, are slowly backpedaling from what has been a headlong rush to build a 92-mile gas pipeline.

Even still, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to consider a permit for reasons that are simply unclear to me and anyone else, except they may wish to continue to do their friends' bidding—yes, their friends that they left behind at the office who soon will leave that Federal Government office to join them in the private sector. Oh, the ways of Washington, D.C.

But the people of Puerto Rico have already declared: permit denied. This coming Sunday in Old San Juan we will stand together, environmental leaders, labor leaders; and we will speak out loud and clear.

Permit to destroy the environment: denied.

Permit to put lives at risk: denied.

Permit to disregard the views and the voices of the people: denied.

Permit to waste money to lavish the friends of the regime with no-bid contracts: denied.

Yes, Madam Speaker, most people in Puerto Rico are convinced that the Gasoducto is dead, but I will be proud to join the voice of the Puerto Rican people next Sunday as we remain vigilant and firm in our opposition to this wasteful, dangerous, and abusive project. Together, we will continue to work to allow fairness and justice to reign once again on the island of Puerto Rico.

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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