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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. FLEISCHMANN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 17, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHARLES J. "CHUCK" FLEISCHMANN 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 6, 2015, 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.

WEST VIRGINIA'S DRUG EPIDEMIC

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOONEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, it has been nearly 4 weeks since President Obama visited my district in Charleston, West Virginia, to discuss the ongoing drug epidemic that is plaguing my State.

West Virginia has the highest overdose rate in the country, with 29 out of every 100,000 people each year dying from drug overdoses. This is an issue that affects all West Virginians.

We all know someone who has been addicted or has been directly affected by drug abuse. Drug addiction knows no boundaries. It affects the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the Black and the White. That is why we have to do everything we can to fight back.

We have to help coordinate efforts on the Federal, State, and local levels. One of the best ways to ensure that we have a cohesive strategy is to work with the HIDTA program, also known as the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

The HIDTA program was created by Congress to provide assistance to Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies operating in areas determined to be high drug-trafficking regions of the United States.

The purpose of the program is to reduce drug trafficking and illegal drug production in the United States by doing the following:

First, facilitating cooperation among Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies to share information and implement coordinated enforcement activities;

Second, enhancing law enforcement intelligence sharing;

Third, providing reliable law enforcement intelligence to law enforcement agencies needed to design effective enforcement strategies and operations;

Fourth, supporting coordinated law enforcement strategies which maximize use of available resources to reduce the supply of illegal drugs in designated areas and in the United States as a whole.

One of the counties in my district, Jefferson County, has recently applied to the HIDTA program. It is imperative that Jefferson County become a designated area.

On August 6, I sent a letter along with my colleagues in West Virginia, Congressman DAVID MCKINLEY and Congressman EVAN JENKINS, to Michael

Botticelli, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, urging him to make Jefferson County a HIDTA area. It is of the utmost importance to include Jefferson County as a Washington-Baltimore HIDTA-designated county to help combat the growing drug epidemic not only in our State, but also in our entire country.

Jefferson County is dangerously close to three major drug markets: Washington, D.C., which is 60 miles away, right here; Baltimore, which is 70 miles away, here; and Philadelphia, which is 171 miles away. Our Interstate Highway System directly links all three areas to Jefferson County, and a traveler can reach both D.C. and Baltimore in a little more than an hour, making it incredibly easy to bring drugs into our community.

There is also a large number of tourists that visit Jefferson County each year. It is estimated that around 4.3 million visitors come to Jefferson County annually to visit a number of tourist attractions, including the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, eight historical homes of President George Washington's family, Charles Town racetrack, Shepherd University, and many others. While Jefferson County greatly benefits from a large number of tourists, it is a growing concern that the ratio of police to visitors is growing too wide.

The most dramatic reason for Jefferson County to become a HIDTA is the high drug use statistics of the eastern panhandle of West Virginia. Cocaine use the past year is 16 percent above the national average, and nonmedical use of pain relievers is 15 percent above the national average. Illicit drug use other than marijuana in the past month is 27 percent above the national average.

It is time to act now before the situation in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia becomes grimmer. Jefferson County needs to be designated as a HIDTA county.

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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