

honor and pleasure of meeting with servicemembers during my Congressional Delegations abroad. I am always moved by their professionalism, courage, and most especially, their dedication to their families, fellow service members, and country. This Moment of Silence legislation will send a powerful message of appreciation to our veterans for all that they do on behalf of our nation.

I would like to express my thanks to the leadership of the Veterans Affairs Committee, as well as to the bipartisan group of cosponsors who were steadfast in their support of H.R. 995. I am grateful to Senators KIRK and DURBIN for their leadership and stewardship of this initiative on the Senate side. I also wish to thank Daniel and Michael Bendetson, along with their father, Dr. Peter Bendetson, who first approached me with the concept of this tribute and have worked tirelessly for years to bring this proposal to fruition. Finally, I would like to thank all the veterans in the Eighth District of Massachusetts and across America, in whose honor I am proud to have introduced and supported the Veterans Day Moment of Silence Act.

The bill was ordered to be read a third time, was read the third time, and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on S. 1004.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

EXPRESSING PROFOUND CONCERN ABOUT THE ONGOING POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN VENEZUELA

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Affairs be discharged from further consideration of the resolution (H. Res. 851) expressing profound concern about the ongoing political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, urging the release of political prisoners, and calling for respect of constitutional and democratic processes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, although I do not intend to object, I am proud to be the sponsor of H. Res. 851, which expresses profound concern about the shameful and rampant corruption of President Maduro's government and the plight of the Venezuelan people.

The Maduro regime's efforts to silence political opposition leaders, including by jailing Leopoldo Lopez and Daniel de Ceballos, are unconscionable.

And just last week, the National Electoral Council announced an outrageously high barrier to the referendum on his government that millions of Venezuelans are demanding.

His flagrant misconduct has brought a series of devastating crises to Venezuela. Families all across the country are starving. Their local store shelves are barren, many of them empty of both food and lifesaving medicine.

And Maduro still refuses to listen to the will of his people. They are crying out for their voices to be heard and their rights respected, and we must ensure they are not crying out in vain.

I am proud to cosponsor this legislation with my colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The reservation is withdrawn.

Is there further objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN)?

There was no objection.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 851

Whereas the deterioration of basic governance and the economic crisis in Venezuela have reached deeply troubling levels, which in turn have led to an unprecedented humanitarian situation in Venezuela where millions of people are suffering from severe shortages of essential medicines and basic food products;

Whereas Venezuela lacks more than 80 percent of the basic medical supplies and equipment needed to treat its population, including medicine to treat chronic illnesses and cancer as well as basic antibiotics, and 85 percent of pharmacies are at risk of bankruptcy, according to the Venezuelan Pharmaceutical Federation;

Whereas, despite the massive shortages of basic foodstuffs and essential medicines, President of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro has rejected repeated requests from the majority of members of the National Assembly and civil society organizations to bring humanitarian aid into the country;

Whereas the International Monetary Fund assesses that, in Venezuela, inflation reached 275 percent and the gross domestic product contracted 5.7 percent in 2015, and further projects that inflation will reach 720 percent and the gross domestic product will contract an additional 8 percent in 2016;

Whereas Venezuela's political, economic, and humanitarian crisis is fueling social tensions that are resulting in growing incidents of public unrest, looting, and violence among citizens;

Whereas these social distortions are taking place amidst an alarming climate of violence as Caracas continues to have the highest per capita homicide rate in the world at 120 per 100,000 citizens, according to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime;

Whereas the deterioration of governance in Venezuela has been exacerbated by widespread public corruption and the involvement of public officials in illicit narcotics trafficking and related money laundering, which has led to indictments by the United States Department of Justice and ongoing investigations by the United States Department of the Treasury and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration;

Whereas domestic and international human rights groups recognize more than 85

political prisoners in Venezuela, including opposition leader and former Chacao mayor Leopoldo Lopez, Judge Maria Lourdes Afiuni, Caracas Mayor Antonio Ledezma, former Zulia governor Manuel Rosales, and former San Cristobal mayor Daniel Ceballos;

Whereas, in December 2015, the people of Venezuela elected the opposition coalition (Mesa de Unidad Democrática) to a two-thirds majority in the unicameral National Assembly, with 112 out of the 167 seats compared with 55 seats for the government's Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela party;

Whereas, in late December 2015, the outgoing National Assembly increased the number of seats in the Supreme Court of Venezuela and confirmed magistrates politically aligned with the Maduro Administration and, thereafter, the expanded Supreme Court has blocked four legislators, including 3 opposition legislators, from taking office;

Whereas, during the first 6 months of the new legislature, the Supreme Court has repeatedly issued politically motivated judgments to overturn legislation passed by the democratically elected National Assembly and block internal legislative procedures;

Whereas, in 2016, President Maduro has utilized emergency and legislative decree powers to bypass the National Assembly, which, alongside the actions of the Supreme Court, have severely undermined the principles of separation of powers in Venezuela;

Whereas, in May 2016, Organization of American States Secretary General Luis Almagro presented a 132-page report outlining grave alterations of the democratic order in Venezuela and invoked Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which calls on the OAS Permanent Council "to undertake a collective assessment of the situation";

Whereas, in June 2016, at a joint press conference with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada and President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico, President Barack Obama stated, "Given the very serious situation in Venezuela and the worsening plight of the Venezuelan people, together we're calling on the government and opposition to engage in meaningful dialogue and urge the Venezuelan government to respect the rule of law and the authority of the National Assembly"; and

Whereas, at the joint press conference with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Peña Nieto, President Barack Obama continued, "Political prisoners should be released. The democratic process should be respected and that includes legitimate efforts to pursue a recall referendum consistent with Venezuelan law."; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its profound concern about widespread shortages of essential medicines and basic food products faced by the people of Venezuela, and urges President Maduro to permit the delivery of humanitarian assistance;

(2) calls on the Government of Venezuela to immediately release all political prisoners, to provide protections for freedom of expression and assembly, and to respect internationally recognized human rights;

(3) supports meaningful efforts towards a dialogue that leads to respect for Venezuela's constitutional mechanisms and resolves the country's political, economic, social, and humanitarian crisis;

(4) affirms its support for OAS Secretary General Almagro's invocation of Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and urges the OAS Permanent Council, which represents all of the organization's member states, to undertake a collective assessment of the constitutional and democratic order in Venezuela;

(5) expresses its great concern over the Venezuelan executive's lack of respect for the principle of separation of powers, its overreliance on emergency decree powers, and its subjugation of judicial independence;

(6) calls on the Government of Venezuela and security forces to respect the Constitution of Venezuela, including constitutional provisions that provide Venezuelan citizens with the right to peacefully pursue a fair and timely recall referendum for their President this year if they so choose;

(7) stresses the urgency of strengthening the rule of law and increasing efforts to combat impunity and public corruption in Venezuela, which has bankrupted a resource-rich country, fuels rising social tensions, and contributes to elevated levels of crime and violence; and

(8) urges the President of the United States to provide full support for OAS efforts in favor of constitutional and democratic solutions to the political impasse, and to instruct appropriate Federal agencies to hold officials of the Government of Venezuela accountable for violations of United States law and abuses of internationally recognized human rights.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MS. ROS-LEHTINEN

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have an amendment to the text of the resolution at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Strike all after the resolving clause and insert the following:

That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its profound concern about widespread shortages of essential medicines and basic food products faced by the people of Venezuela, and urges President Maduro to permit the delivery of humanitarian assistance;

(2) calls on the Government of Venezuela to immediately release all political prisoners, including United States citizens, to provide protections for freedom of expression and assembly, and to respect internationally recognized human rights;

(3) supports meaningful efforts towards a dialogue that leads to respect for Venezuela's constitutional mechanisms and resolves the country's political, economic, social, and humanitarian crisis;

(4) affirms its support for OAS Secretary General Almagro's invocation of Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and urges the OAS Permanent Council, which represents all of the organization's member states, to undertake a collective assessment of the constitutional and democratic order in Venezuela;

(5) expresses its great concern over the Venezuelan executive's lack of respect for the principle of separation of powers, its overreliance on emergency decree powers, and its threat to judicial independence;

(6) calls on the Government of Venezuela and security forces to respect the Constitution of Venezuela, including constitutional provisions that provide Venezuelan citizens with the right to peacefully pursue a fair and timely recall referendum for their President this year;

(7) stresses the urgency of strengthening the rule of law and increasing efforts to combat impunity and public corruption in Venezuela, which has bankrupted a resource-rich country, fuels rising social tensions, and contributes to elevated levels of crime and violence;

(8) urges the President of the United States to provide full support for OAS efforts in favor of constitutional and democratic solutions to the political impasse, and to in-

struct appropriate Federal agencies to hold officials of the Government of Venezuela accountable for violations of United States law and abuses of internationally recognized human rights; and

(9) urges the President to continue to stand in solidarity with the Venezuelan people by urging the Maduro government to—

(A) hold a fair and free recall referendum by the end of this calendar year;

(B) release all political prisoners, including United States citizens, from prison;

(C) adhere to democratic principles; and

(D) permit the delivery of emergency food and medicine.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

The amendment was agreed to.

The resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

AMENDMENT TO THE PREAMBLE OFFERED BY MS. ROS-LEHTINEN

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have an amendment to the preamble at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Strike the preamble and insert the following:

Whereas the deterioration of basic governance and the economic crisis in Venezuela have reached deeply troubling levels, which in turn have led to an unprecedented humanitarian situation in Venezuela where millions of people are suffering from severe shortages of essential medicines and basic food products;

Whereas Venezuela lacks more than 80 percent of the basic medical supplies and equipment needed to treat its population, including medicine to treat chronic illnesses and cancer as well as basic antibiotics, and 85 percent of pharmacies are at risk of bankruptcy, according to the Venezuelan Pharmaceutical Federation;

Whereas, despite the massive shortages of basic foodstuffs and essential medicines, President of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro has rejected repeated requests from the majority of members of the National Assembly and civil society organizations to bring humanitarian aid into the country;

Whereas the International Monetary Fund assesses that, in Venezuela, inflation reached 275 percent and the gross domestic product contracted 5.7 percent in 2015, and further projects that inflation will reach 720 percent and the gross domestic product will contract an additional 8 percent in 2016;

Whereas Venezuela's political, economic, and humanitarian crisis is fueling social tensions that are resulting in growing incidents of public unrest, looting, and violence among citizens;

Whereas these social distortions are taking place amidst an alarming climate of violence as Caracas continues to have the highest per capita homicide rate in the world at 120 per 100,000 citizens, according to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime;

Whereas the deterioration of governance in Venezuela has been exacerbated by widespread public corruption and the involvement of public officials in illicit narcotics trafficking and related money laundering, which has led to indictments by the United States Department of Justice and ongoing investigations by the United States Department of the Treasury and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration;

Whereas domestic and international human rights groups recognize more than 85 political prisoners in Venezuela, including United States citizens Francisco Márquez and Josh Holt, opposition leader and former Chacao mayor Leopoldo Lopez, Judge Maria Lourdes Afuni, Caracas Mayor Antonio Ledezma, former Zulia governor Manuel Rosales, and former San Cristobal mayor Daniel Ceballos;

Whereas, in December 2015, the people of Venezuela elected the opposition coalition (Mesa de Unidad Democrática) to a two-thirds majority in the unicameral National Assembly, with 112 out of the 167 seats compared with 55 seats for the government's Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela party;

Whereas, in late December 2015, the outgoing National Assembly increased the number of seats in the Supreme Court of Venezuela and confirmed magistrates with the Maduro Administration and, thereafter, the expanded Supreme Court has blocked four legislators, including 3 opposition legislators, from taking office;

Whereas the Supreme Court has repeatedly issued politically motivated judgments to overturn legislation passed by the democratically elected National Assembly and block internal legislative procedures;

Whereas, in 2016, President Maduro has utilized emergency and legislative decree powers to bypass the National Assembly, which, alongside the actions of the Supreme Court, have severely undermined the principles of separation of powers in Venezuela;

Whereas democracy is failing in Venezuela, the Maduro government controls the presidency, a majority of the municipalities, the Supreme Court, the military leadership, the state-owned oil company (PDVSA) leadership, and most of the media;

Whereas the former Presidents of Spain, Panama, and the Dominican Republic have pursued dialogue between President Maduro and the National Assembly;

Whereas, in May 2016, Organization of American States Secretary General Luis Almagro presented a 132-page report outlining grave alterations of the democratic order in Venezuela and invoked Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which calls on the OAS Permanent Council "to undertake a collective assessment of the situation";

Whereas the countries of Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, United States, and Uruguay called on the Venezuelan Government in June 2016 to "guarantee the exercise of the constitutional rights of the Venezuelan people and that the remaining steps for the realization of the Presidential Recall Referendum be pursued clearly, concretely and without delay";

Whereas, in June 2016, at a joint press conference with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada and President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico, President Barack Obama stated, "Given the very serious situation in Venezuela and the worsening plight of the Venezuelan people, together we're calling on the government and opposition to engage in meaningful dialogue and urge the Venezuelan government to respect the rule of law and the authority of the National Assembly."; and

Whereas, at the joint press conference with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Peña Nieto, President Barack Obama continued, "Political prisoners should be released. The democratic process should be respected and that includes legitimate efforts to pursue a recall referendum consistent with Venezuelan law.": Now, therefore, be it

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

The amendment to the preamble was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

TREATMENT OF CERTAIN PAYMENTS IN EUGENICS COMPENSATION ACT

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 1698) to exclude payments from State eugenics compensation programs from consideration in determining eligibility for, or the amount of, Federal public benefits.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1698

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Treatment of Certain Payments in Eugenics Compensation Act".

SEC. 2. EXCLUSION OF PAYMENTS FROM STATE EUGENICS COMPENSATION PROGRAMS FROM CONSIDERATION IN DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR, OR THE AMOUNT OF, FEDERAL PUBLIC BENEFITS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, payments made under a State eugenics compensation program shall not be considered as income or resources in determining eligibility for, or the amount of, any Federal public benefit.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section:

(1) FEDERAL PUBLIC BENEFIT.—The term "Federal public benefit" means—

(A) any grant, contract, loan, professional license, or commercial license provided by an agency of the United States or by appropriated funds of the United States; and

(B) any retirement, welfare, health, disability, public or assisted housing, postsecondary education, food assistance, unemployment benefit, or any other similar benefit for which payments or assistance are provided to an individual, household, or family eligibility unit by an agency of the United States or by appropriated funds of the United States.

(2) STATE EUGENICS COMPENSATION PROGRAM.—The term "State eugenics compensation program" means a program established by State law that is intended to compensate individuals who were sterilized under the authority of the State.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) and the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of S. 1698, the Treatment of Certain Payments in Eugenics Compensation Act, introduced by my friend and colleague, Senator THOM TILLIS of North Carolina. Senator BURR and Senator TILLIS have been very active in getting this bill passed through the United States Senate.

Mr. Speaker, S. 1698 is a bipartisan bill that will help victims of State government eugenics campaigns by excluding one-time, eugenics-related, compensation payments from consideration when calculating Federal benefits. In essence, this would ensure that the victims of State-based and State-mandated eugenics programs in the early part of the 20th century—which over 30 States actually had—are not further victimized by being kicked off the social safety net, which many of these victims who are still alive depend on.

Many of these victims are still alive today, as I mentioned. In North Carolina, at least, 220 out of the reported 7,600 victims were still living as of September of last year.

My home State has worked to make amends for those that the State victimized. Our State legislators, now led by Senator TILLIS passed—and the Governor signed—legislation that provided large, one-time compensation payments to victims of eugenics programs that are still alive and still in our society today.

In North Carolina, victims can receive payments from the State government ranging from \$20- to \$45,000. Our State is not alone. Virginia has a similar program, awarding \$25,000 in compensation to each victim of the State's eugenics programs.

These one-time compensation payments count as normal gross income under current Federal law and could have the unintended effect of increasing some of the victim's reported income, thereby costing them access to some Federal income-based benefits.

Mr. Speaker, such an outcome is unfair. These individuals have suffered great pain at the hands of their State government and must not be further victimized by losing the important benefits they are receiving today.

The takeaway is that this was a State-created problem and the State owed them compensation, and we should ensure that these individuals are able to get the benefits they need and deserve.

Mr. Speaker, this is important legislation that is bipartisan. I am happy to have the support of my colleague, Representative BUTTERFIELD, a Democrat from North Carolina, representing eastern North Carolina as a cosponsor of this important bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 1698, the Treatment of Certain Payments in Eugenics Compensation Act.

In the early 20th century, over 30 States enacted eugenics and compulsory sterilization laws, resulting in the involuntary sterilization of over 60,000 Americans. These horrendous and discriminatory laws targeted low-income individuals, particularly single mothers, African Americans, children from large families, and people with disabilities.

Recently, two States with the most aggressive eugenics programs, Virginia and North Carolina, passed State legislation to provide compensation to the living victims of these programs. In 2013, North Carolina set aside \$10 million for compensation payments; and, as of January 2015, the State had awarded approximately \$20,000 to each of the 220 victims. Last year, Virginia passed a bill awarding \$25,000 to each of its surviving eugenics victims.

While these payments are intended to compensate individuals for past wrongs, they may also have the unintended effect of causing victims to lose eligibility for Federal benefits determined by income thresholds. Under current law, victims who receive eugenics compensation could be denied Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, unemployment, or disability benefits should the payments raise their incomes above program eligibility levels.

Most eugenics victims were poor and disadvantaged in the early 20th century, and many remain so today. As such, they rely on these important Federal benefits programs to make ends meet.

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S. 1698 would ensure that State eugenics payments are treated like other medical compensation payments and not included in eligibility determination for Federal benefits. This would guarantee that eugenics victims receive all benefits they rightfully deserve.

We cannot undo the mistakes of the past, but we can do everything in our power to ensure that eugenics victims are not subjected to unfair treatment yet again. I urge my colleagues to support S. 1698.