last week, House Speaker JOHN BOEHNER told POLITICO that Republicans will hold the House for the next decade thanks to the once-in-a-decade redistricting process that has made the GOP's hold on the majority ''iron-clad.''

I don't know about you, but I don't think the American public wants elections to be pre-cooked, a decade at a time. Politicians should not be allowed to achieve through the redistricting process what they can't accomplish at the ballot box. And regardless of whether the Speaker is right or not, the optics are disheartening and more than enough to further depress voter turnout.

Outside the beltway, there is very little that separates the average person in their political beliefs. But when you have a redistricting system where incumbents don't feel accountable in general elections, but fear attack in the primary, politicians are forced further and further to the left or right, ultimately skewing the membership of Congress. This is a system that rewards ideological extremes, punishes those who have nuanced or moderate positions, and closes the door on compromise before anyone even gets to Washington.

Even though elections are just around the corner, only 22 states have approved final district maps, leaving voters uncertain about who their candidate will be and furthering the already substantial incumbent advantage. There is hope, however, in states that have adopted independent redistricting commissions. All but one of these 13 states have already finalized their Congressional districts, making up a majority of the national total, and representing a small fraction—two of the 11 states—that are duking it out in court.

Redistricting reform isn't a Democrat or Republican idea. Indeed, it's bipartisan as seen in California and Florida where in 2010, both states—California controlled by Democrats in both chambers, and Florida controlled by Republicans in both chambers—enacted bipartisan redistricting reform.

While reform is slowly taking hold, the process remains woefully inadequate and subject to political abuse. The temptation to place partisan objectives above the public interest is just too enticing.

To make Congress more representative, all districts in all states should follow the same balanced metrics and criteria for redistricting, instead of the corrupt system we have today that's makes some states less fair and representative than others. That is why I have introduced legislation that would create the National Commission for Independent Redistricting.

The Commission would be composed of respected leaders with a proven commitment to public service and strengthening our future, such as ex-Presidents, retired Federal justices, previous congressional leaders, and electoral experts from academia. The Commission would oversee an independent, professional agency, tasked with establishing uniform criteria and congressional district lines for each State that respects the communities of interest, and geographic, ethnic, cultural, and historic boundaries, rather than just partisan affiliation.

The Commission would also inject greater transparency and accountability into the process by requiring robust public consultation and commentary that must be taken into account, and a website where all maps, hearings, votes with concurring and dissenting opinions, and materials would be made public in a timely fashion.

Congress would then approve or disapprove of the proposal put forward by the Commission with a simple up-or-down vote, free from procedural gridlock.

Congress should enact this legislation now, well before the next census in 2020. With six elections and nearly a decade standing between current politicians and the next Census, now is the time to reform our redistricting process and act in a way that reflects broad public interests rather than narrow and immediate partisanship.

Meaningful political reform is seldom easy and it takes time. Instead of each state passing their own version of what might as well be called ''The Incumbent Protection Act'' every 10 years, I am hopeful that there will be careful consideration of this proposal as a way to make the House of Representatives fairer, more representative, and more effective for this new century.

RECOGNIZING ALEX LESSER, SAM DIXON, AND JOSH FIXLER

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 31, 2012

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I have the good fortune of representing many bright and promising young people. When they speak selflessly about the need to help those less fortunate and recognize that the federal government has a responsibility to address this need, it renews my hope for a better future.

Yesterday was one such occasion. A young man, Alex Lesser, accompanied by Josh Fixler, Assistant Educator and Youth Director of the Temple B'Nai Shalom Congregation, came to my office on behalf of the Religious Action Center and the Union for Reform Judaism. Alex presented my office with a paper he and his friend, Sam Dixon, wrote jointly on the topic of economic justice and the importance of extending unemployment benefits. Alex's and Sam's eloquent words of reason deserve to be heard by my colleagues. I ask that they be submitted in today's CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Hello, I am Alex Lesser, and I am Sam Dixon, here on behalf of the Religious Action Center and the Union for Reform Judaism. We come from Temple B'nai Shalom in Fairfax Station, and we are here to talk to you about unemployment insurance. The economy is still recovering from the economic downturn of 2008. Since the recession started, a total of approximately 8.8 million jobs have been lost. Despite the fact that 2.7 million jobs have been recovered, 6.1 million workers have not gotten jobs back. The economy is still not in a good situation. The group that is struggling the most is the unemployed. And this group is not small: the national rate is still at 8.5%. Many of these people are food insecure. Being food insecure means a family or individual does not have the physical, economic, and social access to safe and nutritious food and drink. This is an important problem that YOU can help fix.

As a country that is currently in an economic crisis, it is not only our duty-but our responsibility to ensure that all citizens, regardless of economic status, are not at an unfair disadvantage to one another. However, this does not always seem to be the case in this nation. We have unfortunately seen a significant increase in poverty and unemployment over the past few years, with 3.2 million impoverished Americans in 2009, and 3.3 million in 2010. With unemployment insurance, not only will these unemployed individuals be supported and sustained, but our country as a whole will also benefit. A recent estimate from the Congressional Budget Office concluded that for every $1.00 that the government invests in unemployment benefits, approximately $1.90 will be added to the U.S. Economy. It seems to me that not only is this an important step in combating poverty for Americans, but also a necessary step to get the nation's economy back on track.

We are here today because Judaism teaches us that this is a vitally important issue. God commands us in the book of Deuteronomy that ''if there is a needy person among you . . . do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your kin. Rather, you must open your hand and lend whatever is sufficient'' (Deuteronomy 15:7–11). It teaches us that providing for the needy is not just a matter of charity, but an obligation. Judaism also teaches that the highest form of tzedakah, the Jewish value of charity, is to help a person achieve self-sufficiency. Unemployment insurance is that exact type of support that the homeless need to help them get back on their feet. I think that we can all agree that poverty is one of the worst fates imaginable. It is one of the most terrible sufferings. The Union for Reform Judaism has consistently fought against attempts to weaken the social safety net. This is clearly a moral choice as well as a political one.

This past Friday night, we attended a presentation from the National Coalition for the Homeless, which struck a very resonant chord in our hearts, all because of one man's story. Steve, a native Washingtonian and former homeless man, told us about how he was involved with drugs from a very early age. As a result of this drug abuse, he lost several high-paying jobs and his home. Steve mentioned that when he was at his lowest point, someone offered to help him in his path to sobriety, and he finally got his life together. After getting back on his feet, he is now in danger of going back on the streets due to a debilitating and degenerative disorder. His story reminded us that this is an extremely important issue because he was a prime example of a good person whose bad decisions impacted the rest of his life, making it hard for him to avoid homelessness. This reminds us that even when it seems as though someone has hit rock-bottom, the right help can put them back on the path to success. Part of the reason that this resonates with me is that we want to make sure that if our friends and family, as well as those who we will never meet, will not fall too far if they fall through the cracks.

Clearly, this is an important and timely issue that must be addressed. Extending unemployment benefits and insurance will not only help struggling Americans survive this economic downturn, but will also help the economy grow. We urge Representative Moran to support legislation that would extend unemployment insurance for a year.

JIM BARNETTE

HON. FRED UPTON

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 31, 2012

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, today I bid farewell and best wishes to Jim Barnette, the incomparable Energy and Commerce Committee General Counsel.

When I became Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, everyone told me I needed someone like Jim Barnette to serve as General Counsel. He served under three Chairmen before me and, though he was no longer in government service, his legacy of jurisdictional tenacity and seemingly limitless institutional knowledge remained.

Not content with a mere likeness, I informed Jim I was revoking his leave of absence and he was to report for duty promptly. Much to my delight, like any true public servant, he obliged.

As a veteran of the procedural, political, and policy battlefield, there was no one better suited to take the reins as General Counsel for the Committee when I began my tenure as Chairman at the outset of the 112th Congress.

Jim styles himself a country lawyer, but he brings a level of experience and wisdom to our Committee that is quite simply unmatched on Capitol Hill. He helped assemble and mentor the strongest team on Capitol Hill, building a backbone for our Committee staff that will stand the test of time.

He is a General Counsel in the fullest sense of the title: a faithful counselor to Members and staff and a forceful advocate for the issues before the Committee.

He has been a trusted partner, an expert negotiator, a skilled tactician, and a true friend. I wish Jim and his wife Chelo well, extending my sincere thanks for the year they set aside that allowed me to bring Jim back to the Committee. As we say at the Energy and Commerce Committee, Jim is the best.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE RETIREMENT OF MR. JACK CLINE

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 31, 2012

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a constituent of mine, Mr. Jack Cline, who retires from the Anniston Army Depot in April.

Jack Cline is a native of Anniston, Alabama. Upon his honorable discharge from the United States Navy in 1979, he came to work at Anniston Army Depot March 1981.

Jack began his career at the depot as an Electronics Worker in the Missile Guidance Branch, Directorate of Maintenance. He also worked in Directorate of Mission Plans and Operations as a Planner. In 1991, he became the Division Chief for Weapon Systems. In 1996, he became the Deputy Director for Production, and in 1999 served as the Division Chief for Tracked Systems. In 2001, he was promoted to Director of Production and Jack currently serves today as the Deputy to the Commander.

Among many educational and professional accomplishments, Mr. Cline attended Army Management Staff College in Fort Belvoir, VA; and the Depot and Arsenal Executive Leadership Program at UNC, Chapel Hill.

Married to the former Jeni Guthrie of Oxford, Alabama, Jack has one daughter Beth Williams, a teacher, married to Brad who serves as a Youth Minister. They have one granddaughter Savannah. Jack also has one step-son, Matthew, who is a Chemical Engineer. Jack and Jeni are active members of the Harvest Church of God in Anniston.

We congratulate Jack on his retirement today and thank him for his steadfast and dedicated service to our nation. On behalf of everyone at Anniston Army Depot, we wish him the best.

CONGRATULATIONS TO CARMELL F. ANDERSON FOR HER YEARS OF SERVICE

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 31, 2012

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in congratulating Carmell F. Anderson on her retirement from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Carmell F. Anderson was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1944 and resided most of her life in Bay City, Michigan. She was a 1962 graduate of T. L. Handy High School, and after attending Delta College, and later Northern Michigan University, she earned her Bachelor and Master's degrees in secondary education. In 1984, Carmell earned her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in Adult Education and Labor Studies.

Along the way, Carmell taught driver's education and business classes for the Bay City Public Schools, worked at General Motors Saginaw Steering Gear, and the University of Missouri—Kansas City. In 1988, Carmell moved to Washington D.C. where she worked for the AFL–CIO—Human Resources Development, Inc. (H.R.D.I.) at the George Meany Center in Silver Spring, Maryland, followed by a position as Executive Assistant to Congressman Bob Traxler.

In 1991, she accepted a position as a researcher with the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington D.C. While working at the U.S. Department of Labor—Employment and Training Administration, Carmell and her husband, Jim Hoppenjan, volunteered during the first administration of the Clinton White House serving in the Correspondence Office, Personnel, and the NAFTA War Room. In 1994 she transferred to the Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship in Detroit, Michigan. Carmell retired from the U.S. Department of Labor in 2012 after 21 years' service.

Mr. Speaker I would like to congratulate Carmell F. Anderson on her retirement. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated public servant in the U.S. Department of Labor and I wish her well in her future endeavors.