

to extend the payroll tax holiday will raise taxes on millions of Americans, taking over \$120 billion out of the pockets of consumers and out of the economy.

Furthermore, at the same time the majority is working to raise taxes on the middle class, they are willing to cut off the unemployment insurance that has been keeping millions of Americans afloat.

Madam Speaker, let's ensure that millions of Americans enjoy this holiday season and are not forced to worry about raising taxes or losing essential assistance.

UNEMPLOYMENT HAS NOT BEEN THIS PERSISTENT SINCE 1948

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, last Friday the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics announced November's unemployment rate remained above 8 percent. Over 13 million American families are now without jobs. Nearly 25 million people are looking for full-time employment. The number of unemployed Americans has not consistently remained at such a high percentage since 1948.

For the past 34 months, the American people have been depending upon Congress and the President to cut Washington's wasteful spending and enact policies targeting job creation and economic growth.

Since the Republicans regained the majority of the House in January, legislation has passed that allows small businesses to grow and create jobs. It is past time for the President and liberal-controlled Senate to change course to put our hardworking American families back to work.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism, as on December the 7th we honor the heroes of World War II.

BEYOND THE BORDER AGREEMENT

(Mr. HIGGINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, today the United States and Canadian Governments will announce a Beyond the Border agreement to ease border trade and travel in this era of heightened security.

I support this goal because in western New York our future depends on integrating our economy with the booming economy of southern Ontario by expanding the Bridge Peace that connects our two communities. The Peace Bridge is the busiest passenger crossing at the northern border. Passengers using the bridge spend \$133 million in western New York annually in support of our retailers, sports franchises, air-

ports, educational and cultural institutions.

In western New York, Peace Bridge trade impacts \$9.1 billion in business sales, supporting 60,000 local jobs and generating \$2.6 billion in household income and \$233 million in local tax revenue. All of this economic activity depends on a Peace Bridge that is free of congestion, one that is safe, reliable, and predictable.

I applaud the efforts of this agreement and call on a renewed Federal focus on the northern border, generally, and the Peace Bridge, specifically.

MEDICARE PHYSICIAN PAYMENT SYSTEM

(Mr. FITZPATRICK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Madam Speaker, for decades the fundamentally flawed Medicare physician payment system has created uncertainty and instability, not only in the health care system but in the larger economy.

Every year physicians face the threat of reimbursement cuts which, in turn, hinders their ability to provide the necessary care that patients need. The Sustainable Growth Rate rate formula has constantly called for negative updates to physician payments with the scheduled reductions accumulating year after year, but Congress has continually delayed the cuts.

Congress has a historic opportunity to implement sound fiscal policy in the Medicare program in the context of broad economic reforms. I believe we must pursue a fair, efficient, and affordable long-term solution to the Medicare SGR formula. I am committed to working with my colleagues to pass commonsense legislation that promotes efficiency, quality, and value and ensures access to medical services for Medicare beneficiaries.

MEDICARE TOWN HALL/DOUGHNUT HOLE CLOSURE

(Ms. HOCHUL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. HOCHUL. Madam Speaker, yesterday I spoke with over 8,000 of my constituents during a telephone town hall to talk about the end of the open enrollment period for Medicare, which occurs at midnight tonight.

We also talked about the savings they are now receiving as a result of the closing of the legendary prescription drug doughnut hole. More than 2.5 million Medicare recipients across the Nation have saved \$1.5 billion on their prescription drugs this year alone. In New York, we had 175,000 Medicare recipients, and they received a 50 percent discount on prescription drugs, totaling over \$113 million in savings, an average of \$650 per family.

Yesterday's call was a reminder, when I was talking about Bill from

Williamsville and Joan from Livingston County, that we have to work hard to protect this absolutely critical program that ensures medical care for our seniors and allows them to live their later years in dignity.

As my seniors told me: Medicare is not an entitlement; it is a program we spent our entire lives paying into. And I, for one, plan to protect it.

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CONGRATULATING ED SNIDER

(Mr. MEEHAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MEEHAN. Madam Speaker, I rise to congratulate Ed Snider, the owner of the Philadelphia Flyers hockey club, on being inducted into the United States Hockey Hall of Fame. This is a special occasion, not only for the city of Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley as a whole, but particularly for those who love the game of hockey, myself included.

Ed's tremendous success with the Flyers franchise—winning two Stanley Cups and reaching the finals six times—contributed to making Philadelphia a Class A hockey town. However, the key is that he has really given back to communities.

Through his organization, the Ed Snider Youth Hockey Foundation, he teaches high-risk inner city boys and girls from Philadelphia the game of hockey. But it prepares them with life skills for success in school and life as well. Hard work, honest effort, teamwork, dedication, and a solid work ethic are instilled in these children as life lessons and values as part of participation in this program. It is through these lessons that his organization helps our children become good and productive citizens. His philanthropic cause is significant to our region and to these young children in our area.

Congratulations to Ed Snider on this recognition.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join thousands of activists participating in the 16 Days Campaign by speaking out against violence against women.

Violence against women is a violation of fundamental human rights. It is a global problem of epidemic proportions. One in three women worldwide is beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused over the course of her lifetime.

That is why I am proud to be working with Congressman TED POE to reintroduce the International Violence Against Women Act. The important bill would require a comprehensive strategy to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls internationally.