

point in the future when the Speaker is able to twist enough arms to pass the other pieces.

An obvious question to ask about H.R. 3408 is: what does it have to do with transportation? Not much. Although this bill is a grab bag of goodies for the oil and gas industry, it will do virtually nothing to repair our crumbling roads and bridges.

The legislation requires drilling off the coast of Southern California and overrides current law to forbid the State of California from having any input into where, when, and how the drilling will occur. So much for states' rights. In their drive to hand out drilling leases to oil companies, Republicans are preventing my constituents in California from having any say on an issue that could have profound consequences on our state's economy and environment.

In the unlikely event that this bill becomes law, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would be opened to oil drilling and the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline will be approved despite the fact that the President found the pipeline is not in the national interest. This legislation also mandates oil shale production on millions of acres of taxpayer owned lands in the West without environmental review. Producing oil from oil shale is an unproven process that requires massive amounts of water and energy and produces equally massive amounts of waste. That's why the Obama Administration continues to study the process and conduct research and development on the feasibility of oil shale extraction prior to opening up federal lands. Instead of following this reasonable approach, Republicans are ignoring science and pushing ahead.

Republican leaders claim that all of this new drilling might raise some money in the future that can then pay for transportation projects. Instead of relying on fictional revenues, we could simply end the \$4 billion in yearly tax subsidies that the big oil companies enjoy. These companies raked in \$137 billion in profits last year, yet taxpayers are still forced to subsidize them. Let's end those handouts to pay for transportation projects not provide yet more giveaways to the oil industry.

I urge all my colleagues to vote against this dirty energy bill.

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CONGRATULATING NORTHEAST  
IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**HON. BRUCE L. BRALEY**

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 16, 2012*

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Northeastern Iowa Community College (NICC) in my district. NICC was recently named one of the top ten community colleges in the country by the Aspen Institute. This recognition is a high honor and speaks well to the education service that NICC provides in Northeast Iowa.

NICC's success stems from the wide array of education opportunities that are offered by the school. The school does an incredible job with identifying the career goals of each of their students. Many of their students will receive a degree then transfer to a four-year college or university, while others will enter the workforce after graduation. NICC offers degree programs in nursing and other technical

education programs. The school has also done a tremendous job of offering job-relevant degrees and certificate programs. NICC partners with local businesses to determine what jobs need to be filled. The school then offers certificate programs for the jobs that have the most demand, such as welding. This approach has been a tremendous success that has put many people back to work in Northeast Iowa.

In selecting their top ten finalists, the Aspen Institute looked for community colleges that were meeting the demands of today's workforce while educating and graduating their students in a timely fashion. NICC easily met these criteria. The Aspen Institute, a non-partisan think tank, is highly regarded as a national leader in identifying successful education models around the country and the world.

NICC has and will continue to provide valuable education opportunities for my constituents in Northeast Iowa. I'm proud to have NICC in my district and congratulate them on this important achievement.

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OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL  
DEBT

**HON. MIKE COFFMAN**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 16, 2012*

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, on January 26, 1995, when the last attempt at a balanced budget amendment passed the House by a bipartisan vote of 300-132, the national debt was \$4,801,405,175,294.28.

Today, it is \$15,391,735,627,010.18. We've added \$10,590,330,451,715.90 dollars to our debt in 16 years. This is \$10 trillion in debt our Nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

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INTRODUCTION OF THE GUNS-  
FREE NATIONAL PARKS ACT OF  
2012

**HON. JIM McDERMOTT**

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 16, 2012*

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a firearms bill that will restore a common-sense rule in our national parks. Hundreds of millions of people from across the country and abroad have visited our world-famous national parks. Before 2009, visitors could enjoy our national parks knowing that they were free of loaded guns, thanks to a common-sense policy providing that guns were not to be brought into national parks unless they were unloaded and safely stored.

In fact, this common-sense regulation was enacted by the Reagan Administration. But in 2009, Congress passed the Coburn Amendment, allowing people to carry concealed loaded weapons into national parks if it is permissible under state law—and many states allow just that. I believe that the 2009 Coburn Amendment was a huge step in the wrong direction. That is why I am introducing the Guns-Free National Parks Act of 2012—to repeal it.

I have always believed that loaded weapons have absolutely no place in our national parks, which are natural sanctuaries and some of the last sacred spaces in our country. Last month Margaret Anderson, a park ranger in Mount Rainier National Park in Washington, executed a routine traffic stop in an effort to ensure that a driver was driving safely. The mentally unstable driver then shot and killed the park ranger. This brave public servant was a wife and mother of two young children. My heart goes out to her grieving family. We have too many guns in American society, and too many needless gun-related deaths. As Americans we rightly pride ourselves on the progress we have made over the decades in science, in civil liberties, and our standard of living in general. But rolling back sensible and appropriate public-safety rules is not progress. I am proud that this bill is endorsed by several well respected national and state-level groups that have worked for years on ending gun violence: The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, Ceasefire Washington, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, and the Violence Policy Center.

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HONORING THE MONROEVILLE  
JUNIOR HIGH ROBOTICS TEAM

**HON. JO BONNER**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 16, 2012*

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to shine the spotlight on a talented and dedicated group of young people from Southwest Alabama whose hard work and ingenuity have garnered them much-deserved national recognition.

On February, 7, 2012, students from Monroeville Junior High School's robotics team participated in the second annual White House Presidential Science Fair where they personally demonstrated their robotic creations for President Obama. From all reports, the President was duely impressed.

Monroeville Junior High was the only Alabama school and the only BEST school robotics team to receive an invitation to this prestigious national event.

Monroeville Junior High is one of 24 Alabama schools currently participating in the Boosting Engineering Science and Technology (BEST) program, which introduces students to engineering and technology and teaches the skills needed for today's high-tech workforce.

Monroeville Junior High has also competed in the Great Freight Robotics Challenge bringing home many awards including the 1st Place Five Star Award (overall winner). They also competed in the Jubilee BEST Robotics Competition in Mobile, winning several awards and qualifying to advance to South's BEST Regional Competition hosted by Auburn University. At that event, the team brought home the 3rd Place Engineering Notebook Award out of 50 champion teams from across the eastern half of the country.

After their visit to the White House last week, the students arrived on Capitol Hill where it was my honor to personally welcome them and talk to them about their achievements. These students have proven that age is no limitation to teamwork and success.

A special congratulations goes to each of the Monroeville Junior High robotics team