

Too many hardworking American families are looking for their next paycheck, and yet this Tea Party-led Republican Congress is wasting precious legislative time and energy on a purely partisan effort to generate conflict where none exists.

The Republicans' claims against Attorney General Holder defy belief. The simple fact is the Bush administration developed the inappropriate tactics, and once this Justice Department, under President Obama, learned about it, Attorney General Holder stopped the program—stopped it.

So instead of handling our Nation's priorities, this Tea Party-led Republican Congress is choosing to stick its head in the sand, ignoring the wide range of documents and open cooperation provided by the Justice Department but now engage in a game of political theater with no regard for struggling families across America.

The true motivation behind this contempt resolution is simple: As Leader PELOSI remarked last week, this is really about suppressing voter turnout. The National Rifle Association, unfortunately, has insisted that their supported Members of Congress vote for it or face political peril.

Let me tell you, these Tea Party Republicans don't like it when their ideological efforts to prevent people from voting get blocked by the Justice Department doing its job—and that's defending the Constitution of the United States. They know they can't win in judicial courts and they cannot win in the court of public opinion, so instead they're doing all they can to undermine the Justice Department by dragging Attorney General Holder through the mud, making endless demands, changing the goal posts, and monopolizing his time so that they can continue their efforts to undermine the democratic process. And they're asking for information that would violate the law. Furthermore, this is unprecedented. The House has never voted to hold an Attorney General in contempt.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are sick and tired of seeing these Tea Party Republicans pursue a senseless and destructive agenda. There's a reason that Congress has the lowest approval rating in history, and it has everything to do with efforts like this—a contempt vote that does nothing to improve the economy, does nothing to create jobs, and does nothing to strengthen our middle class or to help those trying to raise themselves out of poverty.

We need to invest in transportation, in education, and in ensuring above all that jobs and jobs and more jobs are added to our economic recovery. We only have a matter of weeks before Congress effectively shuts down for the August recess, and we cannot waste any more time doing anything other than putting Americans back to work. Jobs should be our number one priority, our number two priority, and our number three priority.

So I join my colleagues in the tri-caucuses calling for an end to this useless path of petty politics. Let us work during the remainder of time we have this congressional session to do the work that we were sent here to do. No more political witch hunts, no more political fishing expeditions, no more excuses. It's time to get back to work.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago, two new words were added to the American immigration policy: "Prosecutorial discretion."

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano recently ordered Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials to not deport certain classes of aliens who are in the country illegally. Instead, these illegal aliens will be given 2-year work permits that can be renewed indefinitely. The reason Secretary Napolitano and President Obama have given the American people for this de facto amnesty program is prosecutorial discretion.

The Secretary and the President claim that the Department of Homeland Security personnel can use their discretion to decide what individuals they can and cannot deport. But in Federal immigration law, this discretion does not exist. Congress took it away from the executive branch in 1996 when it passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act.

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The law requires, and I will repeat that, this law requires immigration officials to address illegal aliens when they become aware that they are in the country illegally. It clearly spells out the actions that must be taken by Federal officials.

In fact, according to one of the Nation's leading experts on immigration, Congress, frustrated at the time because the Clinton administration was using it to let thousands of illegal aliens remain in the United States, wrote the law to remove that discretion. In other words, the discretion that President Obama and Secretary Napolitano claim they use no longer exists because Congress deliberately eliminated it in 1996. By stating they still have it, President Obama and Secretary Napolitano are actually ordering Federal immigration officials to break the law.

Since the executive branch is citing a privilege that no longer exists in ordering Federal immigration officials to break the 1996 immigration act which was passed by Congress and signed into law, today, I'm calling on the Judiciary and Homeland Security Committees to hold hearings to investigate the legality of this decision to use so-called "prosecutorial discretion."

Just this week we heard from the United States Supreme Court that because the Federal Government writes immigration laws, State laws must work in harmony with the Federal Government. In striking down part of Arizona's S.B. 1070, the High Court's majority said that Federal law shall be the supreme law of the land when laws do not work in harmony with the Federal scheme or when Federal law is explicit. Well, in this case, the law is very clear: there is no prosecutorial discretion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my district in Pennsylvania has one of the highest unemployment rates in the State, and our country is still reeling from one of the worst recessions we have ever faced. The Department of Homeland Security's unlawful action could have grave consequences on our labor force and on our economy, both at the local and national levels.

Additionally, allowing individuals with forged documents to remain in this country could pose a serious threat to our homeland security.

Let me also state that I am troubled by the expansion of the authority of the President that he believes he has. In the past, President Obama clearly stated he had to follow existing immigration laws. During a town hall meeting with Univision in March 2011, he said:

America is a Nation of laws, which means I, as the President, am obligated to enforce the law. I don't have a choice about that.

During that same town hall meeting, President Obama also said:

There are enough laws on the books by Congress that are very clear in terms of how we have to enforce our immigration system, that for me to simply, through executive order, ignore those congressional mandates would not conform with my appropriate role as President.

So what changed? In the last 15 months, did Congress grant the President new powers? I don't remember doing that. Fifteen months ago, President Obama said he can't ignore congressional mandates. But suddenly, 2 weeks ago, he can? Again, I ask, what changed?

I'm concerned President Obama overstepped his constitutional authority in this case, just as he did in claiming executive privilege in Operation Fast and Furious. That's why these two committees must hold formal hearings and investigate this claim of discretion and the unilateral rewriting of Federal immigration policy.

THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, the centerpiece of President Obama's 2008 Presidential campaign was the promise of health care reform. He told us, time and time again, that every President has seen the urgency of reform, that all of them had attempted reform, and none succeeded.

President Obama reminded us of the fact that having more than 40 million uninsured Americans is unacceptable. It is not only bad for the individual, but it is for the American economy. It is bad for hospitals who absorb the loss for these indigent patients or shift the costs to other patients.

During the campaign, the President went on to painfully highlight the unfair practices of some insurance companies in making people think they have quality insurance policies, when, in fact, in many instances, it is not worth the paper it is written on.

After fierce debate, and after the right-wing Tea Party instilled unfounded fear in the hearts of good Americans, the Congress passed the Affordable Care Act, and it is good policy for the American people. But there are those who have exploited the legitimacy of the Affordable Care Act, and now we await a ruling from the Supreme Court on the act's constitutionality.

Should the Supreme Court decide to undermine the most vital provision of the law, the individual mandate, one thing will be clear: it would be an act of judicial activism and judicial overreach, placing the Court firmly in the role of Congress.

Precedent for the Affordable Care Act already exists. Social Security is a program which all Americans are required to pay into and to participate. Car insurance is mandated in almost every State; yet the Supreme Court is on precipice of possible unfastening the linchpin that makes true health care reform attainable.

Such a decision would confiscate benefits that the public and businesses largely support. Lifetime coverage limits could be re-imposed on 100 million Americans. Seventeen million children with preexisting conditions could lose insurance coverage, and 6 million young adults may be forced off their parents' insurance plans.

Preservation of this law means 40 million uninsured Americans will be insured. It creates state-run health exchanges to give consumers maximum choice when selecting a policy, and it contains skyrocketing costs in medical care. The Affordable Care Act will lower insurance premiums driven by uncompensated care for the uninsured, saving the average family in North Carolina \$1,400 a year.

Mr. Speaker, the Affordable Care Act has already paid great dividends in my district. Under the law, 94,000 seniors have received Medicare preventive services without paying a dime. More than 5,000 young adults have health insurance when they previously did not. About 400 small businesses received tax credits to expand care to their employees; 34,000 children with preexisting health conditions can no longer be denied.

As a policy-maker representing 700,000 people, I hope the act will remain intact. As a former judge, I hope the Supreme Court recognizes the im-

pact an unfavorable decision will have on the role of Congress.

We cannot let the perfect, Mr. Speaker, be the enemy of the good. We should explore ways to improve upon the law instead of ways to further deny Americans access to affordable health care.

AMERICA'S FOREIGN POLICY OF MISCHIEF AND INTERVENTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, last week I introduced legislation, H.R. 5993, that would prohibit the President from providing military or paramilitary aid of any sort to any faction in the internal fighting in Syria. Unfortunately, it appears that the administration is already very much involved in supporting the overthrow of the Assad government.

There's nary a whimper of criticism in Congress over our growing involvement in the civil war in Syria. The only noise we hear from Congress, and repeated in the media, is the complaint that we're not doing enough and that immediate, direct U.S. military action must be taken.

Tragically, our political leaders show both bad judgment and short memories when it comes to the downside of our foreign policy of mischief and intervention. Our compulsion to engage ourselves in every conflict around the world is dangerous to our national security.

In dealing with Syria, the administration pretends to pursue diplomacy and provide humanitarian assistance to the people. In reality, the U.S. Government facilitates weapons transfers to the rebels who are demanding immediate regime change.

My goal is to stop our dangerous participation in the violence in Syria; yet evidence mounts that we're already deeply involved, with no expectation that the administration will back away from military engagement.

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Recent reports indicate that the U.S. is providing logistics and communication assistance to the rebel forces. Assistance in getting arms to the rebels through surrogates is hardly a secret. Cooperating with the rebels' propaganda efforts has been reported and is used to prepare the American people for our coming involvement.

There is every reason to expect that the well-laid plans to, once again, coordinate a favorable regime change will end badly. Even the strongest supporters of our direct and immediate military involvement in Syria admit that the rebel forces are made up of many groups, including al Qaeda, and no one is sure to whom the assistance should be given. All they claim is the need for the immediate removal of Assad.

This policy is nothing new, and too often in our recent history our assist-

ance with dollars and weapons used to overthrow a government ends up with the weapons being used, instead, against us. The blow-back from our policy of intervention has caused a great deal of harm to us since World War II:

Propping up the Shah in Iran for 26 years was a powerful factor in motivating radical Islamists to eventually overthrow the Shah in 1979. The hostages taken at the U.S. Embassy at that time was as a consequence of our putting the Shah into power in 1953;

In working with the mujahadeen in the 1980s, our CIA supported radical Islam in an effort to combat communist occupation in Afghanistan. Later, this led to the radical Islamists' hatred being turned against us over our occupation and interference in Muslim countries;

The \$40 billion given to Egypt for over 30 years to prop up the Mubarak dictatorship and to buy an unstable peace with Israel has ended with what appears to be the takeover of Egypt by the Muslim Brotherhood. They may well turn Egypt into a theocratic Islamic state unless our CIA is able to, once again, gain control. Al Qaeda now has a presence in parts of Egypt and has been involved in the bombing of the pipelines carrying gas to Israel. This is hardly a policy that is enhancing Israel's security.

What are the possible unintended consequences of this policy if we foolishly escalate the civil war in Syria?

The worst scenario would be an all-out war in the region involving Russia, the United States, Israel, Iran, Turkey, and others. The escalating conflict could rapidly make containment virtually impossible.

Chaos in this region could encourage the Kurds in Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran to decide it's an opportunity to move on their long-sought-after goal of establishing a Kurdish state. Significant hostilities in the region would jeopardize the free flow of oil from the Middle East, causing sharp increases in the price of oil. The already weak economy of the West would suffer immensely. Some will argue erroneously that a major war would be beneficial to the economy and distract the people from their economic woes.

War, however, is never an economic benefit, although many have been taught that for many decades. If liberty and prosperity are to be our goals, peace is a necessary ingredient of that process.

PARTISAN ACRIMONY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina. Tomorrow will be a peculiar day in Washington and in American politics.

Republicans will denounce ideas that they enthusiastically supported until those ideas became associated somehow with the Obama administration.