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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FLEISCHMANN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 29, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHARLES J. FLEISCHMANN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1998. An act to obtain an unqualified audit opinion, and improve financial accountability and management at the Department of Homeland Security.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the Republican Conference, I acknowledged that five marines and one soldier from my district, the Third District of North Carolina, had been killed in Afghanistan by the Afghans they were training. This, to me, just does not make any sense at all as to why we stay in Afghanistan.

I also shared with the Conference an email I got from the former Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, who has actually been my adviser on Afghanistan for 3 years. I said, Mr. Commandant, why do we stand by and see our American soldiers, Marines, killed by those people we're training? I said, Mr. Commandant, how many more have to die, killed at the hands of the people they're trying to help?

And I read this from the Commandant:

> At the end of the day, I am more convinced than ever that we need to get out of Afghanistan. When our friends turn out to be our enemy, it is time to pull the plug. The idea that troops we have trained and equipped now turn that training and equipment on us is simply unconscionable. Whether we leave tomorrow or 1,000 tomorrows from now, nothing will really change. We are now nothing more than a recruiting poster for every malcontent in the Middle East. We need to wake up.

I read that yesterday in the Conference, Mr. Speaker. I want my party and the Democratic party to wake up and get our troops home.

Mr. Speaker, recently on CNN's Reliable Sources with Howard Kurtz, a well-known journalist, Tom Ricks, made the following statement:

> We, as a Nation, seem to care more about the sex lives of our generals than the real lives of our soldiers.

Mr. Ricks went on to say that probably no one knew who Sergeant Channing Hicks and Specialist Joseph Richardson were. They were two Americans killed in Afghanistan the Friday before Ricks was interviewed. The media will not print those names, but almost everyone in the country knows Paula Broadwell. That's such a tragedy, Mr. Speaker, that our troops are dying in Afghanistan, and we're writing about generals having relationships outside of a marriage. It makes no sense.

We lost 32 Americans in October and November. I want to know, where is the outrage here in Congress? Why are we spending money we don't have? Why are our troops dying, and yet we just seem to go on and on talking about the fiscal cliff? Well, I know that's important.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for Congress to realize that we are having young men and women die in Afghanistan for a failed policy that will not change one thing.

Mr. Speaker, before closing, I make reference to this poster of a young American in a casket being carried by his colleagues to be buried. Please, American people, put pressure on Congress to bring our troops home now and not wait until December 2014.

I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform, to please bless the families of those who've lost loved ones in Afghanistan and Iraq. I ask God to please bless the United States of America. And please, God, help us get our troops home now and not later.

HOW BIG IS YOUR FEMA?

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, Mitt Romney weathered a storm of criticism late in the campaign after Hurricane Sandy for his earlier comments about privatizing FEMA and turning responsibility back to State and local governments. But during an era of fiscal restraint and global warming, it's high time that we start this conversation in earnest. How big do

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you want your FEMA to be, how generous your disaster relief payments, and how much do you want to pay?

In today's New York Times op-ed section, there is an article that points out the potential liability for flood insurance alone is $1.25 trillion, second only to the liability for Social Security. Right now, we have arguably the worst of both worlds. The Federal Government responds to disaster, usually paying too much for the wrong people to do the wrong things. We provide Federal money to put people back in harm's way and sometimes provide infrastructure to make future, risky development worse. We often take remedial action like fortifying beaches, a temporary solution that can actually accelerate erosion elsewhere, shift storm damage down the coast to another spot or more serious flooding down river. By giving the illusion of protection, more people locate in dangerous areas, and the vicious cycle is repeated with untold damage to families, with loss of life, loss of property, disruption of business.

Perhaps we'd be better off if we began with a serious conversation about what people expect from FEMA and heavily subsidized flood insurance.

What if the balance of responsibility between individuals, local, State, and Federal governments were analyzed?

What if we required individual property owners to assume more of the cost of disaster mitigation and recovery by paying the full cost of their flood insurance premiums and having recovery benefits provided on a declining scale after repetitive incidents?

What if local developers were required to insure their buildings withstood the cost of certain foreseeable disaster events? Would they be less likely to pressure local governments to approve risky development proposals?

If individual homeowners absorbed more of their cost with slightly higher home prices, would it make it less likely that they're going to be buying homes in dangerous locations?

Shouldn't local governments be required to have stronger zoning and building codes to make loss less likely and recovery less expensive? What if these local governments were put on notice that when they invest in infrastructure, that the Federal disaster relief is only going to cover a portion of the loss and that portion will decline with increasing frequency of events?

While there appears to be little appetite for overall Federal control, there ought to be even less appetite for the Federal Government to pay for the failure of local control to plan, zone, enact, and enforce strong code provisions and consumer protection. The notion that this is all going to be a one-way street for the Federal taxpayer to pay for repetitive disaster costs is something that needs to be challenged and rejected out of hand.

Make no mistake; I think it would be foolish to privatize FEMA because there is a need for Federal response to true disasters. That's precisely the time that the local economy and taxpayer are least able to pay the full cost of recovery. They need money, personnel, and assistance, but that doesn't mean a permanent entitlement to risky behavior. The Federal Government should deal with what is truly catastrophic and with the humanitarian costs. Families obviously should not be left destitute, hungry, and homeless in the aftermath of natural disaster. There is, however, no reason that we encourage the repetition of these terrible events.

In a time of fiscal stress and budgetary realignment, we should include government disaster spending, liability and development policy as we address the fiscal cliff. Done right, this will not only save money, but countless lives, as well.

□ 1010

THE TRUE MEANING OF THE FISCAL CLIFF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. HAYWORTH) for 5 minutes.

Ms. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, our work in Congress during these final weeks of 2012 is focused on the fiscal cliff. We're worried—and rightly so—about what it means to our economy, to our future, to the daily lives right now of hardworking Americans who are, in all too many cases, already struggling to make ends meet, like the mother in Carmel, New York, who told me her kids are going to have to limit their sports activities because she's having trouble finding the money to fill her gas tank a couple of times a week.

I came to Congress 2 years ago to help that mom who is doing all she can just to get by. She cares for her family, she has a job, and she is a taxpayer. She is in the middle class, and she is being squeezed from all sides. She knows, even though she has to set and keep a budget, the Federal Government hasn't been able to do that, and that's why we're facing the fiscal cliff. The Federal Government has been spending her hard-earned tax dollars like water, running trillion-dollar deficits year after year. She is angry, and she has every right to be angry.

So what are we going to do about it?

Lately, we've heard a lot of talk about raising revenues but not nearly enough talk about bringing the Federal Government down to the right size, about matching spending to the resources we have, about balancing the Federal budget. Oh, we hear about a ''balanced approach,'' but that's just a way of saying we need to increase taxes. Actually, we don't need to increase taxes. The best thing we could do would be to not increase taxes.

The best thing we can do to raise revenues is by making our economy as healthy and strong as it can be. That means we need to help our businesses grow and hire. That has become way too hard to do in the past couple of years. A businessman in Dutchess County, New York, told me that he's going to have to limit the number of employees he has to fewer than 50 so that he won't be subject to penalties under the 2010 health law. So, right now, the Federal Government is keeping him from offering jobs. That hurts the people who need jobs and who would be happy to be on a payroll on which they would be putting their own contributions into Social Security and Medicare.

Increasing taxes means less growth and fewer jobs, and that's not balanced. Three years ago, I made a pledge to oppose tax increases. I made that pledge to the citizens I serve and to no one else, and I made it because tax increases will hurt them. When Jen, the owner of La Petite Cuisine in Warwick, New York, tells me that the best thing I can do for her small business is to give her a break from high taxes, I believe her. I ran for Congress to help Jen and all the small business people like her, who are the engines of job creation. I ran for Congress to help all the people who need employers like Jen to hire them.

These good people deserve better than temporary fixes that mean we lurch from one crisis to the next. They deserve a plan that solves our economic problems for the long term. They deserve a plan that goes beyond politics and shows a commitment to putting the Federal Government on a budget and on track to eliminate our crushing debt, that respects our citizens' rights to enjoy the fruits of their labors and to spend and save and invest as they see fit, which is the best way to grow the economy and add jobs, and that allows each of them, regardless of their station in life or where they live or their ethnic background or their gender, to use their energy, talent, and common sense as free people in a Nation that must remain the strongest in the world, which it simply cannot be if it is drowning in debt.

I am here to fight for what is best for my constituents—every one of them—today and every day, in every single way I can. I am here to serve them and not any party or ideology. My constituents' future extends far beyond any election. They deserve that future to be as secure and prosperous as it can be, and it surely can be if we in Congress and the White House can have the courage to move forward together in a spirit of true cooperation. I stand ready to do that, and I stand with the people of the Hudson Valley.

TURNING THE CORNER ON REAL IMMIGRATION REFORM

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

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, let me tell you how you know you've

turned the corner on the immigration debate.

When Sean Hannity and Senator RAND PAUL and a group of others in the Republican Party begin saying it's time to rethink the party's approach to immigration, we've probably reached a milestone. When Donald Trump says the Republican policy of asking 12 million people to self-deport is a ''crazy policy'' that likely cost the Republicans the White House, you've turned a corner. Any time I agree with Donald Trump, hope for a bipartisan agreement should be running high.

Most Americans believe that Election Day demonstrated that it's time to move beyond the same old politics, the same tired blame game on immigration. So, when I saw a Republican-sponsored STEM visa bill on the House calendar this week, I thought, well, maybe House Republicans are changing their tune. On the campaign trail, we heard Governor Romney say he supported stapling green cards to the diplomas of every math and science graduate from our universities. Why should we educate some of the best minds on Earth and then say, ''Sorry, no room in the U.S. economy for you''? It makes no sense. They go away and compete against us rather than innovating and creating jobs here.

Then I took a closer look at what the Republicans are actually proposing. They haven't turned a corner at all. In fact, they haven't even stepped out of their houses. They certainly didn't learn anything from the last election. The STEM visa bill on the House floor this week was actually voted down in September. It was introduced with a few changes but with absolutely no consultation with Democrats.

I want to find a bipartisan solution on immigration. I am committed to it. I know it won't be easy. They say a journey of a thousand miles begins with just one step. The problem is my colleagues on the other side of the aisle want to take one step and have the Democrats travel the other 999.9 miles. Certainly, this bill isn't even a step—it's a shuffle; it's a shell game. It has exactly the same problem that the STEM bill in September had. It moves visas from a legal immigration program, which works, over to a new visa category where there may or may not be sufficient demand to use those visas each year.

Immigration is always a zero-sum game for my colleagues on the other side: we will only increase visas for immigrants we like if we can eliminate immigration for immigrants we don't like. But it isn't even a zero-sum trick they're pulling here. Best estimates are that only 20,000 STEM visas would be issued to graduates, meaning that the other 35 visas would just disappear.

Which immigrants do they want to exclude in order to play this game?

They're people from around the world who want a chance to make a new life for themselves in the U.S., people like the fathers and mothers and grandparents of almost every Member of Congress. In this case, half of the people who come to America legally, through the Diversity Visa program, come from the continent of Africa, over half of them. Yet they come from all over. So the Republicans would have us say to the good people of Ghana or South Africa—but also to the people of Sweden and Ireland and New Zealand and Taiwan who apply to come here legally—sorry, we have to withdraw the chance you had at 50,000 visas so we can divert them to, maybe, 20,000 STEM graduates. Maybe. Once again, the Republicans' math doesn't add up.

Here is something I'll bet you didn't know about the Diversity Visa program, which is that many of them come to this country and join the Armed Forces of the United States of America. But these legal immigrants are the target of the Republican bill.

I have news for my friends on the other side of the aisle: you can't fool immigrants. You can't pretend to be pro-immigrant and then eliminate immigration from one group to allow another group to come.

I woke up the day after the election and I saw a new landscape for the immigration debate. It is one in which Democrats and Republicans work together to solve tough problems facing the United States. We should not treat this as an opportunity for politicians to score political points again, but sadly, that is what is happening here. I want Republicans to know that Democrats support STEM visas. We don't need to kill other legal immigration programs to create a STEM program, but Republicans are more interested in killing the Diversity Visa program than in creating a program for STEM graduates. For this bill, no matter what happens on Friday, it will not pass in the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we can turn the corner on real immigration reform but only if Republicans are willing to put on their walking shoes and take a few steps with Democrats, walking side by side, for a greater, better America.

□ 1020

HONORING LOUIS GIACOMELLI

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

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Louis Giacomelli of New Britain in my home of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. A devoted husband and a loving father, Louis passed away earlier this week after a long life of service to his community and to his country.

As a young man in the Army, Louis answered his country's call and honorably served in the Korean War and was awarded a Purple Heart for his service. Upon returning home from the war, Louis went on to serve his community with the Philadelphia Police Department for over 20 years.

I had the opportunity to visit the Korean War Memorial here in our Nation's capital with Louis earlier this year. I was fortunate to have been able to spend that time with him and proud to have called him my friend.

His life of service is an example to each of us, and I wish his family all the best in these difficult times.

PITS FOR PATRIOTS

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the exceptional work of an organization operating in my district called Pits for Patriots. This innovative program strives to save not just one life, but two.

The Chicagoland organization currently trains rescued pit bulls to become service dogs for veterans in need. In addition to helping our country's patriots, the program is committed to educating the public about the loyalty, devotion, and commitment of the pit bull breed. Their service dogs are trained to help improve a veteran's quality of life in their day-to-day activities, such as opening and closing doors, retrieving items, and assisting with mobility problems.

I had the honor of attending a training session and meeting a dedicated veteran, Sergeant Danny Randall, and his companion dog, Shiloh. After serving for 9 years in the Army, Danny felt an emotional disconnect between military and civilian life. Reentering the civilian workforce had been a difficult adjustment. Danny suffers from posttraumatic stress disorder, making it difficult for him to remain calm in large crowds or tight spaces. He is not comfortable sitting with his back to a door or window and feels stress when strangers enter his personal space. But Danny has found a way to help battle some of the aftereffects of war. Danny's medicine is in the form of a four-legged pit bull dog that goes by the name of Shiloh. Shiloh helps Danny to remain calm when going out in public and increases his comfort level and socialization skills.

Shiloh and other pit bulls do more than just facilitate the day-to-day lives of the recipients; they provide a sense of independence and unconditional love. For the veterans, caring for a companion animal can provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment, while lessening feelings of loneliness, isolation, and depression.

There are over 22 million veterans in America today. And although the number of servicemembers being deployed in today's wars are fewer than in wars of the past, those returning from war are suffering from increasingly severe disabilities, such as traumatic brain injury, numerous amputations, and posttraumatic stress disorder.

Over the past decade, the number of vets in need of disability compensation has more than doubled, from 600,000 in

2000 to over 1.4 million in the year 2011. As more vets return home from multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, the need for assistance will grow even greater. We must do all we can to support inventive programs such as Pits for Patriots that provide essential support and assistance to our veterans in need.

I want to end with the words of Sergeant Danny Randall, who said about his pit bull, Shiloh:

> He truly gives me a reason to be successful. Shiloh gives me a great sense of calm and balance. He is an amazing dog, not just where he has been and what he's lived through, but all that he has overcome. In that sense we are a lot alike, and I believe that is why we have such a strong bond. We truly do everything together, and I could not have asked for a better pittie partner.

Let's make sure other veterans in need have access to the same program that has done so much to help Danny and Shiloh.

TRIBUTE TO CONGRESSMAN RON PAUL

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

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my friend, RON PAUL. I have now served in Congress for 24 years, the last 16 of which I have served with Congressman PAUL. During all of that time, I have never once seen him waver or stray from a commitment to liberty and freedom and his promise to uphold and defend our Constitution.

I can assure you that no one runs for office wanting to make people mad. In fact, it may be that people who run for office have a stronger desire to be liked than most people. Thus, I feel certain that at times it has been hurtful to Congressman PAUL to be the only Member out of 435 to vote ''no'' on some popular bill or seemingly harmless resolution. Yet, on many occasions, he has been the only vote on some issue. Yet, because of his courage and sincerity and his steadfast belief in free enterprise, private property, and individual freedom, he has earned the respect and admiration of almost everyone with whom he has served on both sides of the aisle.

When there was tremendous pressure, especially on the Republican side, to vote to go to war in Iraq, only six Republicans voted ''no.'' Three of those were very liberal Republicans, and three were very conservative. The three conservative ''no'' votes came from John Hostettler of Indiana, Congressman PAUL, and myself.

It is probably accurate to say that, during the 16 years Congressman PAUL and I have served together, no two Members have voted more alike than we have. Most of that time we have arrived at our decisions separately and independently. But we also have discussed many votes over the years, and I have attended most of the meetings of the Liberty Caucus Congressman PAUL has hosted in his office with a wide variety of speakers.

One national magazine about 4 years ago gave just three Members 100 percent ratings on a freedom index—Congressman PAUL, Congressman JEFF FLAKE of Arizona, and myself. Last year I was very surprised when the National Taxpayers Union ranked me as the most fiscally conservative Member on all 338 spending votes. But the only reason Congressman PAUL was not first was because he missed many votes during his run for the White House.

There have been articles and comments and questions about who would be the next RON PAUL in Congress, but, really, no one can replace RON PAUL or fill his shoes or be the next RON PAUL. He has achieved a fame and a following and a position of influence that is almost miraculous considering his unique independence.

He is such a kind, humble, almost bashful person that I know he has been amazed by the numbers that have turned out to support him, and especially the following he has among young people. After all, there is nothing cool or hip about him, but several million college students and 20-somethings love the man. I think his appeal lies in his principled stands on the issues, the concern young people have for their future and where this country is headed, and the fact that Congressman PAUL is real. There is nothing fake about him. He believes what he says and says what he believes and then sticks by it even when it is not ''politically correct.''

Financial columnist Charles Goyette probably summed up Congressman PAUL's time in office best in a column a few days ago. He wrote:

> Politics has ways of bending such lesser men and molding even the well-intentioned to become servants of the State. The tools are many: Congressional leadership bribes and bestows its favors from plum committee assignments to nicer Capitol offices. The parties reward the lockstep marchers, too. For those who stay in step, there are endorsements and campaign funds. Meanwhile, for those who march to a different drummer—well. And then there is the simple social pressure to which men whose eyes are not focused on a polestar of principle soon succumb. The description you've heard of Washington that you have to go along to get along is all too true.

Mr. Goyette concluded by writing:

> Ron Paul never succumbed. He never sold out for a better assignment, a nicer office, lobbyist largesse, or shallow conviviality.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I think words written in a 1930 novel called ''The Lion's Den'' fit Congressman RON PAUL. The words described a fictional Congressman named Zimmer. The author, Janet Fairbank, wrote:

> No matter how the espousal of a lost cause might hurt his prestige in the House, Zimmer had never hesitated to identify himself with it if it seemed to him to be right. He knew only two ways; the right one and the wrong, and if he sometimes made a mistake, it was never one of honor. He voted as he believed he should, and although sometimes his voice was raised alone on one side of the question, it was never stilled.

□ 1030

PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO VOTE

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, Americans turned out in record numbers this past election day, November 6, to exercise our most cherished and fundamental right, the right to vote.

No doubt my colleagues heard from their constituents who endured, in many cases, outrageously long lines. I spoke with voters who reported having to wait two or more hours, and in some cases up to 5 hours, to cast that precious vote. In most cases, the absence of early voting and the shortage of voting machines and well-trained election volunteers were the primary culprits leading to unacceptably long lines.

Whether one lived in a blue or red State, or voted in an urban, suburban or rural precinct, residents at polling places in more than a dozen States, including Florida, Pennsylvania, Colorado, Ohio, New York, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, South Carolina, Montana, Tennessee, Hawaii, Arizona, Rhode Island, and my own Commonwealth of Virginia, encountered significant, yet avoidable, barriers to casting their ballots.

This is not a Republican or a Democratic problem. Voters from both parties were affected. This is truly a national bipartisan challenge, if not a crisis. And to quote President Obama: ''It's one we have to fix.''

I think about the employee who struggles to manage his commute or her commute and work schedule on election day, or the senior citizen who may not have had the stamina to stand in line for 5 hours, or the young working mom waiting to vote, worried about the fact that she won't get to the front of the line in time to pick up her kids at daycare.

The experience of our constituents on election day amount to a modern-day poll tax on all Americans that must be eliminated. Twelve years after the 2000 Presidential election exposed the deep structural problems that plague our decentralized voting system, our troubles appear to have worsened, not improved.

Long waits in the cold or the heat, confusing and conflicting instructions from poorly trained election officials, a paucity of voting machines or malfunctioning machines showing their age, a shortage of paper ballots, absentee ballots that failed to reach civilian and military voters in time were among the litany of voting problems that came to a head on election day.

I saw the problem firsthand at polling places in my district as I visited with voters in one Prince William County precinct who had been waiting in line for more than 4 hours in the

cold. That's why I joined with Congressman JIM LANGEVIN to introduce the Fair, Accurate, Secure and Timely Voting Act of 2012, the FAST Act. A Senate companion bill was introduced by Senators CHRIS COONS of Delaware, MARK WARNER of Virginia and SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island.

Representative LANGEVIN and I have significant experience serving at the State and local levels, and we strongly believe that the Federal Government often works best when it leverages those laboratories of democracy at the local and State levels to test innovative solutions and governing reforms and best practices that might have applicability at the Federal level.

Consistent with this principle, our bill avoids overly prescriptive requirements and, instead, offers States a menu of options and financial incentives to adopt voting reforms.

Our FAST Voting Act recognizes that modernizing the Nation's voting system will require collaborative and coordinated efforts at the State, Federal, and local levels. It creates a competitive grant program, similar to the President's Race to the Top schools initiative, and rewards those States that aggressively implement the most effective and promising reforms to expand the franchise.

The menu of reforms includes flexible voter registration opportunities, including same-day registration; early voting, with a minimum of at least 9 days before the election; no-excuse absentee voting; assistance to voters who do not speak English as a primary language; assistance to voters with disabilities, including the visually impaired; effective access to voting for members of the Armed Services; formal training of election officials, including State and county administrators and volunteers; auditing and reducing waiting times at polling stations; creating contingency plans for voting in the event of a natural or other kind of disaster.

To be clear, the FAST Act is the latest in a series of proposals to reform how our elections are administered. Given the renewed interest among the public, Members of Congress, and the President, we ought to at least move forward with hearings to debate the merits of these proposals.

This is the world's greatest and oldest democracy. How can any of us be satisfied with the scandalous operations that occurred in all too many voting places that impaired the ability of Americans, free Americans, to freely cast their vote?

We ought to clean this up. It's a solvable problem, and it ought to be solved on a bipartisan basis.

HONORING SERGEANT FIRST CLASS RILEY G. STEPHENS

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

Mr. FLORES. Mr. Speaker, America recently lost another hero in the war on terror. On September 28, America lost Army Sergeant First Class Riley G. Stephens of Tolar, Texas.

Riley grew up in Tolar. He enlisted as an infantryman in the Army in 1993. He volunteered for the Special Forces Assessment and Selection Course. He also went on to graduate from the Special Forces Qualification Course in March of 2005.

At the time of his tragic death, he was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) as a Special Forces medical sergeant. He would go on five separate deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

During his 19 years of service to our country, Sergeant Stephens earned many awards and decorations. He earned the Bronze Star Medal with Valor, two Bronze Star Medals, the Purple Heart, the Army Achievement Medal with Valor, four Army Commendation Medals, four Army Achievement Medals, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with three campaign stars, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon Military, the Army Service Ribbon, two Overseas Service Ribbons, the NATO Medal, the Air Assault Badge, the Basic Parachutist Badge, the Expert Infantryman Badge, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Ranger Tab and the Special Forces Tab.

On October 7, Sergeant First Class Riley G. Stephens was laid to rest at the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery, not far from his hometown in Tolar where, earlier that day, his life was celebrated and his service to our country was celebrated in a church full of friends and family and fellow patriots.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of Sergeant Stephens. He will forever be remembered as an outstanding soldier, a husband and a father. We thank him and his family for their service and sacrifice for our country.

His sacrifice reflects the words of Jesus in John 15:13 which say: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all Americans to continue praying for our country during these difficult times, for our military men and women, and for our first responders who keep us safe by their sacrifice each day.

God bless our military men and women, and God bless America.

COMMEMORATING THE CANONIZATION OF SAINT MARIANNE OF MOLOKAI

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) for 5 minutes.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution commemorating the remarkable life of service of Mother Marianne Cope of Molokai, and her canonization as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church on October 21, 2012. She joins Saint Damien of Molokai among the 12 American saints.

I am joined in introducing this resolution by Congresswoman ANN MARIE BUERKLE, who represents Syracuse, New York, where Mother Marianne's Order of the Sisters of Saint Francis is based; by Congressman RICHARD HANNA, who represents Utica, New York, where Mother Marianne grew up; and by Congresswoman COLLEEN HANABUSA, who represents Hawaii's First Congressional District. I am proud to represent Hawaii's Second Congressional District, which includes the island of Molokai.

It may seem surprising that one-sixth of America's saints are connected to the tiny Kalaupapa Peninsula on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. The story of Kalaupapa is heartbreaking.

We have all heard of how isolated native populations are especially susceptible to new diseases. Once Westerners and other peoples came to Hawaii, diseases like smallpox and measles caused high mortality. It was no different with leprosy. Native Hawaiians made up the majority of those afflicted with this disease.

To stem the spread of leprosy, the Kingdom of Hawaii decided in 1866 to forcibly relocate persons found to have the disease to the Kalaupapa Peninsula. Those with the disease were outcasts in every sense of the word. Kalaupapa was chosen because it is surrounded by the ocean and some of the tallest sea cliffs in the world, effectively cutting off escape.

□ 1040

Mothers, fathers, and children who contracted the disease were taken from their families and brought to Kalaupapa, where living conditions were terrible and medical care almost nonexistent. Father Damien, who ultimately contracted and died from the disease, is recognized throughout the world for all he did to improve conditions for the outcasts of Kalaupapa. Mother Marianne carried on and expanded on his work. This resolution honors Mother Marianne for her legacy of compassionate care and recognizes her example of what it truly means to dedicate one's life in service to others. One does not need to be Catholic to be humbled and inspired by the life of someone who devoted herself so selflessly to those whom almost everyone else shunned and rejected.

Mother Marianne, born Barbara Koob, immigrated to this country from Germany as a young girl. She and her family settled in Utica, New York. At the age of 24, she entered the religious life as a Catholic nun and commenced a life dedicated to children, education, and the sick. Mother Marianne later focused her efforts on health care and was influential in establishing St. Elizabeth Hospital in Utica. She was also

the founder and administrator of St. Joseph's Hospital in Syracuse, the city's first hospital.

In 1883, Mother Marianne received a letter that would change her life. It was from Father Leonor Fouesnel, a missionary in Hawaii, who was desperately searching for volunteers to take charge of the hospitals that served people with Hansen's disease. More than 50 religious congregations had already declined, but Mother Marianne was different. She eagerly accepted the mission. She wrote back to Father Leonor:

> I am hungry for the work and I wish with all my heart to be one of the chosen ones. I am not afraid of any disease.

Mother Marianne left for Hawaii, along with six sisters from Syracuse, in 1883, where she began a 30-year mission caring for those diagnosed with Hansen's disease. Mother Marianne accepted a government plea to start a new home for women and girls with Hansen's disease at the Kalaupapa settlement. Mother Marianne arrived in Kalaupapa just months before Father Damien's death. She oversaw the expansion of health services and programs to provide education and tend to the spiritual needs of the patients.

Mother Marianne lived until the age of 80. On August 9, 1918, she died in Kalaupapa. She was deeply mourned and is still revered. I have visited her grave site, where I left ho-okupu, a traditional Hawaiian offering. I was deeply moved by the devotion of this woman from New York who left all that was familiar to live on an isolated peninsula 5,000 miles from home. Kalaupapa became her home and its people her family.

Mother Marianne recognized the rights and inherent dignity of all people. She dedicated her life to caring for those who needed it the most. People of all faiths can admire her spirit of aloha—encompassing love, compassion, mercy, and grace—and malama—to care for others.

ONE LESS PLACE SETTING AT THE HOLIDAYS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, it's the time of year when families reunite and renew their very close connections—connections that are actually, in most instances, the most precious parts of our lives. This Thanksgiving I know all of us were grateful for the company of those we love the most. But more than 2,000 American families sat at tables where there was one less serving of the Thanksgiving meal just a week ago. Those families lost a loved one in the deadly war in Afghanistan—now more than 11 years long and a tragically reckless policy.

I'm personally grateful for the service of all of our Afghanistan veterans and for their sacrifice and for the sacrifice of our military families. But sometimes I don't know how we as a Congress and a Nation can look them right straight in the face after everything we've put them through. The benefits of this war don't come close to justifying the devastating human cost—not just fatalities, but disfiguring wounds, lost limbs, traumatic brain injury, and demons of post-traumatic stress. They all add up to tragedy at the utmost.

For too many of our veterans, the transition back to civilian life is a daily struggle. Many face not just health care challenges but joblessness, housing and credit troubles, and overall economic anxiety and stress. We've had enough of this. Why would we want to extend a war that has given so much misery and so much heartache and so few actual national security benefits?

The American people have rendered their verdict on the occupation of Afghanistan. Poll after poll shows they want it over. Who can blame them? In fact, the public opinion was so clear during the last Presidential election that both candidates for President in this year's campaign were saying that they would end the war. But the question, Mr. Speaker, is, When? The current 2014 timetable is not nearly aggressive enough—not when we're losing brave servicemembers every single week, not when our military presence is sustaining the very extremists we're trying to defeat, and not when American taxpayers are paying the bill to the tune of $10 billion a month, at least.

And now it seems that our policymakers might be planning for a significant military presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014. According to a new New York Times article last weekend, one of the options on the table calls for 10,000 American troops and several thousand more NATO troops to remain on the ground after 2014. Sources say that General John Allen, our top commander in Afghanistan, prefers to keep as many as 60,000 troops for another year. As The Times editorial board points out, this is not the ''steady pace'' of troop withdrawal that the President has promised.

This is unacceptable. We ought to have a role in Afghanistan, but it cannot and must not be a military role. We need more humanitarian aid, more support for education, health care, democracy promotion, civil society, and so much more. But we will not make America safer and we will not make Afghanistan stronger by continuing this war. The only morally decent and strategically sensible approach is to bring our troops home now—certainly before 2014.

INVESTING IN R&D AND STEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Today, I would like to emphasize the important role that Federal investments in research and development, or R&D; and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or STEM, education play in stimulating growth, creating new industries and jobs, and delivering long-term benefits to our citizens.

As a member of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, and now as ranking member, I have had the privilege of hearing countless witnesses from industry, academia, and government over the past several years testify that investments in R&D are essential to keeping America competitive in a challenging international marketplace. In fact, according to a paper by the National Bureau of Economic Research, changes in technology are the only source of permanent increases in productivity.

If we are to reverse the trend of the last 20 years, where our country's technology edge in the world has diminished, we must make the investments necessary today. The statistics speak for themselves. It is estimated that more than 50 percent of our economic growth since World War II can be attributed to development and adoption of new technologies. The path is simple: research and education lead to innovation. Innovation leads to economic development and good-paying jobs and the revenue to pay for more research.

□ 1050

As private firms underinvest in research and development because the returns are too far off in the future, there is a clear and necessary role of government to help our Nation keep pace with the rest of the world.

More than 50 years ago, when DARPA was first created, no one had any idea that the research that they would fund would be responsible for the creation of the Internet or the proliferation of GPS technology, but it did. Those inventions started with Federal dollars, as did countless other game-changing technologies.

It is clear that Federal investments in R&D bring significant returns for decades to come. In 1987, MIT Professor Robert Solow was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics for his work proving that improved technology and improved education in the workforce was clearly and chiefly responsible for long-term growth, much more than increases in labor or capital. The current best estimate for the return on academic research alone is 28 percent. Federal efforts are underway now to more vigorously and rigorously quantify the return on Federal investments in R&D.

Today we find ourselves at a crossroads. The United States remains a leader in science, technology, and innovation but no longer the unchallenged leader. While our own world-class innovation infrastructure is under stress, our competitors in other countries, even as they institute austerity measures in other parts of their budgets, are

seizing the opportunity to make strategic investments in long-term basic research and build and leverage public-private partnerships to support the shorter term R&D that will help create jobs now and long into the future.

As we struggle with our own deficits, we too can make the strategic choice to continue to invest in our future—both in our human capital and physical infrastructure—or we can make the strategic choice to permanently cede our leadership, to fail our current generation of young people and to put our economy in a state of stagnation for years to come.

STEM education is another critical component to the Nation's economic competitiveness. Yet according to the Program for International Student Assessment, the U.S. currently ranks 17th in science and 25th in math out of 34 countries. Though our best STEM students have no trouble competing with their international peers, on average, our K–12 students continue to lag far behind their international peers in math and science aptitude. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2009 science assessment, 34 percent of the fourth-graders, 30 percent of the eighth-graders, and 21 percent of the 12th-graders performed at or above the proficient level in science. When eighth-graders were tested again in 2011, they achieved a modest 2-point gain in the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency.

When the results are broken down by demographic groups, we see a 6–7 point gender gap that begins somewhere between the 4th and 8th grade and persists through 12th grade. Even more troubling, there are huge and persistent gaps across racial/ethnic groups. Among African American students, in 2009 only 11 percent of fourth-graders, 8 percent of eighth-graders, and 4 percent of twelfth-graders performed at or above the proficient level in science. The number for Hispanic students—14, 12 and 8 percent, respectively—are only slightly better. The one small sign of improvement is a 4 point gain for Hispanic 8th graders from 2009 to 2011. But how as a nation and as parents and grandparents can we tolerate any of these numbers for any of our students?

We must also do better at the college level. Even among those minority students who have access to high-performing schools or who otherwise succeed against the odds and enter college intending to major in a STEM degree, fewer than 20 percent finish within five years, compared to a 33 percent 5-year completion rate for White students and 42 percent for Asian students.

We've been talking about "A Nation at Risk" since the report by that name came out nearly 30 years ago, but in that time we've made little to no improvement. Some suggest we may even have gone backwards. As long as our nation overall was still number one, it was easier for our leaders to let year after year pass without taking the hard steps to take on an enormous set of challenges in a large and diverse country where, rightly so, education is controlled at the local level.

However, the world is changing, the demand for STEM skills is steadily increasing, and our nation's leadership is being challenged. At the same time, our demographics are shifting in profound ways, making the racial/ethnic gaps that much more consequential for our future. By the year 2050, minorities are predicted to represent 55 percent of the national college population.

I am heartened by many of the initiatives going on now at both the federal and state levels, including the Obama Administration's Race to the Top, Initiative and the state-drive common core standards in math and science. Nevertheless, we have a long way to go to ensure that the U.S. continues to produce the world's best scientists, mathematicians, and engineers and to make sure that every student is prepared for the highly technical, high-paying jobs of the future. According to 2008 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the professional information technology (IT) workforce was projected to add a little under a million new jobs between 2008 an 2018. This represents more than twice the rate of overall workforce growth over that same period. Many high-tech companies cite the availability of a skilled STEM workforce as the number one reason for determining where they locate their facilities. Producing students with the STEM skills needed to fill the jobs of the future is necessary to maintaining our nation's innovation capacity and creating new high-skill, high-paying jobs at home.

We need to take a step back and refrain from making short-sighted, ill-advised cuts to our R&D and education investments in pursuit of illusory budgetary benefits. While we debate turning the lights off on groundbreaking research projects, shuttering world-class research facilities, stopping emerging industries in their tracks, and losing many of our best and brightest scientists from the STEM pipeline for good, our competitors in China, India, and elsewhere are surging ahead in their investments in R&D, STEM education, and emerging industries.

I urge all of us, as we undertake our very difficult task of trying to set us on a more sustainable fiscal path, to do whatever it takes to prioritize steady growth of our investments in science, technology, and STEM education. It is when our economy is hurting the most that we should be redoubling our efforts to innovate our way into a brighter future of new jobs, new technologies, and untold societal benefits.

CORRUPTION IN AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, this year I pushed for and received a congressional investigation into the Dawood National Military Hospital in Afghanistan based on allegations that senior Afghan medical personnel sold U.S. military medical supplies and that Afghan soldiers and police were dying in the facility from untreated wounds and malnutrition because their families couldn't come up with the necessary bribes to pay the hospital staff for their care.

The Afghan surgeon general, General Ahmad Zia Yaftali, was complicit in the corruption. U.S. Army Lieutenant General William Caldwell was instrumental in covering it up by not only delaying an investigation but by limiting the scope of it when it did occur. Neither General Caldwell nor General Yaftali have been disciplined for their conduct.

Last week I was in Afghanistan and I visited the hospital. I left Afghanistan confirming my belief that the greatest threat to the future of Afghanistan is not the Taliban but the pervasive corruption that permeates every level of Afghan governance and the lack of leadership by the United States in confronting it.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 55 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Dr. Leslie Callahan, St. Paul's Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, offered the following prayer:

Gracious God, we offer thanks for the joys and challenges of self-government, which this House and the whole Congress symbolize.

In a world ravaged by violence, political and domestic, we enter gratefully the sanctuary of these Chambers for peaceful deliberation for this Nation's good. Even in the spaces of deep disagreement may these debates be seasoned with mutual understanding. May Your presence as liberty, love, and justice walk up and down and, yes, even between these aisles. Remind everyone of the sacredness of the trust of their constituents and the hope of all our citizens.

At day's end, may all affected by their decisions be confident of their good faith. At the end of the term, may the reelected redouble their efforts for the common good and those retiring find satisfaction in having done their duty. In the name of all that is holy and good.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from New York (Mr. REED) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. REED led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING REVEREND DR. LESLIE CALLAHAN

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to welcome Dr. Leslie D. Callahan to serve as our guest chaplain today. I have known Dr. Callahan since she was a toddler and am proud to say that she is the dedicated senior pastor of St. Paul's Baptist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, its first female leader in 119 years.

Dr. Callahan is a religion scholar who received her bachelor of arts in religion from Harvard University/Radcliff College, a master of divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York, and doctor of philosophy in religion from Princeton University.

A native of Gary, West Virginia, and resident of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Dr. Callahan has been publicly preaching since the age of 19. She is noted for her dynamic preaching and teaching gifts and as a minister who plays a major role in shaping the future of the African American church. She is the mother of 2-month-old Annabelle, or Bella.

Reverend Callahan's character is captured in her favorite scripture from Psalm 27:4:

One thing I desired of the Lord, that I shall seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to seek God in God's temple.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS of New Hampshire). The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

MLR AND FRAUD

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

Mr. PITTS. Yesterday, we had an Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee hearing on how we can combat waste, fraud, and abuse in our health care system. We heard from private sector representatives about some of the innovative ways that they prevent fraud before it happens. At the same time, Medicare loses billions of dollars annually because most fraud is only discovered after it has been perpetrated.

Now, under ObamaCare, we have a new medical loss ratio rule, or MLR, that may actually create perverse incentives for private insurers to behave like Medicare. Some have suggested that the consumer protections provided by the MLR rule are too important to subject the rule to change in order to prevent fraud. Setting aside whether individuals or employers have received the benefit of the MLR rule, clearly the best way to save money is prevent it from being stolen in the first place, not chasing criminals after they have received and spent their illicit gains.

The flawed MLR rule is just another example of how ObamaCare's sloppy legislating and rulemaking has the potential to cost the American people dearly.

MORE MONEY FOR WAR?

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

Mr. KUCINICH. The same geniuses who involved the U.S. in a war against Libya, who knocked off the pro-U.S. Libyan Government, who created in Benghazi an extremist shooting gallery which has claimed four American lives including our Ambassador, who have not been held accountable or responsible for those events, who have opened the door for radical fundamentalists to run roughshod over Libya, these same experts are working out of the same playbook for Syria.

Assad was no angel, but he was not a significant threat to the U.S. Apparently, flush from success in Libya, the administration is preparing to ratchet up the war in Syria.

Why would Qatar, our partner in Libya, be supplying surface-to-air missiles to rebels in Syria without the support of this administration? NATO—meaning the U.S.—discusses putting missiles in Turkey, which would create a de facto no-fly zone over northwest Syria, expanding the war.

Is this why we need a tax increase? More money for more war? Really?

CONGRATULATING RANDOLPH HIGH SCHOOL CARDINALS

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

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Randolph High School Cardinals on their victory in the New York State Class D title game on November 23, 2012, at the Carrier Dome in Syracuse, New York. Led by Head Coach Pat Slater and the game's Most Valuable Player, Cody Oldro, the Cardinals won 28–7. It is with no small amount of pride that we recognize all of the players, cheerleaders, coaches, advisers, administrators, and, most importantly, the parents and the kids for their achievements and congratulate them on their third State championship since 2005.

The 2012 New York State Class D title game was also Coach Slater's final game as head coach of the Cardinals, capping a 33-year career at the helm. His teams earned three State titles, eight Section Six championships, and a career record of 213 wins and 99 losses. Today, we honor Coach Slater for the positive impact he has had on the young people at Randolph for so many years.

CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE

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

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, our national policy for transportation and budgetary commitment is a disgrace and an embarrassment. Our roads and bridges are a mess. Transportation for America says that we have 69,000 structurally deficit bridges in this Nation. We have over 2,000 structurally deficient bridges in New York State, and we have 99 structurally deficient bridges in my home community of western New York. Every second of every day, seven cars carrying our families drive on a bridge that is structurally deficient.

In the city of Buffalo, we are preparing to make a decision about the future of the elevated Skyway bridge, a roadway classified by transportation officials as being structurally deficient, fracture-critical, and functionally obsolete.

Federal investments should help communities make smart decisions and become more self-sufficient. Investing in smart infrastructure is not simply about tearing down our crumbling bridges; it's about rebuilding our Nation.

CONGRATULATING COLORADO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION CHAIRMAN BOB SCHAFFER ON HIS RETIREMENT

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

Mr. GARDNER. Today, I rise today to honor Colorado State Board of Education Chairman Bob Schaffer on his recent retirement.

Chairman Schaffer proudly served the State of Colorado and our country in this Chamber, representing Colorado's Fourth Congressional District. Throughout his career in Congress and on the State Board of Education, he has dedicated himself to improving the education of Colorado and this Nation's youth. He's a passionate advocate of education policies that reach all students in our Nation.

In addition to his work on the State board, Bob serves as the principal at Liberty Commons in Fort Collins, Colorado. Liberty is a public charter school and is consistently ranked among the State's top-performing schools.

Chairman Schaffer has been an advocate for State and local control over education. He promotes the value that

all schools need to be competitive and accountable, including faculty and administration.

While the challenges of education have been many over the past two decades, Bob knows they are worthy of our time and our best efforts. Through his leadership, we have seen education in Colorado improve for our kids; they have a brighter future ahead and the tools to achieve success.

And today, I recognize Bob Schaffer's service in this Chamber and his service to the people of Colorado.

□ 1210

CONGRATULATING SHALER NORTH HILLS LIBRARY

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, recently I had the honor of attending a ceremony recognizing the Shaler North Hills Library for receiving the National Medal for Library and Museum Service. This is the highest Federal honor any museum or library can earn.

The Shaler North Hills Library serves over 50,000 families, providing assistance for everything from job searching to computer training. The library also presents outstanding programs for all ages, including showcasing local gardeners, art exhibits, and a speaker series. Their interactive science program, ''Discovery Kids,'' won a Pennsylvania Library Association Best Practices Award, recognizing the program as the best of the best for early learning. The Shaler North Hills Library truly sets the standard for all ages in library services. I congratulate them on this well-deserved honor.

DEDICATED LEADERSHIP OF SHERIFF MARK CURRAN

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

Mr. DOLD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the work that Sheriff Mark Curran and the Robert Crown Center are doing in Illinois' 10th Congressional District.

Heroin and prescription drug abuse are on the rise in our local communities. Families of all backgrounds are being affected by this epidemic in the Chicagoland region. As a result of the increase in heroin deaths and prescription drug overdoses, Sheriff Mark Curran and the Robert Crown Center and other individuals in the community have come together to raise awareness of the dangers of these drugs.

Throughout the past 2 years I've had the privilege of working with these leaders so that we can help educate our communities and to help get help for those who are struggling with addiction. From roundtables to awareness events and a recent community forum—which we held in Vernon Hills, Illinois—I'm proud of the work that's being done to end this epidemic. We do have much more work ahead of us, but I'm confident that Sheriff Mark Curran and others will continue to champion this cause and provide valuable resources to our community. I look forward to helping in any way possible.

WORLD AIDS DAY

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

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on World AIDS Day to highlight the remarkable progress that has been made over the past 30 years in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

I commend local leaders from my Tampa Bay area district like the Reverend Dr. James Favorite, who understands the importance of speaking to his congregation about HIV and AIDS. Reverend Favorite has urged more than 100 local churches and pastors across the Tampa Bay area to put AIDS and HIV awareness at the heart of their sermons. Reverend Favorite's impact has garnered national acclaim from the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS.

I also commend the Test Tampa Bay campaign, which is an initiative designed to intensify HIV education, awareness, and prevention brought along by local health departments and other health advocates. Test Tampa Bay aims to increase the number of Tampa Bay residents who know their HIV status by encouraging HIV testing.

Finally, I would like to voice my strong support for H.R. 6138, Ending the HIV/AIDS Epidemic Act, by Representative BARBARA LEE and others, of which I'm a proud sponsor. We must remain committed to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic and improving the lives of those infected with the disease.

We are at a tipping point in the fight against AIDS, so let's recommit to ensure that America continues to lead the way to achieve an AIDS-free generation.

HONORING MARGARET OBRAY FOR DEDICATION TO EDUCATION

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, schoolteachers are an overworked and undercompensated group, but the good ones are always appreciated for the time and effort and commitment they make to kids. So I stand today to honor one of the best examples of a dedicated teacher, Margaret Obray, who was a government and history teacher at Mountain Crest High School in Hyrum, Utah. Mrs. Obray has dedicated the past three decades of her life to encouraging her students, both in and out of the school. She has worked tirelessly to open their minds to guide them towards a productive and meaningful life.

Mrs. Obray has decided to retire at the end of this school year, having changed the lives of literally thousands of students who had the opportunity of being taught by such an outstanding educator. I have watched Mrs. Obray for many years and can verify that she is the epitome of what a good educator should be, and she will be sorely missed. So, Mrs. Obray, we want to thank you for what you have done, for the impact you've had on students you have taught in the past, the ones you are teaching currently, and we have pity for all those kids in the future who will never have that experience.

HIV/AIDS

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

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate World AIDS Day today, we have reason to be proud of what we've done to fight HIV/AIDS.

When I came to the Congress in 1989, AIDS was a death sentence; now, with the right medicine, it's a manageable chronic disease. And we've made real progress toward a vaccine. That happened because the United States Congress took action. It wasn't magic. People living with the disease fought to make it happen, and leaders in the Congress and the White House fought to make it happen too.

As we recognize World AIDS Day today, we cannot get complacent. We can create an AIDS-free generation—it is possible. But it will slip away if we let these essential programs get cut. Today, we should resolve to stay the course, to keep the pressure on, and win the fight, to honor all those who died of AIDS and all those who are still fighting for AIDS today. This Capital has an epidemic of AIDS. We need to deal with it.

CONGRATULATING TEACH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN SAN LUIS OBISPO

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

Mrs. CAPPS. I rise today to congratulate Teach Elementary School in San Luis Obispo on becoming a National Blue Ribbon School.

For 30 years, the Department of Education has bestowed this coveted award for outstanding academic achievement, and I am delighted that one of our local schools on the central coast of California was awarded such a tremendous honor.

This distinguished recognition highlights the hard work and dedication of the entire staff at Teach Elementary, and I would specifically like to note the outstanding leadership of Principal Dan Block.

For Teach Elementary to have such remarkable results—particularly during these tough budget times—is truly commendable. At a time when we must

invest in high-quality education in order to strengthen our Nation's economic vitality, it is important that we recognize and replicate the successes of schools such as Teach Elementary.

Our students are our Nation's greatest resource, and it's our responsibility to provide them with high-quality schools that put them on a solid path towards success.

San Luis Obispo, California, is truly fortunate to have a remarkable school such as Teach Elementary.

OPPOSE ANTI-IMMIGRATION BILL

(Mrs. DAVIS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose the anti-immigration bill brought before us today.

The supporters of this legislation would have you believe that immigration is a zero sum game—that for every door you open for one person you have to close it on another. That's what this bill aims to do by increasing the number of visas for STEM graduates while eliminating them from the Diversity Visa Program. This troubling precedent of creating visa offsets will foreclose the promise of the American Dream for countless immigrants.

Our country remains the beacon of opportunity and freedom. For many, the only path to getting here is through the diversity program. People like Yulia, who is a constituent of mine, that lucky draw in the lottery was her best hope for coming to America from Kazakhstan.

It is irresponsible, Mr. Speaker, to hold the much-needed—and I would say we need it—STEM visa bill hostage just to dismantle a program that has helped new Americans like Yulia. It's bad policy, and I urge my colleagues to reject the bill.

BUDGET CRISES

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

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, the consequences of jumping off this so-called ''fiscal cliff'' are serious but avoidable if the sacrifice is shared. My concern is that the domestic discretionary accounts don't seem to have a seat at the negotiating table. If you don't have a seat at the table, you're far more likely to be on the menu.

Domestic discretionary funding is already projected to fall to historically low levels at less than 3 percent of GDP. This is less than what existed during the Eisenhower administration when our population was much smaller and much younger. These are the programs that are the most critical to the future of our country. They fund our roads and rails and ports, they support the most important scientific research in health and technology and are necessary to educate, feed, and house our most vulnerable children and families. Yet they are the ones most likely to be targeted for budget savings. If we allow that to happen, we'll condemn 16 million children to living their lives on the margins of our economy rather than providing them with the means necessary to escape the cycle of poverty as adults.

A Nation such as ours cannot meet the challenges of the 21st century without making the necessary investments in our human and our physical infrastructure and in cutting-edge basic research in health and technology. We shouldn't further diminish our future in order to get ourselves through this artificially created budget crisis.

□ 1220

WORLD AIDS DAY

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

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Today, World AIDS Day, provides the opportunity to celebrate the gains made in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS.

People living with HIV can now experience long and productive lives. Advancements in prevention have led to a turning point—the possibility, as Secretary Clinton said—of an AIDS-free generation.

However, cuts in funding to international and domestic programs could very well turn back the clock. We must take action now to avoid the looming threat to more than 1 million Americans, including more than 4,000 in my own district in Illinois who are living with HIV/AIDS. They cannot afford the $538 million in sequestration cuts that would affect our HIV/AIDS programs; 15,708 people cannot afford to lose access to crucial lifesaving drugs. So let's stop these cuts and move forward towards an end to this epidemic.

WORLD AIDS DAY 2012

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

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, December 1 is World AIDS Day, although every day is World AIDS Day for the millions battling this epidemic on the front lines. It's an important time, though, to reflect upon our loved ones lost, to celebrate the progress we are making, and to recommit ourselves to achieving an AIDS-free generation for all.

As this Congress comes to an end and a new one begins in January, we have been given the extraordinary opportunity to leave an astonishing legacy. Our understanding of the spread of HIV has changed dramatically in recent years. Armed with the National AIDS Strategy, the Affordable Care Act, and the ongoing progress of PEPFAR and the Global Fund, we are closer than ever to stamping HIV and AIDS off the face of the Earth.

But while we have made tremendous progress, we must not lose sight of the long road ahead. In my own district, for example, in Alameda County, we declared a state of emergency in 1998. My phenomenal local activists and providers have done a great job with minimal resources to end the state of emergency; but like all communities, we need more resources and not budget cuts. We have the tools we need. We just need the political will and investments to make the end of AIDS the legacy of our generation.

IN RECOGNITION OF WORLD AIDS DAY

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

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues today in recognizing World AIDS Day. While great progress has been achieved nationally and globally, our fight against HIV/AIDS should only grow stronger. Globally, 6.8 million people are eligible for HIV treatment but don't have access. In the U.S., accessibility of treatment has significantly increased, but the rate of new HIV infections has only stabilized.

So today, in recognition of World AIDS Day, I come first to remember the lives of the affected in my district, the country, and the world but also to reaffirm my commitment, on their behalf, to stand with those who have relentlessly forged progress, including my late predecessor and father, Donald M. Payne.

Today, I stand with the Nation and the world in international solidarity, committed to the fight against HIV/AIDS and ''Getting to Zero.''

EQUAL RECOGNITION FOR DC AND THE TERRITORIES

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

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor to thank the House for recognizing that all veterans and members of the military must be recognized equally, not only some of them; and I have asked the Senate to do the same.

Imagine you are a parent. You go to a military ceremony, for example, the graduation from Navy boot camp. Applause comes with each graduate as his or her name is called, and the flag of the home State is raised. But your flag is not raised. Why? Because your son is from the District of Columbia or one of the Territories.

The House defense authorization bill recognizes the injustice of the discrimination against any of our veterans or members of the military. The Senate bill does not. We ask that the Senate follow the lead of the House.

In our country, no American—and especially no veteran or member of the military—is more equal than any other. If the military flies the flags, then fly them all.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 6429, STEM JOBS ACT OF 2012

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 821 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 821

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 6429) to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to promote innovation, investment, and research in the United States, to eliminate the diversity immigrant program, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. An amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of Rules Committee Print 112-34, modified by the amendment printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution, shall be considered as adopted. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, and on any amendment thereto to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) 90 minutes of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary; and (2) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. It shall be in order at any time on the legislative day of December 6, 2012, for the Speaker to entertain motions that the House suspend the rules as though under clause 1 of rule XV.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this rule, which will allow the House of Representatives to consider H.R. 6429, the STEM Jobs Act of 2012.

As I am sure my colleague from Colorado will point out, H. Res. 821 is a closed rule. The fact is that like Mr. POLIS, I prefer an open-amendment process. Open rules let us come together on both sides of the aisle and contribute ideas to help make a bill better.

Today's rule will be closed, but that's because the crafting of the STEM Jobs Act has been in a collaborative process for the last few months. Chairman SMITH, the author of this legislation, has already worked with his committee, Republicans, Democrats, and even the Senate to come up with a bill that, hopefully, everybody could support.

Unfortunately, we've since been informed that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle and in the other Chamber are looking to play politics with the STEM Jobs Act. However, that doesn't change the fact that Chairman SMITH worked diligently to make sure this legislation was filled with bipartisan ideas.

The STEM Jobs Act would eliminate the flawed Diversity Lottery Green Card program and reallocate up to 55,000 green cards a year to new green card programs for foreign graduates of U.S. universities with advanced STEM degrees.

According to a study by the National Science Foundation and the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, in 1990 about 91,000 full-time foreign graduate students were studying in STEM fields in the United States. That number had jumped to almost 149,000 by 2009. It was 149,000 in 2009. However, the vast majority of these highly skilled, highly educated innovators are leaving the United States where they once received their education.

We're training hundreds of thousands of highly skilled engineers, technicians, and scientists at American universities and then sending them back home to compete against us in other countries.

□ 1230

They aren't moving to other countries because they want to leave the United States. They're moving because the immigration system forces them out.

Currently, we only select 5 percent of our Nation's legal immigrants based on skills and education they bring to America. So the vast majority of foreign students who come to America for advanced degrees and get their education find themselves on a years-long green card waiting list and give up on the idea of staying here in the United States.

When they leave our country, they take with them all their training and all of their potential to go work for America's business competitors in Canada, Europe, and Asia. The exodus of U.S.-trained STEM professionals has been referred to as reverse brain drain.

The STEM Act of 2012 would reverse this trend. It would establish a program to prioritize green cards for immigrants with graduate-level degrees in the STEM fields. To offset the number of green cards that would be given to the STEM Visa program, the bill would eliminate the diversity lottery green card program, a program that has been repeatedly highlighted as a threat to our national security.

The result is that there would be no net increase in the number of green cards we give out as a Nation. The difference is that we will get immigrants who have the training and the skills that we need to keep American businesses competitive in a globalized and increasingly technical age. In the process, we will eliminate a visa lottery system that's rife with fraud and abuse and the State Department stated contains significant threats to our national security.

In the Rules Committee meeting last night, some opponents to H.R. 6429 said that fraud and security concerns are old problems and that they've been fixed. My colleagues were right in that these are old problems, but the State Department inspector general report published in 2003 listed the widespread abuse in the diversity lottery visa program. The inspector general pointed to identity fraud, forged documents, and national security threats. That's their words.

However, my colleagues were absolutely wrong to say that the problems have been fixed. In fact, just 2 months ago, the GAO released a study discussing the ways the State Department could reduce fraud in our immigration system, and it highlighted the diversity lottery program. Moreover, the STEM Jobs Act does this without putting American jobs at risk.

This legislation includes provisions that would require the petitioning of an employer to submit a job order to the appropriate State workforce agency. The job opening would then be posted in the agency's official Web site in an effort to publicize available jobs for Americans.

In addition to reforming the green card process for foreign students with advanced STEM degrees, H.R. 6429 also includes provisions that would help reunite families waiting on the immigration process. As it currently stands, family green cards can take 6 or 7 years to process and be approved. During these long years, families are separated. A spouse or parent can be living as a permanent resident in the United States while their loved ones wait back home hoping to be reunited somewhere down the line. This pro-family legislation would help reduce the time these families need to spend apart without speeding up or preempting the actual green card process.

Provisions contained within the STEM Jobs Act would expand the V nonimmigrant visa program to allow spouses and minor children of permanent U.S. residents to come to the United States to live with their loved ones once they have spent 1 year on the green card waiting list. The bill expressly states that these folks would not be allowed to work, taking jobs away from American citizens, nor would they inherently be entitled to any government welfare programs because of the V visa in and of itself.

Similarly, the expanded V visa program won't speed up or expedite the green card process in any way. All it does is this: It ensures that families don't have to live separately and in uncertainty as to when they can be reunited at an unknown time down the line. It brings families back together.

The simple fact is that our current immigration system is ineffective. We educate the world's best and brightest and then send them away to be our competitors. We only prioritize about 5 percent of our visas based upon what they actually contribute to our economy. We have a diversity lottery system that is subject to widespread abuse and opens up our country to entry of hostile intelligence officers, criminals, and terrorists. We separate spouses, parents, and minor children for unknown years on end.

We can do better with the STEM Jobs Act. It is an important step towards doing better. It makes the American green card process smarter, safer, and more family oriented. It protects American jobs and workers while still supporting the American innovation industry, which is why over 100 major companies and councils have supported H.R. 6429.

I support this rule, and I hope all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding me the customary 30 minutes, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the rule for the underlying bill, H.R. 6429, the STEM Jobs Act of 2012. It is important to talk about, in consideration of this rule and this bill, what it is and what it isn't.

Here we are with a looming fiscal cliff, and yet Congress has allowed no issue to fester longer than immigration. Whether one is on the left or the right or in the middle, I'm sure my colleague from Florida would agree that whatever we're doing now in immigration is not working very well. We have over 10 million people here illegally. There is rampant violation of the law. There is lackluster enforcement. Families are torn apart.

What's before us, regardless of the merits, which we'll get into in a moment, clearly does not address the problems in our immigration system. Whether this bill becomes law or not, our immigration system will continue to have problems, and there will continue to be over 10 million people here in violation of the law, many working illegally, in some cases taking jobs away from American citizens.

So instead of a solution, we have a bill before us that asks us to weigh two goals of our immigration policy in many ways against one another. There might very well be room for a noncontroversial immigration bill that catches up and includes some of the less controversial provisions, including a STEM program, and there could very well be room for that short of comprehensive immigration reform.

I support and am a cosponsor of the IDEA Act, which does that. I tried to amend into this bill and allow for the consideration of this body yesterday in the Rules Committee a bill that I have for the permanent reauthorization of the EB–5 visa program, a program that is not very controversial and has strong support from both sides but suffers from temporary reauthorizations. This is a critical program for creating jobs for Americans because it allows companies to attract capital from investors, and those investors are able to be part of those companies and grow those companies, creating jobs for Americans.

This program could be much more successful if the Rules Committee yesterday had, on a party-line vote, not allowed that amendment to come to the floor. I'm confident that that amendment would have passed with near universal support, and certainly strong support from both sides.

Instead of trying to catch and move forward on some of the less controversial aspects of immigration which in no way, shape, or form, again, prevent the need for a comprehensive solution, but instead of even moving forward on the noncontroversial aspects, we have a bill before us that is controversial because it weighs two important goals of immigration against one another. So rather than create a STEM Visa program as the IDEA Act does, as the STAPLE Act, which I'm a cosponsor of with my colleague Congressman FLAKE from Arizona who has introduced it in past sessions, rather than do that, it asks the question of this body: Would we rather have a Diversity Visa concept or would we rather have a STEM Visa concept? In reality, I think many in this body would agree that both are desirable.

□ 1240

Diversity Visas essentially go to immigrants that are from countries other than the main countries that send us immigrants. What are the main countries that send us immigrants? Obviously, Mexico. In addition to that, there are China, Brazil, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Peru, and several others. We have a lot of immigrants from Mexico and these other countries. What the Diversity Visa says is, shouldn't we also give opportunities to some residents of countries, like the Ukraine or Albania or Ethiopia, and have them also come so that they're not just crowded out by applicants from Mexico, India, and China?

If we don't have a Diversity Visa, a higher percentage of our immigrants will be from Mexico, India, and China. Now, that's okay—it's certainly not the end of the world—but there is value in having immigrants from across the world. There is value in having Ukrainians come to this country. There is value in having Ethiopians. In addition, there is value in people having diverse social backgrounds and ethnic backgrounds coming to this country to facilitate assimilation into this country and integration into this country. So I think that it was well thought out in having a concept whereby people who don't happen to be from Mexico, India, China or the other main countries have a way of getting here. It's a good program.

So, too, having a STEM visa program is absolutely critical as it is important to our country to make sure that we can retain the talent that we attract to our universities. There is something that is so frustrating to me as an American and to many of our constituents, and I talk about it frequently back home with my representing both of our major State universities in Colorado as well as private universities in my district:

Here we are educating people from across the world, and if you look at our engineering grad schools, we see a high number of foreign nationals on student visas. We are educating computer programmers and aerospace engineers with the skills they need to compete in a 21st-century workforce. Upon giving them their master's degrees or Ph.D.s, we tell them, do you know what, you're not allowed to work here in this country. You have to move back to another country and compete against us. Guess what? The jobs follow them. In the digital age, employers care less where an employee is based. They care where the talent is. If the best computer programmer is only available for hire or if an aerospace engineer is only available for hire in India or in Mexico or in the U.K., the companies will—and increasingly are—setting up divisions in those countries to hire them rather than hiring here. So the lack of having a STEM job pathway is actively destroying American jobs every day.

Here we are as a body being asked to say under a closed rule, Is it more important to have immigrants from countries other than Mexico, India, and China? Is it more important to have some Ukrainians and Ethiopians and Albanians? I use those examples because those are some of the leading countries that have used the Diversity Visa, but there are a broad number of countries that do. Is that something that's important? How does its importance compare to making sure that those we train here are able to deploy their talents here and create jobs in America rather than overseas?

Again, it's a very frustrating proposition in the way the Republicans have chosen to bring this to the floor: a, it obviously doesn't address the underlying issues of our immigration crisis in this country. It doesn't change the fact that there are 10 million people here illegally, and it doesn't prevent people from coming here illegally; b, it asks us to choose between two valuable programs. Rather than simply passing the Staples Act, rather than passing the IDEA Act, it says that we're going to have to choose as a country to benefit either from STEM graduates or from people from other countries other than Mexico, India, and China. It's a false dilemma.

There were amendments that were offered by ZOE LOFGREN that would

have addressed that which were turned down by the Rules Committee. Again, there were strong bipartisan concepts like EB–5 permanent authorization that I offered, put forward, that were also shut down in committee. In addition, at a time of budget deficits and the looming fiscal crisis, this bill would increase the budget deficit by over $1 billion over the next 5 years; and that is unpaid for as well.

There are many ways that immigration can be looked at to reduce our budget deficit, and there are many concepts of comprehensive immigration reform either through fees paid by those who violate the law, penalties paid. Increased taxes going forward for those who would have to pay taxes under immigration reform would actually reduce our deficit; but here we are with a solitary idea around immigration that forces all Members of this body to weigh two valuable programs against one another, and at the same time it costs taxpayers over $1 billion over the next 5 years. It's a choice that Congress shouldn't face.

There are also very legitimate concerns that, not only does this bill weigh two valuable programs and asks us to choose, but, in effect, it's a backdoor way to reduce the number of legal immigrants. There should be no hesitation in saying that, by reducing the number of legal immigrants, we will increase the number of illegal immigrants. This bill will likely increase the number of illegal immigrants to this country because the math doesn't work.

Now, why doesn't the math work? The bill purports to offset 55,000 STEM green cards by eliminating 55,000 green cards in the Diversity program. Now, if that were a one-on-one trade, that would be the same net number of immigrants. The issue is, as to our institutions of higher education that give master's degrees and Ph.D.s in the eligible areas to students on foreign visas, there are not 55,000 foreign students who receive them every year. There were, in fact, 29,904 last year, so about 30,000. There is a backlog so that, after several years, the 55,000 would no longer be able to be met; but then after 3 or 4 years and after the backlog was met, this would likely lead to a reduction in legal immigration and to an increase in illegal immigration because only 29,000 foreign nationals are matriculating with master's and Ph.D.s in the included areas; yet 55,000 visas would be removed from the program that allows Ukrainians, Ethiopians, and people from countries that are not Mexico, India, China, and the other 12 from coming to this country legally.

So I have very sincere concerns that, rather than addressing the issue of illegal immigration, this bill because of the math and because of the numbers that have been brought to my attention could actually increase illegal immigration by reducing legal immigration, which is the last thing that we need to do with regard to solving in a bipartisan way our immigration crisis.

As a former Internet entrepreneur myself and in representing our universities, I know firsthand about the critical need to pass a STEM visa program. Not only would it create more high-paying, high-tech jobs for Americans, but it would produce tax revenues. It would make our country stronger and our economy stronger. Yet rather than take up the IDEA Act or the Staples Act, we're here with a backdoor attempt by the Republicans to increase the number of illegal immigrants in our country, which I would argue is not the right direction for immigration reform. Immigration reform should be predicated around solving the crisis of illegal immigration. Rather than increasing the number of illegal immigrants from 10 million to 12 million to 14 million, we need to find a way to reduce that number to as close to zero as is feasible, and that should be the goal of immigration reform.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NUGENT. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POLIS. It is my honor to yield 3 minutes to a leader on immigration issues, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIERREZ).

Mr. GUTIERREZ. I thank the gentleman from Colorado and distinguished member of the Rules Committee for yielding time to me.

Despite bipartisan support for a clean STEM visa bill, this is a partisan bill that picks winners and losers in our immigration system and requires the elimination of the Diversity Visa program before a single STEM visa can be issued. In other words, we want to pick immigrants we like and then eliminate immigrants we don't like as though some are better than others. The interesting thing is that most of the Members of the House can look back into their own personal histories and find their own family members and ancestors who come from the countries that are being eliminated.

□ 1250

After the historic elections we've just witnessed, it flies in the face of our diverse American electorate to precondition STEM visas on the elimination of Diversity Visa immigrants, 50 percent of whom come from the continent of Africa. Like STEM graduates, they have much to contribute to the United States.

We've seen this poison pill before—pitting immigrant against immigrant—when the House voted down H.R. 6429 under suspension. But it gets worse. Inserted in the new version of the bill is an amendment to the V Visa program that the majority claims helps families and makes the bill balanced and bipartisan.

Let me be clear: this was not a provision negotiated with us on the Democratic side. It was negotiated with anti-immigrant groups and extremists in the Republican Party.

H.R. 6429 takes the V visa, a bipartisan visa created more than 10 years ago, and amends it to deny V visa holders eligibility to work and cuts out of the program spouses and minor children already living in the U.S. This backhanded, so-called family fix should offend anyone who truly cares about families.

But the family provisions are even worse than that. Families of STEM visa holders are treated fairly, but the families of ''ordinary'' green card holders are treated as second class. If you are a STEM degree holder, your spouse and minor children can immediately come to the United States and your spouse is granted a work permit. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle know this. However, if you're an ''ordinary'' green card holder who applies to bring your spouse and children to the United States through our regular family immigration channels, you will make your spouse and children wait at least a year before joining you in the U.S., and we will not allow your spouse to work once he or she gets here.

I agree that STEM holders should be able to bring their families—their children and their wives or their husbands—and that their spouses should be able to work legally in the United States. However, I resent that the spouses and children of other family-based immigrants are treated differently and unfairly. Apparently Republicans' devotion to family extends only to families where the principal immigrant is smart enough to earn a Ph.D. or master's degree in a STEM field, and that is something that I resent. And that is something that all Americans should abhor. It goes against the immigration diversity that we have, as a Nation, created.

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CURSON), a new Member of our body.

Mr. CURSON of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 6429 because I have grave concerns with the bill's elimination of the Diversity Visa program. The Diversity Visa program has given people from around the world the opportunity to win the most precious lottery: the chance to come to the United States, to work hard, and to earn the right to be an American. The program increases our Nation's ethnic diversity and provides one of the few legal pathways for immigration from countries that are impoverished, persecuted, or unfree.

I do support increasing STEM visas to foreign graduates. That will increase our pool of high-skilled workers that will promote new ideas, new technologies, and help our businesses stay on the cutting edge of new things to come. But we should not reward one class of individuals and deny another class that's not so blessed with the opportunity to prove themselves.

H.R. 6429 would actually reduce legal immigration levels by not allowing the rollover of unused visas. It's disappointing that there's no opportunity

to craft sensible, bipartisan legislation on an issue that so many Democrats and Republicans agree on.

H.R. 6412, the Democratic version, requires that employers offer wages to STEM graduates that do not undercut actual wages paid to U.S. workers with similar levels of experience. I have witnessed over the last decade unscrupulous employers who dramatically eroded wages, not for competitive reasons, but solely to transfer wealth from workers to executives. They were successful only because workers were hungry for jobs and willing to work for nearly any wage. The median household income dropped by $3,700 in that time while executive pay skyrocketed, even as our economy tanked. By contrast, the bill we are debating today does not include wage protections and does not adequately ensure that American workers are protected.

Equally important is that H.R. 6412 preserves the Diversity Visa program, ensuring equal opportunity to work in our great land. Democrats and Republicans alike have forwarded great wisdom towards this issue. Now is the time to cooperate with one another and craft a truly bipartisan approach to immigration reform that provides for equality of opportunity for all those who seek the benefit of U.S. citizenship.

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POLIS. It is my honor to yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy for yielding me this time, and I identify with a number of the reservations that he mentioned about this legislation.

A costly, inhumane, and broken immigration system is a shadow over the American landscape. The current system denies the reality of nearly 12 million immigrants, who, for the most part, are already part of the fabric of American life. They work in American business and are often already integrated into existing families.

A consequence of this recent election may well be a new reality on the American political scene when it comes to immigration, a willingness to soften hard-edged positions and move us in a more thoughtful direction. We are already hearing some of these signals from the Senate this week. In a small way, the legislation before us today may provide an additional opportunity to move forward.

I voted against its earlier incarnation—reluctantly—because it was designed to fail. While I will vote today against the rule, tomorrow I will be voting for the legislation which would create the STEM Visa program and give 55,000 green cards a year to doctoral and masters graduates in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematical fields. Dealing with this in regular order is encouraging. The bill was also made marginally better. I think we have an opportunity here for us all to help break this logjam. Creating a STEM Visa program should be a no-brainer.

This legislation is certainly not perfect, and I agree, as I mentioned, with some of the reservations that have been advanced. Frankly, unless our objections are addressed, it will not pass the Senate. We don't support the philosophy that immigration needs to be zero sum. We need not eliminate the Diversity Visa program in order to add this program. The Senate, as I said, will fix these provisions, if they take it up at all. Frankly, I hope they do take it up and they do fix it. This would be an important signal to the next Congress that we can and must move forward on broader immigration reform, like the comprehensive immigration reform, that Senator MCCAIN previously supported with the late-Senator Kennedy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. POLIS. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. America needs to unite families, to protect and give justice to young people, strengthen business from high tech to agriculture and help us live up to our ideals as a Nation of immigrants.

A costly, inhumane, and broken immigration system is a shadow over the American landscape. The current system denies the reality of nearly 12 million immigrants, who for the most part are already part of the fabric of American life. They work in American business and are often already integrated into existing families. Strengthening and expanding legal immigration even helps grow our economy. Conservative economists for the Cato Institute project that a comprehensive imigration reform with a pathway to citizenship would add $1.5 trillion to the U.S. economy over 10 years. Unfortunately, rational immigration policy has fallen victim to some of the most extreme political cross currents in our country which not only deny our roots, but violate fundamental fairness and reality.

Recent immigration legislation is costly, inefficient, and cruel as it relates to families already here. Young people brought here as children who know no other life and are American in every sense, but are still denied the American dream.

A consequence of the election may well be a new reality on the American political scene when it comes to immigration and a willingness to soften hard-edged positions and move us in a more thoughtful direction.

There have been shifts in public attitude embracing comprehensive solutions for some time, but in the political arena this is a more recent phenomenon. It will take time to do this right, but a willingness by some on the other side of the aisle to offer their own version of the DREAM Act in the Senate, for example, is reason for optimism.

While I strongly support a comprehensive solution that provides a path to citizenship for people who are willing to play by the rules, work hard, pay their taxes, and demonstrate citizenship skills, there are two intermediate steps that should get us moving in the right direction. The DREAM Act and the creation of a STEM visa program should be low-hanging fruit that almost everyone can embrace.

The deferred action announced by the administration to give a sliver of hope to these bright young people who study hard and play by the rules and who are good citizens was a good step but should be followed by early action on the DREAM Act. I am proud this was passed by the previous Congress and I hope it will be the first order of business in the new Congress. These young people are the lifeblood of America's future and we should welcome them and do everything possible to ensure their success.

I will vote for H.R. 6429, the STEM Jobs Act, which creates a STEM visa program and would give 55,000 green cards a year to doctoral and master's graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematical fields. I reluctantly voted against this in September because it was brought forward as a last minute suspension bill designed to fail and create unnecessary political divisions. This time, dealing with this in regular order is encouraging. It was also made marginally better. For example, the new version of the legislation decreases the wait time for certain spouses and children who are planning to join their loved ones with permanent residency in the United States. It also removed a concerning provision that forced STEM visa applicants to commit to working in the United States for five years. While prospects in the Senate are still dim, the most important change has been the willingness of my friends on the other side of the aisle to take another look at immigration and maybe dial down the political rhetoric. I was personally willing to meet them halfway.

Creating a STEM visa program should be a no-brainer. It will make a huge difference in keeping the best and brightest from around the world in the United States. These students come to our colleges and universities to receive the best education available and it is insane to send them back home or to other countries if they want to stay here. It has been said that we should staple a green card to every diploma for an advanced degree. We should certainly do whatever is necessary for appropriate verification to ensure national security, but the overwhelming majority should be welcome to reside, be productive, create families, and support businesses right here.

The legislation is certainly not perfect and unless our objection is addressed will not pass the Senate. We need comprehensive immigration overhaul, not a piecemeal approach. I also do not support the philosophy that immigration needs to remain zero-sum: we should not need to eliminate the diversity visa in order to add this program. I am confident the Senate will fix these provisions.

This would be an important signal to the next Congress that we can and must move forward on broader immigration reform. America needs to unite families, to protect and give justice to young people, strengthen business from high-tech to agriculture, and help us live up to our ideals as a Nation of immigrants.

Mr. POLIS. I would like to inquire if the gentleman from Florida has any remaining speakers he's expecting.

Mr. NUGENT. I do not.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, seeing as I am the last speaker from my side, I yield myself the balance of my time.

As articulated by the gentleman from Oregon, this bill presents a difficult decision for Members of this body, and I certainly have great respect for people on both sides of the issue.

□ 1300

I want to go over, again, some of the pros and cons. The program that allows Ukrainians, Ethiopians, and Albanians to come in to make sure that a disproportionate number of our immigrants are not just from a small number of countries is important. Absent that, a higher percentage of our immigrants will be from Mexico, India, and China. So again, if this bill passes, a higher percentage of our immigrants will be from the major countries that send people here.

Now, it's not the end of the world, but there's added value in having people from all corners of the world come here to become part of our great country and, in many cases, this is the only way that people from Nepal or Albania or Ethiopia have a shot at coming to this country and succeeding.

We also need people in this country across all different skill levels in our labor market. And whether that labor includes toiling in the field or toiling in downtown buildings at night or programming computers or designing aircraft, we have needs across all sectors of our economy—yes, in STEM, but not just in STEM.

So we are asked to choose, asked to choose between people with graduate degrees whom we want to keep here in science, technology, engineering, and math. In many cases, if they're not allowed to stay, they will have to return to other countries, and the jobs will follow them, costing our country jobs.

Choose between them and allowing people here from countries other than Mexico, India, and China, some of whom are high-skilled, some of whom are low-skilled, a diverse group across the board. Looking back at many of our own forebears, certainly mine, my family came to this country in the late 19th century, and early 20th century, 1890s, 1905. They didn't have master's degrees. They didn't have Ph.D.s. They didn't have college degrees. And that's the case for many of our forebears.

Here today their great-grandson sits as a Member of Congress, and had a program not existed whereby they could arrive at Ellis Island and be here, I wouldn't be here today.

Now, my father has a Ph.D., but that's the legacy of his hard-working immigrant grandparents that came to this country without a college degree and, in many cases, without something that's the equivalent of even a high school degree today. To work hard, to live the American Dream, and for their descendents, to be able to serve in this august body.

So it's a cause for reflection. Both are important. And again, the closed process of the bill doesn't allow for a discussion of the IDEA Act or the STAPLE Act, which would simply create a new STEM immigrant visa program.

My other concern with this bill, as I mentioned, is that it would increase the number of illegal immigrants here in this country. Simply by the way that the math works, the number of STEM graduates is lower than the number of STEM visas that are available each year.

Now, it would be one thing if that was allowed to trickle down to other categories, or, for instance, the overflow was allowed to be used for diversity visas. There might be room for compromise. But instead, those excess visas disappear. So after the backlog of three or 4 years is dealt with, these 55,000 visas that are being taken away from Albania and the Ukraine and Ethiopia and Africa and Asia, the back of those 55,000 visas will only result in 20,000 or so net immigrants.

Now 29,000 graduates graduating from institutions of higher education. Now, keep in mind, not everybody wants to stay here. As attractive as our country is, some people do want to learn here and go back to their other countries, and that's certainly fine as well. But many will want to stay here.

But in losing some of those visas, again, we are only increasing the immigration problem, the illegal immigration problem, and moving in the opposite direction of addressing immigration in this country. There is little to be proud of with regard to the current state of affairs in immigration.

It's very different than when my great-grandparents came here and got off at Ellis Island and registered and, albeit with a misspelled name, were able to go to work the next day. It's becoming harder and harder.

The absence of a legal way of immigrating that is in touch with our labor market in this country, the lack of having an operative immigration system has led to over 10 million people being here illegally, working illegally, as my colleague from Oregon said, in many cases, integrated into our communities. Many of them have American children, are parents of American kids, and yet, without any way, currently, of getting right with the law.

What we need to do in immigration reform is require that people who are here illegally get right with the law, rather than prevent them from getting right with the law, which is what we do currently.

So, again, while STEM immigration is very important, my colleagues are being asked, in a closed process, to weigh that with the issue of immigrants from countries like the Ukraine and Albania. At the same time, again, this bill will increase the number of illegal immigrants in this country. Perhaps increasing the number of illegal immigrants will redouble the efforts of this Congress to address this issue.

But, given the enormous dimension of the problem already and the complete lack of consideration of any meaningful immigration bill by this Congress to solve a broken immigration system, I'm certainly not holding my breath.

The zero-sum bill on the floor asks us to weigh one class of immigrants at the expense of another, in effect, trying to play politics and avoid solving our immigration crisis.

I think it's time for a transparent and open debate. It's time for compromise. It's time to work in a bipartisan fashion to actually replace our broken immigration system with one that works for our country, one that strengthens our economy, one that creates jobs for Americans, one that makes our Nation's immigration system more humane and makes it workable and enforceable.

This bill, for all its merits, for all its problems, I think, we, both proponents and opponents can agree it falls short on that account of fixing our broken immigration system and replacing it with one that works. It has no additional enforcement provisions, no border security provisions. It provides no requirement for people who are here illegally to get right with the law.

Rather, it does create an excellent program to keep high-tech graduates here. It destroys another valuable program to keep people from countries other than Mexico and India and China and the UK here. It likely will increase illegal immigration by 10 or 20,000 a year, and provides no solution.

So a difficult decision for all Members of this body. And I'd like to think that Members on both sides, hopefully, would agree that we can do better. We need to do better. We've been called upon by the voters of this country to do better.

And I encourage, whether it's in this Congress or the next Congress, to take up the difficult but critical issue of replacing our broken immigration system with one that works for our country, creates prosperity for America, helps reduce our budget deficit, is humane, is enforceable. No one said it would be easy, but that's what the people send us here to do.

And regardless of the outcome of this particular bill, we are simply taking another week in avoiding addressing the real issues of the immigration crisis in this country.

I encourage my colleagues to vote against the rule, which was a closed process and doesn't allow for consideration of even noncontroversial amendments such as my EB–5 amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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

To my good friend from Colorado, we agree on so many issues, particularly as it relates to immigration reform. We agree. I think this is the first step in regards to where we need to go. You have sold a very persuasive argument in regards to why it is so important, so important, that we have a STEM visa program; why it's important to us to keep that brain power that we educated in the United States, keep them

here in this country to support our businesses and our manufacturing so we can be more competitive on a global market. You have made my case on that argument.

I'll agree with you that this immigration system that we have is broken. I wasn't here 2 years ago or 4 years ago when the Democrats were in power in both the House and the Senate and the Presidency, and they moved nothing forward that we're talking about today.

□ 1310

It's disappointing when you have all the levels of government and you don't accomplish anything as it relates to this. And now we want to turn it around and say that this is a flawed bill. At the end of the day, this meets the needs of our corporations of creating more jobs here in America, about putting more people to work, and it also rectifies an issue on the V-Visa program in regards to instead of having families split because someone has a legitimate green card as a resident here, that he has to be split or she has to be split from their family. The mother of their children or their children are kept from coming in the United States. Because today, the way the program is, they are kept from coming to the United States. So they don't have an opportunity to get a job, anyhow.

But what this does do is it rectifies a problem that allows parents to be reunited with their children. I don't know, but that's important to me as a father of three. I would much rather have had my family here if I was a resident alien here. I would rather have my family here so I could reach out and touch them and help encourage them and move them forward in the American principles—that's what I would want to do—versus trying to talk across great distances to try to bring a family together. That's no way to raise a family. But they do it because they have to. This rectifies that problem. While it doesn't allow them to go out and get a job, it does bring the family unit back together again. I know, Mr. POLIS, you have a son. You would rather have your son with you than a thousand miles away, as I would.

So this is a step in the right direction. This is moving us forward, not moving us backwards. This is actually taking an approach that should have been taken 4 years ago, and the Democrats punted it down the field. In September, we voted on this initial STEM bill and we had 30 Democrats across the aisle vote with us. We didn't meet the threshold of two-thirds because it was under suspension.

I truly believe that this bill has the ability to cut across the aisle. And we heard our good friend from Oregon talk about it—for the right reasons. Just because it's not perfect doesn't mean we should just throw it in the scrap heap. And I agree that we can pass this bill and send it to the Senate. The Senate has the option to bring it up, debate it, vote on it, amend it, and send it back to the House. Do your job. I agree that that's what they should do. At least have the discussion. When the Senate comes out and says, We're going to ignore it, we're not going to do anything with it, that's a disservice to the American public, it's a disservice to those that create jobs, and those Americans that need jobs.

You talk about a zero sum game. This is not a way to reduce immigration. I don't know where my good friend got the numbers about how this is going to increase the number of illegal immigrants to this country. I've never heard that before. I've never seen anything in writing as relates to that. I'm not saying it's not true, but I don't know that. I think it just sounds like a good number. What we don't want to do is scare people to be opposed to something that is good for America.

We made an investment as a Nation in these foreign students when they came here, when we allowed them here in the STEM fields. Why let that investment leave? Why would we ignore that investment and say, you know what? we don't care, when it has a direct negative impact on this country—not on any other country—on this country it has a direct negative impact. It's just common sense. And I guess that's the problem. Sometimes common sense and Washington, D.C., are vast worlds apart.

While looking at this, it's just a small, commonsense reform to our immigration policy. But what it does do is addresses a dangerous Diversity Visa problem. Even the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Visa Services testified in front of the Judiciary Committee that visa lottery fraud includes multiple entries, fraudulent claims to education and work experience, pop-up spouses or family members, and false claims of employment or financial support in the United States. His words, not mine.

For example, one third-party agent in Bangladesh entered every single name from a phone book in Bangladesh into the lottery system in order to extort money. If your name got pulled he would go to you and extort money so you can come to the United States. Or, guess what? Sell that winning slot to someone else.

That's not what the whole program was designed for. I would suggest to you that students that are coming from foreign countries come across-the-board. We have them from China, we have them from the Ukraine, as you like to keep pointing out, and from all over the world to come to our universities, particularly for those STEM degrees, advanced degrees. So I would suggest to you that you're going to continue that diversity by getting people that have gone to the max that are going to be so productive here in America to help us. It's not a sum game. It's just a rational game.

I really wish that I knew that if we passed this today, that it would become law. The President has already kind of said he wouldn't sign it. I don't know how you can have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about STEM, those individuals who have come to our universities and graduate with a degree in those STEM sciences, how we can just ignore them and say, Listen, this is good for America.

Instead of making this a Republican or Democratic idea, why don't we just pass it because it's the right idea? Let's do something for once that's good for America. Let's do something once that's good for those green card holders that are currently here in the United States, bringing their families together so they can become productive in whatever sense their family decides. Wouldn't we want to do that? I would want to do that. I want to see families reunited, not split apart, not kept because of some arcane rule that's going to take them 6 or 7 years, maybe, to get a green card so they can bring their family here in the United States, where this would allow them to come 1 year after being on the waiting list, they get the opportunity to come here and be reunited with their family.

For all that we hear about Democrats are always for families, this time I guess they're not. This time I guess because they're from some other country, maybe they're just not that important. They are to me. I think it's important. Here's once where the Republicans are stepping forward on an immigration issue that's good for America, it's good for the people that are currently here on green cards legally. It allows them to reinvest. How can this be bad for America? Is it because it's a Republican idea? Is that the reason why this is a bad piece of politics? I would hope not. I would hope that my colleagues across the aisle will be like Mr. BLUMENAUER from Oregon and look at the real merits of it.

While not perfect in any sense of the word, as is any legislation that comes out of this place, at least it's a move and a step in the right direction. And let the Senate do their job. Let the Senate bring it up. Let the Senate vote on it and amend it and send it back to the House. Let the Senate for once do their job. And then, Mr. President, you can make a decision whether you're going to veto it or not. But let's quit playing politics with immigration.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank my good friend from Colorado because we agree on so many issues as it relates to this. We just don't agree on everything.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose H. Res. 821, the Rule providing for the consideration of H.R. 6429 "STEM Jobs Act," a bill which eliminates the Diversity Visa Program.

Nearly 15 million people, representing about 20 million with family members included, registered late last year for the 2012 Diversity Visa Program under which only 50,000 visa

winners were to be selected via random selection process.

Each year, diversity visa winners make up about 4% of all Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) admissions.

SEEDS OF DIVERSITY

Unlike every other visa program, its express purpose is to help us develop a racially, ethnically, and culturally-diverse population. It serves a unique purpose and it works. In recent years, African immigrants have comprised about 50% of the DV program's beneficiaries.

Diversity Visa immigrants succeed and contribute to the U.S. economy. According to the Congressional Research Service, in FY 2009 Diversity Visa immigrants were 2.5 times more likely to report managerial and professional occupations than all other lawful permanent residents.

The Diversity Visa program promotes respect for U.S. immigration laws. It reduces incentives for illegal immigration by encouraging prospective immigrants to wait until they win a visa, as opposed to attempting to enter without permission.

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS

The Diversity Visa sustains the American Dream in parts of the world where it represents the only realistic opportunity for immigrating to the U.S.

Former Rep. Bruce Morrison—one of the architects of the Diversity Visa—testified in 2005 that the program advances a principle that is "at the heart of the definition of America"; the principle that "all nationalities are welcome."

Ambassador Johnny Young, Executive Director of Migration and Refugee Services, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, testified at a 2011 Judiciary Committee hearing: "The Program engenders hope abroad for those that are all too often without it—hope for a better life, hope for reunification with family in the United States, and hope for a chance to use their God-given skills and talents."

AMENDMENTS OFFERED IN JUDICIARY AND RULES

During the Judiciary Committee's markup of a bill earlier this year to kill the Diversity Visa program, I offered an amendment directing the Secretaries of Homeland Security and State to report to Congress on steps that could be taken to further eliminate fraud and security risks in the Diversity Visa program. Rather than vote to fix the program and defend legal immigration and diversity in our immigrant pool, every Republican on the Committee who was present voted down the amendment.

Once again I offered 2 amendments in Rules Committee to protect the Diversity Visa Program, and once again the Republican majority on the Committee voted against it.

NO SIGNIFCANT EVIDENCE OF A SECURITY RISK

No substantive evidence has been given that the Diversity Program poses a significant risk to our national security. There are organizations like Numbers USA who are not just advocating against illegal immigration but also wish to place caps on or decrease legal immigration as well.

As former Congressman Bruce Morrison testified in 2005: "[I]t is absurd to think that a lottery would be the vehicle of choice for terrorists." 12 to 20 million people enter the Diversity Visa lottery each year and no more than 50,000 visas are available.

In 2007, GAO "found no documented evidence that DV immigrants . . . posed a terrorist or other threat."

Diversity Visa recipients go through the same immigration, criminal, and national security background checks that all people applying for Lawful Permanent Residence undergo. They also are interviewed by State Department and Department of Homeland Security personnel.

FRAUD

Since the State Department OIG first raised concerns about fraud in 1993, significant changes have been made. In 2004, State implemented an electronic registration system. This allows State to use facial and name recognition software to identify duplicate applications and to share date with intelligence and law enforcement agencies for necessary immigration and security checks.

In 2012 there was an incident where 20,000 people were erroneously notified that they were finalists in the Diversity program. They would have the opportunity to enter the lottery. The OIG investigated and found this was due to a computer error. There was no evidence of intentional fraud, as a safety precaution and because of the principle of fairness the State Department did the lottery again.

The Diversity Visa program has led the way in applying cutting edge technology to reduce fraud and increase security. The program was one of the first in the government to use facial recognition software to analyze digital photographs.

I join the vast majority of my Democratic colleagues in supporting an expansion of the STEM program. H.R. 6429 attempt to increase the STEM Visa program is an admirable one; however, I firmly believe it should not come at the expense of the Diversity Immigration Visa Program and should include a broader range of institutions.

I firmly support Rep. LOFGREN's bill, H.R. 6412 which is a clean STEM Visa bill and creates a visa program for students graduating with advanced STEM degrees from U.S. research universities, without eliminating the Diversity Visa Program.

Frankly, it appears there are Republicans who have been needlessly targeting this program, as a means to decrease legal immigration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 243, nays 170, not voting 19, as follows:

[Roll No. 611]

YEAS—243

Adams
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Amash
Amodei
Bachmann
Bachus
Barletta
Bartlett
Barton (TX)
Bass (NH)
Benishek
Berg
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Bonner
Bono Mack
Boren
Boswell
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brooks
Broun (GA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Buerkle
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Canseco
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Cassidy
Chabot
Chaffetz
Coble
Coffman (CO)
Cole
Conaway
Cravaack
Crawford
Crenshaw
Culberson
Denham
Dent
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Dold
Donnelly (IN)
Dreier
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Ellmers
Emerson
Farenthold
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Flake
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grimm
Guinta
Guthrie
Hall
Hanna
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (WA)
Hayworth
Heck
Hensarling
Herger
Herrera Beutler
Huelskamp
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Issa
Jenkins
Johnson (IL)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Kelly
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kissell
Kline
Labrador
Lamborn
Lance
Landry
Lankford
Latham
LaTourette
Latta
Lewis (CA)
LoBiondo
Long
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lummis
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Marchant
Marino
Massie
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
Meehan
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran
Mulvaney
Murphy (PA)
Myrick
Neugebauer
Noem
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
Olson
Palazzo
Paul
Paulsen
Pearce
Peterson
Petri
Pitts
Platts
Poe (TX)
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Quayle
Reed
Rehberg
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rigell
Rivera
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross (AR)
Ross (FL)
Royce
Runyan
Ryan (WI)
Scalise
Schilling
Schock
Schweikert
Scott (SC)
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Southerland
Stearns
Stivers
Stutzman
Terry
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Turner (NY)
Upton
Walberg
Walden
Walsh (IL)
Webster
West
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Young (AK)
Young (FL)
Young (IN)

NAYS—170

Altmire
Andrews
Baca
Baldwin
Barrow
Bass (CA)
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown (FL)
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Carnahan
Carney
Carson (IN)
Castor (FL)
Chandler
Chu
Cicilline
Clarke (MI)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly (VA)
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Courtney
Critz
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Curson (MI)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
DelBene
Deutch
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Engel
Eshoo
Farr
Fattah
Fudge
Garamendi
Gonzalez
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hahn
Hanabusa
Hastings (FL)
Heinrich
Higgins
Himes
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hochul
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hoyer
Israel
Jackson Lee (TX)
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Kaptur
Keating
Kildee
Kind
Kucinich
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski

Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Luján
Lynch
Maloney
Markey
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McNerney
Meeks
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Moore
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Olver
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor (AZ)
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters
Pingree (ME)
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Richardson
Richmond
Rothman (NJ)
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schrader
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sewell
Sherman
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Speier
Sutton
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Tonko
Tsongas
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watt
Waxman
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Woolsey
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—19

Ackerman
Austria
Barber
Costello
Filner
Frank (MA)
Gallegly
Lee (CA)
Manzullo
Murphy (CT)
Owens
Payne
Pence
Roybal-Allard
Schmidt
Stark
Sullivan
Towns
Turner (OH)

□ 1342

Messrs. HONDA, ELLISON, CARNEY, CLEAVER, and Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated against:

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall 611, I was away from the Capitol due to prior commitments to my constituents. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay."

ELECTING MEMBERS TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 822

Resolved, That the following named Members be and are hereby elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

(1) COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE.—Mr. Garamendi.

(2) COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY.—Mr. Curson.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HAMAS IS THE PUPPET AND IRAN IS THE PUPPETEER

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the eyes of the world were on the Gaza Strip for 8 days as sirens wailed and Hamas rained rockets down on Israel.

Iran's mullahs shipped long-range rockets into Sudan, sent them up into Egypt before smuggling them through tunnels and assembling them in Gaza. Israel responded by doing the only thing a responsible nation should do: it defended itself. Now the United States needs to show there are consequences for attacking this sovereign nation, consequences for Hamas and Iran, as well.

We should have stricter enforcement of sanctions against Iran. Iran and Hamas both need to be held accountable for these attacks. Israel had the moral right and legal duty to defend itself from attacks by the barbarians, Hamas. There is a ceasefire, but only until Hamas obtains more Iranian missiles.

Hamas is the puppet, and Iran is the puppeteer. The Iranian regime needs to go. The Iranian people need to rid themselves of the little fellow from the desert, Ahmadinejad, and his ways of war.

And that's just the way it is.

□ 1350

NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVERS MONTH

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

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the more than 65 million family caregivers across the Nation who work tirelessly and selflessly to care for loved ones who are chronically ill, disabled or aging. So this month, we celebrate National Family Caregivers Month, which is a time to thank all those heroes who sacrifice their time and effort in looking after others.

It is estimated that family caregivers provide 80 percent of our Nation's long-term care, saving families about $375 billion annually. Caregivers are the silent heroes of the family. They work day in and day out to ensure that those in need of care receive that support. Taking care of sick family members is, no doubt, a difficult job; and I encourage caregivers to continue to utilize the resources they have in their communities for support.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the family caregivers in Minnesota and of those helping families in America. Your work to support your families exemplifies the true meaning of putting someone else's needs first.

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, just about 40 minutes or so ago, we were in the midst of a debate concerning STEM, which is something that most Americans have come to now understand as the acronym for science, technology, engineering, and math.

As a longstanding member on the Subcommittee on Immigration and on Homeland Security, STEM is now a basis for expanding visas to ensure or to give opportunities to young people who are graduating from our research institutions of higher learning who have been born in other countries and to give them the ability to be able to stay here in order to help create jobs and to build this economy. That's a good thing. Yet on November 6, 2012, I think America spoke and said, We're ready to do more and go further.

I voted ''no'' on the rule because I believe we are ready for comprehensive immigration reform, not something that will hurt us, but something that will help us. For those who appreciated the Statue of Liberty that welcomed the poor and the downtrodden, that welcomed the Irish and the Germans and the Italians, we know that comprehensive immigration reform is the right way. This rule, H. Res. 821, is not the right way. So I ask my colleagues to look to comprehensive immigration reform, and I will speak about this bill tomorrow.

UPHOLDING THE SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois. Twelve years ago, I took an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States. I am here today to urge my colleagues to uphold our Second Amendment right to bear arms.

Congress has to put aside partisan differences and act to uphold a citizen's right to bear arms in every State in the Union. Unfortunately, in my home State, residents are denied the ability to carry firearms even though the residents of every other State in the Union are allowed to protect themselves and their property. The Second Amendment is clear and concise, and it was meant to protect all residents no matter where they live.

I urge Congress and the States to uphold this fundamental and basic right.

THANK YOU, NOT GOODBYE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE of Texas). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I begin this Special Order for those Members on this side of the aisle who are retiring or who are leaving at the end of 2012, so I rise today not to say goodbye, but to say thank you.

After 14 wonderful and productive years, I will be stepping away from this podium for the last time at the end of

the 112th Congress. Representing the people of the 13th District of Illinois has been the great honor of my lifetime. Words cannot express the depth of gratitude I feel to my friends, colleagues, supporters, and staff who have made this time in Washington so cheerful and fulfilling. I can recall the first time that I stepped out onto the House floor as a Member of this great body and said to myself, How did I end up in the U.S. Congress, surrounded by the legacies of so many great leaders?

Growing up on the south side of Chicago, I never expected to become a lawyer or a school board president, much less a Member of Congress. At the time, few women went to college, let alone law school. Today, I know the path here was often the same for all who have walked these Halls. We are just Americans who love our communities and our country and who found ourselves pursuing that love through service to others. Even among those who rarely see eye to eye, I know that we share a passion for creating a better future for the next generation and that there has always been enough to bridge any gap that divides us. Maybe that's why I've always been known as a moderate. I like to assume the best about people with whom I disagree, at least until they prove me wrong. Thankfully, I can say without question that I've rarely been wrong, which is why my faith in this country and its future has never been stronger.

But listening is the key. Lawmakers must listen to those around them as one American to another, as neighbors with shared values and without assuming that any difference of opinion is evidence of greed, ignorance, or malice. I was fortunate. I learned that lesson early. Maybe it was because I was the only female Republican in my freshman class here. All of my colleagues, chairmen and ranking members seemed eager to come and say hello, to welcome me with a smile and sage advice. Their advice served me well, and, in turn, it allowed me to serve my constituents better. My hope is that our incoming class of lawmakers follows a similar path and that they come to Washington ready to learn from those around them and to benefit from the diversity of backgrounds and experiences that can be found here in the Capitol.

Because we face great challenges—the economy, immigration, the debt, Social Security, and Medicare—on these items and more we must find the answers soon if we hope to keep our country on a path to prosperity. Those solutions will only materialize if the Members of Congress take a chance, work together, and care more about results than sound bites or the next election. Equally important, they must be willing to take a walk a few hundred feet to the other side of the rotunda.

The House and the Senate are two sides of the same coin, and yet they have never seemed further apart. My proudest moments as a Member of Congress have all been as the result of collaboration. My work to keep homeless kids in school, to bar genetic discrimination, or to reform the Nation's Flood Insurance Program were all signed into law after extensive personal conversations with Members of the upper Chamber. We have great leaders here in the House, but they alone cannot maintain communications between the two greatest deliberative bodies in the world. It's up to all of us, and it will be to all of you.

So, Mr. Speaker, my advice is to work together across the aisle and across the Capitol. I urge my colleagues to stay close to their voters and true to their principles, but to never let ''compromise'' become a dirty word. That's what our constituents want; that's what America needs; and that's what has made these last 14 years the source of great joy in my life, none of which, I should add, would have been possible without my wonderful staff.

Before I close, I must give thanks to these individuals who have been with me for months or years and who have never let up in their service to the residents of the 13th Congressional District of Illinois. From casework, to flag requests, to building roads or to passing laws, my staff has taken every challenge in stride, has brought out the best in me, and has done it all without ever seeking recognition, praise, or a raise.

I also want to thank the great committee staff with Financial Services, with Education and the Workforce, and with Science, Space, and Technology, as well as the team at Ethics, with whom I worked for several years. Also, thank you to the unappreciated staff here on the House floor, who always keeps the debate moving forward.

Most of all, I would like to thank Kathy Lyndon, the best chief of staff and friend that a Member of Congress ever asked for. Without her, I would not be here; and without her, I would not have been able to assemble one of the smartest and most capable staffs in Washington.

□ 1400

So, thank you. Thank you to my colleagues, my staff, my friends, my family, my supporters, and even my critics who have helped me to grow, to learn, and to serve the people of Illinois. I have always viewed public service as a privilege, not a career, and you have all made this the fondest privilege of my life.

Mr. HOYER. Will the gentlelady yield?

Mrs. BIGGERT. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

I was in the cloakroom having some lunch, and I heard the gentlelady's comments. Most of us—a lot of us—went around this country listening to people as well as speaking on behalf of our respective candidacies and parties. What I heard around America was that they want people who will sit down together and try to solve the problems that confront America's families and America's workers.

I want to say to the gentlelady from Illinois, my experience with her, throughout her career, has been that she is one of those types of people. And I want to thank her. I want to thank her for her decency. I want to thank her for her hard work. I want to thank her for her commitment to country first. It's been a privilege to serve with you, Judy, and I look forward to being your friend for many years to come. I wish you great success in the future.

I wanted to say that because too often the public sees us confronting one another and sometimes being angry with one another, but you and I have had the opportunity to work together and I know the good heart that you have and the openness that you have displayed, and I thank you for that.

Mrs. BIGGERT. And I thank you, the minority whip, so much for those comments. That really is very kind of you, and I appreciate it.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentlelady.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Would the gentlelady yield for one more comment?

Mrs. BIGGERT. I yield to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. PERLMUTTER).

Mr. PERLMUTTER. I just wanted to echo Mr. HOYER's comments. You and I have served together on the Financial Services Committee. We have worked together on legislation that I was proposing and that you were proposing, and working with you was always a pleasure and an honor. I always appreciated the knowledge you would bring to all of these different discussions; and the fact that you were willing to work with me in such a fashion, that helped bring me along as a Member of Congress. I think you definitely brought legislation to the country that was of value, and I just want to thank the gentlelady from Illinois.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I thank the gentleman. I will always think of you as the green man from Colorado.

Now I would like to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. TODD PLATTS, who is also retiring.

Mr. PLATTS. I thank the gentlelady.

Before commenting on my own retirement, I want to echo the gentlemen from Colorado and Maryland, Mr. PERLMUTTER and Mr. HOYER, and their right-on-point remarks, Judy, about you and your service.

We have sat together for the last 12 years on the Ed Committee working on education issues and children's issues. You've been such a great leader on the issue of homeless children and the importance of us doing right by them in the education arena even though they were homeless—and maybe all the more important that we do right by them.

When we hear the terms ''statesman'' or ''public servant,'' you epitomize

both. Judy, it has been a great privilege to work with you.

As I think back to arriving 12 years ago, one, it is hard to believe it has been 12 years since first coming here. My decision about a year ago, January of this year, to step down was not an easy one, but it's one that I felt was the right decision for me. I've always been one who believed in 12-year term limits and thought I've got to live what I preach as a servant, as a public official, but maybe most importantly as a dad, that I needed to set a good example to my sons, Tom and TJ, that they saw me living up to my word and that my actions backed up my words. So while it wasn't an easy decision to decide to leave this great Chamber, I believe it was the right one.

But it has been such a privilege to represent the people of Pennsylvania's 19th Congressional District—Adams, Cumberland, and York counties; Gettysburg, Carlisle, and York, the county seats in the three counties in my district—and the fact that 12 years ago the citizens of this district said, Todd, we trust you to represent our interests in Washington. And to allow me to return for five more terms after that first one has been pretty remarkable.

And it speaks volumes to me about what truly a land of opportunity we are. As a kid growing up, that I would be given this opportunity, it only happens in America. I'm one who's known that I wanted to do this since I was 14. I've often been asked, What made you want to serve in Congress at such an early age?

I point first to my mom and dad, Babs and Dutch Platts, just average citizens, middle class family. Dad was a mechanical engineer; Mom was a stay-at-home mom, park director, a lot of odd jobs that were part time to make sure that she could be hands on with all five of us kids. They were not active politically other than always voting and taking us with them to vote when they would go, but they were so active in the community. They were community servants, teaching Sunday school, coaching Little League baseball. In fact, I had the privilege to coach my sons for about 10 years on the same fields that my dad coached three of us Platts sons way back when; Mom running the school candy sales. They gave all five of us children—I'm the fourth of the five—a wonderful example to follow, that if you want to live in a great Nation and a great community, you need to do your part. You need to be engaged and be involved. So they gave me the example of service, and then it was my eighth grade social studies teacher by the name of Earl Lucius, who passed away just shy of 2 years ago, who encouraged taking that community service example of my parents and to make it a public service career.

So as I left eighth grade and Mr. Lucius' class and got ready to enter high school, I joined the Teenage Republicans as a ninth grader and volunteered on my first campaign. It was Jerry Ford running for reelection for President, John Heinz for the United States Senate, and Bill Goodling for his first reelection to represent the 19th Congressional District of Pennsylvania. Pretty eerie, 24 years later, after volunteering for Mr. Goodling as a ninth grader, that's who I succeeded. When he retired after 26 years here in the people's House, I had the privilege to succeed him. But I have known ever since then that this is what I wanted to do.

So first, I thank the citizens of the district for allowing me this privilege and for giving me their trust. Certainly I could not have served the citizens back home without a tremendous staff in the district, as well as here in Washington. I have been blessed with just true public servants. When we would hire, I never asked what their party registration was or anything about their politics other than, Why do you want to serve, and why do you want to serve in the 19th District in particular? So, thanks to all of my staff, to my personal staff in the district and down here, and to the committee staff. I've had the privilege to chair a subcommittee on Oversight and Government Reform for many years, and have been blessed in the past and present with a great staff there as well.

But the one thing I would emphasize is we call this the people's House, and I look at it that way for a number of reasons. One in particular is the only way you get here is if you're elected. You can be a Senator, you can be Vice President, you can be President and never be elected to those positions. Jerry Ford, never elected Vice President and President, served in both Houses. You can serve in the Senate, but here, if there's a vacancy, you have to wait until the people decide. So we're the people's House. But also because we're a great representation of the people of this great country.

The approach and how I got here, it was because of the people of the 19th District. When I leave, it's my understanding that I'm the last Member of the House or Senate, other than a couple of self-funders, who rely solely on individual contributions—no special interest money, no PAC contributions. I've never had a paid television commercial in any campaign. I've never had a paid pollster in any campaign. It's been about volunteers going door to door with me spreading the word.

I think back to that first campaign 12 years ago when over 500 volunteers came out in 1 day and stuffed a 115,000-piece mailing for me. And not only did they come and volunteer and spend about 10 hours that day doing that work for us, but they also brought their own food and fed themselves because we were a low-budget campaign, then and now.

□ 1410

We didn't have money to buy them food, so it was kind of like a church supper where everybody brings a dish and we'll have food, we'll get some good work done. But the people of the 19th district is what allowed me to come here. That first campaign I was outspent 5–1, 3–1, 2–1, and because of the people, I've been allowed to serve here for the last 12 years, and I will be forever grateful for that.

Before I wrap up, I'd be very remiss if I didn't recognize my family. My wife, Leslie, well, we celebrated 22 years of marriage this past July. I've been in office for 20 of those, 8 in the State House, 12 here. And so this is our first election year in 22 years where we weren't campaigning, going door to door. And I certainly would not be standing here as a Member of the United States House of Representatives but for her great love and support over all these years, along with our sons, T.J. and Tom, and my extended family.

Mom and Dad. Dad passed away my first year here in Congress, but Babs and Dutch Platts; my brothers, Mark and Craig; and sisters, Pam and Jill; and my sons, Tom and T.J., who have made so many sacrifices while I've been allowed to serve in this position from a time standpoint of being away and missing ball games here or there. But because of their support, and that love and support of my family, and the support and trust of my constituents, I've been allowed this great privilege.

I'll leave here with a heavy heart, because I'm still pretty passionate about what we do. I'll leave here with great friends on both sides of the aisle, Republican, Democrats, from all corners of this great country. It's been such a privilege to serve with these true public servants.

I'm going to share one final story that kind of captures what I think is great about our country and the fact that I've been allowed to serve here. When my dad passed away my first year in Congress, June 25, 2001, I had just, about a month earlier, had the privilege of introducing my parents to President Bush for the first time. In fact, the last picture of my dad before his passing is a picture of my mom and dad with me and President Bush taken up on the edge of my district in Pennsylvania.

Dad passes away. I get a note from the President expressing his sympathies, having just met my dad. But about a week after his funeral, President Bush was here in the Capitol with us in caucus and meeting with all the House Republicans. And when it was over, we all scattered and went back to our offices, wherever it may be.

As I'm leaving the Capitol Building to go back to Longworth House Office Building, I hear applause up here in the rotunda. And I come up, and this was pre-9/11, and the President's just going down a rope line, shaking hands with all the visitors to the Capitol that day. So moms and dads and kids are just getting to meet the President of the United States by good timing of being in the Capitol.

I'm standing at the House side of the rotunda with Bill Livingood, our then-Sergeant at Arms, and the President stopped and said hello to Bill, said hello to me, and invited me to walk out to the motorcade with him. And the subject of our conversation was the passing of my dad and how he dreads the thought of some day losing his dad. And, thankfully, President Bush 41, 88 and I know in the hospital right now, but hopefully still going strong.

But it was an amazing conversation, one, President Bush, a new President showing concern for a freshman House Member and my family and how my mom and I were doing with the loss of my dad and my mom's husband. But it also spoke volumes about what an amazing country in which we live.

My dad was one of nine kids who grew up in a row house in the city of York during the Depression. Five boys, four girls. Five boys in one bedroom, four girls in the second, Grandma and Grandpa, his mom and dad, in the third.

The fact that his passing was the subject of a conversation between the President of the United States and a Congressman who happened to be his son speaks volumes about us being truly a land of opportunity. That this kid from a typical middle class family has been allowed to serve here for 12 years, it's just amazing about what we stand for, that if you are willing to work hard and follow your dreams, they can come true.

So to the people of the 19th District of Pennsylvania, I say thank you for allowing this now 50-year-old's dreams to come true many years ago as a State representative and then ultimately as a United States Congressman. I will be forever grateful and would tell you that while I'm a proud Republican, most importantly, every time I entered the Chamber, I came into this Chamber, as our men and women in uniform do every day on the front lines of democracy, as a proud American, first and foremost.

I think they give us the example, and that's my final comment is to all those out there who are defending the freedoms we have and the blessings we have, such as TODD PLATTS, me, being allowed to serve in Congress, I say thank you to those courageous men and women and to their families.

Godspeed as they continue to defend us and all that's great about this great Nation.

I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mrs. BIGGERT. You know, I just would like to say how we have worked together, and I really appreciate all that you have done. And what's different is that you had this family. And that is the hardest thing to have, you know, the kids and a wife, but to have the kids that you're always worried about. You always want to be to their games. I know you were always rushing around to do that and driving home, and I appreciate that.

I have four children and a husband. Actually, we just celebrated our 49th wedding anniversary, which I can't believe, as time flies when you're having fun.

Mr. PLATTS. Congratulations.

Mrs. BIGGERT. But my children, we raised them, I think, well, and we raised them to be independent. We didn't think that they would be so independent. One lives in London with her husband and three children, one lives in Los Angeles with her husband and three children, one lives in Bethesda with her three children, and our son lives in New York City.

They're great places to visit, but you don't really have time, I think, when you're here as much as it was.

But to have the family that's there all the time I think it's wonderful, but it has also been really difficult.

Mr. PLATTS. It's one of the blessings, Judy, that I've been allowed, because of my district, about 100 miles each way, in my 12 years serving here, while I've been honored to work here, I've been blessed to live at home all but 12 nights, or maybe 13 nights that I couldn't go back home. But being able to go back to my wife and children, to start every day and end every day with them kept me grounded. And it's one of the sacrifices that, as you know, and our colleagues, the families of Members make a tremendous sacrifice, because I'm the exception. I'm the only Pennsylvanian. There's a couple of Maryland and Virginias, but most Members have to be away all week or relocate their families here, so it is a tremendous family commitment.

But you're right. As I say, my kids, when I walk in the door, they don't care if I was meeting with the President of the United States or working whatever issue. Dad, get rid of the coat and tie. We're late for practice. Let's go. Kids do a good job of keeping our priorities straight.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I also thank you for the experiences we've had working together on the Education Committee and being the Bermuda Triangle that we always laughed about, sitting on our side with Tom Osborne. We made a nice triangle to put things like vouchers in there. They go away, but they wouldn't come back.

Mr. PLATTS. And public education, and one of our colleagues who we both had the privilege to serve under when he was chair of our committee as well.

Mrs. BIGGERT. So thank you.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Will the gentlewoman yield?

Mrs. BIGGERT. Yes, I will yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. I want to thank the gentlewoman for yielding. I want to thank the gentlewoman from Illinois, JUDY, and TODD from Pennsylvania. Thank you so much for your service in the Congress. I've known you as members of the Education and Labor Committee, and I can't thank you enough. I've known you when I was in the minority, I knew you when I was chairman, I've known you when I was ranking minority member.

But you've always been willing to discuss the issues with us. You've always been willing to make suggestions. We haven't always agreed. We've agreed a lot on these issues of child nutrition and school reform and out-of-home children and where do they go to find the schooling and the support systems they need to be successful in our education systems. And I just can't tell you how much I appreciate your service. Thank you. I thank you for that.

And TODD reminds us—I'm listening to you talk about your family. Somebody once said, there's no great way to do this job with a family because the family sort of is the shock absorber for our schedules and everything else. But you obviously have done it pretty darn well.

I just want to thank you for your service to the Congress, to the country, and to obviously the people that you've represented so terribly well. Thank you.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I really appreciate that. Thank you. You were great as chairman, great as ranking member, and I think education is where it all starts in this most important committee. Thank you.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. If the gentlelady would yield to me one more time, as to Mr. PLATTS and to yourself, I mean, the word that has come to me as I'm sitting here and always has struck me is ''respect.'' You both have respect on both sides of the aisle. You listen, you work, you have energy, you want to make this country a better place for all of us. And I just want to thank you for the service to the Nation. It's been an honor to serve with both of you.

And I would say to my friend, Mr. PLATTS, he introduced me to about a half a dozen military installations in the Far East on the fastest moving trip I have ever been on; and that was a year and a half ago and I'm still tired from how quickly and how much energy he put into this trip to expose me to the needs of our troops throughout the Far East.

□ 1420

Again, your respect on both sides of the aisle is well known. Your energy is well known. And thank you for your service.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. PLATTS. If the gentlelady will yield, I would add it's been a great privilege to serve with you here and to travel. You'll enjoy a story from that trip when we were visiting the Special Forces in the Philippine Islands. This past September, I was at my local fair in York, Pennsylvania, and I ran into one of those Special Forces members that's from my district that we had met and had just left the military and was getting ready to go back to school. But we were reminiscing about our trip to visit him and his fellow special operators on that trip.

It was great to travel and to serve with you, and I wish you great success as you continue to serve the State of Colorado with great fashion.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thank you.

Mr. PLATTS. I thank the gentlelady again for the time she's allowed me here today.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you.

I yield 1 minute to Mr. YODER.

CONGRATULATING KANSAS HOUSE SPEAKER MICHAEL O'NEAL

Mr. YODER. I thank the gentlelady from Illinois for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute the legacy of service and dedication of my friend, Kansas Speaker of the House Michael O'Neal. After 28 years, Mike has decided to retire from public service to the people of Kansas. He leaves behind a history of courageous leadership in making smart public policy on behalf of all Kansans.

Mike spent his career in the Kansas House notably chairing the Judiciary Committee and the Education Committee before eventually being elected by his colleagues twice as Kansas speaker of the house. While Mike's career in the people's house in Kansas will be remembered for his many notable legislative achievements, his most prominent legacy may be the wonderful friendships and relationships he built along the way. Many of us consider Mike a mentor and true friend, someone you can always count on—a rare quality in politics today.

So as the gavel falls for the last time and Kansas Speaker of the House Mike O'Neal closes this chapter of service on behalf of so many appreciative Kansans, I would like to thank him for his 28 years of tireless service to make Kansas the best State in the Nation.

Rock Chalk, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. BIGGERT. We have no other Members that are here so I would just like to say, again, thanks so much to my colleagues, and particularly my family. Some have been with me these entire 14 years and some have arrived after the start of the 14 years. To my friends and my supporters who have helped me really to grow and to learn and to serve the people of Illinois, it's been a real honor and a privilege. Public service is something that is such a privilege and honor, and I think that this has been the greatest privilege of my life, to have been a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

THE PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YODER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My name is KEITH ELLISON, cochair of the Progressive Caucus along with my good friend, RAÚL GRIJALVA. I want to come before the body today, Mr. Speaker, with the Progressive message. The Progressive message is a message that the Progressive Caucus shares with people. The progressive message is very simple. It's a basic idea that America, this great land of ours, is big enough for everybody, has enough abundance for everybody, and we have natural resources which should be respected, and we should live in harmony and promote a green economy and should have civil and human rights for all people.

In the Progressive message we say that we would promote dialogue and diplomacy before we ever find ourselves in military conflicts. The Progressive message is about an inclusive America—all colors, all cultures, all faiths, an America that says if you live in this country and you want to work hard, the economy should be robust and broad enough and fair enough for you to make a good run in this economy. If you work 40 hours a week, you ought to be able to feed your family. You shouldn't have to resort to public assistance. It's talking about standing up for the rights of labor, the rights of working men and women, the right to be able to be paid fairly, the right to be able to go to the doctor, the right to look forward to a decent and fair retirement, the right to be able to see that your children will be able to get a good education that can see them through. In other words, the Progressive message is the message of an inclusive America that makes sure that our economic and our environmental lives are strong, healthy, and affirming.

We contrast this with another vision—a vision of a divided America, where not everybody counts and not everybody matters; an America in which labor and management are fighting and there's no peace; an America where there's not full inclusion of LGBT Americans or Americans who are trying to join America through immigration—a not fully inclusive America; an America in which women have to worry about their right to be able to seek out contraception or seek out equal pay for equal work. This is the America that we don't embrace. The America that we embrace embraces equality, inclusion, and opportunities.

Now where are we today? We are in the middle of a national conversation which is playing itself right here in Congress that has to do with the so-called fiscal cliff. I'm not going to use that term anymore because we're actually not on a cliff. What we are on is a set of important deadlines that we should meet and we should work at. But this imagery of a cliff and of falling over something and plummeting downward is false, and we should stop using this analogy. I know the press likes it because it adds drama. Of course, the press thrives on drama. But in truth, there are some important deadlines we should meet. But we should not surrender our deeply held views simply to get any deal done. The deal we should do should be a fair deal, it should be a deal for all, and it should be a deal that meets our most important priorities. But it should not be some force-fed thing that we accept simply because we fear going over this cliff that really doesn't exist.

You can refer to it as a set of deadlines. That's the best way to put it. That's what it actually is. And if you don't meet a deadline, then, of course, there are consequences to not meeting deadlines. And you want to avoid them. But at the same time, this idea that we've got to put up with anything that the other side may offer because we're facing a cliff is a concept that I reject, and I hope the American people reject, Mr. Speaker, because that's not really what is going on. We have a set of deadlines that we should meet. And everybody in this body should work earnestly, sincerely, and in good faith to compromise. But in terms of just accepting some bad deal just to get a deal done because of a crisis that they've threatened, we shouldn't buy into that line of thinking.

Now what are these deadlines? Well, we know that the Bush tax cuts are expiring. They'll expire for everyone, not just the top 2 percent. This is something that we don't want the American middle class to get hit with, a tax increase at this time, but we do believe the wealthiest among us should pay more. And we think that the top 2 percent should pay a higher tax rate on the money they make after $250,000 a year.

□ 1430

We also believe that there's more that can be done. Closing loopholes. People say, well, let's talk about that tonight too. But we see the Bush tax cuts expiring for everybody. We see the production tax credit expiring—which is something important for people who work in the wind industry and in the area of industry that promotes environmental matters. We also see the expiration of things like the estate tax, the SGR—which is the doctor fix for Medicare. We also see the sequestration, which is the outcome, the final outcome of the Budget Control Act that we passed in August 2011 which is now coming due. There will be equal defense and discretionary spending cuts on both sides, which will inflict damage.

So all these things are happening at the same time, and so the same question is going to be asked: How will this budget entanglement be resolved? Will it be resolved on the backs of people who can least afford it, or will the people who can best afford it be asked to help out?

So it's within this context, Mr. Speaker, that I come before you with the Progressive message today to try to bring some clarity to folks listening to C–SPAN today about what the real issues are, what we have to avoid, and what we have to fight for.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this deal that is being considered right now by the U.S. Congress and the American people—and of course the President—is still something that is subject to being changed and altered depending upon how vigorously people are willing to advocate for what's right. So I want to talk about that today. I don't want to call it the fiscal cliff—that will be the last time I use that term—because it's not that, but there are serious fiscal issues that we should address.

Now, I want to talk about a few things that we should not be discussing and don't need to be talking about, and one of them is Social Security. Social Security does not contribute to the deficit. It's not expiring. There's no reason we have to deal with Social Security right now. It is one of those things that some people—who never liked Social Security, by the way, called it socialism even—want to change and have been wanting to change for decades, and so they create this imagery of crisis coming at the end of the year. Then what they're trying to do is say, well, we've got to change Social Security because of the so-called ''fiscal cliff''—although it's not really a cliff. So this is something that really shouldn't be on the table.

I want to encourage folks to really discuss and get the facts, Mr. Speaker, because Social Security is solvent through 2037. Does it need to be fixed? Yeah. It is true that there is slightly more money going out than coming in. But when you look at all the money that is owed to Social Security and you have the interest payments that are being made on it, it more than pays for itself for now. There are some things that could be done into the future that are not an emergency. It doesn't have to be done this second.

Social Security is probably more solvent than a whole bunch of businesses and agencies of government. To try to throw Social Security into the mix at this time is a big mistake. I believe, Mr. Speaker, it's being done because people who have been wanting to change it for decades and decades and decades want to create the idea of a crisis and then use that crisis to get Members to vote for something that is not well considered.

I insist on any changes to Social Security being well considered. I insist that there be a full-fledged debate on Social Security, not this fiscal mess that we're working through right now. But let Social Security be considered on its own freestanding basis, and if changes need to be made, we make them. But just to sort of argue that in order to solve this fiscal crisis that we're facing with these ending deadlines, these expiring deadlines, because of that we've got to deal with Social Security, Mr. Speaker, I think the American people should reject that idea.

I have brought this issue to people who say, Well, what are we going to do about Social Security? I say, Well, we're going to continue to have Social Security. Well, we've got to change it. We have the fiscal crisis coming up, don't we have to change Social Security? No, we don't. It doesn't add to the deficit. In fact, if any changes need to be made to it, they need to be on their own, freestanding.

Social Security is one of the greatest programs this country has ever produced. It helps literally millions and millions of senior citizens and people on disability and people who receive survivor benefits. It's a great program, and we should continue to support that program. We don't need to mess with it. When we do want to reform it, it needs to be something that will preserve benefits for people and allows the program to continue. It's a solid program, and it doesn't need to be in these budget entanglements. I hope Americans really get the facts.

Some people say, Well, okay, you're right, Social Security doesn't add to the deficit, but let's talk about it anyway. Okay. Well, let's talk about it for a minute anyway even though it shouldn't be considered. Here's what could be said, Mr. Speaker, by someone who wants to defend the excellent program known as Social Security.

They might say, Well, shouldn't we raise the retirement age? Again, it's an irrelevant conversation to this problem. But if they want to go down that road you can tell them, Look, we don't need to raise the retirement age because, firstly, people who are running jackhammers or people who are on their feet for their whole working life—nurses, firefighters, people who really use their bodies to earn a living—it's just not fair to them when you say we're going to raise the retirement age. If you've been a nurse picking up patients and walking, walking, walking for 30, 40 years, now all of a sudden they tell you, yeah, you used to be able to retire at 65, but we're going to move it to 70, that's just not fair to them. If you're just a white collar worker, that might be a little different, but the truth is it's going to be a big rule that everybody has to abide by, and it's not fair to a number of people, so we're against it.

Here's another reason—even the more important reason—why messing with Social Security that way is the wrong thing to do:

As you know, Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years we've seen our 401(k)s go to what? 201(k)s. We've seen American savings rates go down. We used to talk about a three-legged stool when it came to retirement: one, Social Security; two, the money you save yourself; three, the money you get from your job.

The money that we get from our jobs, we have seen pensions, guaranteed pensions become almost a thing of the past. Some people still have them—God bless them—but most workers are now having to bear the risk of their own retirement through a 401(k) plan. If the market has been down, as it has been, people's retirement savings—or at least one-third of what they were counting on—is diminished in a very significant way.

The other thing, private savings have gone down. A few years ago before the financial crisis hit in 2006 we had a savings rate of negative 2 percent, which meant people were not saving. So here we are when we're having one of the largest age cohorts in American history moving into their golden years, when they're expecting to retire, their 401(k) is a 201(k) and their pension from their own personal savings has gone down, and now we're going to tell them, your Social Security, you can't really count on that anymore. This is a problem.

We have a problem with retirement in America today. People aren't ready for it. This is the wrong time to take that one solid leg on what we used to call a three-legged stool and start sawing on it and making it less strong than it was before. The fact is, raising the retirement age means lessening benefits for people—people who need it, many of them who have been working hard at jobs all their lives—and it's wrong to do.

As I said before, Mr. Speaker, as we talk about this fiscal entanglement, these expiring deadlines that we're coming up on right now, Social Security shouldn't be part of the conversation. Anybody who brings up Social Security in this conversation ought to be asked why they're bringing up things that are irrelevant to resolving these expiring deadlines that are coming up between now and the end of the year. Why do they want to bring up stuff that doesn't have to do with these expiring deadlines? If it doesn't have to do with sequestration and it doesn't have to do with the 2001/2003 tax cuts that are expiring, then what are we discussing it for? It's a distraction from what we should be devoting our time to.

□ 1440

Now, Mr. Speaker, you're also going to have people who like to use the term ''entitlement.'' I resent the term ''entitlement'' because entitlement kind of suggests that, well, this is just something we're giving to you. No, this is an earned benefit, Social Security, and it should not be referred to as an entitlement.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that people begin to defend Social Security and say, Look, don't call my Social Security an entitlement. I've worked my whole life for this, and I'm not about to just say it's some sort of entitlement, that it's some sort of a thing that somebody's handing to me.

I just want to say that I think people need to defend Social Security. They need to stand up for it. They need to explain that it's not part of this fiscal mess that we're in. It's not part of the expiring deadlines that we're seeing happening right now, and we should

not deal with it here. They should defend it by saying that people's retirement security has significantly diminished over the last number of years, and now is not the time to start cutting benefits to Social Security. And more than that, we should make it clear that Social Security is the best program, perhaps one of the best programs our government has ever come up with. We're going to get more into the expiring deadlines that we see coming up in the next few weeks.

But before I say another word, Mr. Speaker, I want to yield to my good friend from the great State of Texas, SHEILA JACKSON LEE, a stalwart member of the Progressive Caucus. She is totally reliable and can be counted on to stand up for the American working people.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. I thank the distinguished gentleman. And, of course, who could help but listen to that very potent message. And we are better for the fact that you and the distinguished gentleman from Arizona have come together again to—I call it standing in the gap and reinforcing to individuals who have never walked these Halls.

The thing I want to just reinforce very briefly is how much all of us who have the privilege of walking these august Halls, sometimes on occasion looking at these ornate murals and recognizing the historic features and the history of this body, the largest democracy but the longest democracy, extending democracy in the world, that is the United States of America. And for this place called the House of Representatives, this honored place to be called the people's House is for the very reason that we are the defenders. We are those who will stand in the gap. We will be there when others cannot and when others' voices cannot be heard.

So let me give you a picture of America because, for some reason, if we are not tied to the latest social media or maybe to our favorite cable stations, we can't imagine what happens across America, from California to New York, from the furthest State going to the North to our southern friends, including the great State of Texas.

Every morning, every morning some family, some single mother, some single dad, some mother and father rise at 4:00 or 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning. And on some tables, there may be more than one would expect for breakfast; on some tables, there is no breakfast. They rush to prepare for the day's work. They rush sometimes to get their children to schools that are far beyond bus stops. And the reason why I say that is many school districts have even cut out school buses. So that means that these hardworking Americans have to rush and get their children to school. And they go off to jobs that are 8, 10, 12 hours long, where they work all day. And maybe they had someone—a grandmother or someone—pick up the child, but maybe they did not, and, therefore, they have to either have extended public care or wind up picking up those children. But what I will say to you is that they toil and work every day.

So this fiscal deadline—deadline—is very serious to the Progressive Caucus and those of us who really believe that we would not be the patriots that we claim to be if we did not recognize the millions of Americans—with great humor, people were making jokes to the gentleman from Minnesota about the Powerball last night and how many people had tried to sign up for it—not out of greed. When they interviewed people, they were talking about charity and their friends and helping Mama get a better house and helping themselves get a better house.

And something was said in our discussions today that the people who are trying to get into the middle class are the ones that we should be able to say to them, Your desires, the service you have given to your country, the work you do when you get up in those early mornings—some of them are park attendants. Some of them are working in bus barns. They may not even be bus drivers or they may not be conductors. They may be working around. They may be working in the great work that we could not survive, we call it Departments of Sanitation, the same group of men at that time that Martin King went to Memphis for.

And the reason why I call out what it's like every morning before dawn when people get up and go to work is that they don't have time to do social media. They don't know when we are in negotiations about the fiscal deadline, but they're hoping someone is here standing in the gap.

And Social Security is earned. It is earned by these people, whether they're in coal mines, as I said, whether they're sweeping streets, whether they are children who are disabled, whether they are children of the deceased who the only thing that kept them going or is keeping them going is a Social Security death benefit that they got from their deceased parent.

So it is important as we look to what we will be doing is that we understand that it is not those of us in this place that we speak of. And as we speak of the hardworking middle class, we must put into the mix those individuals that keep the lights on, those individuals that keep the streets clean, those individuals that are assisting those who are at home—our nurses, attendants, and aides—those who are working in daycare centers, those persons who, when a fire in my district burned down a daycare center or something occurs, then you can be sure that there are workers who cannot work.

And let me be clear: Since there was a tragedy in my community, I was not speaking of that specific tragedy. I'm talking about if something stops you from working, something happens to your business and there are workers there, those workers are unemployed, but they had paid into Social Security. Which brings me to a couple of other points, and I will yield back to the distinguished gentleman.

It is important that we maintain the extension of unemployment benefits because I'm glad to say that I feel a surge in this economy. Things are getting better. We've had some great Thanksgiving sale days, and people went out even on Thanksgiving Day. Then we had Black Friday and then Cyber Monday. And everybody is telling us that things are on the move.

But it is important to recognize that the country churns if you keep the important safety nets of Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security. And that must be what we do. And then to add unemployment, unemployment insurance. You always have to say over and over again, the word ''insurance'' means that you've gotten some insurance to get you through a rainy day. It's not a handout. It's a hand up. But it is insurance, and you've earned it because you have worked and you are now unemployed and you are looking for work. So the unemployment insurance is to be something that we need to count as a safety net and one that is of great need.

Now let me finish by trying to, again, reemphasize the importance of bipartisanship. And progressives are those who recognize what a great country this is, and we are progressive by the nature of some of the issues that we support. But we do not have a wall in front of our face and say that we don't believe in bipartisanship or we haven't joined with some of our colleagues to make a difference for America.

I truly believe that every set of policies have, maybe, relevancy as their past, and some policies—and I'm going to add the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act—have an unending life. But when you come to fiscal policy, because the economy churns and it goes in cycles, sometimes we're up, and sometimes we're down.

Tax cuts of the nineties and earlier than the nineties with President Bush, before President Clinton and then thereafter with President Bush who came after President Clinton—sometimes economic policies say it's time for a rest; and those tax cuts, the top 1 and 2 percent, it is time for a rest.

□ 1450

To be able to shore up, to say to every American that you will get a tax cut for $250,000 of your income, which includes 97 percent of small businesses is a reasoned response to the changing economy. The protection of the safety net is a reasoned response to the changing economy. And the recognition of the importance of Social Security, the recognition of the importance of Medicare and Medicaid, and the recognition of the importance that if you're unemployed of extending the unemployment, responds to the people who don't get their news on a regular streaming basis. They don't know

what's going on up here. They're counting on us to stand in the gap and to make a difference in their lives. Some of them are working and some are on assistance, but they're not defined by anything except that they are Americans that love their country.

I hope as we go into 2013 and as we have the privilege of being sworn in again, that we will look at issues like a wealth tax, that we will look at issues that address equalizing the impoverished in this Nation, most of them children. We're not there yet, but I think that we would be even a greater country—we're a great country and the greatest country in the world—if we recognize that there is value to lifting all boats, that there is value to saying that you're on hard rubble times, and this great country wants to lift the boat so that any children that you are raising have the equal opportunity to achieve their greatness.

To the gentleman of Minnesota and the cochair of the Progressive Caucus, let me thank you for your wisdom and your sense of—I think the characterization that I've heard you state in many different instances and the characterization that I made today. We have an obligation to the people whose daily life is simply about trying to make it to the next day. I hope this Congress and I hope this process of negotiations and media debate and discussion don't ignore the fact that sometimes you've got to make sure that you respond to those who are now busily filling in those 12 hours of work, and the only thing they're looking forward to is whether they will have enough for a dinner at home and to pick up those children and get ready for the next day. As Americans, many of whom have served their Nation, I feel an obligation to make sure that we stand in the gap on their behalf.

I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank the gentleman for his leadership.

Mr. ELLISON. I thank the gentlelady for joining me. If you have the time, we'd love to hear more from you.

Let me just say today that we're members of the Progressive Caucus talking about the deal for all. First of all, we are laying out some of our values, but also talking about some things that are really problems in this debate.

I mentioned before and you mentioned, as well, Social Security is not contributing to the deficit. Social Security is solvent through 2037. Social Security may need attention, but to try to fix it in the midst of this debate is not the right thing. Again, I'm speaking only for myself. People who are demanding that we reform Social Security right now are people who want us to put attention on something that is other than the problem, and then I have to wonder why that is. Does it have something to do with the fact that ever since Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the legislation, that there have been some that don't like it. Why? Because they don't think the proper role of government is to have a program administered through the government that looks out for the aged, the disabled, the vulnerable. They don't think the government should do that. They think it's all about 100 percent individual initiative, and they don't believe the government has a role or responsibility to administer a program to make sure the aged and the sick and those who are the children of those people who may have died should have some basic sustenance.

We disagree philosophically and fundamentally, but some folks—there is a concept out there known as the ''shock doctrine.'' A woman named Naomi Klein wrote a very interesting book. Sometimes you will have folks who will create a crisis. They want there to be a crisis because within the context of the crisis, the parties to the bargaining will be willing to do things that in the absence of a crisis they would never agree to. So I believe that these expiring deadlines don't have to be a crisis, but they've been created to be one. We even use words that invoke imagery of a crisis, and that's why we now talk about this thing as to what it really is, which is expiring deadlines.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. If the gentleman will yield for a moment.

Mr. ELLISON. I yield to the gentlewoman.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. The Congressional Budget Office even indicated that there is no such thing as a ''cliff.'' There will be expiring deadlines that will allow deliberative thought. That's what you're talking about. Let's have deliberative thought. When you act and your hair is on fire or you're running out of a burning building, you will take any water hose you can find; and that may not be the good water hose that will keep us going.

I just wanted to mention my late colleague, Mickey Leland. This is his birthday this week. It was November 27. I just wanted to mention it on the floor of the House. Congressman Mickey Leland served in this Congress in the late 1970s until 1989, when he died in Ethiopia trying to feed the starving Ethiopians who had been impacted by the drought. At the same time, he helped cochair the Hunger Select Committee because at that timeframe there was an effort to try to extinguish hunger in America and hunger in the world. Lo and behold, here we are in 2012, and I bet we can have a vigorous debate on hunger that still exists in this country.

When we put our hair on fire, then we start looking and digging deep and we start ignoring the peace dividend and resources that we could get from that, from an expedited withdrawal for our hardworking military that are in faraway places such as Afghanistan. The point is that then we begin to do things like look at the minimal subsistence that people get in order to survive. Social Security is a different line of funding; but as you well know, I mentioned that sometimes you get it on disability and sometimes you get Social Security as a death benefit for a deceased parent that keeps those children going. Then you have people who get payments because they are ill or have no way of working or have children, need assistance; and people start looking at that.

We need to be deliberative in our attempt to do the things that we want to do in a bipartisan way, which is reduce the deficit, to make sure we tighten our belt and act accordingly to churn this economy, and we're fair in our tax policies. My friends, we can do all that, but let us not do that with hysteria that starts looking at the basic safety net of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. As my friend said, Social Security is 2037 and Medicare is 2024. That means your house doesn't have to be on fire. You don't have to get a skinny hose that is just drip, drip, dripping, and then you just burn up.

You can be deliberative. We can deal with this immediate fiscal issue of deadlines with tax issues and begin to build on what the revenues will be.

Mr. ELLISON. The gentlelady correctly mentioned Medicare, because in this whole fiscal situation, they keep on throwing out Social Security and Medicare entitlement reform, which is what they want so bad. Again, we've clearly shown Social Security has no place in this debate.

Let's talk about Medicare for a moment. In the Affordable Care Act, the so-called ObamaCare, which I used to not want to call it that, but now I do because Obama does care. We call it ObamaCare because the Republicans thought they could use it as an insult, but actually it's kind of a badge of honor.

The Affordable Care Act, with the bill we passed, is estimated to save about $500 billion over the next 10 years. They say we've got to reform Medicare. There may be reforms to Medicare that are important to do, but we already started that process with the Affordable Care Act by reducing extra subsidies paid to Medicare Advantage plans. They said they were going to do it for cheaper, and they did it for more. Now we're saying we're going to hold you to your word.

□ 1500

We used that savings to close the doughnut hole, to make reductions in the rate of growth and provider payments, in efforts to make sure that Medicare programs were more efficient, and to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse.

Medicare will be reformed as we reform health care and as we move away from this fee for service, where it's this much for this test, this much for that test, then some folks run a bunch of tests, and you get this huge bill. We are now moving from that fee-for-service model to a model that goes on, Are you improving the health of your patients? There are a lot more doctors nowadays, particularly at the Mayo

Clinic in Minnesota, who are on salary so that the doctors don't have to worry about the tests, they just have to worry about health. They order the tests that you need, but they don't order the ones that you don't.

So my point is that we are already implementing ways to maintain and control costs in Medicare that do not deprive seniors of good medical care. That's the key. Medicare—I'm sorry—is going to cost more in the future because we have a lot of people born between 1945 and 1960 who are now getting into older years. Everybody knows as you get older you may need to go to the doctor more, and we have more folks who are in that age group, so that's the way it is. It does make sense to try to control costs, but the proposals have been to give seniors a coupon that the Congressional Budget Office admits is going to cost them $6,000 a year more than it does now and to give Medicaid a block grant program, which we know will likely be reduced.

What's the point?

They keep on saying, ''entitlement reform,'' ''entitlement reform.'' Social Security is fine for now, and it will be into the future with just a few tweaks that will not hurt beneficiaries. As for Medicare, we are reforming it and making it more solvent. We literally extended the life of the program up through 2024. Republicans during the campaign attacked President Obama for this, and yet we extended the life of the program. If entitlement reform were wrapped up in the expiring deadlines and the sequestration, I would say, yes, we have to talk about that now, but it isn't. Why are we doing that? It's because people never liked the program and don't believe the proper role of government is to help people. So we just disagree. I just wish folks would be a little more transparent in the positions that they take.

I am very fortunate to have been joined by the gentlelady from Illinois, JAN SCHAKOWSKY, and I yield to the gentlelady.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I want to thank you so much, Congressman ELLISON, for pulling this together, because we are in the midst of an incredibly important debate about how to deal with all of these fiscal issues. Mainly, to me, it's about who shall pay, not about what are the dollar figures and how do we take a little bit from this and that. It's about who exactly in our society is going to be responsible.

I want to focus on the entitlements. In addition to some of our Republican colleagues—I'm talking mainly about the CEOs now, the fix-the-debt group, who say quite piously, by the way, and self-righteously that we have to cut entitlements. In listening to them, you would think that the United States of America is poorer today than it was 50 years ago when Medicare and Medicaid became part of our social contract, or 70 years ago when we created Social Security. Now they say it's unsustainable. Is it because the United States of America is actually poorer today than we were then?

I wanted to quote from something in The Washington Post, an article that Ezra Klein wrote, entitled, ''Why Rich Guys Want to Raise the Retirement Age'':

> The first point worth making here is that the country's economy has grown 15-fold since Social Security was passed into law. One of the things the richest society the world has ever known can buy is a decent retirement for people who don't have jobs they love and who don't want to work forever.

I think that's right. It's like—really?—we can't afford it? This is one of the things that we absolutely have to cut.

I wanted to just make a point about some of these guys, these 71 CEOs who are in the fix-the-debt group who wrote this letter about the things that need to be done, some of which included the cuts.

Mr. ELLISON. Will the gentlelady yield?

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. ELLISON. Is not having to bail them out on that list?

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Bailing them out, that was then. Get over it. Of course they got a lot of money from the taxpayers. Why do you keep bringing that up, Mr. ELLISON? That was just a fine thing to do.

But here. The 71 fix-the-debt CEOs, who lead publicly held companies, have amassed an average of $9 million in their own company retirement funds. A dozen have more than $20 million in their accounts. So, if each of them converted his assets to an annuity when he turned 65, he would receive a monthly check of at least $110,000 for life. Now, one of those fellows, Dave Cote, whom I know because I served with him on the Simpson-Bowles commission—and he's a longtime advocate of Social Security cuts—has a $78 million nest egg. That's enough to provide a $428,000 check every month after he turns 65 years old. Since the average monthly Social Security benefit is $1,230, Dave Cote would receive a retirement income every month—by the way, this doesn't count his Social Security—of as much as 348 Social Security beneficiaries. This is a guy saying that those 348 people, who are together going to get as much as he gets, ought to see those Social Security benefits cut.

I just think it's outrageous because this is about who we are. Really? We can't afford today the kind of Medicare benefits that we had 50 years ago when Medicare went in or 70 years ago?

Here is the other thing. One of the arguments that is used is that life expectancy has gone up. That's true for some of us but not for all of us. Since 1977, the life expectancy of male workers retiring at age 65 has risen 6 years in the top half of the income distribution, but if you're in the bottom half of the income distribution, then you just gained 1.3 years. The fact of the matter is, if you are a poor woman in the United States of America, you have actually lost ground in terms of longevity in this country. So it is just simply a myth to say that. Averages can be deceiving, right? You get a basketball player, and you average him to 6-feet tall even though one is 7'2'' or whatever. That's ridiculous. People are actually losing life expectancy.

The truth of the matter is, while the Social Security retirement age is now about 67, you can retire early at 62, which is the earliest the law allows. You lose some benefits, but that is when most people retire. Now, these are not slackers. These aren't people who just now want to lie around at home and eat bonbons. These are people who pretty much can't wait until their full benefits kick in because they've been working really tough jobs, long hours, who've been on their feet, flipping patients in beds, working with their hands. It is not easy. So now what? Are these people supposed to go out and all find jobs—what jobs? Where are those jobs?—in order to wait even longer for them to get their Social Security benefits?

Frankly, I'm personally pretty resentful that some of the very richest people in our country, who are now offering advice on how we can save money and fix the debt, are offering up senior citizens, half of whom make $22,000 or less per year.

□ 1510

Those seniors who make $85,000 or more a year are already paying more for their Medicare benefits. We are already means testing Medicare benefits. A lot of people don't know that. So who are the rich seniors who are supposed to pay more? Who are the seniors who are living longer? Well, you know, Dave Cote and the other CEOs, they're doing just fine. They may want to work forever. God love them. God bless them. Let them do it and retire with tens of thousands of dollars every single month. And their advice is cut the rest of the people. That's not right.

Mr. ELLISON. It's not right.

You know, here's the reality. In this whole debate, we want to talk about how to deal with these expiring matters like the 2001 and 2003 taxes and the sequestration. They have a time limit on them, and we in Congress are here now to address these issues. But does it strike you funny that they keep on talking about stuff and want to drag it into this debate that doesn't have anything to do with sequestration or these expiring tax matters? Why do they keep talking about Social Security? Why do they want to keep talking about raising the age or somehow cutting benefits for Medicare and Medicaid? I mean, one needs to ask the question, if these are problems and they need to be solved, why do they have to be solved in this very limited window of time when there are other things that, in fact, are expiring?

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Well, first of all, I agree with you because I think what

I'm hearing you say is let's put those—Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid—in a separate basket and deal with them at another time. Social Security should not be even on a different table. It should be in a different room, because Social Security has a big surplus in the trust fund and hasn't contributed one thin dime to any deficit.

Medicare and Medicaid, I'm all for making those programs more efficient. We can find savings in those programs. But let's remember, it occurred to me that Democrats, through ObamaCare, actually found—does this number sound familiar?—$716 billion worth of savings in Medicare that made the program more efficient but didn't touch benefits.

Mr. ELLISON. Right.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. We actually improved Medicare by finding savings.

It seems to me that number came up in the election that Democrats were somehow stealing from Medicare, implying to senior citizens that their programs were being eroded when, in fact, their programs were being improved and Medicare was made more efficient. So now that the election is over, they're back to saying we've got to cut these entitlement programs; they're unsustainable. We just can't make it anymore. We're too poor a country. We can't aspire to make sure that people with disabilities and old people are going to have access to health care. We can't do it anymore. That was so 20th century. We're done with that.

I mean, it's really outrageous, the hypocrisy of criticizing us for making the programs more cost effective, cost less, but keep benefits, and now hitting us over the head with that and now saying, Oh, no, never mind, we have to go back and cut those programs.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, you know, I appreciate the gentlelady in revealing really the real deal here. The President, to his credit, is trying to talk to broad cross sections of Americans. He's had labor and progressive groups join him, and then the CEOs come in. And it's funny, when the CEOs come in, and I'm not talking about everyone, but this letter where they're telling us we've got to have austerity, we've got to lower people's expectations as to what people expect.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Other people. Not them, other people.

Mr. ELLISON. Other people. They are extremely well taken care of, and they come from companies, several of them, that got direct benefits from the government. And now all of a sudden, you know, everybody else has to tighten their belt. It's shocking, actually. And if there's anything funny about it, it is that they don't get the irony of what they're doing.

I think the American people should know that whenever you see CEOs from polluting industries, from financial services industries, from industries that have gotten a lot of help and benefit from the government talking about how other people should tighten their belt and have to lower expectations, this should be met with extreme displeasure.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Here's Lloyd Blankfein, and he's just one example, the CEO of Goldman Sachs, and part of what I really resent about it is he doesn't even know what he's talking about. He says:

> You can look at the history of these things, and Social Security wasn't devised to be a system that supported you for a 30-year retirement after a 25-year career.

Well, first of all, the average beneficiary collects about 16 years, so a 30-year retirement after 25 years?

Mr. ELLISON. He must be talking about himself.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I don't know what he's talking about.

> So there will be things. Maybe the retirement age has to be changed, maybe some of the benefits have to be affected, maybe some of the inflation estimates have to be revised, but, in general, entitlements have to be slowed down and contained.

Now, you know, this is a guy who's a pretty entitled fellow. And the idea of him pointing to these people who, you know, half of whom make less than $22,000 doesn't sit well with me and, I don't think, most Americans. It's not just that I think; we've asked most Americans.

And, by the way, even people who voted for Mitt Romney said, Do not cut my Social Security and Medicare benefits. They don't want that. And it's not because they're stupid or greedy, as Alan Simpson would like to make them out to be. It's because, in this country, retiring with some level of security is something that people who've worked all their lives deserve in this country and something that should be a priority.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, let me quote Mr. Blankfein of Goldman Sachs. He says:

> You're going to have to do something, undoubtedly, to lower people's expectations of what they're going to get, the entitlements, and what people think they're going to get because you're not going to get it.

That's what he said. Now, this gentleman is the CEO of a firm that received tens of billions of dollars——

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Tens of billions.

Mr. ELLISON. Tens of billions of dollars from direct money and indirect money through access to the Fed at lower rates, and now has the audacity—is the only word you can use—to start talking about how somebody who is making $22,000 a year has to figure out what they're going to do.

Here's the thing. I remember 2008 very well. I remember people's 401(k)s taking massive hits directly related to the behavior of large banks. So it used to be that you had money you saved, money you saved on the job and then Social Security. Two sources of your retirement income are now dwindling in part because of the behavior of these banks, and one of the leaders of one of the biggest ones is talking about other folks having to get by on less.

My question is: What happened to the basic concept of civic virtue? I mean, what happened to the basic idea that, yes, I may be a CEO and, yes, I have an obligation to my shareholders, but I also have an obligation to the community that has fed my business and I've got an obligation to the United States that has made it possible for me to do well.

□ 1520

What happened to the basic idea that we're sort of in this thing together?

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Well, frankly, I think that idea is alive and well and was reflected in the elections on November 6——

Mr. ELLISON. I agree.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. That the idea that we are all in this together, that we do have some responsibility. And I want to tell you that there isn't a person that goes to synagogue or church or a mosque or a temple that doesn't learn about, we are our brother's and our sister's keepers, we do feed the hungry and take care of the poor, that we have an obligation to do that. So in our private lives, and in our faith lives, we're taught that as well.

I mean, it's good economics, but it's also the right thing to do. And I also think it's a very American kind of ideal, and that, at the end of the day, that most people agree with that.

When I say under $22,000, that's income. The average Social Security benefit is far below that. And so we're talking about very little, very little money to provide not a whole lot of security, but some security.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, I'd just like to advise the gentlelady that we've got about 3 more minutes in our hour, and I just wanted to encourage you to think about some of your essential points that you may want to repeat for the Speaker.

But I just wanted to say that, look, you know, the Progressive Caucus—we're here with the Progressive message—is thinking about these fiscal deadlines that this country is facing. We do believe that we should try to come up with a fair deal in anticipation of sequestration and the expiration of deadlines on some taxes.

We believe that the top 2 percent of the income scale should have to pay more. We believe that the Defense Department, which has seen its budget double since 2001, should have to take cuts.

We believe we have to invest in jobs and get people back to work. And we believe we should protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Those are some takeaways that I think are very important.

We do believe in negotiating. We believe that it's important to do so. We've already given up $1.5 trillion in the last term. People talk about what's on the table, what's off the table—$1.5 trillion should be on the table as cuts that have already taken place.

I'd just like to leave the gentlelady the remaining time to summarize.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. You have the sign, ''The Progressive Message,'' and I

am a proud member of the Progressive Caucus. But I believe that if you presented what you just said to the American people, in general, that the vast majority agree with that because it's fair. That's all.

We are willing to find cuts, and as you pointed out, we've already done that. That's already been done with $1.5 trillion in cuts. But fairness means not just that starting from scratch, we cut everybody across the board, but we do it in a humane and fair and sensible way in our country. And I think the Progressive message is the American message, the one that we're hearing from the American people.

So I thank you so much for your leadership. And going forward, I hope we can help to mobilize, along with the President, mobilize people to support these ideas.

Mr. ELLISON. The gentlelady from Illinois has the last word from ''The Progressive Message.''

I yield back the balance of my time.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 1998. An act to obtain an unqualified audit opinion, and improve financial accountability and management at the Department of Homeland Security; to the Committee on Homeland Security; In addition to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

BILLS PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported that on November 28, 2012, she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bills.

H.R. 6063. To amend title 18, United States Code, with respect to child pornography and child exploitation offenses.

H.R. 6570. To amend the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 to consolidate certain CBO reporting requirements.

H.R. 2453. To require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of Mark Twain.

H.R. 6118. To amend section 353 of the Public Health Service Act with respect to suspension, revocation, and limitation of laboratory certification.

H.R. 6131. To extend the Undertaking Spam, Spyware, And Fraud Enforcement With Enforcers beyond Borders Act of 2006, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 23 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, November 30, 2012, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

8494. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — 1,4-Dimethylnaphthalene; Amendment to an Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2011-1029; FRL-9368-2] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

8495. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Dinotefuran; Pesticide Tolerances [EPA-HQ-OPP-2012-0060; FRL-9365-1] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

8496. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Flonicamid; Pesticide Tolerances [EPA-HQ-OPP-2011-0985; FRL-9368-7] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

8497. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Delaware; Requirements for Prevention of Significant Deterioration and Nonattainment New Source Review; Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5) [EPA-R03-OAR-2012-0381; FRL-9747-9] received November 2, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8498. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Tennessee; Regional Haze State Implementation Plan; Best Available Retrofit Technology Requirements for Eastman Chemical Company [EPA-R04-OAR-2009-0786; FRL-9752-5] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8499. A letter from the Chief of Staff, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Amendment of the Amateur Service Rules Governing Qualifying Examination Systems and Other Matters; Amendment of Part 97 of the Commission's Amateur Service Rules to Give Permanent Credit for Examination Elements Passes; Amendment of Part 97 of the Commission's Rules to Facilitate Use in the Amateur Radio Service of Single Slot Time Division Multiple Access Telephony and Data Emissions; Request for Temporary Waiver; Amendment of the Amateur Service Rules Governing Vanity and Club Station Call Signs [WT Docket No.: 12-283] [WT Docket No.: 09-209] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8500. A letter from the Deputy Bureau Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Amendment of Part 90 of the Commission's Rules; Implementing a Nationwide, Broadband Interoperable Public Safety Network in the 700 MHz Band; Service Rules for the 698-746, 747-762 and 777-792 MHz Bands [WP Docket No.: 07-100] [PS Docket No.: 06-229] [WT Docket No.: 06-150] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8501. A letter from the Chief, PSHSB, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Implementing Public Safety Broadband Provisions of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012; Implementing a Nationwide, Broadband, Interoperable Public Safety Network in the 700 MHz Band; Service Rules for the 698-746, 747-762 and 777-792 MHz Bands [PS Docket No.: 12-94] [PS Docket No.: 06-229] [WT Docket No.: 06-150] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8502. A letter from the Chief of Staff, Wireless Communications Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Amendment of Part 90 of the Commission's Rules to Permit Terrestrial Trunked Radio (TETRA) Technology; Request by the TETRA Association for Waiver of Sections 90.209, 90.210 and 2.1043 of the Commission's Rules [WT Docket No.: 11-69] [ET Docket No.: 09-234] received October 31, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8503. A letter from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Basic Service Tier Encryption; Compatibility Between Cable Systems and Consumer Electronics Equipment; Inter Mountain Cable Inc.'s Request for Waiver of Section 76.630(a) of the Commission's Rules; RCN Telecom Services, Inc.'s, Request for Waiver of Section 76.630(a) of the Commission's Rules; Coaxial Cable TV's Request for Waiver of Section 76.630(a) of the Commission's Rules; Mikrotec CATV LLC's Request for Waiver of Section 76.630(a) of the Commission's Rules [MB Docket No.: 11-169] [PP Docket No.: 00-67] (CSR-8483-Z) (CSR-8525-Z) (CSR-8334-Z) (CSR-8528-Z) received November 21, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8504. A letter from the General Counsel, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Electricity Market Transparency Provisions of Section 220 of the Federal Power Act [Docket No.: RM10-12-000; Order No. 768] received November 16, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8505. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 12-56, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

8506. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 12-0C, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(5)(e) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

8507. A letter from the Acting Secretary, Department of Commerce, transmitting Periodic Report on the National Emergency Caused by the Lapse of the Export Administration Act of 1979 for February 26, 2012 — August 25, 2012; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

8508. A letter from the Director, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, transmitting the semiannual report on the activities of the Office of Inspector General for the period April 1, 2012 to September 30, 2012; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

8509. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Transportation, transmitting the annual report under the Federal Managers'

Financial Integrity Act for 2012; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

8510. A letter from the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Farm Credit Administration, transmitting the semiannual report on the activities of the Office of Inspector General of the Farm Credit Administration for the period April 1, 2012 through September 30, 2012; and the semiannual Management Report on the Status of Audits for the same period; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

8511. A letter from the Director, Trade and Development Agency, transmitting the Agency's Performance and Accountability Report including audited financial statements for fiscal year 2012; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

8512. A letter from the Acting Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice, transmitting the Annual Report to Congress on the implementation, enforcement, and prosecution of registration requirements under Section 635 of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (Pub.L. 109-248)(AWA); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

8513. A letter from the Commissioner, Social Security Administration, transmitting a news release on Social Security Benefit Increase for 2013; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Mr. ROONEY, Mr. ROGERS of Michigan, Mr. HARRIS, and Mr. BENISHEK):

H.R. 6611. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to promote public notification and provide incentives to reduce drug shortages, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. MCCARTHY of California (for himself, Mr. CALVERT, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mr. MCKEON, Mr. PALAZZO, and Mr. ROHRABACHER):

H.R. 6612. A bill to redesignate the Dryden Flight Research Center as the Neil A. Armstrong Flight Research Center and the Western Aeronautical Test Range as the Hugh L. Dryden Aeronautical Test Range; to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.

By Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts (for himself and Mr. CAPUANO):

H.R. 6613. A bill to establish the Securities and Derivatives Commission in order to combine the functions of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the Securities and Exchange Commission in a single independent regulatory commission; to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on Agriculture, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. MATSUI:

H.R. 6614. A bill to amend the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 to allow the rebuilding of certain structures located in special flood hazard zones, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. PERLMUTTER (for himself, Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. POLIS, and Mr. TIPTON):

H.R. 6615. A bill to exclude from gross income payments from the Aurora Victim Relief Fund to the victims of the event at the Century 16 Cinema in Aurora, Colorado, on July 20, 2012; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. PRICE of Georgia:

H.R. 6616. A bill to protect securities transactions in the United States from enforcement of certain excise taxes imposed by any foreign government, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. SIMPSON:

H.R. 6617. A bill to provide for Indian trust asset management reform, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. SMITH of Washington (for himself and Mr. REICHERT):

H.R. 6618. A bill to further the mission of the Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative Advisory Committee by continuing its development of policy recommendations and technical solutions on information sharing and interoperability, and enhancing its pursuit of benefits and cost savings for local, State, tribal, and Federal justice agencies; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. YOUNG of Alaska:

H.R. 6619. A bill to provide for the unencumbering of title to non-Federal land owned by the city of Anchorage, Alaska, for purposes of economic development by conveyance of the Federal reversion interest to the City; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. LARSON of Connecticut:

H. Res. 822. A resolution electing Members to certain standing committees of the House of Representatives; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mr. HANNA, Ms. HANABUSA, and Ms. BUERKLE):

H. Res. 823. A resolution honoring and praising Mother Marianne Cope for her legacy of compassionate care and recognizing her example of what it truly means to dedicate one's life in service to others, especially to those she served at the leprosy settlement at Kalaupapa on the island of Molokai; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following statements are submitted regarding the specific powers granted to Congress in the Constitution to enact the accompanying bill or joint resolution.

By Mr. CASSIDY:

H.R. 6611.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. MCCARTHY of California:

H.R. 6612.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2 of the Constitution

By Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts:

H.R. 6613.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 (the Commerce Clause).

By Ms. MATSUI:

H.R. 6614.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3

By Mr. PERLMUTTER:

H.R. 6615.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8

By Mr. PRICE of Georgia:

H.R. 6616.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This bill makes changes to existing law relating to Article 1, Section 8 which provides that, ''The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts, and Excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts, and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States.'' The Secretary of the Treasury is responsible for the collection of any tax at the federal level. It is purview of the Congress to determine which taxes the Secretary shall or shall not collect. Clarifying direction to the Secretary in regards to a foreign financial transaction tax will ease the administrative and compliance burden on the private financial sector and the federal government.

By Mr. SIMPSON:

H.R. 6617.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, which grants Congress the power to regulate Commerce with the Indian Tribes.

By Mr. SMITH of Washington:

H.R. 6618.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I Section 8. ''. . . provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States . . .''

By Mr. YOUNG of Alaska:

H.R. 6619.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 4, Section 3, Clause 2

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 59: Mr. GOSAR.
H.R. 402: Ms. MCCOLLUM.
H.R. 816: Mr. MARCHANT.
H.R. 1001: Mr. MICHAUD.
H.R. 1386: Mr. CUMMINGS.
H.R. 1489: Ms. ESHOO.
H.R. 1653: Ms. BONAMICI.
H.R. 1711: Mr. RANGEL.
H.R. 2069: Mr. BLUMENAUER.
H.R. 2104: Mr. PALAZZO.
H.R. 2705: Ms. PINGREE of Maine and Ms. EDWARDS.
H.R. 2969: Mr. ELLISON.
H.R. 3238: Ms. MOORE and Ms. MCCOLLUM.
H.R. 3497: Mr. THOMPSON of California.
H.R. 3769: Mr. ISRAEL.
H.R. 4156: Ms. CASTOR of Florida.
H.R. 4202: Mr. TIERNEY.
H.R. 4373: Mr. CARSON of Indiana.
H.R. 5741: Mr. NEAL.
H.R. 6155: Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas.
H.R. 6256: Ms. FUDGE, Mr. CLAY, and Mr. RANGEL.
H.R. 6275: Ms. MATSUI.
H.R. 6312: Mr. PAULSEN.
H.R. 6320: Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas and Mr. JONES.
H.R. 6388: Mr. HANNA and Mr. KING of New York.

H.R. 6413: Mr. ELLISON.

H.R. 6475: Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA and Mr. TOWNS.

H.R. 6494: Ms. BASS of California, Mr. SHERMAN, Mr. WAXMAN, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Ms. WATERS, Ms. SPEIER, Mrs. CAPPS, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. BECERRA, Ms. HAHN, and Mr. COSTA.

H.R. 6495: Mr. RIGELL, Mr. PITTS, Mr. MULVANEY, Mr. SCHWEIKERT, Mr. GARRETT, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. LABRADOR, Mr. STUTZMAN, Mr. CAMPBELL, and Mr. RIBBLE.

H.R. 6527: Ms. SEWELL.

H.R. 6575: Mr. PETERSON and Mr. BISHOP of Georgia.

H.R. 6587: Mr. MCNERNEY, Ms. ESHOO, and Mr. STARK.

H.R. 6588: Ms. WILSON of Florida and Mr. ELLISON.

H.R. 6589: Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. NEUGEBAUER, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. FARENTHOLD, Ms. GRANGER, and Mr. OLSON.

H.R. 6591: Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. CLARKE of Michigan, Mr. SCHIFF, Ms. KAPTUR, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. GUTIERREZ, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. CLAY, Ms. SEWELL, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. NADLER, Mr. TIERNEY, and Mr. KUCINICH.

H.R. 6603: Mr. MATHESON.

H. Con. Res. 141: Mr. NADLER, Ms. LEE of California, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, and Mr. GRIJALVA.

H. Res. 220: Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, and Ms. NORTON.

H. Res. 734: Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas and Ms. HIRONO.

H. Res. 819: Mr. PAUL, Mr. AMASH, Ms. LEE of California, and Mr. MCGOVERN.