

Our policy in Afghanistan is a total disaster. It is a failed policy, and we're not going to change one thing in Afghanistan. In fact, Madam Speaker, this past week, the new Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, who's a friend of mine—I have great respect for him—was in Afghanistan, and Mr. Karzai accused Mr. Hagel and the American people of negotiating with the Taliban. The Taliban are our enemy and the enemy of Karzai. This just continues to show that this gentleman that leads Afghanistan is, quite frankly, corrupt, confused, and unpredictable.

But what amazes me is this Congress continues to spend \$6 billion to \$8 billion a month in Afghanistan, when we have this person who is leading that country who, from one day to the next, either likes the American people or he dislikes the American people. In fact, in December of this year, Karzai was quoted in *The Washington Post* as saying he now has three main enemies: the Taliban, the United States, and the international community; and if he had to choose sides today, he would choose the Taliban. And now he's accusing America of cutting deals with the Taliban.

Again, we had seven Americans killed yesterday. It's time for this Congress to wake up and stop spending money in Afghanistan. History has shown we will never change Afghanistan no matter what we do. Go back to Alexander the Great, Madam Speaker, and look at what he did there. Go to the English. Go to the Russians. Nobody is going to change that country. They don't want to be us to begin with.

So why are we going to cut programs in America for children and senior citizens to make sure that Karzai will get his money? In fact, the inspector general for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, John Sopko, he testified recently that we are averaging spending \$235 million a day—\$235 million a day—in Afghanistan, and half the projects that we are spending money on are blown up within a few weeks after they are completed by the Taliban.

I do not understand my own party, to say the least. I don't understand the Congress. Why do we want to keep spending money we don't have and deny the American people a fix for this economy and this country?

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to say that I have introduced, along with my Democratic friend, ROSA DELAURO, H.R. 125, the Congressional Oversight of Afghanistan Agreement of 2013. All we're trying to do is to get a debate on the floor to say: Why would we agree to stay in Afghanistan after 2014 to 2024? This agreement signed by this administration has obligated America to be there 10 more years after 2014. How many more Americans will have to die? How much money will the American taxpayer have to spend in Afghanistan?

Ms. DELAURO and I would like to have a debate on the floor of the House if, for no other reason, if we can't even change the agreement that the Presi-

dent has signed, let the American people know that we want to debate staying there 10 more years and see young men and women die for a corrupt leader, a confused leader, and spend the money that we don't have for the American people. It makes absolutely no sense.

In closing, Madam Speaker, this is just another example of war. These marines are carrying a flag-draped coffin. How many more families have to cry and lose a loved one in a failed policy, a policy where we will never change Afghanistan no matter what we do?

In closing, Madam Speaker, I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform, to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. I ask God in His loving arms to hold the families who've given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq, and I ask God to please continue to bless America.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 18 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HOLDING) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Dear Lord, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

As the House reassembles, there are new efforts at communication between the branches of our government to address the issues of our time.

May all Members of the people's House be led by Your Spirit in the negotiations taking place. May they possess an abundance of wisdom and good judgment, as well as a discerning ear, so that possible inroads to productive legislation might emerge.

Bless as well those from the executive branch as conversations resume in a more direct manner. Help all engaged in these efforts emerge as honorable statesmen and authors of a new chapter of great American history, where our system of government proves once again to be a model for all nations to respect.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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 pro tempore. Will the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. BEATTY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. BEATTY 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.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Brian Pate, one of his secretaries.

LET'S PASS THE SKILLS ACT

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, today, millions of Americans are looking for work. At the same time, there are 3.6 million jobs sitting vacant, in part because there aren't enough qualified applicants to fill them.

What can we do to erase the skills gap? Washington has tried, to the tune of \$18 billion, to run more than 50 different workforce education programs that are supposed to be teaching job seekers the skills and expertise required to compete for jobs.

Despite the hefty price tag, only a fraction of job seekers are completing these programs and many more are getting slowed in a maze of duplication and one-size-fits-all mandates. In 2012, President Obama said:

I want to cut through the maze of confusing job training programs, so that people have one program, one place to go for all the information and help that they need.

The SKILLS Act is the only plan on the table that treats job seekers as individuals and brings us closer to the President's stated target.

Let's pass the SKILLS Act.

OHIO PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

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

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to salute the nationally recognized Ohio Psychological Association, founded in 1949, for their outstanding contributions to psychology and mental health development in Ohio. It is the seventh largest psychological State association in the country and it is located within my Third Congressional District.

They have taken psychology and mental health development to a new level of member service and effectiveness. They advocate for the continued advancement of the professional and