

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

supportive legislative initiatives that include and improve Medicare for their patients.

I would like to recognize Executive Director Michael Ranney, Dr. James Mulick, and Dr. Bobbie Celeste for their hard work that has ensured that the profession of psychology has remained vital, relevant, and at the forefront in Ohio.

CHAIRMAN RYAN BALANCES BUDGET

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, it is budget week in Washington. Today, House Republicans, under the leadership of Chairman PAUL RYAN, unveiled the new budget.

Our Nation has racked up nearly \$17 trillion in debt due to out-of-control government spending. In order to prevent our children and grandchildren from paying higher taxes with no results, House Republicans have found a way to balance our budget over the next 10 years by cutting wasteful spending, reforming our Tax Code to create jobs, preserving entitlement programs, and expanding opportunities for all Americans.

House Republicans understand the severity of the issue and are willing to work with the Senate and the President to balance our budget. I am very pleased that due to the passage of the No Budget, No Pay Act, the Senate will return to regular order and pass a budget for the first time in 4 years. I look forward to working with the Senate and the President to cut spending and make substantial job-creating reforms that will encourage small businesses to create jobs.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

CLIMATE CHANGE

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

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the House's attention to the compelling issue of climate change that the House majority continues to refuse to address. There are a number of us who plan on speaking every day on the House floor on the need for Congress to take action on climate change. We are making this commitment because this Chamber is filled with such a large collection of climate deniers.

It is here in Congress, though, where a long-term strategy to address this issue will have to be crafted if we are to avoid the worst-case scenario and the catastrophic consequences of climate change.

Today, there should be complete consensus on the science of climate change: that the higher concentrations of greenhouse gases over the past 50

years are due to human activity; that the rapid increase in global temperature could not have been caused by natural factors alone; and that the severe temperatures and extreme weather events we have experienced in recent years, including the devastation brought by Hurricane Sandy, all fit into the predictive pattern of global climate change.

Failure to take action dooms future generations to more powerful and destructive weather events, alters our coastlines, and subjects our nation to more droughts and food scarcity.

Mr. Speaker, an overwhelming majority of the public accepts these scientific findings and understands a status quo energy policy heavily dependent on the burning of fossil fuels must change.

It is not only unsustainable but injurious to our nation's future.

In the coming weeks we will be highlighting the consequences of continued inaction and ways we can move forward with solutions.

□ 1410

BALANCING THE BUDGET

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

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I ran for Congress to improve the lives of North Carolinians by advancing initiatives that reinvigorate our economy and put people back to work. To achieve this goal, we must curb Washington's spending addiction and balance our budget.

For the sake of our country and the sake of our children and grandchildren, we must stop the reckless spending of our taxpayer dollars. It has weakened our liberty; it has diminished our prosperity; and it has mortgaged our future. I cannot, in good conscience, stand by and watch our Nation self-destruct because our leaders don't have the discipline to say enough is enough.

Just yesterday, the White House said that the President is not looking to balance the budget. This comes on the heels of 4 long years of Senate inaction to even merely present a budget.

Mr. Speaker, leadership on this issue is clearly long overdue. Fortunately, that leadership Americans thirst for can be found in the Chamber today as Chairman PAUL RYAN presents a budget that balances in 10 years. I applaud his work and look forward to working against Washington's unbridled spending and for a path to economic prosperity.

THE HOUSE GOP BUDGET RESOLUTION

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

Mrs. WALORSKI. Today, hard-working Hoosier families sit around their kitchen tables and make tough decisions to keep a balanced budget.

The Federal Government should do the same thing.

In the State of Indiana, we were able to balance our budget and get our fiscal house in order. We created jobs and we kept taxes low using a common-sense, step-by-step approach.

It's time for this Congress to pass a responsible budget that reins in spending and promotes economic growth and job creation. House Republicans have introduced a budget that balances in 10 years while protecting the most vulnerable among us. Proposals by the Senate Democrats never balance and will jeopardize our seniors and our poor by spending our country into bankruptcy.

We cannot afford to wait. I urge my colleagues to support the House Republican budget resolution.

RATE SHOCK AND THE PRESIDENT'S TAKEOVER OF HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, well, here we are. The Affordable Care Act is going to be 3 years old in just a few days, and we're continuing to uncover things within the law that nobody knew about. Remember all the stuff that was sold to the public because it was going to be "free"? But we all know nothing is free, so how do you pay for it?

Well, it turns out there's going to be tax on insurance companies and taxes on employers which, guess what? That's going to be passed on to the employees and the beneficiaries. The deadline is quickly approaching and plans are submitting their bids, but they're faced with no choice but to raise costs.

In response to the rate increases, the Federal Government is attempting to limit higher premiums by something they call rate review. But anytime you treat only the symptom of a disease and not the underlying cause, you're going to end up with something you didn't expect.

Continued regulatory pressure—continued pressure on employers and continued pressure on insurance plans—is going to result in actually further increasing rates. The government is attempting to control the market. But we all know this market is one the government cannot control, and the end result is that we'll all suffer.

Let's face it. Instead of "if you like what you have, you can keep it," what they really meant to say was "you're going to pay a lot more to get a lot less."

THE FEDERAL BUDGET

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