

trained or funded many of the leading MS researchers creating these life-changing breakthroughs.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank Lori and Tommy Straub for inviting me to be a part of Team “Walk a Myelin My Shoes.” Together, we will continue to work towards a world free of MS.

STOP CLOSING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN AMERICA

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate and thank the community of North Forest and the North Forest Independent School District.

This has been a tumultuous week. This school district, undeserving, has fallen prey and victim to the closing of public schools in a public school system—this district that has acceptable schools; this district that has homeowners who have taxed themselves to ensure excellence in the teaching of these children, 7,500 students that are happy to be in a small pond and be a big fish. It is sad that the TEA administrator has undeservedly offered to close this school district without accepting an offer of compromise.

This is time for the Secretary of Education to act on the massive closings of public schools throughout America. This is time for the U.S. Department of Justice to act on preventing the elimination of elected school board members and utilizing section 5.

But more importantly, I want to thank the ombudsman coalition headed by Dr. Ken Campbell and President Robinson, the presidents of the Ministers Alliance who carried on a prayer vigil this last week. I do believe that prayers will be answered, the children will be saved, and we'll stop closing public schools in America.

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PETSMART PROMISE

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

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Mr. Speaker, this is actually one of those moments when you get to stand in front of the House with sort of a happy story. There's an organization out there called Family Promise. They are in 41 States with, I believe, about 160,000 volunteers, and they've had an issue for years now. They bring in homeless families, but often those homeless families would have a pet, a furry family member.

Just this week, PetSmart set up PetSmart Promise. I actually got to see this firsthand in Scottsdale, Arizona, where they actually are taking care of that furry friend of that homeless family that needs to get their life back in order. So PetSmart gets a real

call out from us. Family Promise is doing amazing things, and this is just one of those moments where you're very proud of a corporate entity like this, stepping up and working with Family Promise to help homeless families around the country.

CBC HOUR: ELIMINATING HEALTH DISPARITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HORSFORD) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

We are pleased to come to this body at this time for this hour of power with the Congressional Black Caucus. This evening, we'd like to focus on eliminating health disparities in America.

Health is a cornerstone of equal opportunity, which is why access to quality, affordable care is so important. Sickness not only decreases individual and social productivity, but without access to health resources, many get sick and never truly recover. Over this next hour, members of the Congressional Black Caucus will discuss our priorities, working together with the President, our colleagues on the other side and throughout this body, and in the other Chamber, to address the needs of health care for all Americans, and specifically to eliminate the health disparities in the African-American communities.

I'd like to recognize the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. Under her leadership, the CBC is advancing a number of priorities during this 113th Congress. I yield to the gentlelady from Ohio, Chairwoman FUDGE.

Ms. FUDGE. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I want to thank my colleagues, both Congressmen HORSFORD AND JEFFRIES, again for leading the Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour. This hour is to discuss health disparities. You both have done an incredible job carrying the message of the CBC on the House floor each week, and I thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the health disparities between African Americans and other racial and ethnic populations are striking. When compared with the country as a whole, African Americans are three times more likely to die from diabetes. We account for about 44 percent of all new HIV infections among adults and adolescents, despite representing only about 13 percent of the U.S. population. African-American men can expect to live approximately 6 years less than White men. African-American women are twice as likely to give birth to low-weight infants, and our children are almost five times more likely to be hospitalized for asthma.

Though health disparities manifest in life-threatening ways, such as lower life expectancy and higher disease rates, the root cause is poverty. Where

you live and how you live have a direct effect on how long and how well you live. Until we address the persistent poverty that plagues our communities, the debilitating cost of health disparities will continue to rise.

According to the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, health disparities collectively cost minorities more than \$1.24 trillion from 2003 to 2006. We must create and maintain a path toward greater health equity in America. We can't afford the status quo.

Thankfully, a path to equity has begun to take shape, a path that reduces the rates of illness and premature death and increases access to quality health care. The solution was and is the Affordable Care Act—or, as it is known to many, ObamaCare. We are proud to call it ObamaCare because it proves that the President and many in this Congress really do care about the health of Americans.

ObamaCare has already begun to lower the cost of health care by providing financial relief for consumers, increasing insurance options, investing in preventative and primary care, and placing a focus on minority health. The ACA helps decrease health disparities by collecting data, strengthening cultural training, and increasing diversity in the health care field. These investments are critically important and will strengthen America's financial future.

Some on the other side of the aisle believe the status quo is sufficient, that health disparities are not real. Some don't believe that the impact of disparities on families is devastating. That's why a number of Republicans are again calling for the repeal of the ACA. How many times do we have to play this game?

The CBC will continue to stand up, speak out and defend the Affordable Care Act against all of those who oppose it for political or ideological reasons. Attaining health equity is to the benefit of all Americans, and is not only consistent with the American promise of opportunity, but it is critical to the future of Black America.

Mr. HORSFORD. At this time I would like to recognize the vice chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, a leader on a number of key issues that the Congressional Black Caucus is facing this 113th Congress, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD).

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Let me thank you, Mr. HORSFORD, for yielding time this evening, and thank you for your leadership not only here in the Congress but in the Congressional Black Caucus. You have come to this Congress, and you've done so much in such a short period of time. Thank you, Mr. JEFFRIES and Ms. FUDGE as well, for your leadership.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to start this conversation this evening by talking about a 1985 report. President Ronald Reagan was President at the time, and the U.S. Department of Health and