

life when I depended on our vital social safety net programs during some very difficult times; but my testimony is only one of millions of other Americans. Many of you may be familiar with the Campaign to Cut Poverty in Half in Ten Years, a project of the Center for American Progress, the Coalition on Human Needs, and the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. Now, they are doing phenomenal work gathering American stories of those who are living in poverty and have been lifted out of poverty, including our own Congressman POCAN's constituent, Amy Treptow's story.

Amy is here today, and I look forward to hearing Congressman POCAN read her story later on this House floor. Her story, though, is a true representation of the legacy of the war on poverty and the promise of the American Dream fulfilled. Her story is not unlike one of my constituents in Oakland who visited my office here in D.C. last month. After becoming a single mother, Jennifer was forced to stop attending her college courses and take a job making minimum wage as a caregiver. She relied on CalWIC and food stamps to feed her daughters, and her family and friends supported her with her housing and other basic needs.

Today, two of her daughters are graduates of the Head Start program, which prepared them to start elementary school where they are currently doing very well. And Jennifer was able to finish school and is now working to advocate on behalf of other families like hers who had to turn to the American people in her time of need. Also, I am reminded that one of my former district directors was a graduate of the Head Start program. He is doing phenomenal work raising a family and living the American Dream.

These are stories of resilience. They are the stories of millions of Americans who are facing homelessness, hunger and unemployment, if it weren't for a safety net. In my home State of California, 6.3 million people—17 percent—lived in poverty in 2012. And in my district in Oakland, California, 18 percent of the residents live below the Federal poverty level, including one in four children.

While the richest segments of our population continue to prosper nationally, income inequality traps millions of the working poor in poverty. Many low-wage workers must rely on food stamps and Medicaid just to survive—which our colleague Congressman AL GREEN just brilliantly laid out—just to survive while CEOs are making megabillions with government subsidies.

As a recent study by the National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan showed, in any given month, 1.7 million households live on a cash income of less than \$2 per day. Now that is comparable to many living in the developing world. Yes, \$2. I said \$2 per day. Now, that is here in America, the richest Nation on this Earth.

In an economy that, despite recent gains, there are three unemployed for every one job opening, it is really a shame and a disgrace that 1.3 million people lost their lifeline as Republicans continue to refuse to extend emergency unemployment compensation. Now, these individuals' checks should arrive or should have arrived this week. Unfortunately, they did not. What in the world are people going to do now? This is heartless, it is mean-spirited, and, of course, to add insult to injury, many of these people lost about \$35 in food stamp benefits last November.

Yes, the economy has gotten better for some, but has left millions behind. Fifty years ago, the safety net was put in place just for times such as these. That is why it is so important to share stories like Jennifer's and like Amy's. Vital social safety net programs are still needed. We need to stop this war on the poor. We should have a cease-fire on the war on the poor. We have a moral and we have an economic obligation to make investments in economic opportunity and jobs.

NAFTA AT 20

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, last week marked the 20th anniversary of NAFTA's going into effect. The North American Free Trade Agreement was a hard-fought fight here in this Congress with a very close vote. In 1994, when it narrowly passed under a rule not allowing amendment, called Fast Track, America was promised that NAFTA would be a great jobs boon for our country and our economy. Exactly the reverse has happened.

The NAFTA promises made have all been broken. First, on jobs: the administration at the time promised that NAFTA would initially create 200,000 new jobs. In reality, America has now lost, after 20 years, about 1 million jobs related to NAFTA's impact, and the old sucking sound actually happened. Our jobs were off-shored, sucked away. More than 680,000 American jobs have gone to Mexico alone. Yes, that great sucking sound continues to happen.

About 60 percent of the jobs lost, of the million jobs lost overall, were lost to Mexico in the manufacturing sector. These were middle class jobs that came from places like Cleveland, Toledo, Pittsburgh, Chicago and Buffalo, and the list goes on. They were good paying jobs in our country that had provided living wages, medical benefits, and employer contributions to retirement programs.

America was also promised that NAFTA would fuel dynamic trade in tearing down trade barriers and creating trade surpluses for our country which means that we actually would export more than we imported with jobs created as a result. Well, guess what, the trade barriers that NAFTA was supposed to tear down have actu-

ally created massive trade deficits—red ink—for our country.

If one looks back at the passage of NAFTA, prior to its passage, America actually had a trade surplus with Mexico. That is more U.S. exports out that Mexico imports in. But then with NAFTA's passage, we began to start really going deep into the hole of jobs being off-shored. And then with other trade agreements like free trade with communist China—which isn't free by any measure—we see that America's trade deficits have accumulated annually to historic levels never experienced by this society before.

The cost of this has been huge. Since NAFTA took effect, the annual U.S. trade deficit has increased by 5 times, a 500 percent increase from \$98 billion in the red to \$534 billion in the red. Each billion dollars of trade deficit accounts for anywhere between 5,000 and 10,000 lost jobs depending if it is in the retail sector or the industrial sector. Our cumulative trade deficit over the 20 years due to NAFTA—get ready for this—is \$1.5 trillion. If you want to understand why America has a job deficit and a budget deficit at the Federal level, it is because we have off-shored so many jobs through these trade agreements that are passed under the Fast Track procedure.

The year before NAFTA took effect, America actually had a \$1.6 trillion trade surplus with Mexico; but every year after NAFTA took effect in 1995, that trade surplus with Mexico was turned into a \$15.8 billion trade deficit in the first year. And every single year, it has simply gotten worse. By 2012, our trade deficit with Mexico ballooned to \$61.6 billion. So every year, the hole got deeper. What a failure NAFTA is on the jobs front and on the trade front.

Finally, supporters of NAFTA claimed that NAFTA would open markets for American exports to Mexico. I will tell you one thing Ohio saw. Ohio saw pork production that used to happen in Ohio platformed down near Mexico City where environmental regulations, if they exist at all, are certainly not enforced. And we look at companies like Mr. Coffee that were sucked out of Cleveland and moved to Mexico. We saw suppliers in the automotive industry being relocated from our country to Mexico and Canada with U.S. middle class jobs just vaporized one factory, one farm at a time. It is as though the lights are being shut out from coast to coast in neighborhood after neighborhood.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation that I have introduced, H.R. 191, the NAFTA Accountability Act, basically says that these trade agreements have to work in America's interest, starting with NAFTA; and where these agreements have failed, adjustments must occur in order to stem the off-shoring of any jobs so we can begin re-creating middle class jobs in this country again. The NAFTA trade model must be replaced, fast track must be sidetracked, and jobs in America must be created again to rebuild our middle class.

□ 1115

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF WAR ON
POVERTY

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

Mr. HECK of Washington. Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago this week, in this very Chamber, President Lyndon Johnson declared an “unconditional war on poverty.” The mission the President outlined was grand, but his goal for each and every American was modest:

Help them fulfill their basic hopes—their hopes for a fair chance to make good; their hopes for fair play under the law; their hopes for a full-time job on full-time pay; their hopes for a decent home for their family in a decent community; their hopes for a good school for their children with good teachers; and their hopes for security when faced with sickness or unemployment or old age.

Fifty years later, the results speak for themselves:

The number of children living in poverty has dropped by 10 percent; the number of seniors living in poverty has plummeted by 32 percent; tens of millions of Americans have health insurance because of Medicare and Medicaid; the percentage of adults completing high school has skyrocketed from 56 percent to 88 percent; the share of women in the workforce has increased from 42 percent to 64 percent; and each and every single day, millions of school children go to school with full stomachs because of nutrition assistance.

We have much as a Nation we can be proud of; and the best way, the very best way we can celebrate and honor that progress is to rededicate ourselves to the challenges remaining. Because the truth of the matter is there are still too many Americans out of work, and there are still too many Americans working in jobs that don't pay enough to raise a family, and there are still too many Americans working harder for less.

I don't pretend that there are easy solutions to these problems. There is no cure-all, there is no silver bullet Congress can fire, but we simply cannot stand down; and we cannot, as President Johnson warned, “fritter and fumble away our opportunity in needless, senseless quarrels between Democrats and Republicans.”

Sound familiar?

So, Mr. Speaker, on this 50th anniversary of the start of the war on poverty, it comes down to one simple question we should have the courage to ask ourselves: Are we doing everything we reasonably can to strengthen the middle class and help those working to get into it? Let me repeat that. Are we doing everything we reasonably can to strengthen the middle class and help those working to get into it? And I think we should also have the courage to answer that question honestly, and I think we all know the answer. It is “no.” But we also all know that we can. That is the question of our time.

The question of the day is whether or not we are going to help in this way by

extending unemployment compensation benefits. The business case for this is exceedingly strong. The fact of the matter is that there are three people looking for work for every job available. The fact of the matter is that long-term unemployment is nearly twice as high as it was at each of the times that we ended emergency unemployment compensation over the last couple of decades. The business case for this is very strong, for those 1.3 million people already affected and the 2.6 million or so or more that will be affected in this calendar year. The business case is very strong.

There are those, of course, who will suggest that there are those who abuse unemployment compensation. I am not going to quibble about that, but I am going to reject the principle that Americans don't want to work, don't need to work, and that we are not hardwired to work, and I can prove it to you. I can absolutely prove it to you. Stop right now and ask yourself, what is the first thing you ask someone when you meet them?

“What do you do?”

We define ourselves by our work. It gives us pride. It helps us support our family. It makes our communities and neighborhoods stronger. Americans want to work. And when they cannot, we ought to be there to help them. We can, and we should.

MARKING 50 YEARS OF THE WAR
ON POVERTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SWALWELL) for 3½ minutes.

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago, President Johnson declared in this Chamber the war on poverty, and this is one war that we must continue to wage.

I want to thank my neighbor in Alameda County who represents Oakland and San Leandro and Alameda and Berkeley, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, who is Congress' greatest champion today to continue fighting President Johnson's war on poverty, and I am grateful to have a mentor in Congresswoman LEE who has guided and helped me as I have worked to do my part.

Since President Johnson's declaration, we have made real progress. Using an accurate measurement of who is poor in America shows we have cut the rate from 25.8 percent in 1967 to 16 percent in 2012, reducing by millions the number of Americans who are poor. Unfortunately, this war is not yet won. Almost 50 million Americans still live in poverty, including over 13 million children. In such an abundant society as ours, there is only one word to describe these stark facts, “unconscionable,” and we can do better.

This Congress should make it a priority to help the poor, the economically downtrodden, and the jobless. Their path to economic opportunity

still remains dim. But this Congress, the people in this House, can be their light. If we are going to win the war on poverty, there are many battles today that we must win:

First, we should start by extending unemployment insurance now and not putting 1.3 million Americans out in the cold;

Second, we need to raise our minimum wage so those working hard and trying to earn a living can actually do so;

Third, we must fight harsh cuts to SNAP and Head Start to make sure everyone has equal opportunity.

These are just a few of the small battles that we must win right now in the larger war on poverty.

This is no time to turn back or to retreat. This is a time for a surge in our war against poverty. Millions of Americans, including children, are counting on us, and we must ask ourselves a few questions:

Has this war been won?

Has poverty been eradicated across America?

And is our middle class built out?

If the answer to any of these questions is “no,” then we know what we must continue to do. We must fight on, and we must keep fighting until we win the war on poverty.

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 11 o'clock and 22 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

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

Loving God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

At the beginning of this new day, we are grateful as individuals and as a Nation for the blessings we have been given.

We ask Your blessing upon the Members of this people's House. May they anticipate the opportunities and difficulties that are before them, and before so many Americans, with steadfast determination to work together toward solutions that will benefit their countrymen.

Grant that they be worthy of the responsibilities they have been given by their constituents and truly the people You have called them to be.

May the walls of disagreement that have divided this assembly be put aside and replaced with a spirit of respect