

about to head off to their annual retreat in Cambridge, Maryland, to discuss their priorities for the year, including whether to raise the debt ceiling or not. My hope is that the majority party listens to Speaker BOEHNER on the debt ceiling. Earlier this month, he said:

All I know is we should not default on our debt; we shouldn't even get close to it.

The Speaker understands that America pays its bills. Good for him. The Speaker also understands that even the threat of default will harm the American economy. And he is right. The Speaker understands that holding hostage America's full faith and credit is a dead-end plan for his party and for America.

Speaker BOEHNER, I surely hope that you prevail on the majority party. America is not a deadbeat Nation. America pays its bills.

REQUESTING MOTOR CARRIER EXEMPTION

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

Mrs. WALORSKI. Mr. Speaker, it has been a frigid winter in the Hoosier State. Subzero temperatures and arctic conditions have forced school closings, travel bans, and challenges for the business community. The demand for propane and home heating fuel is at an all-time high.

As a result, Federal officials declared a state of emergency for the Midwest, lifting hours of service limitations for motor carriers to ensure consumers can steadily receive home heating fuel. But this waiver only remains in effect until February 11, 2014.

Today, I led a letter with Hoosier lawmakers to the U.S. Department of Transportation requesting that the emergency exemption be extended. Winter weather is unpredictable, but if we are ready to act, we can alleviate this stress for our families. This simple extension is a commonsense way to provide some much-needed relief for Hoosiers as we weather this harsh winter.

DON'T CHEAT AMERICAN FARMERS

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this is a sad moment as we consider a farm bill that has the least amount of reform possible to secure passage. I am thankful that some of the most hateful and egregious—like the King amendment—have been stripped out, but the savings from direct payments will be swallowed up by enriched crop insurance.

My friend PAUL RYAN is concerned that the safety net for the poor has become too comfortable a hammock. But this farm bill is now a lounge chair for

rich agribusiness interests, who need it the least. It should be a scandal that there are more cuts to food stamp benefits while crop insurance is further enriched for wealthy agribusiness.

The time to start is now to avoid another congressional grab bag that cheats the American farmers.

Also, thank you, Trudi, for your years of dedicated service to Congress and the American people.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

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

Mr. STUTZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor in strong opposition to the farm bill conference report.

The farm bill is just more business as usual here in Washington. Last summer, the American people won an important victory for common sense and transparency when we ended this unholy alliance between food stamp and farm programs. Together, in this House, we defeated business as usual by passing the first farm-only farm bill in nearly 40 years. But business as usual fought back, and here we are today.

Not only does this farm bill recombine food stamps and farm programs, it actually spends even more than the first bill the Senate passed. This is exactly the kind of logrolling that we fought to prevent this summer.

Mr. Speaker, Congress works best when we do our work in the full light of day. Unfortunately, this farm bill was written behind closed doors. It has stripped long-term reforms. It spends money we simply don't have, and it stripped out important policies that negatively affect our livestock industry.

As a farmer and a conservative, I will not vote to take a step backwards.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF RON GREEN

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

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the public service of Ron Green, a U.S. Navy veteran.

Ron Green is the director of the San Joaquin County Veterans Service Office, advocating for veterans and helping them navigate the Department of Veterans Affairs. After nearly 14 years of service, as the county's VSO director, Ron Green will retire on February 1.

Before his career with the county, Mr. Green worked at the Sharpe Depot and the Defense Distribution Center at Lathrop and as a VA claims examiner. In total, Mr. Green has more than 30 years of service to veterans and the public.

As someone who knows Ron Green personally, I can attest to his commit-

ment and dedication to the veterans in San Joaquin County. Mr. Green has been personally responsible for lowering the number of homeless veterans in San Joaquin Valley. He has supported our local Veterans History Project efforts and has been a valuable partner on veterans' issues over the years, including advocating for the VA to locate an expanded regional outpatient clinic and a new community living center in San Joaquin Valley.

He will be missed by the veterans of San Joaquin County, and I wish him all the best in the years ahead. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the public service contributions of Ron Green.

SUPPORT THE CONFERENCE REPORT ON THE FARM BILL

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

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, ag producers have waited nearly 3 years for a long-term farm bill, and I would like to thank my colleagues for their efforts thus far. Policy certainty will help our country be competitive.

Last year, conferees were appointed to negotiate and resolve differences between the House and Senate versions of the farm bill. The House bill included language meant to encourage compromise on a fix to avoid trade retaliation from Canada and Mexico and bar individual States with unscientific laws from disrupting interstate commerce, something which will only burden producers and increase costs for consumers.

I tend to believe if we are going to call a piece of legislation the farm bill, the measure ought to recognize that farmers and ranchers are the primary stewards of our natural resources, as well as the animals in their care.

This farm bill does include important reforms, such as eliminating direct payments, and it helps hardworking taxpayers in finding an estimated \$23 billion in savings.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, I support this return to regular order. For these reasons, I will support the conference report before us today, but it is my hope this body will act quickly to find solutions to the outstanding issues not addressed in this bill.

PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT

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

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the fifth anniversary of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, a critical law that championed the principle of equal pay for equal work.

While this law made strides in closing the wage gap, across the country, women still earn 77 cents for every dollar a man makes for the exact same work. This gap results in more than