

Now, much has changed. 2014 and 2015 were the strongest 2 years of job creation since 1998 to 2000, when Bill Clinton was President. The private sector is powering the economy forward. Our businesses have added 14 million jobs over a record 70 consecutive months of job growth. Wages have finally begun to rise. Nominal average hourly earnings for all private employees have now risen 2.5 percent over the past year. The ratio of unemployment seekers to job openings has fallen from 7 to 1 to 1.5 to 1. That is about the lowest this ratio has been since early 2007.

Since the start of the Obama administration, our real GDP has increased by 14 percent. The U.S. auto industry, which was on death's door when President Obama took office, is now healthy, thriving, and enjoyed record sales in 2015. Our auto industry is now exporting and creating even more jobs. Oil and gas prices are low. Mortgage rates remain low. Inflation is simply not a factor. The dollar is strong, and housing prices are back up to where they were in 2007.

All of this recovery was not an accident, not a stroke of good luck. Things certainly would have been quite different if we had only listened to the counsel of our colleagues across the aisle. They vehemently opposed efforts taken by the Obama administration to stimulate the economy, and they opposed actions by the Federal Reserve that turned out to be very critically important.

What would have happened without these actions by the Federal Reserve and the Democrats in Congress? The recession would have lasted twice as long, according to a recent study by highly respected economists Alan Blinder and Mark Zandi. The Blinder-Zandi study found that without these actions, the unemployment rate would have reached nearly 16 percent, and we would have lost twice as many jobs, more than 17 million. It is a bit scary to even think about.

So the facts show that we have had a very strong recovery. Are we done? Absolutely not. There is much more work to do to ensure the recovery reaches everyone. Big challenges remain. Many families are struggling to make ends meet, to make the mortgage payment, to save for their children's education. We need faster wage growth, accessible child care, and higher education that is affordable to all families. It is time to pass comprehensive immigration reform and to protect Americans from gun violence.

I am excited about the opportunity to make real progress on these issues this year, and I look forward to working in a bipartisan way to continue to focus on the challenges facing middle class families.

PRO-LIFE

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

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Mr. Speaker, the Declaration of Independence contains a passage that every student in America learns at an early age. It explains that each of us are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, chief among them the right to life. This highlights and reminds us just how much our Founders valued the right to life.

As an elected Representative, the words in our Declaration that follow are equally compelling: To secure these rights, governments are instituted among men. How often we forget that government exists first and foremost to secure the right to life.

Now, this is an immense responsibility, one that I take very seriously, because one of the highest honors I have in representing the Fourth Congressional District of Texas is defending the most vulnerable among us, our unborn children. I am proud to have a voting record that reflects my unwavering commitment to protecting unborn life and ending taxpayer funding of abortion.

I will also be the first to tell you that legislators represent only one piece of the puzzle in the ongoing and vital effort to promote a culture of life. There are literally thousands of unsung pro-life heroes in the Fourth Congressional District of Texas, whose effort to promote a culture of life are not about gaining recognition or notoriety, but are simply rooted in an abiding sense of protecting the inalienable right to life, which our Founding Fathers spoke of.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a few of these pro-life heroes in my district, people like Melanie Grammar and Deborah Butts with the Texas Federation of Republican Women; Michelle Smith and Ann Hettinger in Rockwall, Texas; Chip Adami at the True Options Pregnancy Center in Sherman; Mason Randall and Robin Stevenson at Lake Pointe Church Adoption Ministry; Kristie Wright at the First Choice Pregnancy Resource Center in Texarkana; Threesa Sadler and Tim Stainback at the Raffa Center in Greenville; Joanne Vuckovic at the Rockwall Pregnancy Resource Center; and the great folks at both the Paris and Fannin Pregnancy Care Centers.

The dedication of individuals like these and thousands of others across the Fourth Congressional District of Texas is appreciated, it is necessary, and it certainly does not go unnoticed. Thank you all for your commitment to protecting the incredibly important cause of life.

BILL TO COMPREHENSIVELY ADDRESS COMPACT IMPACT IN AFFECTED JURISDICTIONS

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

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, today I introduced legislation that will help

address the impact of the Compact of Free Association—these are the Pacific Islands—on affected jurisdictions like Guam and the State of Hawaii.

I continue to support the intent of the Compact, and I do understand the benefits that these agreements have for our Nation and our security. However, the costs borne by our local governments amount to millions of dollars for providing social services to Compact migrants are unsustainable, and Congress must act to provide relief for affected jurisdictions who have spent millions of local funds to support the Compact and the migrants.

COFA migrants make positive contributions to our community, but insufficient support from the Federal Government causes a significant socioeconomic strain on our island communities. This strain only increases, especially with uncertain economic conditions in the Freely Associated States, as well as the impact climate change is having on Pacific Island nations.

The bill I am introducing, as well as proposals that I have made in the past, will provide relief and empower local jurisdictions with solutions to reduce the burden of the Compact.

The best solution to Compact impact would be an increase in annual mandatory funding from the current \$30 million to the \$185 million recommended by the GAO. However, the current budget environment makes appropriating this very difficult.

Nonetheless, I am proud to also co-sponsor another bill, a bill introduced by Congressman TAKAI of the State of Hawaii, that would increase this annual appropriation, and I hope that we can at least have a debate on this measure.

However, as we work to find long-term solutions to Compact impact, I believe that there are important and innovative fixes that would provide much-needed relief to our local governments without much cost to taxpayers.

Now, this approach is a more budget-friendly way to address this challenge. The bill's provisions address four areas to reduce the burden.

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First, my bill would permit the affected jurisdictions to use the amount that they have spent to provide social services to COFA migrants toward the non-Federal portion of providing Medicaid to their local residents. The bill proposes a new formula that would increase the Federal medical assistance percentage for each of the affected jurisdictions, and this would go a long way toward alleviating the burden on affected jurisdictions by increasing the percentage assistance provided by the Federal Government for Medicaid.

Secondly, the bill would categorize elementary and secondary education-aged COFA students as federally connected students and make them eligible for Impact Aid. I understand the fiscal challenges that the Impact Aid community faces, and I am committed