

who were willing to die for the right to protect it. If we want to honor this day, let that hundred go back to Washington and gather four hundred more, and together, pledge to make it their mission to restore that law this year. That's how we honor those on this bridge.

Of course, our democracy is not the task of Congress alone, or the courts alone, or even the President alone. If every new voter-suppression law was struck down today, we would still have, here in America, one of the lowest voting rates among free peoples. Fifty years ago, registering to vote here in Selma and much of the South meant guessing the number of jellybeans in a jar, the number of bubbles on a bar of soap. It meant risking your dignity, and sometimes, your life.

What's our excuse today for not voting? How do we so casually discard the right for which so many fought? How do we so fully give away our power, our voice, in shaping America's future? Why are we pointing to somebody else when we could take the time just to go to the polling places? We give away our power.

Fellow marchers, so much has changed in 50 years. We have endured war and we've fashioned peace. We've seen technological wonders that touch every aspect of our lives. We take for granted conveniences that our parents could have scarcely imagined. But what has not changed is the imperative of citizenship; that willingness of a 26-year-old deacon, or a Unitarian minister, or a young mother of five to decide they loved this country so much that they'd risk everything to realize its promise.

That's what it means to love America. That's what it means to believe in America. That's what it means when we say America is exceptional.

For we were born of change. We broke the old aristocracies, declaring ourselves entitled not by bloodline, but endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights. We secure our rights and responsibilities through a system of self-government, of and by and for the people. That's why we argue and fight with so much passion and conviction—because we know our efforts matter. We know America is what we make of it.

Look at our history. We are Lewis and Clark and Sacajawea, pioneers who braved the unfamiliar, followed by a stampede of farmers and miners, and entrepreneurs and hucksters. That's our spirit. That's who we are.

We are Sojourner Truth and Fannie Lou Hamer, women who could do as much as any man and then some. And we're Susan B. Anthony, who shook the system until the law reflected that truth. That is our character.

We're the immigrants who stowed away on ships to reach these shores, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free—Holocaust survivors, Soviet defectors, the Lost Boys of Sudan. We're the hopeful strivers who cross the Rio Grande because we want our kids to know a better life. That's how we came to be.

We're the slaves who built the White House and the economy of the South. We're the ranch hands and cowboys who opened up the West, and countless laborers who laid rail, and raised skyscrapers, and organized for workers' rights.

We're the fresh-faced GIs who fought to liberate a continent. And we're the Tuskegee Airmen, and the Navajo code-talkers, and the Japanese Americans who fought for this country even as their own liberty had been denied.

We're the firefighters who rushed into those buildings on 9/11, the volunteers who signed up to fight in Afghanistan and Iraq. We're the gay Americans whose blood ran in the streets of San Francisco and New York, just as blood ran down this bridge.

We are storytellers, writers, poets, artists who abhor unfairness, and despise hypocrisy, and give voice to the voiceless, and tell truths that need to be told.

We're the inventors of gospel and jazz and blues, bluegrass and country, and hip-hop and rock and roll, and our very own sound with all the sweet sorrow and reckless joy of freedom.

We are Jackie Robinson, enduring scorn and spiked cleats and pitches coming straight to his head, and stealing home in the World Series anyway.

We are the people Langston Hughes wrote of who "build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how." We are the people Emerson wrote of, "who for truth and honor's sake stand fast and suffer long;" who are "never tired, so long as we can see far enough."

That's what America is. Not stock photos or airbrushed history, or feeble attempts to define some of us as more American than others. We respect the past, but we don't pine for the past. We don't fear the future; we grab for it. America is not some fragile thing. We are large, in the words of Whitman, containing multitudes. We are boisterous and diverse and full of energy, perpetually young in spirit. That's why someone like John Lewis at the ripe old age of 25 could lead a mighty march.

And that's what the young people here today and listening all across the country must take away from this day. You are America. Unconstrained by habit and convention. Unencumbered by what is, because you're ready to seize what ought to be.

For everywhere in this country, there are first steps to be taken, there's new ground to cover, there are more bridges to be crossed. And it is you, the young and fearless at heart, the most diverse and educated generation in our history, who the nation is waiting to follow.

Because Selma shows us that America is not the project of any one person. Because the single-most powerful word in our democracy is the word "We." "We The People." "We Shall Overcome." "Yes We Can." That word is owned by no one. It belongs to everyone. Oh, what a glorious task we are given, to continually try to improve this great nation of ours.

Fifty years from Bloody Sunday, our march is not yet finished, but we're getting closer. Two hundred and thirty-nine years after this nation's founding our union is not yet perfect, but we are getting closer. Our job's easier because somebody already got us through that first mile. Somebody already got us over that bridge. When it feels the road is too hard, when the torch we've been passed feels too heavy, we will remember these early travelers, and draw strength from their example, and hold firmly the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on [the] wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint."

We honor those who walked so we could run. We must run so our children soar. And we will not grow weary. For we believe in the power of an awesome God, and we believe in this country's sacred promise.

May He bless those warriors of justice no longer with us, and bless the United States of America. Thank you, everybody.

THE GOP BUDGET

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

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, America has always been the country of op-

portunity. For those struggling, our country works to prevent families from becoming destitute and provides critical supports to help them out of difficult circumstances so they can earn a living and support their families. This support serves as a statement of our values, that you don't have to be born lucky to overcome hardship and succeed.

But the budget released today by my colleagues in the majority does not reflect these values. Instead of strengthening vital services like food assistance or investing in K-12 education, it slashes them. It reinforces the idea that your circumstances are your destiny.

We should be investing in American workers and creating an economy that will help everyone get ahead. Unfortunately, the priorities expressed today do not reflect this vision, and I hope we can work together toward a budget that does.

A BALANCED BUDGET FOR A STRONGER AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROKITA) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ROKITA. Mr. Speaker, we are here today to talk about the Republican budget that was just announced today, and I do that with a great amount of pride and excitement as vice chairman of that committee.

I also look forward to working with the gentlelady who just spoke during the 1-minute speeches, not only to create a sustainable budget and priorities for America, but to debunk many of the things that she just said.

I am pleased to be joined by several members of the Committee on the Budget to help me do this.

Before we get into the details, I feel it appropriate, Mr. Speaker, and absolutely necessary to yield to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. SCALISE), the majority whip of the House of Representatives, a friend of mine, to discuss some of the things that have happened to the great citizens in Louisiana.

HONORING THE LOUISIANA GUARDSMEN WHO PERISHED LAST WEEK

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Indiana for yielding.

As we observed a moment of silence on the House floor just a little while ago, I rise today in honor of the 11 brave American servicemen involved in last week's tragic helicopter crash off the coast of Florida. It is heart-breaking events like this, Mr. Speaker, which remind us that freedom is not free.

Four of those heroes were members of the Louisiana National Guard stationed within the 1st of the 244th Assault Helicopter Battalion out of Hammond, Louisiana, which is located in my district.

Our hearts are heavy, Mr. Speaker, as our Nation joins the battalion in mourning the loss of Chief Warrant Officer George Wayne Griffin, Jr., Chief Warrant Officer George David Strother, Staff Sergeant Lance Bergeron, and Staff Sergeant Thomas Florich. Their names will forever be engraved in our hearts and in our minds. They were described by their fellow soldiers as extraordinary and amazing aviators.

Colonel Patrick Bossetta, the commander of the State Aviation Command, who I spoke with over the weekend, said this, Mr. Speaker:

“This crew was made up of the larger-than-life men who have had a passion for Army aviation that was so evident in the dedication that they had towards their profession. I know this, as I have personally flown with each one of them. They were driven by their intense desire to selflessly serve their country, fellow soldiers, and marines.”

I want to talk about what some of their other colleagues said about them.

Lieutenant Colonel John L. Bonnette II, who is the commander of the 244th said:

“When I say they were heroes, I mean it many times over. They risked their lives under difficult conditions, flying in combat and during national emergencies, to ensure our security and help save thousands of people. I don’t have the words to sum up their lives in a few sentences. You just can’t. Our whole aviation family is reeling from this loss. The hole that is left is enormous. They were part of the fabric of this unit. The difference they made with everyone they served with will be a lasting legacy. Personally, flying with all of them was a privilege and an honor. I am a better person for having known them.”

These heroes, Mr. Speaker, were husbands, fathers, and sons. We reflect upon the countless sacrifices they made for our great Nation, the selfless call they answered to defend our freedoms. They died doing what they loved.

I want to take a few moments now to let the American people know about these four members of the Louisiana National Guard who died in this tragic accident.

First is Chief Warrant Officer 4 George Wayne Griffin, Jr., who was 37 years old. Chief Warrant Officer Griffin was from Delhi, Louisiana, and joined the Louisiana National Guard in 1994 and was commissioned as a warrant officer in 1999 before going on to become the battalion standardization pilot with over 6,000 flight hours, including more than 1,000 combat hours. He later deployed to Iraq in 2004 to 2005 and again was redeployed in 2008 and 2009. He also served during State deployments in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Isaac, as well as in support of Operations River Guardian and Deepwater Horizon.

“G. Wayne Griffin was born to be an Army Aviator,” said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Reggie Lane, commander of Detachment 38, Operational Support Air-

lift Command. “As one of the most talented and respected warrant officers in the Louisiana National Guard, he had a tremendous passion for flying and a God-given natural ability to fly both helicopters and airplanes and to teach others to be the best aviators and crewmembers they could be. He was a great friend and brother to all. With his loss, there will be a void that may never be filled.”

Griffin is survived by his wife, Becky, four children, and his father.

Now, Chief Warrant Officer 4 George David Strother was 44 years old. Chief Warrant Officer Strother was from Alexandria and served in the Louisiana National Guard from 1988 to 2007 and again from 2009 until his death last week. He deployed to Iraq in 2004 and 2005, to Afghanistan in 2011, and Kosovo in 2014. He also served during State deployments for Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Isaac. Strother commissioned as a warrant officer in 1994 before going on to become an instructor pilot, with over 2,400 flight hours, including more than 700 combat hours.

“To describe Dave Strother as a big personality would not be accurate. He was more like a force of nature that could best be observed and marveled at, never opposed or altered,” said Major Andre Jeansonne, commander, F Company, 2nd Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment. “His huge heart touched the lives of all men he met.”

Strother is survived by his wife, Melissa, his son and a stepdaughter, and his mother.

Staff Sergeant Lance Bergeron, 40 years old. Staff Sergeant Lance Bergeron of Thibodaux, Louisiana, enlisted into the U.S. Marine Corps in 1998 before joining the Louisiana National Guard in 2001 as a Black Hawk repairman. His extensive experience as a qualified enlisted flight instructor, graduate of the aircraft crewmember standardization instructor course, aircraft maintainer force, and warrior leader course made Bergeron a crew chief others aspired to be, according to members of his own unit. The combat veteran deployed to Iraq twice, in 2004 to 2005, and again in 2008 to 2009. Bergeron also served during State deployments for Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Isaac, and Operation River Guardian. Bergeron is survived by his wife, Monique, two children, and his mother and father.

Finally, Staff Sergeant Thomas Florich, 26 years old. Staff Sergeant Florich, of Fairfax County, Virginia, enlisted in the Louisiana National Guard in 2007 as a Black Hawk repairer. He was posthumously promoted from sergeant to staff sergeant. Staff Sergeant Florich served during State deployment for Operation Deepwater Horizon and Hurricane Isaac. He earned more than 125 flight hours and was a graduate of the warrior leader course.

“Tom was full of life, and his personality could light the room,” said Marquez. “He was family with this unit and felt at home working with his

brothers in Alpha Company. His dedication to duty and loyalty was without equal, always ready to accept any mission and extra duty in order to help the unit meet the mission. He will be greatly missed by the unit and the flight facility.”

Florich is survived by his wife, Meghan, who is expecting their first child, as well as his father and stepmother.

□ 1630

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, these four men served their country and the people of Louisiana with great honor. They deployed to war zones and served during times of great emergency for our State. They represent the very best of what our military stands for.

On behalf of my family, the Louisiana congressional delegation, and the entire House of Representatives, I want to say thank you to these four men and their families for the sacrifices they have made and for their service to our country. Their service and sacrifice will not be forgotten. They will remain in our prayers.

God bless these heroes, and God bless America.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the gentleman from Louisiana for those eulogies and for being all too appropriate in the honor that we should give these fallen Americans, as great as they have been.

Today, after votes for the day, Mr. Speaker, I want to recap some of the things that happened earlier in the day.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor to say that at about 10:45 this morning, the Republican members of the Budget Committee held a press conference where we explained to the American people our vision for our priorities and for the priorities of America to get us back on track. “A Balanced Budget for a Stronger America,” is our theme.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased and proud to say that this theme isn’t altogether new for the United States House of Representatives Republicans. In fact, in large part, this is the fifth year in a row that we have proposed these kinds of ideas so that we can live responsibly in the here and now to produce and afford a better tomorrow for our children and grandchildren.

Isn’t that, Mr. Speaker, what we are here to be about? Hasn’t it always been the history of these great United States that we would leave the next generation better off than the current generation has had it?

As you know, Mr. Speaker, and as my colleagues will help me point out here over the next hour, we stand here as actually the first generation in American history that is poised to leave the next one worse off by any objective measure.

That is why the budgets that we produce, the spending that we promulgate here in the United States Congress really needs to be scrutinized, really needs to be prioritized.

It is going to take people with a great degree of personal responsibility

and leadership, Mr. Speaker, to have a great, truthful conversation with the American people to, number one, tell them what the situation really is, but just as important, number two, to let them know that there are solutions, that we can fix it if we just show them what they are.

Let me quickly go through some of the points of our budget that we will mark up in committee tomorrow and expect to be on the floor next week for a vote.

Again, the first point, this plan will balance the budget in less than 10 years. That is faster than any of the recent House Republican budgets. Mr. Speaker, it is in stark contrast to the President's budget, which never balances, ever.

How can we pay off this \$18 trillion-plus in debt that we have right now, plus the hundred trillion that is on the way over the next several decades, if we never first get it to balance? This Republican budget does that. We do it in less than 10 years.

Now, many American families are saying, 10 years? I wish I had 10 years to balance our budget. I have to balance it immediately in our households, some might say. For a government that spends over \$3 trillion a year, it takes a while to turn that big aircraft carrier, so to speak, around.

That is why I use the word "responsible," Mr. Speaker. We are being responsible in these reforms, in these priority changes, so that people have time to adapt, so that we can get the economy going again to produce more revenue to make perhaps that 10 years even go by quicker, but this is a responsible way to do it.

All we have to do is show the rest of the world that we have a pathway to prosperity and we will continue to be the best place in the world to invest, to grow a business, to grow a family for the next several decades, as we have been for the last several hundred years.

The other thing our budget does, Mr. Speaker, is it repeals ObamaCare, saving nearly \$2 trillion in the process. This is government-controlled health care. It has never worked in the past. It is not going to work now.

We get rid of it, encouraging us to start over with health care reforms in a way that Americans feel comfortable in keeping their doctor, for example, in ways that respect free market principles of supply and demand, in ways that naturally stop us from overconsuming. That is the baseline from which we should have a health care reform debate and policy, not from a government-controlled perspective.

Our budget also proudly relies on a fairer and simpler Tax Code. It is interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that the Congressional Budget Office, those that are tasked with keeping track of our economic indicators and scoring the different bills that come through Congress, has indicated that our GDP—our gross domestic product in this country—will be assumed to be about 2.3 percent over the next several years.

Now, that is new information, Mr. Speaker. Never before has our GDP growth been calculated to be that low; yet it is because of our current policies over the last several years that they must calculate our GDP growth to be that low. We call for changing that formula.

A fairer, simpler Tax Code allows for job creators to create those jobs, to create more investment, and to invest more in their people and businesses. That creates a net economic positive effect that creates economic value that ultimately, Mr. Speaker, will allow more tax revenue into the government's coffers to help balance the budget and then begin to pay off our debt.

Mr. Speaker, our budget also proudly provides for a strong national defense. As we have heard now for the last several weeks, months, and years, the global war on terror is very much alive, very much real, very much a serious threat, and it would be irresponsible of us to continue cutting our military at a time when these threats exist. Our budget recognizes that.

Our budget calls for more spending in our military than President Obama, the Commander in Chief, has said he needs; and I think it reflects the reality of the situation around the world today, Mr. Speaker. You will see the Republicans stand strong for our military men and women and the defense budget that they need.

This budget also, Mr. Speaker, gives power back to the States. In legislative parlance and philosophical parlance, that is called federalism. Really what this budget is and recognizes is that those individuals and the States are much better at governing the affairs of their respective lives and their respective people than a prescriptive, one-size-fits-all recipe from Washington.

Our budget calls for flexibility, giving the property of individuals and States, i.e., their tax dollars, back to them so they can run social programs that they think are important, that fit the needs of their constituencies and their communities, and that gets Washington out of the way.

Our Medicaid reform proposals, for example, are a great example of this concept, where we send the States' and the individuals' property back to them—their tax dollars, in terms of Medicaid—and say: You know what, you are better at determining who is really poor in your communities and your States and what kind and what amounts of health care those people need.

Then, finally, the third leg to that is what the delivery system for those services would look like.

Who says that we have the answers to all this? It is no one-size-fits-all, prescriptive policy. The States are where it is at. The individuals and their communities know better than we do how to serve those most in need.

That gets right to the heart of Ms. BONAMICI's allegations during her 1-

minute speech. Throwing money at something—into a system that is broken, that doesn't work—is no way to fix a problem. It only grows our debt and makes people more dependent on broken programs.

Let's trust our fellow citizens. Let's trust our local elected officials to know their communities and their constituencies best. That is how you get people out of dependency.

Our goal with the Republican budget is to get people off these programs, not to make them lifetime dependents. There is no freedom, there is no liberty, there is no personal responsibility in that.

The Republican budget also recognizes and focuses on the dignity that comes with a job, the dignity that comes with work. That is altogether important and, Mr. Speaker, altogether lost in so many ways in so many places in this city and in this Congress—the dignity of work, earning the success, the happiness that comes with that. This Republican budget reflects all of that.

I am pleased at this time to yield the floor to several members of the Budget Committee, all of whom have helped put this document together, all of whom have worked diligently and seriously on behalf of the American people—and especially their constituents—to make this document not only bold, but accurate, in terms of its numbers and philosophically correct.

First, I yield to the gentleman from West Virginia, a new Member to this body, Congressman ALEX MOONEY. He lives in Charles Town in Jefferson County in West Virginia and has three children. He is the son of a Cuban refugee and Vietnam veteran.

Alex grew up with a deep sense of appreciation for the American ideals of individual freedom and personal responsibility. That, Mr. Speaker, is what makes him a great member of the House Budget Committee.

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, thank you to Congressman TODD ROKITA for arranging this Special Order to talk about the House budget released today titled: "A Balanced Budget for a Stronger America."

As a freshman member of the House Budget Committee and the Representative of West Virginia on the committee, I worked to deliver on West Virginia priorities in the House budget.

The first of these priorities is to balance the Federal budget. It is totally unacceptable for West Virginia—and all Americans—to live within their means while the Federal Government allows spending and debt to run rampant. While the House budget released today is not perfect, it balances, unlike the President's budget.

As you can see right here, it is a 10-year budget cycle. Our budget balances in year nine. Not only does the President's budget not balance, it creates more debt and deficit each and every year as you go along. We don't have a

partner to work with at the administrative level in the President's office to balance the budget.

We had to do this on our own because the American people demand and deserve a balanced budget. It is the right thing to do, and that is a bipartisan statement. As I traveled my State and my district last year, I heard from everybody, Republican and Democrat, that they wanted a balanced budget. This puts us on the path to do so.

I also successfully led three budget proposals through the committee process, and each are now included in the final House budget released today. The first two will stop the President's war on coal in its tracks, and the third cuts unnecessary Federal spending.

The first proposal stops the administration's efforts to close coal-fired power plants. We simply did this by eliminating any funding for the development and implementation of new ozone standard regulations by the Environmental Protection Agency, or the EPA.

The coal industry has already spent billions of dollars over the last few years coming into compliance with previous ozone standard rules, but the President's EPA is expected to release new ozone standards anyway, designed intentionally to shutter coal plants.

The President and his radical environmentalist allies fail to recognize that many States still rely on coal to provide energy at affordable household prices.

Over 90 percent of West Virginia households rely on coal for affordable, reliable energy. Recent estimates say implementation of the President's new rule would cost over 10,000 jobs in West Virginia.

The second proposal I secured in the House budget to stop the President's war on coal was to prevent funding for a new stream buffer rule from the Department of the Interior.

The administration has already spent over \$7 million writing this rule, which is designed to allow the administration to claim regulatory jurisdiction within 100 feet of anything they deem to be a stream.

□ 1645

That dubious proposition would allow Federal regulators to shut down surface mining operations in almost every region of West Virginia with the stroke of a pen. That is not how we make laws.

Some studies estimate that Federal and State governments will lose \$4 billion to \$5 billion in tax revenue if it is enacted, and the coal industry would lose \$14 billion to \$20 billion in revenue and as many as 85,000 jobs in our region.

Stopping the War on Coal is good policy for hardworking West Virginia taxpayers and good policy for our Nation. We must continue to pursue an all-of-the-above energy approach to secure energy independence and grow our economy.

I am proud of this budget's rejection of discrimination against certain forms of energy production, such as coal, which the President deems to not be politically correct.

To cut Federal waste, my third proposal defunds the Legal Services Corporation, an agency which operates far outside its original mandate after decades absent of any congressional oversight.

Defunding the Legal Services Corporation is a proposal supported by both the Congressional Budget Office and The Heritage Foundation. Instead of providing legal services to the poor, as is its mandate, the organization has been used to advance pro-abortion and politically ideological policies, as well as increase spending on welfare.

Defunding this organization would remove a Federal agency operating outside of its mandate and would also save taxpayers millions of dollars.

I am proud these proposals were included in the House budget to stop the President's assault on energy jobs and cut waste from the Federal Government. I look forward to continuing to fight for West Virginia priorities as the budget process continues. With real solutions, we can restore fiscal conservatism to Washington and foster economic prosperity for our Nation.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the gentleman. If the gentleman would stay, I would like to engage him in a question if he could.

I am very interested in what you are saying. You come from an area of this country, like so many areas of this country, that understand the meaning of the fact that when you pull something out of the ground and you process it, you have just created wealth. You have just created jobs for people.

That is not a dirty thing. And, in fact, the coal industry and the fossil fuel industry today, they are the cleanest they have ever been and have done so much good work. They have been chided and bullied for so many years now.

But I want you to tell us about how the electricity that comes from coal eventually not just is less dirty than it was before, but that it produces the electricity that gives people clean water, and not just in West Virginia or in Indiana, but in Africa. It raises people altogether out of poverty.

Could you talk more about what happens in West Virginia and the good it brings to people there and around the world?

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Sure. We burn clean coal and we see the use of coal. As I mentioned, 90 percent of our State uses coal for their energy. It is the cheapest, most affordable type of energy, electricity, that can be created, so it is a blessing to have that in our State and other States that have it as well.

We already burn it clean. The coal industry has dealt with regulations under previous administrations for many years. We are burning it clean.

It is not an accident. It is an intention of this administration because they stated it when they said they want a war on coal. They stated they are going to make it—the President himself said he is going to make it so expensive that it would bankrupt the coal production companies and shut down coal that way. So it is their goal to make standards that aren't just reasonable, but that are intended to stop an agency from producing.

I would like to also point out, we ship coal to other countries. We ship coal to China, for example. Well, guess what?

There is no EPA in China. They burn the coal there much, much dirtier than we do in this country. So it is cleaner to burn it here anyway than to ship it to other countries and have them burn it. So it makes no sense.

In fact, they are harming the environment. These very policies that are intended to help the environment are actually harming the environment. It makes no sense. It is harming every taxpayer, every family who wants this affordable form of energy.

Mr. ROKITA. Right. Reclaiming my time, I would say that every person we employ in West Virginia, in Indiana, and anywhere else in the country, gets a paycheck for sure. That is a great thing.

The government, both at the State and Federal levels and maybe even the local level, gets a cut of that, right? And that eventually gets here to Washington, D.C.

Sir, does it not make sense then that that would help pay down—excuse me, let's look at your chart—pay down the deficits, eventually getting us to balance, as we stated, in less than 10 years, and then allowing us to begin to work on our surplus over the next several decades?

So we certainly have to cut spending, and that is the main driver of our debt, and reform the social entitlement programs that are driving the debt. But every little bit of economic growth, economic activity that comes with a job, that comes with a paycheck, allows us, if we wanted to, like we do in this budget, to pay down those deficits in the debt.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Yes. Thank you for yielding.

I would say tens and really hundreds of thousands of jobs are on the line with these coal policies that prevent people from having good-paying jobs and feeding their families. And both parties can agree—it is a bipartisan proposal—the best way to help the poor or to help anybody not get on government assistance is to get a good-paying job, and that is what we are trying to provide here, good-paying jobs, the dignity that you mentioned, Congressman, in your earlier remarks about the dignity of having a good-paying job.

Folks in my State and, I am sure, others, want those good-paying jobs because they want that dignity. They

want to work. They don't want to have to be relying on government programs.

So the assault on the coal industry and the energy industry in general is something that is particularly harmful to our State. And anyone listening across this country, I would be careful, because if they can discriminate against one form of energy, which is coal, what is next?

There is an agenda here that exists to discriminate against various types of energy production. Look, we just want to be fair. We want an all-of-the-above energy policy. We want these jobs here at home that are going to happen anyway because they are doing it in other countries, so we want these jobs here at home. They are good-paying jobs.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the gentleman.

Reclaiming my time, I thank Congressman MOONEY for his expertise in this area, coming from the State of West Virginia.

Again, I would say he is an excellent member of the Budget Committee and takes his job seriously, and I welcome him to continue with our discussion here.

Mr. Speaker, if I can inquire how much time we have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 28 minutes remaining.

Mr. ROKITA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn our attention now to another hard-charging member of the Budget Committee, someone else who is new to Congress and who is bringing that energy, along with great ideas, to the discussion. A lot of his ideas are found in this budget.

Congressman JOHN MOOLENAAR of Michigan was a chemist, or perhaps is still a chemist. He worked in the private sector prior to joining us here. He is an example of a team that created the jobs that better our economy, that allow us to crawl out of this deficit and debt that we are facing because of our overspending, and his experience will allow us to be part—allow the conversation to illustrate the solutions that come with raising our GDP level back to where it used to be not just a few years ago so that we can have a better economy now and a better future for our children.

Before serving in Congress, JOHN MOOLENAAR served on the Midland City Council and in the State legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MOOLENAAR).

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Thank you very much. I want to thank my colleague from Indiana for his leadership organizing this presentation today.

Mr. Speaker, as it is clear from the charts and the discussion we have already had today, Washington has a spending problem.

In January, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that the Federal Government would collect \$3.4 trillion in revenue in fiscal year 2016.

The week after that, the Obama administration released a \$4 trillion spending plan that raises taxes and

never balances, a refusal to live within the government's means.

Out-of-control Federal spending has exploded the national debt. In 2014, revenue to the Federal Government was 49 percent higher than in 2000. Yet, spending for 2014 was 95 percent higher than 2000.

As part of the economy, the debt is at its highest point since the 1950s. Much of the problem is spending required by unsustainable government programs. This spending has increased dramatically and crowded out funding for national security and other priorities.

Mandatory spending alone in 2014 cost \$2.3 trillion, more than was spent funding the entire government in 2004.

As a member of the House Budget Committee, I have worked with our colleagues to craft a budget that addresses our country's fiscal challenges. The House Republican budget balances within 10 years and does not raise taxes.

It reforms unsustainable government programs while keeping the promises that have been made to our seniors. It grants flexibility to the States on Medicaid, allowing them to craft their own health care programs for those in need. This change brings Medicaid closer to the American people it was meant to serve.

I hope that Members of both parties, in both the Senate and the House, will be able to come together and address the budget in a responsible way, without raising taxes on hardworking families who have seen their wages stagnate during this historically slow economic recovery.

The House Republican budget puts our country on a path toward a more stable and responsible fiscal future.

Mr. ROKITA. Mr. Speaker, Mr. MOOLENAAR points out some of the obvious and perhaps maybe not so obvious problems the budget faces and what we face as a Congress.

Really quickly, before introducing a veteran member of the committee, I want to illustrate a little bit what, Mr. Speaker, Mr. MOOLENAAR was discussing.

Here you see, in a pie graph form, what our Federal Government, what your Federal Government spends its money on. I have taken the liberty of dissecting or pushing out two pieces of that pie to show you, really, from a year-to-year perspective situation, what we get to vote on as Members of Congress.

It is defense discretionary, as we call it, and there is nondefense discretionary. In terms of the fund centers and the lines in the budget, we can dial those up or dial those amounts down year to year, Budget Control Act deals and all that notwithstanding.

But it is the rest of this pie that Mr. MOOLENAAR indicates that is so alarming, because the rest of this pie, I can't, Mr. Speaker, you can't, Mr. MOOLENAAR can't dial up the spending or dial it down year to year by our vote

on the budget or our vote on appropriations bills because the funding formula for those programs is found in the underlying law.

So Congressman ROKITA doesn't get to decide how much Social Security an eligible citizen receives year to year, or what the Medicare services are going to be, or what the costs or payouts for them are going to be, or determine right now what the one-size-fits-all Medicaid program looks like. That is all determined by the underlying law.

This spending, until we reform these programs, is on autopilot. It just goes on and on and on and on, and that is why these programs too need to be reformed.

So we have taken the extra step in our House Republican budget and outlined solutions for the other committees, for Members of Congress, for the American people, that would work to not only pay down the deficits but then our debt over time after we come into balance, recognizing, being honest with the American people about what is causing our debt.

If you see from this pie graph, it is only about 40 percent of our budget year to year that we can dial up or down simply by a vote on the budget.

□ 1700

Over 60 percent is on autopilot.

So you can't possibly pay off our deficits and our debt until you address the underlying cause—what is driving our debt—and that is these entitlement programs of Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, the interest we owe ourselves and other countries for this debt we are racking up, and a smorgasbord of other mandatory spending, mostly welfare programs.

The Republican budget not only recognizes that, not only tells the American people the truth, but then offers solutions of what could solve the situation over a reasonable amount of time.

A fellow who has been integral to making sure that these good ideas have stayed in our budget now for the fifth time in the last several years is a gentleman I have come to know as a good friend, a trusted confidant, a fellow whom I have said from this microphone before represents the people in his district in Georgia so very, very well, and not only that but represents America so well because of his excellent oratory, his good ideas, and his intense work ethic, which we need more of, frankly, around here, Mr. Speaker.

I yield to the gentleman from the great State of Georgia, Mr. ROBERT WOODALL.

Mr. WOODALL. I thank my friend, the vice chairman for yielding.

I know the vice chairman won't brag about himself, Mr. Speaker. So let me brag about him just for a second.

He got elected when I got elected 4 years ago. But when you think about what the American people have asked for from this Congress in terms of solving the problems that affect their lives,

in terms of dealing with the issues that threaten economic prosperity, in terms of doing the heavy lifting that is required, they have cleared out more than half of this institution.

Well, if you got elected in the class that the vice chairman and I were elected in 4 years ago, you are already in the top 50 percent of seniority in this institution.

We talk about how folks come to Congress and stay forever. America has been turning people out on their ear left and right over these last 4 years, which has allowed folks like the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROKITA) to rise to these levels where they can lead on these issues.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the vice chairman didn't come from a legislative background. He came from a background as a shot-caller. He was the secretary of State in Indiana. He didn't have somebody else to blame when things went wrong. The buck stopped on his desk. Every single day, the buck stopped on his desk, exactly like it does for every father and every mother and every employer anywhere across this country. And when you now have filled this institution with folks who were shot-callers yesterday and now have been asked to find agreement among 435 of their colleagues, you get exciting results, exciting results.

I am going to keep the chart that the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOONEY) had up here, Mr. Speaker.

The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MOOLENAAR) is a freshman. He sold himself short when he talked about the hard work to get this budget done, and you need look no further than this chart to see it.

Mr. Speaker, I don't fault the President's work ethic. I think the President works hard to do what he thinks is best for this country. But there is not one family in America that believes you can borrow as much as you want to borrow, spend as much as you want to spend, and your family's economic future will be secure. They all know that is a path to disaster.

This blue line represents the budget deficits in the President's budget, the budget that he just sent to Congress. It is his legal responsibility to do it. He did it. This is the plan that he laid out for America—deficits as far as the eye can see, borrowing not just for the next year or the next 10 years or the next 20 years or the next 30 years, but forever.

The work that Mr. MOOLENAAR and Mr. ROKITA have done isn't easy. It is unpleasant work. I don't know why you took the job, I will say to my friend from Indiana. It is an awful job to be vice chairman of the Budget Committee because your job is to do the things that haven't gotten done before. Your job is to do the things that were too hard for everybody else to do, and you have stepped into the breach to do it.

This red line, Mr. Speaker, represents deficits under the budget that Mr. ROKITA and Chairman TOM PRICE of

Georgia are bringing to a markup in the Budget Committee tomorrow. They couldn't balance the budget in day one. There is a lot of sweat equity in this chart. They could not balance the budget in day one because the red ink is just too thick. You have got to do it in a responsible way. They made the tough decisions to cut deficits in half by year two, in half by year two and on out to budget surpluses by the time you get to the end of the 10-year window, a balanced budget for America.

You can't see the sweat stains on this chart, Mr. Speaker. But there is sweat equity in this chart. We are not talking about, are you going to spend an extra million dollars here, an extra million dollars there. We are not talking about, are you going to prioritize environmental spending or national park spending. We are not talking about, are you going to prioritize transportation spending via roads or transportation spending via air.

We are talking about, are you going to balance the budget ever. Or are you going to borrow from your children and your grandchildren as far as the eye can see?

And I have news, Mr. Speaker. Every single one of these dollars and deficits you see in the President's budget represents a dollar of future tax increases or future benefit cuts. I want you to think about that.

What Mr. ROKITA and the Budget Committee have done is to put together a courageous package that says, We should pay for the bills today that we are incurring today. We should not sacrifice tomorrow's prosperity for today's indulgence. We should do the tough things when we can so that our children don't have to labor under those burdens.

Every single one of these dollars that the President borrows and spends—and, I should add, this is with a \$1 trillion tax increase; even with \$1 trillion in new taxes, the President still is running these kinds of deficits—represents either a tax increase for your children and your grandchildren or a benefit cut for your children and your grandchildren. Those are the only two ways to get a dollar in this country.

We should have the courage, if we want to spend money, to go find the money to spend. We should have the courage that if we want to cut benefits, to cut those benefits today, not 100 years from today. We should have the courage to do the difficult things that need to be done. And I am just grateful to the gentleman from Indiana and his leadership on the committee. What we are going to mark up—it will probably be a 12-hour markup tomorrow. I am so excited about it. I am so excited about it. What we are going to mark up is a budget that every Member of this Chamber can be proud of.

And I will tell you a secret, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to let the cat out of the bag. I don't think it is too soon to break the news. But I have seen some patterns in the 4 years I have

been here. My expectation is that, as hard as the Budget Committee has worked on this document, as much sweat equity has gone into doing the difficult things that need to be done, my guess is that they are going to allow any Member of this Chamber who wants to write a budget to offer their ideas and get a vote on those ideas too. We have seen it year after year after year. I suspect we are going to see it again.

This isn't about trying to shut folks out of the process, Mr. Speaker. This is about trying to bring folks into the process. The kind of collaborative process the vice chairman of the committee has driven, along with Chairman TOM PRICE, is the difference between taking the responsibility on our shoulders, as parents, grandparents, legislators, citizens, or kicking that can down the road to the next generation.

I just couldn't be more proud of the effort and the work product that my friend from Indiana has created.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the gentleman from Georgia. As much as I appreciate his comments about the work we have all done on the Budget Committee, they are certainly undeserved with regards to me. It was a team effort from the beginning. It continues to be a team effort.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that the gentleman from Georgia is exactly right, though, that every Member of this Chamber—and that is Republican or Democrat—can be proud of this budget. This honestly and accurately solves this country's Federal Government fiscal problems. And they should also be proud of the fact that, as the gentleman mentions, other ideas are going to be accepted in regular order and be voted on. And it really doesn't get more American than that. That will be an honor that has continued to be our tradition, and I see no reason that that won't continue.

If the gentleman would, I would like to hear his thoughts on the Medicare part of our budget.

The gentleman heard me reference the fact that the autopilot spending, these social programs need to be reformed. And I want to be very clear not only with my colleagues, with the gentleman from Georgia, but also with the American people, Mr. Speaker, that we are not cutting, we are not slashing, we are not ending Medicare or these other programs, as I know perhaps there will be some scare tactic language presented. I hope that is not the case. I continue to hope. But the fact of the matter is, we save and we strengthen Medicare.

I yield to the gentleman for his comments in that regard.

Mr. WOODALL. Well, I appreciate my friend for yielding.

I know my friend is well known in this body for his work on Medicaid and the effort to save that important health care program as well, and I thank him for that.

Medicare is a great example. It is a great example. There is not a Member

in this institution, Mr. Speaker, who believes that we have the money or could even find the money to pay for Medicare as it is structured today.

It is not a question of, is it going to go bankrupt; it is a question of when is it going to go bankrupt. And that is not a Budget Committee member from the State of Georgia talking. Those are the Medicare trustees talking. The folks who are in charge of looking after the program year after year after year tell us that it is going to go under.

What people in my district ask for, I will say to my friend from Indiana, is not a leg up, not something for nothing, not a free lunch. They just want to know what the rules are. And if you tell them what the rules are, they will rise to the occasion.

I am in my forties. I know Medicare is not going to be there for me the way it is for my parents. I worry it won't be there at all for folks in my age bracket.

What the Budget Committee has done in this budget is absolutely to protect Medicare. It has gone from something that might not be there for me—and certainly wouldn't be there for me in the way that my parents have known it—to a commitment that I can count on. Not I, the United States Congressman; I, as a 45-year-old citizen in America for whom payroll taxes—those taxes that pay for Medicare—have been the largest tax burden that 80 percent of American families have paid all of their lives.

These dollars that you see here represent dollars that the President, in many cases, is frittering away on today's consumption but that we are re-investing in Medicare to ensure that it survives for another day.

And what it does, Mr. Speaker—I don't know how deeply you have dug into the Budget Committee Medicare proposal—it anticipates providing choice in the Medicare system the likes of which Medicare has never seen.

I mean, America has seen that wildly successful Medicare Advantage program. Have you seen that, Mr. Speaker? I mean, it has been the source of attempts to slash over and over and over again by this administration for reasons that I cannot imagine because it is the most popular Medicare program in America, Medicare Advantage, which for the first time allowed taxpayers to make choices about how they were going to receive their Medicare benefits.

What the gentleman from Indiana and our entire committee has put together in this budget is a pathway through that premium support program to let every Medicare beneficiary going forward, folks—even young people like me at 45, folks at 18—know that when they get to Medicare, not only will it still be there for them, but they will have a choice of plans to choose the one that works best for them.

Mr. ROKITA. If the gentleman will yield, that is so very important and

critical to understanding our reform efforts because of the fact that our proposed changes don't even have to affect anyone who is on these programs or near to being on them.

Our modeling, our reform, our ideas would start in 2024. So the younger guys—men and women, of course—in America, those of the age group that the gentleman from Georgia referenced, would have time to prepare.

And it is not like these changes would be draconian. They would just reflect how we live now and how long we live in the 21st century. Again, the main part of our reform is giving people choice.

We believe and we know from data and from experiences in the States—those laboratories of democracy that I referenced earlier, the notion of Federalism, where the best government comes from those that govern closest to the people—that if you give people a choice, no matter their socioeconomic background, now matter how old or young they are or how smart or simple some may think they are, they can make the best choices for themselves in all facets of their lives. And that includes health care. Once we do that, once we have folks invested in the decision-making process, you will see costs naturally go down.

□ 1715

That is a large part of our plan. Let people choose what works best for them, what works best for that time in their lives, and you will see them take an ownership interest just like they would an ownership interest in any other thing that they have a vested interest in, whether it is repairing their automobile, buying an automobile, or even their health care. It will work the same way. That is a good portion of our plan.

Again, anyone who is on these programs or near to be on them can take the promises that were offered, the deal that was given, and can continue on with their lives and planning for their future.

The gentleman from Georgia, I, members of the Budget Committee, and previous Congresses now for 4 years in a row have talked to the American people about this idea of down the road let's change the system, not so it goes away, but so that it can be strengthened and saved so that it can be around for those in the future. I think what every parent and every grandparent ultimately wants is a better life for their children and grandchildren.

Now, if we contrast that for a minute with the President's idea, you see a much different picture. First of all, in order to fund his government-controlled health care plan, Mr. Speaker, he basically takes from Medicare. The President's health care law makes drastic cuts to the Medicare program without improving the long-term solvency of that program. In addition to the reductions already proposed in the

law, ObamaCare created the Independent Payment Advisory Board, a Board of 15 unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats who will cut Medicare in ways that would deny care to current seniors. That is not the way forward. That doesn't save and strengthen these popular programs. That is what will end up destroying them for future generations.

Some may ask—I know the gentleman from Georgia has heard this question—well, didn't the President's health care law improve Medicare's solvency? No. It absolutely did not. The President's health care law raided Medicare to fund ObamaCare. Advocates of the President's health care law claimed that the law both improved Medicare solvency and paid for the new entitlement at the same time, but this claim is contradictory. Medicare's chief actuary testified before the House Budget Committee that the Medicare savings had been double counted.

The House Republican budget stops the raid on Medicare and ensures that any current law Medicare savings are devoted to saving Medicare. So that is what I mean when I say and when the gentleman from Georgia says that this is an honest budget. It is truth telling to and for the American people, but it also offers the solutions that can honestly and responsibly get us out of this situation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. WOODALL. What my friend says about people being able to rely on this budget, about the honesty and integrity in the budget, it really is contrasted with these deficit numbers that you see coming out of the White House, because there is not an honest broker in this room who would not tell you that if you continue to run these deficits, eventually you are going to hit the wall. You are going to have to pull the rug out from under current beneficiaries. That is what bankruptcy means.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we mean when we say "bankruptcy." We don't mean that Social Security goes away and Medicare goes away and you get zero. We mean you are still stuck on the program, but we are slashing your benefits in half overnight. That is immoral. It is immoral to make promises to people and not keep them.

I don't want the gentleman from Indiana's job, Mr. Speaker. I don't want it. Being vice chairman of the Budget Committee is hard because you have to make tough decisions. And the decision that the Budget Committee made was we can be honest with folks who have not yet attained Medicare age that the program will not be there for them as it was for their parents if we make no changes. We can keep our commitment to older seniors—those folks on the program—to say, if we promise it to you, you are going to get it. Then we can bring in this new element of choice, again, for folks in my age bracket, to say, when you get to Medicare, we will have protected it, and you

will have some personal decision-making in terms of how do you get the benefit package that best serves you, best serves your spouse, and best serves your family.

I am so appreciative in a town where people dodge responsibility like it is the plague that the Budget Committee has said that we are either going to break promises tomorrow when we run out of money or we are going to be honest with people today about the state of the affairs that we are in: \$400 billion deficits, \$600 billion deficits, trillion-dollar deficits in the President's budget. And if you saw the chart that the vice chairman held up earlier, that pie chart of where America spends its money, interest that we are paying today dwarfs education spending, transportation spending, environmental spending, and the like.

I thank the gentleman for his leadership.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the gentleman from Georgia again. He is not only a blessing to his State, he is a blessing to this Congress and to this country for his integrity, his hard work, and for his oratory. Thank you, sir, very, very much.

Mr. Speaker and Members of this body, please pay attention to the House Budget Committee tomorrow as we mark up this bill, hopefully not for 12 hours, but maybe so. We will be there for as long as it takes. And be ready—be ready and be proud—to vote on the floor of this House next week for a budget that offers honesty, real solutions, a balanced budget for a stronger America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

MIDDLE CLASS ECONOMICS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak. I hadn't intended to talk on Medicare, although I think that the ultimate reaction to what we just heard is that the Medicare guarantee that has been the bedrock, foundation, for seniors really will terminate if this budget proposal that we just heard discussed for so long continues because it will basically give seniors an option not to have Medicare. I don't think we want to do that. This has been an extremely important program for more than 40 years now, and I want to look really, really hard at the proposal that is being put forth by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

What I came to talk about today is something that the President actually spoke to us about here in the Chamber in January, and it was middle class economics—middle class economics. How is it that we can grow the middle class which has been stagnant in its eco-

nomics growth for the last almost 25 years now, not seen a pay increase, husband and wife or a single parent struggling to make ends meet here in America? The President came here and he brought to us this middle class economics.

Why is it important? Well, basically, if the middle class is healthy, if the middle class paycheck is growing, the economy grows. It is an economy that is based upon the consumer, and the consumer really is the middle class. So it becomes absolutely important that we look at how we are going to grow the middle class in America.

There are many different ways to do that. Obviously, we need to strengthen the wages that the middle class have. We have seen very little wage growth in the last two decades. We need to really make sure that the men and women that are out there working day in and day out have the increase in their paycheck. We have seen little tiny bumps now as we look across the Nation, and as more and more people become employed and the labor market becomes somewhat tighter, we would hope to see this. But an important element of this paycheck is the minimum wage. So we advocate for \$10.10 minimum wage all across this Nation. We hope to get it.

But what we really want to spend time on today is the infrastructure and how to really see the infrastructure—the foundation for economic growth—really be put in place in America. We now have until mid-May, May 15, to put in place a new version of the highway bill. Can we do it? We have to do it. If we don't put in place and extend the Surface Transportation Act, we are going to see contractors all across America shut down their work, new contracts for highways and bridges not go into effect but, rather, be delayed. So Congress has an enormous task at its hand, and that is to reauthorize the Surface Transportation Act.

The current one? We kicked it down the road last fall. Well, the stop sign is right in front of us, so we need to get with it. We are going to talk about some of the elements in that. We know that if we put in a robust, full Surface Transportation Act, we are going to see the American middle class go back to work.

Let me just show you some of the elements that are in that Surface Transportation Act. Here they are. Last year, the President proposed the GROW AMERICA Act. I am going to call this the GROW AMERICA Act II. So we are looking now at how we can do that. The President came out with a full, 6-year program, a very robust increase in the amount of money available for surface transportation—fully paid for without increasing the excise tax on gasoline and diesel. No, you are not going to see an increase in the pump because of this program. Now, the oil companies may stick you, but not the government.

And so the President's plan, which we call the GROW AMERICA Act 2, has

all of these elements in it: rail, a full rail program that is a freight program; how you connect the rail system, the highway system, and the port system; buses; light rail and the intercity transportation systems that are so important for our urbanization. We are seeing a major need for these buses, for the light rail, the metro systems across the Nation. Ports: 90 percent of the commerce comes through our ports, and so the ports—Los Angeles, Long Beach, in California, Oakland, San Francisco, and Sacramento in my district—are critically important. So there are all of these elements.

We know we need to repair the bridges. We have a nice picture of the Golden Gate Bridge here. We probably should put the new Bay Bridge, or maybe we could actually put up this bridge. This actually happened about 3 years ago. This is Interstate 5 from the Canadian border to the Mexican border down the west coast, Interstate 5. Well, for about a month and a half you weren't going to get very far on Interstate 5 because this bridge is right near the Canadian border, and it collapsed. So bridges across the United States are in desperate need of rebuilding. Many of them are decades old, some more than 100 years old; and, finally, highways.

So this is the GROW AMERICA Act Surface Transportation Program that the President has proposed, about \$160-some billion over a 6-year period of time. It is a large program. It provides a lot of money for all of the things we need to do: freight, intercity travel, buses, light rail, metro systems, ports, bridges, and highways. It is all there. There is a separate bill dealing with our airports. This is our program. This is what we need to do. When we do this, we are going to put America back to work.

Now, one of my colleagues from California, the former speaker of the California Assembly, is here to talk about an element in this program. I welcome KAREN BASS to this 1-hour discussion.

Ms. BASS, if you would like to tell us what is going on in California.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Ms. BASS).

Ms. BASS. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, last year, Congress took an important first step. The CR/Omnibus allowed transit agencies to pursue local hiring. It didn't require them to adopt local hire policies, but it put hiring decisions in the hands of local government officials. I think my good friend and colleague from California is making the point that transportation is the backbone of this country, and certainly we have been the world's leader in infrastructure, in projects like has been described by my colleague, but we need to do more of that.

Every now and then, Congress does something in a bipartisan manner, and because of this action, the Department of Transportation established pilot programs that will permit L.A. Metro to