

do things that will benefit the real American people, not pointy-head economists and not Wall Street.

ACORN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to again call attention to the group Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, or ACORN. As Congress proceeds later this week with appropriations, we must be mindful of the risk of allowing this group's funding to be restored.

ACORN's funding was stripped last month, thanks to quick action on the part of some of my colleagues here in the House. However, if we do not ensure that that funding is permanently eliminated, ACORN could again resume their questionable activities, subsidized by the American taxpayer.

Recently, 11 former ACORN employees were arrested for suspicion of voter registration fraud. In the past several weeks, more than five videos have been released to the media showing ACORN employees advising individuals of methods to illegally evade taxes by masking prostitution under an IRS code, among other questionable things.

We have no way of knowing if these were isolated instances or basic procedure, but I've heard from many Kansans who have voiced their displeasure with ACORN. They demand that ACORN be investigated, possibly criminally, as well as completely defunded, and I agree with those Kansans.

I recently wrote a letter demanding an investigation by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. In the enclosed letter, I cited ACORN's unresolved issues with past elections and the recently released videos as evidence to block any further funding.

While ACORN has launched an internal investigation and fired offending employees, this string of events sheds light on the lack of institutional control within ACORN's management ranks. This is a perfect example of misappropriation of taxpayer dollars.

The American people should not be expected to subsidize ACORN's activities. That is why I called for this investigation in the beginning of September, and that's why I again call for an investigation now, a month and a half later. Congress must look at its own procedures when it comes to allocating money with little or no accountability.

Congress has been complacent with the money entrusted to us by the taxpayers. The House of Representatives owes an explanation as to why ACORN has been deemed fit to receive any Federal assistance. Congress has the opportunity to deny Federal funds to ACORN when we consider legislation later this week. It is necessary to deny those funds now and in the future until ACORN can dispel its long history of

questionable practices. I cannot foresee a scenario where it would be appropriate to reinstate ACORN funding. Their previous track record, coupled with their stonewalling of legislative efforts to review them, gives me the impression that they are unwilling or, even worse, unable to play by the rules.

Let's end this corruption and stop wasting the money.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Ms. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, we are closer than ever to achieving health care reform for the American people. I think it's really important for us to step back and examine the reasons that we want health care reform.

Every day, every year premiums for Americans are going higher and higher, deductibles and copays higher and higher. Millions of people without health insurance, some 47 million people without health insurance, 14,000 people a day who lose their health care coverage. It's really unthinkable. And here we have an opportunity to do something that's very special and right for the American people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I haven't been in this Congress for six decades, but I do know that the idea of health care reform has risen and fallen for six decades. So it's time for us to make the kind of changes the American people thought they bought onto in November 2008. We are closer than ever to achieving that kind of comprehensive reform. We need to take a look at why we want reform.

The American people want reform because they want to lower their health care costs. They know the cost of their premiums. It's not affordable for their families. Americans want health care reform because it's not fair that millions go without health insurance and many millions more are in danger of losing their health insurance. Our small businesses are struggling each and every day. They want to provide health care for their employees, but they just can't because they can't operate with a profit margin and provide quality, affordable, and accessible health care for their employees.

So I am really struggling here with why my friends on the other side of the aisle have so resisted reform. I don't really believe that it's because they're such allies with the health insurance industry. I don't really believe it's be-

cause they're more driven by what works for the private market than what works for the American people, but I have to believe that all of us can get on one page about what's right for the American people.

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So, as we move into these days following many town hall meetings and meetings at senior centers with our seniors, as we talk to young people about the need for reform and as we meet with our business leaders, it's time for some real decision-making. If it's not going to come from my friends on the other side of the aisle, then the leadership and that decision-making has to come from Democrats. It doesn't matter to me, frankly, about one election or another, because it's about doing what's right for the American people.

Now, I, along with hundreds of others of my colleagues, happen to believe that a robust public health option is important for the American people. I guess the question is: How many more are going to step up and have the courage to do the right thing? How many more are going to step up and say, You know what? Not only do we want to eliminate preexisting conditions and strengthen insurance provisions for everyone, but we want to lower costs, we want to create competition, and we want to make sure that there is real accountability in the system.

Now, earlier this month, we had an opportunity to see the insurance companies and insurance industry completely unmasked. I mean their goals are very clear to the American people. Their goals are about maintaining the status quo because it works for them. Their goals are about maintaining the status quo because it satisfies their profit margins, and it satisfies their shareholders. The problem with that is that it doesn't satisfy the American people. So I'm ready to act.

I know that, from the year 2000 until 2006, the Republicans controlled both chambers of the Congress and the White House, and yet we didn't do health care reform. So the opportunity for those of us in the majority today is actually to do the right thing by the American people. I'm excited about that. I know the American people are excited about it.

If you look at the polls, and although polls may not be everything, they do give us a picture of where the American people are and of how they've moved. What those polls suggest is that, despite being beaten up and beaten up for months and weeks at a time, the public option has survived. The reason that it has is that I believe, like many of my colleagues, that the American people are smart. They get it. They understand what health insurance means to them.

They know that, for children who are coming out of college and who are ready to strike out on their own, those children are no longer on their parents'

health insurance plans, so there has to be affordable and accessible health care for those young persons as they strike out on their own in the workplace.

For our small business owners who want to provide health care, they know that, in fact, the opportunity is there if we do it in the right kind of way, if we make it affordable for them and if we allow the small businesses to do what they want to do to invest in their communities.

We also know that, for those Americans who don't have health insurance, we can't pass them up anymore. We can't pass up the 47 million people a year who are without health insurance.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will close and say it's time for us to get on with the business of decision-making and to bring real health care reform with a robust public option to the American people.

THE RULE OF LAW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, this past week, I discovered I made an error on my House financial disclosure forms for 2006 and 2007. Let's get this clear.

I properly reported my stock dividends, stock sales and capital gains on my Federal tax returns, and I paid all the taxes in full. I properly reported dividend income on my stocks and the sale amount of my stocks on my House financial disclosure forms in both of those years. My error was in leaving the amount of the capital gains from the sales off the forms. I have amended both of these forms to reflect these amounts, and this has not changed my net worth one penny.

There was a good editorial on this in the Roll Call this week, and I urge my fellow Members to read that editorial.

To make the point on this issue of my amending my House disclosures, today, I have posted online my Federal tax returns for 2006 and 2007 so there can be no question about whether or not I paid my taxes as they were due. I do this because I intend to continue my discussion of the rule of law, and I think it's important that I do that.

Yet I'm not the first one to take this step. In one of the same years that we're discussing here, then-Senator Barack Obama made the identical, same error that I made on my House disclosure forms. When he discovered that he made that omission, the same as the omissions I made, he did the same thing as I am doing. He corrected his return, and posted his Federal tax return online. I have followed the lead of the President of the United States in correcting this issue.

It's now time for House Ways and Means Committee Chairman CHARLES RANGEL and Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner to pony up. Could it be that the only reason these two hold back is that, maybe, they have something to hide?

Chairman RANGEL failed to pay income taxes for over a decade on his Caribbean resort property while Secretary Geithner evaded withholding taxes on income from the International Monetary Fund over multiple years. Neither of these gentlemen has paid any penalty on their violations as would a normal American taxpayer.

The American public needs to know that Chairman RANGEL has not again failed to report or pay Federal taxes while still not paying penalties and interest on his previous evasions, all while overseeing the IRS on behalf of the House of Representatives.

They also need to know that the Secretary of the Treasury is not using his high station to avoid complying with the same IRS rules as his fellow citizens. While Secretary Geithner is asking his fellow taxpayers to pay a 20 to 50 percent penalty for failing to report and to pay income taxes on foreign deposits, he has failed to pay a nickel on multiple years of evading Federal taxes on income from the International Monetary Fund.

My opinion is that anyone who fails to disclose income or to pay taxes should pay a reasonable penalty with interest. If not, our Tax Code becomes unenforceable.

I also believe there is a higher law here, which is the equal protection clause under the 14th Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. Secretary Geithner cannot and should not legally charge his fellow Americans penalties when he has paid none himself. That would seem to be a violation of the Constitution.

Next week, I will introduce legislation dealing with the Secretary of the Treasury's failure to abide by the same laws as the rest of the country. If anyone thinks that I will slack off defending the rule of law because of a House disclosure error, they obviously have got another thing coming.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FLORIDA'S PREPAID COLLEGE TUITION PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to encourage all Florida residents to consider enrollment in Florida's Prepaid College Tuition Program.

I am a strong advocate of having parents and students get an early start on saving for college. As a mother and as a grandmother, as well as a former educator, I know the struggles working parents face when their children apply

to college. Even in the best of times, parents and young adults can have trouble paying for tuition.

As a coauthor of the Florida prepaid plan, when I was a member of the Florida legislature, I knew that we could help make paying for college education easier on all of Florida's families. We created the Florida prepaid plan so that parents could lock in their children's tuition costs early and could ensure that they would be able to receive quality educations when their time came.

This plan has been extremely successful. Even as similar plans across the country are struggling, Florida's prepaid plan has a solid future. More than 206,000 students have attended college in Florida with the assistance of our State's Florida Prepaid College Tuition Program. With college tuition rising at about 6 percent each year, there is no reason not to take part in this program. There is flexibility in this program to allow parents to find the right plans and the right payment schedules which best fit a family's needs.

In addition to locked-in tuition rates, Florida's Prepaid College Tuition Program offers a tax-free investment fund—an account where money can be saved for tuition and additional college expenses. This program is truly helping families afford college for their children. Tuition plans vary depending on a child's age and a plan's options, but in most cases, the savings for a family can be incredible.

Prepaid plans can be bought by non-Florida residents, but the child for whom the plan is purchased must be a resident younger than 18 and not yet in the 12th grade. If the child decides not to go to college, the money is refunded or it can be transferred to a brother or to a sister. Also, that plan is good even if the child and the parents move out of State. Many States apply and accept Florida's prepaid plan.

The future of America lies in the hands of the next generation, and our children must be provided with the intellectual opportunities that they need to succeed. As a Nation and as a community, we must work together to improve the educational opportunities for all of our children. With the help of programs such as Florida's Prepaid College Tuition Program, we certainly have a valuable tool toward accomplishing this noble goal.

For anyone signing up before January 31, tuition rates will be locked in at the 2009-2010 tuition rates. Florida's public universities, Mr. Speaker, have been given the authorization to raise tuition up to 15 percent for next year. So, with these possible increases looming, there is no better time than now to make sure that our sons and daughters are afforded the education they rightfully deserve.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.