

Mr. SESTAK led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

EXTENDED COBRA CONTINUATION PROTECTION ACT

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

Mr. SESTAK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask the House to quickly pass the Extended COBRA Continuation Protection Act to ensure health coverage for millions of Americans who, through no fault of their own, have lost their jobs and now, because Wall Street gambled with their savings, cannot afford the COBRA premiums to keep their health care from their former employer.

So, in the economic stimulus bill we provided 65 percent of the cost of those premiums, but those benefits are now running out for those who were laid off first. I ask this House to quickly pass the bill to extend those COBRA premium subsidies for 6 months.

Take a woman in my district. She pays \$535 for her 35 percent share of the premiums. It will go over \$1,500 very soon if we do not act. And she has a preexisting condition and must keep on her health care plan.

Hundreds have contacted my office regarding this, and I ask this House to quickly help. As we come out of this savage recession, it's not just economic security, but it's health security we must address.

CO₂ IS NOW A POLLUTANT

(Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Madam Speaker, yesterday was a historic day. It will be a day which lives in economic infamy. The EPA administrator yesterday unsheathed the dagger at the heart of our economy when she announced an endangerment finding. Yes, CO₂ is now a pollutant. That means everyone in this Chamber, anyone who out there might be hearing us, you are now polluters. With every breath you take you emit CO₂.

This was never, ever, conceived by Congress when it passed the Clean Air Act. We now have a situation in which administrators are going to effectively control the entire economy and the way in which we live and the way in which we breathe. This is not the idea of freedom. This is, in fact, not an endangerment finding about clean air. This is an endangerment finding about our freedom.

Our freedom took a vicious blow yesterday, and we, as representatives of our people, must act.

ARE WE FIGHTING OR FUNDING THE TALIBAN?

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, U.S. contractors are paying U.S. tax dollars to the Taliban in order to protect the delivery of U.S. shipments of U.S. goods to U.S. soldiers so that our soldiers can fight against the Taliban.

In an investigative expose, *The Nation* magazine reveals "how U.S. funds the Taliban," and "with Pentagon cash, contractors bribe insurgents not to attack supply lines for U.S. troops." Another quote from the investigation: "The real secret to trucking in Afghanistan is ensuring security on the perilous roads controlled by warlords, tribal militias, insurgents, and Taliban commanders." The American executive I spoke to was fairly specific about it: "The Army is basically paying the Taliban not to shoot at them," and then the Taliban uses that money to shoot at our troops. What a racket.

Are we in Afghanistan to fight or to fund the Taliban or both?

NETWORKS IGNORE CLIMATEGATE SCANDAL

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

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Madam Speaker, ABC, CBS, and NBC are the winners of this week's Media Fairness Caucus' highly uncoveted "Lap Dog Award" for the most glaring example of media bias. The networks took 2 weeks to devote any coverage to the Climategate scandal on their evening news programs.

We now know that prominent scientists were so determined to advance the idea of human-made global warming that they worked together to hide contradictory temperature data. But for 2 weeks, none of the networks gave the scandal any coverage on their evening news programs, and when they finally did cover it, their reporting was largely slanted in favor of global warming alarmists.

The networks have shown a steady pattern of bias on climate change. During a 6-month period, four out of five network news reports failed to acknowledge any dissenting views about global warming, according to a Business and Media Institute study.

The networks should tell Americans the truth, rather than hide the facts.

FINANCIAL REGULATORY REFORM

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

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, last fall our economy began a tailspin into the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. For years, greed and irresponsibility was allowed to run wild.

Now, we find ourselves beginning to climb out of this hole.

This week, we will consider a comprehensive financial package that is loud and clear: No more, and I state, no more, no more will we allow financial institutions to engage in abusive behavior with other people's money. No more will we allow corporate executives to receive cash bonuses for failed investments. No more will we let consumer protection take a back seat to the bottom line of Bank of America or Citibank. The age of taxpayer funded bailouts is over.

Last fall, Americans lost faith in this country's ability to regulate corporate greed. This week, we have a chance to deliver reform Americans demand. We cannot let them down.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

SERVICE ACADEMY APPLICATIONS

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, all too often we come to this floor to talk about problems in the country. Today, however, I want to mention some good news about the future of America and the next generation of patriotic men and women.

In my district this year, applications to the military service academies increased by 30 percent. Today's youth, more than ever, are looking to serve this country. And our academies are among the finest universities in the world.

While it may seem counterintuitive that a nation at war would see increased interest in military service, I think that we have remarkable young people who value the sacrifices made by previous generations. They know the value of freedom and liberty and are willing to defend these precious gifts. They're willing to serve a cause greater than themselves.

We just celebrated Thanksgiving, and I believe we need to be thankful for men and women who are eager to wear the uniform and become leaders in our military services.

WE'RE NOT DOING ENOUGH

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

Mr. TEAGUE. Madam Speaker, Congressional Quarterly recently reported that more American military personnel have taken their own lives in 2009 than have been killed in either the Afghanistan or Iraq wars this year, with 334 members of the military service committing suicide. This staggering number means one thing. We're not doing enough.

We're not doing enough to provide adequate mental health care for our returning servicemembers. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2009 was

recently signed into law with a provision that I championed that requires mental health screening for all service-members returning from combat. This is the single most effective thing we can do to identify cases of mental illness, reduce the stigma of mental illness, and ensure our brave men and women in uniform receive the treatment they need and deserve for mental illness. However, we don't have enough mental health professionals to carry out these screenings.

I ask my colleagues to join me in increasing mental health funding and making sure the Defense Department and VA hire the mental health professionals they need to keep our service-members well.

CAP-AND-TRADE

(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. Madam Speaker, I rise to express my concerns about the rush of some of my colleagues that they seem to be in to enact cap-and-trade legislation. We are seeing serious doubts on the validity of the science which is driving this flawed policy. In fact, the EPA has formally declared greenhouse gas emissions as dangerous pollutants, an action which could prove costly to America's farms, ranches, and small businesses.

At a time of double-digit unemployment, the last thing our country needs is a jobs-killing tax regime imposed on our family-run small businesses and agriculture producers. Agriculture is an energy-intensive industry, relying on fuel for the truck, fertilizer for the crops, and generators to keep heaters on during the winter.

This national energy tax is the wrong way to go, and it's based on flawed science.

HONORING THE LIVES OF THE FOUR LAKEWOOD CITY POLICE OFFICERS KILLED ON NOVEMBER 30, 2009

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

Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, today in Tacoma, Washington, the State of Washington will honor and memorialize the service and lives of four Lakewood City police officers who were slain while on duty on November 30 this year.

Sergeant Mark Renninger, Officer Ronald Owens, Officer Tina Griswold, and Officer Gregory Richards were killed while in the line of duty. And today, in the Tacoma Dome, thousands of Washingtonians will embrace them in their arms and in their hearts and to show respect for their loss.

But I just want to note that it is the Nation that appropriately honors and memorializes these four officers, and

the reason is that they are symbols of the service of police and sheriff's officers all over this country who are out on dark roads, who are working in dark cities, who are doing the hard detective work it takes to keep us safe. And I hope we will thank the next officer we see for their service.

And I just want to tell these families how I feel. I lost my cousin, a sheriff's deputy, Mark Brown, in 1999 while in the line of duty. My prayers and heart goes out to these families, and I hope all my colleagues will join me in that regard.

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THE FINANCIAL SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES

(Mrs. SCHMIDT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SCHMIDT. Madam Speaker, as I was getting ready to come here this morning, I was listening to the television and something was said that really caused me to not just pause but really question what some folks are doing with this country.

Moody's Investment Service has sounded an alarm. It is said that if we do not stop our spending, we will lose our AAA rating. We're in jeopardy of losing our AAA rating in the next 3 to 4 years.

This week we're going to debate an omnibus budget bill that will spend almost a half-trillion dollars—that's a half-trillion dollars more to the deficit we already have. Moody's has warned us we can't sustain the spending, and this is going to cost us our triple-A rating.

Madam Speaker, I question what some folks want to do. We need to pause before we spend the taxpayer dollars. We need to make sure that we do not ruin the financial security of our Nation.

CONGRATULATING CENTRAL ARIZONA COLLEGE'S CROSS-COUNTRY TEAM

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

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK of Arizona. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor the accomplishments of Central Arizona College's women's cross-country team.

On November 14, the Vaqueras earned their second National Junior College Athletic Association Championship in 5 years. The squad had four runners in the top 12 at the Championship meet, with last year's national title winner, Rose Tanui, placing second. The team has shown an unwavering commitment to excellence. They have been practicing six mornings a week starting at 5:59 a.m. since the start of the school year, and now all their hard work and lost sleep has paid off. Winning the title was a perfect sendoff for Coach

Mike Gray, the NJCAA coach of the year who is retiring after leading the Vaqueras for over a decade.

I would like to congratulate Coach Gray and the entire team on this amazing end to their tremendous season.

“LET WALL STREET PAY FOR THE RESTORATION OF MAIN STREET” ACT

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

Ms. HIRONO. Madam Speaker, out-of-control financial speculation on Wall Street contributed to the deep economic hole we're in today. Taxpayers have paid the price, risking around \$3 trillion to stabilize the financial system. Astonishingly, the top three bailed-out firms are reportedly on track to pay \$30 billion in bonuses to top executives this year. In the meantime, furloughs, unemployment, and foreclosure are weighing on American families. Limited access to lending is still a problem for many small businesses.

It's time for us to institute a modest transaction tax on trades of stocks, options, and swaps. Even a small tax of a quarter percent on these securities could raise up to \$150 billion a year. Part of this revenue should be used to invest in our Nation's infrastructure, creating jobs and putting Americans back to work again.

I ask my colleagues to support the “Let Wall Street Pay for the Restoration of Main Street Act.” Wall Street needs to be part of the solution, not an ongoing part of the problem.

USING BAILOUT FUNDS AS A SLUSH FUND VIOLATES THE LAW

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

Mr. PENCE. Last year I opposed the Wall Street bailout because I thought it was just wrong to take \$700 billion in bad decisions on Wall Street and transfer that debt burden to Main Street and future generations of Americans.

But while I believe the action taken by Congress a year ago was wrong, the TARP legislation actually rightly demanded that any money not used to purchase toxic assets in the bill be used to pay down the national debt. The legislation specifically says that any leftover TARP money goes to deficit reduction.

That's why I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, I was astonished when I heard Speaker NANCY PELOSI last week suggest that her source to pay for a new so-called stimulus bill would be leftover TARP funding. And if press reports are true, the President of the United States will address the Brookings Institution this morning and suggest the same.

Let me be clear on this point. To use money from the TARP fund in the