

especially if we have to rob Social Security to do it, has to stop.

Additionally, the reductions in federal reimbursements to hospitals that are contained in this legislation are not acceptable. Hospitals in northern West Virginia are already being paid at some of the lowest Medicare rates in the country; we should not be making it even harder for the hospitals to provide quality healthcare to our seniors.

Again, since this bill was loaded up at the last minute with several items which I have already strongly supported throughout this Congress—including jumpstarting the Keystone Pipeline, relaxing EPA regulations on boilers, extending and reforming unemployment benefits and other government programs, and preventing a scheduled 27% cut to doctors' Medicare reimbursement rates—it is simply unacceptable to continue the president's misguided economic theories at seniors' expense.

This bill has a long way to go despite the short timeframe in which Congress is operating, and if significant changes are made, it may be worth another look. But I came to Washington to get something done, create jobs, and restore common sense to the process. Unfortunately this particular bill fails that test.

RECOGNIZING THE YOEMEN MARCHING BAND OF CAMERON HIGH SCHOOL IN CAMERON, TEXAS

HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Yoemen Marching Band of Cameron High School who placed third out of the 297 bands in state 2A marching competition in San Antonio on November 7, 2011.

The 97 member band is under the direction of Stephen Moss, head director, and Craig George and Danielle Roberts, assistant directors. Only ten bands performed in the finals competition, and the Yoemen Marching Band received a 1st place vote from all five judges, which advanced them to the UIL State Marching Contest in San Antonio for the first time in the history of the school. The band competed in the preliminary competition at the UIL State Marching Contest, which advanced them to the finals portion of the competition. The Yoemen Marching Band came in 2nd place behind the two time champion Queen City.

This 2nd place finish advanced the band to the highly coveted finals competition that same evening. The Yoeman High School Marching Band was also selected to play at the World War II Memorial in Washington DC and was one of the ten bands selected to play in the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Parade this past spring.

I congratulate the Cameron High School Yoemen Marching Band on their accomplishments and I am proud to represent them in the United States Congress.

RECOGNIZING THE SEMI-FINALISTS FOR THE ASIAN AMERICAN SUCCESS YOUTHCON SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, it is my great honor to rise today to recognize the finalists of the 2011 Asian American Success (AASuccess) YouthCon Scholarship program. Each year, AASuccess grants scholarships and recognition awards to 6 students in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area.

Founded in April 2006 by Dave Nguyen, Irina Nguyen, David Montanari, Sumesh Kaushal and Malou Gemeniano, the missions of AASuccess are to promote academic excellence of young Asian American and other minority students, foster mentorship and partnership between career professionals and student members, and promote "The Act of Giving Back" in the Asian American community. AASuccess offers 4 different programs to achieve their goals; the AAS Life Skills Academy, Scholarship Program, Giving Back Program, and the Arc360 Web TV Program.

Scholarships are awarded in amounts ranging from \$500.00 to \$1000.00, and winners are selected based on academic performance, civic engagement, and completion of an essay. Using famous images from Saigon for inspiration, the theme for this year's essay asked applicants to consider their freedom, and the connection between protection of personal freedoms and civic duties. This thought provoking topic has encouraged students to reflect on and consider some of the most crucial questions we face today.

While there will be 6 scholarship winners, it is my great pleasure to recognize the following 12 finalists:

Ms. Sungmin Sohn; Mr. Vihanh Tham; Ms. Khanh-Ni Thi Nguyen; Ms. Mai Ly; Ms. Julie Hoang; Mr. Dylan Vu; Mr. Tristin Tran; Mr. Maxwell Tran; Mr. Minh Pham; Ms. Kirby Taylor; Ms. Julia Ngoc-Kim Nguyen; Ms. Krystal Sing.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in applauding the efforts of these students, and in congratulating them on their academic and civic accomplishments. I also commend AASuccess for their efforts to ensure and encourage professional development and success of students in our community.

MIDDLE CLASS TAX RELIEF AND JOB CREATION ACT OF 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, during this Season of Giving, when our nation should be reflecting on the need of friends and neighbors who are out of work and struggling to provide for their loved ones, this chamber will vote today to cut unemployment benefits for one million of our fellow Americans.

The House Majority's bill, H.R. 3630, would eliminate several tiers of benefits, created

under the Emergency Unemployment Compensation program, which has provided up to 99 weeks of support for those who lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

If this legislation becomes law, the maximum potential unemployment benefit will fall to 59 weeks.

This legislation would also allow states, many of which are struggling to balance their budgets, to reduce the average weekly amount available to beneficiaries.

I am strongly opposed to any reduction in emergency unemployment insurance.

This Congress cannot and must not adjourn for the holidays and go home to tell our unemployed neighbors that the richest country on earth cannot find a place in their heart to help them in their time of need.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I am not able to support H.R. 3630 even though I am a strong supporter of moving the Keystone XL Project along and would support the language included in this bill if considered separately.

The Keystone XL project makes both energy and economic sense for our country, and I hope that the Administration could find a way to allow for construction to commence in some of the states while simultaneously revisiting the route in Nebraska.

I urge my colleagues to stand in support of the millions of our fellow Americans struggling to find work and to oppose this legislation.

HOUSE DEMOCRACY PARTNERSHIP

HON. DAVID DREIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, when I was first elected to this body in 1980, the preeminent national security threat that gravely concerned us all was the Soviet Union. A decade later, as we know very well, the Soviet Union collapsed and the Cold War came to an end. As we quickly near the twentieth anniversary of that transformative event, we should not forget the role that the United States Congress played in supporting democratic development in the legislatures of many of the former Warsaw Pact and Soviet republics. The Frost-Solomon Task Force partnered with the newly democratically elected members of post-Soviet legislatures to offer support and guidance in building an independent, co-equal legislative branch of government. A key part of that effort was the role our Congressional Research Service played in building strong, independent, nonpartisan research and analysis capabilities for these nascent institutions. Many of these countries are now members of NATO, the European Union, and in some cases, the Eurozone. They are fully integrated into the Trans-Atlantic partnership.

However, the work of democratic development in the region is not over. I have the privilege of leading, along with my friend and colleague Rep. DAVID PRICE, the House Democracy Partnership (HDP). Our commission is committed to helping strengthen legislatures in new and re-emerging democracies by engaging with our counterparts throughout the world. Two of our partner countries are Ukraine and the Republic of Georgia. Both are former Soviet republics working to consolidate their democracies. To date, their efforts have been

met with varying levels of success, but HDP has been honored to work with reformers in both countries as they strive to throw off the shackles of their authoritarian past.

The world has watched over the past week as Russia's citizens have stood up and demanded greater political freedom and transparency, which is indeed a hopeful step. However, there is another country in Eastern Europe that has resisted all efforts to transform itself into a modern democracy and maintains itself as an authoritarian dictatorship. The country of Belarus remains Europe's only dictatorship. Under the unyielding grip of dictator Aleksandr Lukashenko, the people of Belarus are denied the basic freedoms of assembly, association, and expression. The press is heavily restricted and intimidated. The internet is censored. Independent nongovernmental organizations are not allowed to operate. There is little freedom of religion. And 100,000 Belarusians have been barred from leaving the country. For the people of Belarus, the oppression of the past did not dissolve with the Soviet Union, but remains a bitter reality.

While their neighbors in Central and Eastern Europe are able to freely elect their own leaders, Belarusians have witnessed one stage-managed election after another under the current regime. Lukashenko has held illegal referenda to change the constitution, eliminate term limits, and dissolve an elected parliament. In December 2010, the Government of Belarus conducted a presidential election that failed to meet basic standards of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and followed that election by detaining and beating more than 600 peaceful opposition protestors. Seven of nine opposition presidential candidates were jailed and what remains of the independent media was attacked. Rather than address the OSCE's criticisms, the OSCE was kicked out of the country by the government.

To highlight the continued abuses of the Lukashenko regime and once again demonstrate Congressional support for the aspirations of the Belarusian people, the House voted to renew the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, with a unanimous vote on July 6 of this year. This bill not only imposes additional sanctions on the leaders of the corrupt Belarusian regime, but allows the United States to work with groups who are promoting freedom and democracy, particularly media groups such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Voice of America, European Radio for Belarus, and Belsat.

The U.S. Congress will continue to stand with the Belarusian people as they fight for self determination and the rule of law. I look forward to the day that they are able to join their European neighbors on the right side of history with a lasting, peaceful and prosperous democracy.

MIDDLE CLASS TAX RELIEF AND JOB CREATION ACT OF 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the language included in this bill

that would remove current barriers for states to strengthen the unemployment program through optional drug testing. The purpose of the unemployment insurance program is to be a safety net, a bridge to reemployment. However, when beneficiaries choose to abuse illegal drugs they are no longer at their competitive best within the jobs market.

That is why I have proposed legislation, H.R. 3601 the "Ensuring Quality in the Unemployment Insurance Program (EQUIP) Act," that would require screenings for applicants of unemployment insurance. Applicants would be screened using a non-invasive questionnaire that has a 94 percent accuracy rate. If identified as likely to use drugs, an applicant for unemployment would be required to pass a drug test as a condition of benefits. This non-invasive practice has been upheld by state courts in New Jersey, Texas and Indiana. A federal court in West Virginia upheld that state's practice of screening applicants for Social Security Disability Insurance.

The screening would not increase federal spending. The estimated cost is \$12 per person. This would be more than offset by reducing the \$7.5 billion budget for the controversial Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB) and Consumers Operated and Oriented Plan (CO-OPs), which was established to ration health care expenditures.

At one of the several listening sessions I had with business owners earlier this year, I had an employer tell me of an overwhelming response for job openings. There was just one problem: half the people who applied could not even pass a drug test. Another told me about an employee they had to temporarily lay off when times were tight. A month later when he contacted his former employee to offer him a new position, he declined because unemployment was paying the bills. With our budget woes of more than \$15 trillion in debt, how can we justify using unemployment insurance to pay someone not to work when they have voluntarily taken themselves out of the hiring pool? That is what we are doing when someone on unemployment is using drugs.

Under the current system, workers can earn up to 26 weeks through employer contribution but are eligible for 99 weeks of benefits under current law. Your tax dollars make up the difference. Maximizing efficiency and effectiveness of programs like unemployment insurance has to be our society's goal.

Drug screening beneficiaries incentivizes individuals to not abuse drugs, which would otherwise render them unfit to be employed. Some have said this proposal asks too much of those who have lost their jobs, but asking someone who is unemployed to do his or her part by staying eligible to work is common sense, not draconian.

I look forward to working with the Committee on this proposal and a hearing in the spring.

URGING TURKEY TO SAFEGUARD ITS CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

SPEECH OF

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, the text of House Resolution 306 could lead to

false conclusions about Turkey. Make no mistake: Turkey has taken concrete steps to improve religious freedom through a series of meaningful initiatives. Moreover, Turkey is a secular, modernized NATO ally that provides indispensable military and diplomatic support to the United States and our allies. Its efforts with respect to religious inclusion are welcome and worthy of recognition.

In September, for example, Secretary Clinton praised Turkey's continued progress in enhancing religious freedom, stating:

We have also seen Turkey take serious steps to improve the climate for religious tolerance. The Turkish government issued a decree in August that invited non-Muslims to reclaim churches and synagogues that were confiscated 75 years ago. I applaud Prime Minister Erdogan's very important commitment to doing so.

Long before H. Res. 306 was introduced, the Turkish Government was enhancing religious freedom. For example:

In May 2010, the Prime Ministry issued a circular underlining that Turkey's non-Muslim citizens share with all other Turkish citizens the right to enjoy and maintain their own identities and cultures in parallel with the national identity and culture of Turkey.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul recently has been permitted to conduct masses at religiously significant venues that had been rendered museums due to disuse.

In November 2010, Turkish authorities returned a former orphanage to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate following a decision by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The attorney representing the Patriarchate declared, "This marks a first in Europe. Turkey became the first country to implement a decision of the ECHR by returning the property. This should be an example for other countries."

Since the original text of H. Res. 306 was introduced, Turkey amended its Law on Foundations to state that immovable properties, cemeteries, and fountains (of the non-Muslim community foundations registered in the name of Turkish public institutions) will be returned to the relevant non-Muslim community foundations, upon those non-Muslim foundations' request.

On a larger scale, Turkey has been an indispensable ally and friend of the United States since it joined NATO almost 60 years ago (in 1952). Given Turkey's strategic location and maintenance of the second largest military in NATO, this should come as no surprise. Currently, NATO is installing radar systems in Turkey and Romania as part of the regional anti-ballistic missile defense system. Moreover, when NATO passed Resolution 1973, which enforced a no-fly zone in Libya, Turkey helped lead a NATO-led coalition, after playing a major role in deliberations with the United States and other key allies. Turkey also had a key role in negotiating the release of four New York Times reporters who were captured during fighting in Libya.

With regard to U.S. operations in Afghanistan, Turkey:

Has made available its Konya Air Base and other airports for the deployment of aircraft and allies' cargo aircraft in support of ISAF operations.

Has deployed five Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLT) and has also conducted in-place training of 8,000 Afghan National Army (ANA) members and training in Turkey for an additional 1,000 Afghan troops.