

Now Act. It will require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct oil and natural gas lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and offshore Virginia that have been delayed or canceled by this administration. In fact, if we don't have an oil lease this year, it will be the first time in my lifetime that the American public has not had that.

Yesterday, the House voted on the Putting the Gulf of Mexico Back to Work Act. Since the drilling moratorium was officially lifted in October, the administration has chosen to drag their feet and stalled the permitting process in the gulf. Twelve rigs have already left the gulf for other regions, taking hundreds and even thousands of jobs with them. This steady decline in oil and natural gas production is costing the United States \$4.7 million every day in lost revenues. This act speeds up the drilling permitting process and will put thousands of Americans back to work.

Today, we'll vote on the Reversing President Obama's Offshore Moratorium Act. The administration's actions have placed the Atlantic coast, the Pacific coast, and areas of Alaska off limits. This Act will implement a smart drilling plan requiring the administration to move forward on American energy production in areas containing the most oil and natural gas resources.

In north Mississippi, we're working at leading the way toward helping our Nation become energy secure. All three of these bills combined can create up to 1.2 million jobs that will generate revenue that our Nation needs, and it will put us on the path to achieving energy security, of more American oil, more natural gas, clean coal, nuclear energy, and new technologies such as wind and solar.

□ 1050

Donna Whiteside and the thousands of businesses and families around America need to know that the House of Representatives is listening to them. The House Republican American energy initiatives will free the American people from the Obama administration's stalling games. If the Senate will consider and pass this legislation, it will put an end to higher gas prices that are straining budgets and are compromising our energy security.

REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS OF THE VIOLENT TENNESSEE STORMS

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

Mr. DESJARLAIS. Mr. Speaker, today I come to the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives to remember the four victims who tragically lost their lives in Bledsoe County as a result of the severe storms and tornadoes that struck middle Tennessee on April 28, 2011.

Loretta Winters Bellos was dearly loved by those in her community. She

was described by friends as a generous and beloved friend who will be greatly missed.

Loretta's sister, Patricia Lynette Thompson, attended Brayton Baptist Church in Graysville and was previously very involved in the Tremont Baptist Church. Those that knew her said that her faith and her church family were a very important part of her life. Her family says they will remember her as "the best mother, grandmother and wife in the world."

Debbie Gibbs Fox was known as an avid animal lover and her husband, Harold "Sonny Boy" Hudson Fox, was described by friends as someone with a lightened spirit who was always a joy to be around.

To all the families and friends of each of these victims, I'm sorry for your loss and offer my deepest sympathies.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize the many emergency management service workers and volunteers that have worked tirelessly to help the victims overcome this terrible tragedy. While touring the damage left by these storms, I was extremely touched by the kindness and generosity of the many people who were there to immediately lend a hand to their neighbors in this time of great need.

I know that the rebuilding process will be difficult and that much was lost, but I'm confident that our community will get through this. My wife, Amy, and I are keeping the families of the affected members in our thoughts and prayers as they begin the process of rebuilding their lives. May God bless you.

CONSTITUENT WORK PERIOD RECAP

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

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, once again it is a privilege to rise this morning and share with my colleagues in the House what my neighbors at home shared with me during the last constituent work period. During those 2 weeks in April, I met with business and community leaders in Wilkes-Barre to see how they're working to keep their downtown alive and vibrant. For example, they converted an old storefront, right in the heart of the city, into a business incubator which encourages local entrepreneurs and start-up firms. The Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry is also trying to restore the city's Irem Temple, a local landmark that is a truly beautiful building, one of the last buildings of its kind in the United States.

I toured an ongoing flood control project in the city of Scranton. There, the Army Corps of Engineers is working to make sure the flood walls meet new standards to protect thousands of residents and dozens of businesses. These constituents have been very pa-

tient, waiting decades for their relief. Now, the Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency are finalizing plans that will provide the protection they deserve.

About 200 people came out to my Home to House public forums, where they learned about the issues we're tackling here in Congress. I was eager to talk with them about Medicare reform and about the steps we're taking to cut the outrageous overspending. Most of my constituents understood what we're doing here, especially the senior citizens. They know that we're trying to save the future for their children and their grandchildren. Many of my constituents also told me they don't want us to raise the debt ceiling without securing substantial budget cuts.

But everywhere I went, my neighbors asked me what we're doing here in Congress to lower the price of gas. Over the 2-week constituent work period, regular unleaded gas cost between \$3.90 and \$4 a gallon. People would come up to me at the gas station as I was filling up and tell me that we need to work harder here to solve this problem. I am happy to report that this week and last I voted on two bills that will put thousands of Americans back to work, while increasing American energy production to help address rising gasoline prices.

There are two events in the constituent work period that stand out for me. One was speaking to a class of students at St. Jude's School in Mountain Top. These bright, eager young men and women were curious about what we do here in Congress. They asked insightful questions. They wanted to learn about Washington. They offered some insights on how to make their futures brighter. As I continue to examine education and workforce programs as a member of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, I will remember these students and their advice.

The second event was the arrival of the Patriot Flag in my hometown of Hazleton. This giant symbol of the United States is traveling around the country to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the September 11 attacks. It was my privilege to stand on the steps of city hall and help first responders, law enforcement, Boy Scouts, and members of the military fold the Patriot Flag.

Less than 36 hours later, we learned that Osama bin Laden was dead. The death of the most visible face of international terrorism is a historic event, and it is one that unified our country. My neighbors in the 11th District of Pennsylvania are proud to congratulate our brave men and women in our Armed Forces and intelligence services, and we thank all of them and their families for their continuing sacrifices. We also commend President Obama for taking bold action.

The spontaneous celebrations after bin Laden's death in front of the White

House, at Ground Zero in New York City, and all across the country once again remind us that there is more that unites us than divides us. We are all, at the core, proud Americans. If we can learn anything from recent events, it is that America is strong and resilient. If we stay dedicated to our efforts, we can get our country back on track.

Fueled with the feedback I heard from my neighbors during 2 weeks at home in northeastern Pennsylvania, I am ready to keep fighting for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 58 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Monsignor Craig Harrison, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, Bakersfield, California, offered the following prayer:

Gracious and loving God, we are grateful for the gifts and blessings You have shown our Nation.

Be with those who are suffering the devastation of the great storms that we have experienced and help us as a Nation to respond.

Bless the women and men gathered here who are called to protect and serve the people of the United States. Watch over and bless all those who serve our Nation abroad.

Guide the Members of this Congress, that their work today will reflect Your love and compassion and guide our Nation to be a leader in justice and peace.

We pray this in the name of the one who created us in love. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIREs) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. SIREs led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Repub-

lic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING MONSIGNOR CRAIG HARRISON

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. MCCARTHY of California. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to welcome Monsignor Craig Harrison from Bakersfield, California, and appreciate that he was able to be here today to open up our floor session with the invocation. It is great to have a fellow Bakersfield High School Driller here on the floor with me.

Since he returned to Bakersfield in 1999 to be the pastor of his hometown parish, Monsignor Craig has had a profound, positive impact on the lives of the thousands in our community. The fact that the number of families in his parish has increased by over 5,000 and enrollment in the parish school has doubled is a testament to his leadership in our community.

He is more than just a faith leader. He is an author of a children's book, he is a faith leader to many of us throughout the community, and, on a personal note, he was a faith leader to my father as he battled his fight with cancer.

Monsignor Craig is a true friend to the Bakersfield community, and I appreciate that he was able to share his words of wisdom on the House floor.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARDNER). The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

U.S. FIREFIGHTERS GO TO MEXICO AND FLY OVER TEXAS

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the administration is fighting wildfires. In December, the United States sent two firefighting planes to battle fires in Israel. In April, two specially equipped U.S. Air Force C-130 cargo planes and 30 personnel were sent to battle wildfires in Mexico. The fires in Mexico burned about 380 square miles near the Texas border. The United States came to the rescue.

But not everyone gets help from the United States. A wildfire epidemic has also occurred in Texas, with more than 9,000 fires. Two million acres have been burned. That is the size of Rhode Island and Delaware combined and ten times the size of the fires in Mexico. And the State is still on fire.

Texas Governor Perry requested Federal help, but the administration summarily denied the Governor's request. The administration, it seems, is more concerned about taking care of foreign

nations while ignoring Americans in Texas. Why does the administration despise Texas? Meanwhile, the fires continue.

And that's just the way it is.

CONDEMNING THE DEATH OF JUAN WILFREDO SOTO

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

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to condemn the brutal beating and subsequent death of Juan Wilfredo Soto. Last Thursday, Soto, while participating in a peaceful protest against the Castro regime, Cuban authorities beat him so badly that he was later taken to the hospital, where he died.

Soto was a brave man and a respected advocate who helped support the hunger strikes of human rights award winner Guillermo Farinas.

Juan Wilfredo Soto's death is the latest brazen illustration of the violent methods the Castro brothers utilize to oppress freedom in Cuba. In the last 2 months reports of oppression have increased.

As many praised the false promises of the Sixth Communist Party Congress held in Cuba last month, few acknowledged the crackdown on dissidents and journalists that took place. Prior to the congress, Cuban authorities reportedly arrested and detained opposition members to ensure that all voices critical to the regime would be silent and that no protests would be visible.

The United States and the international community must join together in condemning the wrongful death of Juan Wilfredo Soto and supporting human rights on the island. We must show Cuban leaders that their brutality is not going to go unnoticed.

MAJORITY'S PLAN FOR MEDICARE IS THE WRONG APPROACH

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

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, if the majority's plan for Medicare ever becomes law, seniors will lose their guaranteed benefit and get a private insurance voucher.

Seniors are calling. They are nervous and justified in asking all sorts of questions about the plan, such as: Will the voucher cover me if I get sick? Will the voucher result in rationed care? And will I need to pay more out of pocket?

The Congressional Budget Office says seniors will pay more—much more. Out-of-pocket costs to seniors will double in 2022 and rise by 68 percent by 2030.

This massive cost shifting saves the Federal Government a lot of money. And where does all of the money taken from seniors and Medicare go? Well, it doesn't pay off the debt. It doesn't create jobs or help folks pay for gas or groceries. But it does go to finance large new tax cuts for the most well-off.