

cleared by Homeland Security's Office of the Inspector General and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Office of Professional Responsibility. He was cleared by both of those of any wrongdoing; yet he got a 2-year jail sentence just in the last couple of days because he supposedly mistreated a drug dealer coming across the border carrying 150 pounds of drugs.

This is just not right. This is just wrong.

[From the Washington Times, Oct. 25, 2011]

(By Jerry Seper)

A U.S. Border Patrol agent has been sentenced to two years in prison for improperly lifting the arms of a 15-year-old drug smuggling suspect while handcuffed—in what the Justice Department called a deprivation of the teenager's constitutional right to be free from the use of unreasonable force.

Agent Jesus E. Diaz Jr. was named in a November 2009 federal grand jury indictment with deprivation of rights under color of law during an October 2008 arrest near the Rio Grande in Eagle Pass, Texas, in response to a report that illegal immigrants had crossed the river with bundles of drugs.

In a prosecution sought by the Mexican government and obtained after the suspected smuggler was given immunity to testify against the agent, Diaz was sentenced last week by U.S. District Judge Alia Moses Ludlum in San Antonio. The Mexican consulate in Eagle Pass had filed a formal written complaint just hours after the arrest, alleging that the teenager had been beaten.

Defense attorneys argued that there were no injuries or bruises on the suspected smuggler's lower arms where the handcuffs had been placed nor any bruising resulting from an alleged knee on his back. Photos showed the only marks on his body came from the straps of the pack he carried containing the suspected drugs, they said. Border Patrol agents found more than 150 pounds of marijuana at the arrest site.

The defense claimed that the smuggling suspect was handcuffed because he was uncooperative and resisted arrest, and that the agent had lifted his arms to force him to the ground—a near-universal police technique—while the other agents looked for the drugs.

The allegations against Diaz, 31, a seven-year veteran of the Border Patrol, initially were investigated by Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General and Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Office of Professional Responsibility, which cleared the agent of any wrongdoing.

But the Internal Affairs Division at U.S. Customs and Border Protection ruled differently nearly a year later and, ultimately, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas brought charges.

The Law Enforcement Officers Advocates Council said the government's case was "based on false testimony that is contradicted by the facts."

In a statement, the council said that because the arrest took place at about 2 a.m., darkness would have made it impossible for the government's witnesses to have seen whether any mistreatment took place. It said Marcos Ramos, the Border Patrol agent who stood next to Diaz, testified that he did not see any mistreatment of the smuggling suspect.

The council said other witnesses made contradictory claims and some later admitted to having perjured themselves. Such admissions, the council said, were ignored by the court and the government. It also said that probationary agents who claimed to have witnessed the assault raised no objections

during the incident and failed to notify an on-duty supervisor until hours later.

"Instead, they went off-duty to a local 'Whataburger' restaurant, got their stories straight and reported it hours later to an off-duty supervisor at his home," the council said. "Then the 'witnesses' went back to the station and reported their allegations."

The council also noted that the teenager claimed no injuries in court other than sore shoulders, which the council attributed to "the weight of the drug load, approximately 75 pounds, he carried across the border."

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas, which brought the charges, is the same office that in February 2006—under U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton—prosecuted Border Patrol Agents Ignacio Ramos and Jose Compean after they shot a drug-smuggling suspect, Osvaldo Aldrete-Davila, in the buttocks as he tried to flee back into Mexico after abandoning a van filled with 800 pounds of marijuana. Aldrete-Davila also was given immunity in the case and testified against the agents.

Agents Ramos and Compean were convicted and sentenced to 11 and 12 years in prison, respectively. President George W. Bush commuted the sentences in 2009 after they had served two years.

The same prosecutors also charged Edwards County Deputy Sheriff Gilmer Hernandez in 2005 with violating the civil rights of a Mexican criminal alien after he shot out the tires of a van filled with illegals as it tried to run him over. One of the illegal immigrants in the van was hit with bullet fragments.

PROMOTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

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

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, last week I spent a day traveling my district and meeting with half a dozen women entrepreneurs.

I started the morning spending time with children in Maple Grove, Minnesota, at the LilyPad Daycare that is owned by a dynamic mom and daughter team.

Next I went to Plymouth, and I visited and toured the medical manufacturer ATEK Medical, which is owned by Christy Bieber Orris and Kay Phillips. Now, they've got challenges on the horizon with the FDA and a new medical device tax, but they are determined to move forward.

I also visited a public relations firm that was started from scratch by Cindy Leines in her basement 23 years ago. Then I connected with Makya, who is living the dream of owning and operating her own educational toy store. And finally I sat down with Peg at Peg's Countryside Cafe.

Mr. Speaker, Minnesota is a great State teeming with endless possibilities because of women like these who are entrepreneurs taking risks, and we need to do more to encourage women to take the leap into entrepreneurship.

My hope is that last week's tour will help inspire more women to realize their dream of running their own business. After all, it's small businesses that will lead our way out of this tough

economic situation we're in and drive ourselves to more economic growth.

SMALL BUSINESS CERTAINTY

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

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to tell the story of an American small business owner, Joe Schneider, struggling to keep his head above water. A few weeks ago, I had lunch with Joe at the Barbed Rose Steakhouse, which he owns in Alvin, Texas.

When we finished our lunch, Joe took me on a walking tour to show me his plans to open five more restaurants in the area. He wants to revitalize his hometown by bringing commerce, jobs and good food to historic downtown Alvin. But the likelihood of a large tax increase, whether it be from tax cuts expiring or the White House's proposed tax hikes, has put his expansion plans on indefinite hold.

Small businesses deserve certainty from Washington and a tax policy that allows them to keep more of their money to expand, to reinvest in their communities, and to grow jobs.

Mr. Speaker, people like Joe Schneider need commonsense tax reform that will encourage American job creation, not hinder it.

AMERICAN JOBS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to present here on the floor the solution to the question that was just raised by my colleague from the Republican side of the aisle.

A month ago, the President laid out a plan that would create millions of jobs here in the United States. It was the American Jobs Act. We are going to talk about this tonight. Before I get into the details of it, last week, in fact 1 week ago, I held a town hall meeting in Fairfield, California.

At that town hall meeting the question of jobs was on everybody's mind. What are you doing about jobs? What is Congress doing about jobs? It just seems as though nothing is happening, and all we're seeing from Congress is talk of the deficit and cuts.

Every time there's a cut, we have another job loss here in our area. Maybe it's a school teacher that's laid off or some highway project that's not going forward. So what's happening with the jobs?

And I then began to explain the American Jobs Act, and we're going to spend some time this evening talking just about that issue, the American Jobs Act.

□ 1730

As proposed by the President, it does address a variety of ways in which American jobs will be created, and not increasing the deficit at all, but rather fully paid for.

I would like to start off this evening by asking my colleague from the great State of New York (Mrs. MALONEY) if she would like to express the view from the East Coast, and then I'll move to the West Coast.

Mrs. MALONEY. I would like to thank my colleague from the great State of California for bringing the American Jobs Act to the floor, every single week, speaking out in favor of American workers, small businesses, and a sane, balanced approach that not only has a cutback in order to cut back our deficit and our debt, but also a revenue leg and a jobs leg. And the President has come forward with a balanced approach that has won support not only from New York and California but clear across this country. Economists are speaking out in support of the American Jobs Act. There have been two Nobel Laureates that have come out in support of it. Mark Zandi, who was the economist in Senator McCain's race for the Presidency, he has come out and he has said that next year it would increase the GDP by 2 percent. It would lower the unemployment rate by 1 percent, and would create 1.9 million jobs.

Now, after hearing your Special Orders on this, I think it would create even more jobs. But this is just a sense of economists from all sides of the country coming out in support of it.

I think it is unfortunate that the Senate did not pass it because we need this act, and we need it now. Americans have shown that they are worried about their future and they want this Jobs Act. Analysts have speculated that our country faces the same kind of lost decade that Japan has struggled with.

In a New York Times article by Daniel Alpert, a managing partner at a private capital firm, he was quoted as saying, and I'd like to bring it to your attention and the American people's attention: "Unless we take dramatic steps, it will be Japan all over again—continuous deflation, no economic growth, in and out of recessions, and high unemployment."

Robert Hockett, a professor of financial law at Cornell in New York and a consultant to the New York Federal Reserve, added: "It will be like the economic version of chronic fatigue syndrome—a low-grade fever all the time."

So we need to prevent that fatigue and cure the low-grade fever. That's why we need to pass this bill. It would be the kind of short-term immediate impact that our economy needs. With job creation stalled and median income dropping, Americans just aren't buying. That's why economists and forecasters are so strongly in support of it. And the American Jobs Act goes after unemployment in three big ways: it

cuts taxes to spur small business hiring and consumer spending; it prevents layoffs of our vital services, our teachers, our firefighters, and our law enforcement officers; and it puts people to work building roads, bridges, and schools. That's so important.

The infrastructure jobs not only create good paying jobs now, they're an investment in the future to help America compete in the world economy. I know from my own State many of our bridges and tunnels and roads and mass transit are crumbling, and we could use this influx of infrastructure money to rebuild and put people back to work. Very importantly, the President's plan maintains a safety net for Americans most hurt by the economic downturn. It's a good plan.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I thank you very much for bringing us the overall view of this. You are quite correct about the small businesses. Let me just put this pie chart up here.

Small business is where 64 percent of all new jobs have been created over the last 15 years. Big businesses actually lost many, many jobs as they have offshored jobs. In fact, it was just last December that the Democratic-controlled House passed a tax bill that terminated tax breaks for big businesses sending jobs offshore. That was about \$12 billion of tax breaks that were terminated so that American businesses would not get a tax break to send jobs offshore. I would just like to point out that not one Republican voted to end that tax break that sent those jobs offshore.

But the point here is that small businesses really do create 64 percent of the jobs. Now, in the American Jobs Act, as my colleague from New York said, there are some very, very important provisions that deal directly with small businesses, encouraging them to hire. For example, we've got some 6 million people that are unemployed more than 6 months, so those are the long-term unemployed. If a small business were to hire one of the long-term unemployed, they would receive an immediate \$4,000 tax credit. That is off the bottom line of their taxes, providing a very powerful incentive to hire the long-term unemployed.

Now, I think the entire Nation is sick and tired of our wars, but the wars are real. Those wars have created a situation where a very, very high percentage of the veterans that come back are unable to get a job. These may be those veterans that have been off in Afghanistan or Iraq. There's a tax credit again for a veteran returning from the wars, a \$5,600 tax credit for hiring an unemployed veteran. Now if that veteran happens to have a service-connected disability, and we've seen the terrible tragedies of those disabilities, arms, legs, and other problems that have befallen the veterans as they serve our country, there's a \$9,600 tax credit in the American Jobs Act for those small businesses that hire the veterans. So by hiring new people, small businesses

will be able to receive a very, very significant benefit as a result of this American Jobs Act.

If the gentlelady would like to continue on with some of the reasons why this is important to New York, please, Mrs. MALONEY, if you would take care and have at it.

Mrs. MALONEY. I would like to respond to the point that the gentleman made. Economists tell us that one of the ways that we climb out of recessions—and we're in the worst recession that I've experienced in my lifetime, the worst since the Great Depression—the way we climb out is often small businesses. Small businesses hire and grow. Two out of three people hired in America are hired by small businesses. But at this time their hiring has not moved forward. That's why this subsidy and support for small businesses is so important, and I applaud the President for including it in the American Jobs Act.

But because of the economic downturn, localities across our country are having to lay off workers, essential workers who are investors in the future of our young people: Teachers and the protectors of our communities, firefighters and our law enforcement, are being laid off.

I want to talk a little bit about New York, the great State that I have the honor of representing, and I have some numbers that I would like to share with you, but they are the same in many localities across the country. In my own State of New York, according to the Congressional Research Service, the estimated grant for the teachers and the first responders would be \$1.7 billion, which would save an estimated 18,000 educators and first responder jobs. That's important not only to these families but to the localities. These teachers are needed. These fire and police are needed. And very importantly, one of the things that I think is so important is the focus that the President has put on modernizing our schools.

When I was in school, all you needed was a piece of paper and a teacher and a pencil. Now our young people need computers, and we need to start teaching them computer sciences and math and technology very, very early. This would have grants to modernize schools so they are really ready for the 21st century, wired appropriately for high-tech computers. This would have a grant for New York City alone of \$1.6 billion to modernize the community colleges and the public schools so they are ready for the next century.

□ 1740

But it's our infrastructure that is so important. We are falling behind in terms of high-speed rail. Much of our infrastructure is crumbling. And the infrastructure investment would total over \$105 billion, including \$50 billion on transportation infrastructure. This not only moves people and makes a

more livable environment, it's an investment also for not being dependent on oil that we have to import.

Very importantly, there is \$10 billion on a new national infrastructure bank that would help finance private ventures of public roads and highways and bridges and railroads. And so that's a very, very important part of it.

Very importantly, it also talks about rehabilitating the foreclosed or vacant properties. This is a problem. Some of my colleagues in Ohio tell me they're literally bulldozing down vacant foreclosed properties. And this would allow to help these blighted neighborhoods and help rebuild.

All in all, it is a great plan. We need to get behind it. We need to put Americans back to work. And we should have passed it yesterday. But I'm here tonight supporting the President's plan to put Americans back to work and to invest in our future, invest in America's competitiveness, and our leadership in so many areas depends on getting our economy moving again.

I appreciate being here with my good friend and colleague, and thank you so much for raising these issues. You're doing an excellent job.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I can go through each one of those numbers that my colleague from the wonderful State of New York talked about. California, similarly, would receive very, very significant benefits.

However, we need to look at the reality of what is happening here in this Chamber where the Speaker of the House refuses to even allow a vote on the President's proposal. All of the things you talked about that would benefit New York will come to nothing unless the Speaker of the House will allow these proposals to come to a vote.

Mrs. MALONEY. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GARAMENDI. Certainly.

Mrs. MALONEY. This is a democracy, and I believe that there is no idea in the world that is so dangerous or challenging that you can't debate it in the United States Congress. It should be put up for a debate and have it fully debated and have a vote. That's the least that the Speaker should provide for the American people.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Over on the Senate side, the leader of the Senate, Mr. REID, brought the issue to the Senate floor and was unable to even get a vote on the Senate floor because of the Republican threat of a filibuster and the 60-vote requirement to end that filibuster. And so even though on the Senate side they almost came to a vote, they were stopped short by a filibuster. And the reason, apparently, was that the Republicans did not want to raise a one-half of 1 percent tax on those very small number—the top 1 percent of Americans that are earning more than a million dollars of adjusted gross income a year. And so with that small tax increase, they refused to go along.

So here we are in this House without a vote and on the other side because of

the threat of a filibuster, and 280,000 teachers are not going to be hired unless we're able to break through. The only way to break through is for the American public to rise up, the 99ers out there, and say: Enough. Give us our jobs. Give us the opportunity to go back to work.

I yield to my colleague.

Mrs. MALONEY. It could not be stated more appropriately. The 99ers and all Americans should speak out and demand a vote on this.

Now, the President has pointed out that it should be a three-legged stool. It should be revenues, we need to cut back on other expenditures, and we need to invest in jobs. Right now, we have roughly 15 percent of our GDP is revenues, but our expenditures are roughly 35 percent.

The gentleman points out the tax on millionaires and other areas that they were looking at. You have to bring that in balance. You cannot continue with 35 percent of the GDP being expenditures and only 15 percent being revenues. Granted, we do have to cut back, and that's what the supercommittee is working on, but it needs to be a balanced approach. Actually, that's what's always worked in the past. It's always been a balanced approach. That's the only way we can get this country on firm ground to reduce our debt, reduce our deficit, invest in opportunities, innovation, and jobs for the future.

You expressed it very well, and I support your efforts here tonight.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you very much for joining us this evening.

Before I turn to my colleague from California, I want to just emphasize the point that the President's American Jobs program is balanced, fully paid for. It's paid for with a fair tax.

We know that over the last 12 years now the upper income, that top 1 or 2 percent, has enjoyed an enormous tax break that was put in place during the George W. Bush first and third year. They've had it good. They've really seen their share of income in America grow extraordinarily fast while the great middle class of America has had basically a flat situation. They've seen no improvement in their income. And then in the last couple of years, they've seen a very precipitous decline.

The President has also proposed—and I know I agree very strongly with this—end the tax breaks for the oil companies. Why does the oil industry need another \$5 billion or \$6 billion a year of tax breaks when in fact over the last decade they've earned more than a trillion dollars in profit?

Our colleague from California is ready to go. This is MAXINE WATERS, representing Los Angeles, a colleague of mine dating back to our years in the California Legislature, which was just a few years back.

If you would care to share with us your thoughts on how we're going to get Americans back to work.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much. I'm very appreciative, Congressman,

for your taking this time out on the floor this evening and sharing this time with your colleagues to talk about the American Jobs Act.

What I'm going to say will take a little bit of a different tack. As you know, we just had a contest about the use of social media in our caucus, and I devised a program where I promoted a campaign on #ourspeech, which asked our followers, if they had the opportunity to speak to Congress, what would they say, using the 140 or so characters on Twitter. We got a lot of comments in. We combined them, and now I'm going to share them. A lot of it is about jobs, but they speak about it in a little bit different way. If you would indulge me, I would like to take a few minutes.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I'd be fascinated to hear. I know that your constituents have been very, very active, and I know that over the years you have been superactive. Please share those tweets with us.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much.

Today, I'm delivering what is known as #ourspeech—a speech composed of words solely from my followers and friends on Facebook who posted their thoughts about the economy and jobs online. This is a part of my effort to bring Americans closer to Congress.

To the people that sit on Capitol Hill:

As Members of Congress in the greatest country in the world, you are very well aware of the concerns expressed by the American constituency—jobs, stable economic environment, education, crime, war, et cetera. You are not Republicans. You are not Democrats. You are not an independent. You do not belong to any faction. Stop worrying about party and do something for the people. Pass the jobs bill. Pass the American Jobs Act. We all need to work.

A child with no food doesn't care about your power struggle with those who are across the aisle. You must represent the most downtrodden people in your district, not the most successful business nor any special interest. Big money donations from corporations and the financial industry have purchased our democracy. America elected the House, not corporations. It is time they represent us. You have an obligation as a public servant to ensure that the underprivileged of our society will be protected. Don't forget the poor, a group that continues to grow while the rich get richer. We have to trust you to make the right decisions for us. Support and pass the American Jobs Act.

My Facebook followers continue by saying:

We labor to right our small, overturned coffers to replace what was lost. We labor and pay three and four times over for substandard services.

□ 1750

We have become the disenfranchised while billionaire executives live and work in very comfortable environments. We are bludgeoned with partisan rhetoric that detracts from the

real American issues and Representatives who feel they may act without giving heed to the desires of their constituents.

Put partisan politics aside, they say. Start serving your citizens with measured focus on supporting the people. Congress must support jobs. Congress must support the American Jobs Act. We need jobs so that we can pay our reasonable share for life activities and services. We want the right to realize the promises of our founding documents.

The middle class have been the legs this country has stood on. The lack of meaningful action in D.C. has crippled us. We have not been able to save for our children's college education as we live paycheck to paycheck. We worry about the more immediate dilemma—will we be able to keep our home? We are 2 months behind in our mortgage. Bank of America, our lender, was bailed out with our tax money. Now who is going to bail us, who played by the rules and worked hard, out? Please don't give another dime of our money to save the banks, they do not care about us.

Americans are sick of hearing Congress bicker about who is to blame for our issues. While Congress pontificates and filibusters, Americans are starving, losing their homes, working multiple jobs if they can find them, and puzzling over ways to balance our incredibly shrinking budgets against the rising costs of tolls, gas, food and corporate thievery in the guise of bank fees and loan rates. Good, hardworking Americans shouldn't be rubbing nickels together and shouldn't have to pick food over medicine.

My Facebook followers wrap up by further saying: We wonder how we will pay our taxes and student loans, avoid answering our phones, leave our mail unopened as we struggle. The system, if it ever was for us, has failed at this critical juncture in history to safeguard us. The global Occupy Wall Street movement illustrates beautifully the consciousness of the people which has been missing from the political landscape. Congress must support jobs, education and health care. People are hurting out here. Our silence has finally and irrevocably been broken. Those of us who have been awakened are now willing soldiers in the fight.

The voice of the people occupying around the Nation will not go unrecognized. Our strength, our passion and our vision can, and should be, harnessed to power change.

Thank you so very much for allowing my Facebook followers to have a word on the floor tonight. They are watching us. They will be responding. But I think they are very appreciative that you have allowed me this time to condense those comments and the words that they gave to me to bring to the floor.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I thank the gentlelady from California so very much for sharing with us the words that she

has received from her constituents. I know that for me, and I suspect for many of our colleagues, there are similar words, similar comments to us. It's time for us to get with it. Let's pass a jobs bill. Let's really work for the people out there, not only the unemployed, but for the great middle class that has been pushed down over the last decade. It's time for them to have their say. Thank you so very, very much for being with us this afternoon.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you so very much.

Mr. GARAMENDI. You said something that came to my mind—I'm going to do this quickly before I turn to my colleague from—Rhode Island? You mentioned student loans. Now, the President has been out in California, in Los Angeles and in San Francisco, near my district, and he's been saying something that really caught my attention, and that is: we can't wait. Speaking for the American people, we can't wait for Congress to act. We can't wait.

And he did something that is really, really close to home. My daughter and son-in-law just finished medical school. They have huge loans that they took out to go through medical school. But across this Nation, about \$1 trillion of loans have been taken out by young men and women—and older—who have gone back to school to improve themselves, to get an education, to learn a skill, \$1 trillion out there. And many of those loans are at a very high interest rate, and they may be from different sectors.

And the President says, we can't wait to help these people. These young men and women and others who have these loans, they need help today. And so he put together a new program based upon a law that we passed last year—the Democrats passed last year—that said we're going to do some consolidation. So he's taken that step. He's going to allow for the consolidation of these loans into one loan package and allow the interest rate to be reduced, on the average, at least a half percent interest rate and stretched out—and a small percentage of the income. And many of these young men and women—I'm just going to say men and women, they're not all young—aren't able to get a job other than just a minimum wage, and so they can't pay. So he's giving them a break.

And that's what we want our President to do. We want our President to go out there and say we can't wait for Congress—even though I'm ready to go and I know my colleagues are—and giving them a break. This is really important that he has done this.

Ms. WATERS. I thank you. That is well said. You are absolutely correct. And the young people are waiting on us to act. They are burdened with debt. They can't get careers started. They can't get families started. This will be very helpful to them. The consolidation and the reduction of the interest rate is extremely important.

Mr. GARAMENDI. We can't wait to get a bill out of this House, and hope-

fully the Speaker will allow us to bring it to the floor. And I can't wait to hear from Mr. COURTNEY of Connecticut.

Mr. COURTNEY, please join us.

Mr. COURTNEY. I thank the gentleman from California. Connecticut, Rhode Island—you know, when you're from California, I'm sure we all look like one of your counties there. But it's eastern Connecticut. At least I about Rhode Island. But thank you for the invitation to speak this evening.

I wanted to start, first of all, by just sharing with you that I am in the final day of a 1-week challenge that myself and four other Members of Congress have engaged in to live on a food stamp budget for a week. That's \$4 a day, which is what the budget is for millions of Americans today. And my wife and I and my daughter got through it in one piece—although I had to kind of take my little care package down to D.C. with me. And frankly, it has been harder than I thought and a real eye opener. I mean, a cup and a half of coffee—

Mr. GARAMENDI. Excuse me. May I interrupt? You and three of your colleagues or four of your colleagues have undertaken a program to try to live on the unemployment insurance?

Mr. COURTNEY. No. This is a food stamp budget, the SNAP program. Again, the SNAP budget for millions of Americans is \$4 a day. And so obviously you've got to shop as aggressively as you possibly can, and frankly you're buying somewhat lower-cost items. As I said, we're about to get across the finish line at midnight tonight. Again, a cup and a half of coffee a day, half a peanut butter sandwich for lunch, generic cereal, little bananas, some meals at night. You don't have to worry about cleaning dishes when you're on this kind of budget because you eat every bit of it. And as I said, it has been a real eye opener in terms of the fact that this is really an experience that isn't just limited to 1 week for millions of Americans. It's something that, again, is just part of a growing reality.

I raise it in the context of the Jobs Act because today there are, again, millions of Americans who are 99ers; they are people who have gone through their unemployment compensation period, which, as we all know, has a cap of 99 weeks. For a lot of them, there really is nothing else waiting at the end of that time other than food stamps—or the SNAP program as it's now called. To basically live on \$32, which is really what the amount is for a single adult, is really impossible.

As a result, we're seeing, again, record numbers of people showing up at food banks, record numbers of people showing up at soup kitchens. There is now a suburbanization of poverty that's going on in this country. Again, I represent Connecticut, which has the highest per capita income in America—obviously lots of suburbs. There are now, again, food banks that are operating in a lot of these communities.

Clearly, this is an issue in terms of the supercommittee and the sequestration, whether or not a program like SNAP is going to be at risk. For people to go backwards from \$4 a day is something that I personally can't imagine.

But at the end of the day, the real solution is to get this economy growing again, and the best social program is a job. I mean, that is the bottom line in terms of what is a real fix to this problem.

One of the things that I just wanted us to, again, spend a minute on, and then I'll hand it over to my friend from Ohio who's here, is that the pay-for that's been proposed and supported in the Senate and the White House is a 5 percent surcharge on income above \$1 million. Recently we had, again, in my opinion, a patriotic, courageous American who stepped forward to really put the spotlight on what that means. Warren Buffett, who, again, is a legendary investor, financier, commentator on all the news programs and the business channels, shared his tax return for last year.

□ 1800

His gross income, his top line was \$63 million, his adjusted gross income was \$32 million, and his payment was roughly about \$6 million. As he explained in a number of op-eds, that roughly translates into a tax rate of 17 percent, which, again, you're here, Johnny-on-the-spot with the charts, which is terrific.

If his tax return was subjected to the surcharge which has been proposed and supported in the Senate, basically, it would add about another \$2 million to \$3 million of tax liability in terms of what his return would be, and his overall effective rate would be roughly about 25 percent.

He clearly makes the argument about the Buffett rule that he should pay a higher rate than his secretary and his staff—today he pays a lower rate than all of them. But the real, I think, power of his argument which he made in *The New York Times* op-ed piece, "Stop Coddling the Rich," was that the tax rates that he paid gladly back in the eighties and nineties, which again, is even higher than it would be if we passed the surcharge, did nothing to inhibit his willingness or desire to go out and compete and invest and participate in the drive for the American Dream.

And if you look at the growth rates that we experienced in the 1990s when, again, the tax rates on both capital gains and regular income were much higher than today, and would still be higher than if we adopted the Jobs Act pay-for, as he powerfully makes the point, it would do nothing to inhibit growth, and it would do nothing to inhibit or punish success.

It, in fact, would just do a lot to try and create some balance in our public finances so that we can afford to do the great things that a great Nation must do to get us out of the predicament that we're in today.

What I want to say to anyone who's watching here today, who's on food stamps, having experienced briefly the challenge that you face over a 1-week period of time, we can do better, as a Nation, than that, and we must adopt the Jobs Act to make sure that we solve the problems of Americans who today are trapped in an economy that allows no way out except subsistence programs that are inadequate to lead a healthy productive life.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I thank the gentleman from Connecticut. My apologies, Rhode Island being not too far away. Thank you very much. And thank you for pointing out that it's very, very difficult in America if you're poor. One out of six Americans now live in poverty and are dependent upon food stamps and other kinds of subsistence in order simply to stay alive.

And we cannot forget that, although we ought to remember that here on this floor very recently there was an effort to reduce the food stamps. So I don't quite understand why anybody would want to do that, given the poverty rate.

You also spoke to the issue of fairness in taxes. Eighty-four percent of all of the wealth in this Nation is now controlled by the top 20 percent, and the bottom have become more and more poor.

Now, one of the States that is struggling to get back into the American Dream is the State of Ohio, and there's a lot of conflict going on there about labor and politics and the like.

But I know, Mr. RYAN, that you're focused solely on trying to get people back to work in your community. If you would please join us. If I recall correctly, you're from the eastern part of Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is correct, the northeastern part, and I'm happy to be joined by my colleague from the northwestern part, Ms. KAPTUR, to talk about these issues.

I think, as I sat here and I listened, whether it was California or whether it was Connecticut or whether it's Ohio, I think the number one issue facing the country right now is the income inequality. It is now just starting to percolate up as the number one issue, the greatest inequality in this country since the Great Depression.

I know many of us have been talking about this for a long, long time—we've had 30 years of stagnant wages in the United States. There is no way that we're going to be able to continue to be the leader of the free world, or really even have the kind of country that we want, if we have this kind of level of inequality.

There are issues that come before the House of Representatives. There are issues that the President is continuing to push that will help rectify this problem that is not getting any attention at all in the House of Representatives, whether it's the American Jobs Act,

which would put people back to work, infrastructure, roads, bridges, get that 20 percent unemployment within the construction trades, or 18 or 19 percent, or whatever it may be, and drive it down.

The China currency bill, passed by the Senate with well over 60 votes, passed the House of Representatives last year, had 99 Republicans, 350 total votes, and we can't get a vote in the House of Representatives to take on the Chinese.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Explain to us what the Chinese currency bill is all about.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Well, they're manipulating their currency. They're devaluing it so that the exports coming into the United States are artificially cheaper than they would normally be, already with benefits of no EPA, no OSHA, no regulations. But in addition to that, they manipulate their currency, devalue it to make those exports landing on the shores of the United States even cheaper.

Now, all of these unfair trade practices have cost the United States 2.8 million jobs in the last 10 years; 1.9 million of those are manufacturing, and 100,000 in Ohio. When manufacturing jobs pay more, there's more intellectual property spinoff, better benefits, better pension.

All of this comes together with an issue that we're facing back in Ohio, and a philosophy in the country that is basically saying, if the middle class just made a little bit less, the country would be better off; we'd finally fix these problems. That's what's happening with S.B. 5 and S.U. 2 in Ohio, where we have a Republican administration taking on the teachers, the police and the fire, and saying they make too much money, and it's because of them that we have these huge budget issues, when really, they're the last bastion of the middle class, and they run into burning buildings, and they go out and they take care of us when we're in a dangerous situation, or they teach our kids, or they clean the public restrooms, or they clean the restrooms in the schools.

These are people who serve us, all of us as a country. For us to continue to go down the path of, we've got to dismantle the middle class, we've got to dismantle the unions, we've got to cut programs like Pell Grants or food stamps or things that help us invest, or keep interest rates high on student loans, or cut funding for the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, this is not a recipe for success. This is a recipe for the destruction of the middle class.

These are investments we've always made as a country that have benefited us. And to say to these police and fire and teachers and public employees, you're making too much money, you're part of the problem, when they're making \$30,000, \$35,000 a year, is ridiculous.

The policies coming out of Washington and the House of Representatives, we don't even have the courage

to take on China to say maybe we'll drive some manufacturing jobs back into the United States, create some wealth back in the United States so these local communities have money to fund their police and fire. This is what we've always done.

One final point. You're starting to see it percolate. You saw it in Wisconsin. The coalition in Ohio, now, against this issue too, is incredible. Police, fire, teachers, public employees, building trades, auto workers, machinists, average people, all coming together to say, this is the middle class, and we've had it up to here. With Occupy Wall Street, it's the same thing. Income inequality. High levels, it's been going on for a long time. People are up to here.

And for a while, my friend, they have said, go get Washington, D.C. Look at them. Look, it's the Democrats, get them. It's their fault. But the reality is it's where the money is, and that concentration of wealth you were talking about, that's driving the policies here.

Somebody explain to me how we can pass a China currency bill last year, with 350 votes, 99 Republicans, and we can't get a vote in the House of Representatives on it now. The Senate just passed it. Because there are some very powerful interests that don't want it on the floor. They don't want to vote on this. They like the system just the way it is. They can locate over in China and ship their product back and the Americans will buy it.

But what's coming home to roost now is that the Americans aren't making the wages they were in the last 20 or 30 years.

□ 1810

In the last 20 or 30 years, consumer spending is down, consumer confidence is down, wages are stagnant, and there are high levels of poverty even in the suburbs. And so it's all coming home to roost.

I think it's time for our country and all of these disparate groups to now come together—police, fire, teachers, building trades, and working class people. I'm telling you, in Ohio they're coming together and they're saying: We are the middle class, we are working America, and we are going to set the agenda.

Mr. GARAMENDI. And we can't wait. We cannot wait.

I'm just going to toss out two more statistics here. The top 1 percent of Americans in 1974 had about 9 percent of income of all sorts—capital gains, interest, dividends, as well as earned income, about 9 percent. In 2007—that was 4 years ago—they had 23½ percent. So you've seen the income of the very few at the top grow extraordinarily from 9 to 23. It's probably up to 25 or 27 percent this year. The top one-tenth of 1 percent—this is 15,000 families in America—have raked in more than \$1 trillion of income in 2009; just 15,000 families, \$1 trillion of income.

Yet, when the Senate took up the bill to provide about 2 million jobs for

America to be paid for by these men, women, and families that have had this extraordinary growth in their income, just a small percentage of a surcharge, 5 percent surcharge on that additional income, the Republicans in the Senate refused to pass that bill. So 280,000 teachers are not going to get a job, 100,000 police and firemen will not be back on our streets protecting us, and \$50 billion of construction programs will not be built, 35,000 schools will not be renovated, and all across this Nation the pain of the middle class will continue.

It's time for us to have a better deal for America. The American Jobs Act can do that. And I think it can help Ohio in the central part.

Ms. KAPTUR, if you would care to join us, thank you so very much. I yield to a terrific Representative who I know has fought fiercely for years and years here to bring back to middle America the manufacturing base and the middle-income jobs that are so important.

Ms. KAPTUR. Congressman GARAMENDI, I want to thank you for your leadership coming from California. And my dear, dear colleague TIM RYAN from the eastern quarter of Ohio, what a privilege it is to be here with you as well and to be a voice for we the people—we the people, not just the superrich people, not just the people running the six biggest banks in the country that just took the rest of America to the cleaners, but Americans who speak for the vast majority who, like that chart states, want a better deal for America. We want investment in America. We want to make goods in America because we know, when we create here and we make here, we create jobs here and we create real wealth here for everyone, not just the privileged few.

It's really an amazing fact to think about that General Motors, when I was growing up, was the biggest employer in the country, and northern Ohio just hummed. Plants had 14,000 workers, 10,000 workers. Now you're lucky if a plant has 1,200 workers, and you see shuttered plants around our country. Thank God for the recovery package and what was done to resuscitate and refinance the U.S. automotive industry so that other countries can't eat our lunch, that they can't eat our investment capital and all of the investment that still exists around this country, the millions of families and retirees that depend on a healthy automotive sector.

When you think about it, today, Walmart is the largest employer. We have gone from General Motors being the largest employer to Walmart being the largest employer. And this week, Walmart announced that even though it's the largest employer, even though it's making so much money for its shareholders and top executives, if you work for Walmart and you put in under 24 hours a week work, you're not eligible for their health insurance. Yup, I can just think of all those women, all

those people that are working in Walmart around the country, their standard of living will drop.

I agree with what Congressman RYAN says about the middle class. We believe in people earning a living and, as a result, being secure in the middle class—earning a decent wage, getting a decent health benefit, and having a retirement program you can depend upon.

I'm really happy that the cost-of-living increase will give, on average, to seniors across this country 360 extra dollars—360 extra dollars a year on average—because they're going to be able to buy some food, better food for themselves. They're going to be able to pay their utility bills. Do you know the first thing they will do? I'll tell you the first thing they'll do. They're going to buy their grandchildren presents. They're going to go spend that money. They're going to spend it in the economy.

Every single business in this country, what do they say? We need customers. We need customers. We don't have enough people working—carrying 14 to 24 million people unemployed or underemployed—to really get this economy to hum. They're waiting for customers. Every Member of Congress, if they're awake, knows that.

And so when we see a call for a better deal for America—for all the people, for we the people, not just for the Wall Street bankers who brought us to this juncture who, by the way, are doing very well and controlling two-thirds of the financial system of this country, which is part of the problem we are facing—too much power in too few hands. But as we look across our country to say what can we do, as Members, in order to create more of an investment climate here, you create investment when you create customers. And, honestly, you don't create customers and create wealth at the same time when you just take all the stuff that's made in China, bring it here and sell it. That money goes—most of it goes back to where those goods were made.

We have a real challenge in our country to reward Make It In America, to make goods here and to sell goods here. And as Congressman RYAN says, for those countries that don't play by the rules—and China doesn't—whether it's on currency, whether it's on the environment, or whether it's on the fair treatment of workers, they're not even living in the same universe as we live in. Who would want to live in Beijing? You'd need a gas mask to survive. Is that really what we want to do is downgrade our standard of living for the American people to that level? And that is the course we are on. That is the course we are on, Congressman GARAMENDI.

When you talk about how many people in America are poor today, do you think they like being poor? God loves them just as He loves everybody in the upper class and the middle class. They don't want to be poor. They want a job.

Here's the figure. Let me put this one on the table. I was talking to one of

the major rail executives today, and I was inviting him to come out to our region because we have a lot of railroads, and they're hiring. He said, Congresswoman, I want you to know something. We posted 4,000 jobs in rail across this country. And he said, Guess how many applications we got? Five hundred thousand. Five hundred thousand applications for 4,000 jobs.

Think about what the American people are saying to us. Austerity will not bring prosperity. What will bring prosperity is investment in America, making goods in America, creating goods in America, growing products in America, processing products in America, and holding our trade partners accountable for their actions, whether it's currency manipulation or renegotiating trade agreements that are not operating in the interests of the United States and that are far out of balance.

Let me tell you, the most out-of-balance trade agreement is with China. And if you go back to NAFTA when it passed here in 1993, they said, Oh, my goodness, there are going to be millions of jobs. Well, they're not in the United States. They're not here. In fact, we've amassed a \$1 trillion trade deficit with Mexico since NAFTA passed. So all those people must live somewhere in outer space to think that that has actually created wealth in America. It has been a sucking sound, a sucking sound to other countries—not here.

All you've got to do is know the math. Know the math. Just look at the numbers. You don't have to believe me. Look at the trade accounts. It's written in black and white every month. We aren't winning. We are losing the trade wars all over this world, and it is costing us investment here. It's costing us jobs here. It's costing us wealth here. And that is where those poverty figures are rising, because we aren't reading the math and we aren't making goods in America and balancing our accounts here at home by putting people back to work.

Mr. GARAMENDI. We certainly can rebuild the American manufacturing industry, and there are ways of doing it. That was done in part when the President stepped up using the stimulus money to rebuild General Motors and Chrysler. They're now back, and millions of jobs have been saved and, simultaneously, the entire small business supply chain is in order.

□ 1820

Mr. RYAN, I know that you have other thoughts that you'd like to add, so please share with us.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I just think we're competing directly now with China in such a significant and direct way. So we put, say, \$8 billion in the stimulus package for high-speed rail. I think China is spending tens of billions of dollars—

Mr. GARAMENDI. Well over \$100 billion.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think it's \$120 billion, maybe, on high-speed rail.

They're going to have more tracks in China than in the rest of the world combined in the next 5 or 10 years; and we're sitting here saying we're not going to do anything because we're not for high-speed rail. Ohio gave back \$400 million, and Florida gave back a few hundred million dollars. We know from conversations we've had with businesspeople that that would have lured companies into the State of Ohio because they want to build railcars, but they're not going to build them if we don't have a high-speed rail program. These are investments that we have made.

We've gotten into the mind-set that the government can't do everything, but it has to do something. What it has to do is make sure our roads and our bridges and our infrastructure are up to speed.

I was just talking with Congressman DOYLE from Pittsburgh. He said \$3 billion in sewer projects need to get done—EPA-mandated in Pittsburgh. I think Cleveland is \$2 billion to \$3 billion and that Akron is about \$1 billion. It's hundreds of millions in places like Youngstown and in smaller cities. I'm sure Toledo is up there in the hundreds of millions in these older cities.

Ms. KAPTUR. And Sandusky.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I saw Rahm Emanuel, the Chicago mayor. He was saying these are 100-year-old systems in Chicago. Do we really think that Pittsburgh and Cleveland and Akron and Youngstown and Toledo have \$1 billion to go make these investments? But if we say collectively as a country we're going to rebuild the country and that right now we're going to use the power that we have to go out and get the money and make these investments and put all these people back to work, they'll be working for a decade.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Let me tell you how that could be done. It's in the President's American Jobs Act.

He has suggested that we establish an infrastructure bank. Every one of the projects that you just described is a cash flow project. There is a fee for sewage and there is a fee for water. There are fees that come traditionally with each of these services. If we had an infrastructure bank—and the President has suggested we put \$10 billion into it—we know that we could get the various public pension funds around to invest in it and that we could probably have \$100 billion within several months that could be invested in each one of the projects that you talked about, and those projects over time are able to repay. Do keep in mind that the Federal Government is now able to borrow that money at about 2 percent for 10 years. So this is an investment opportunity to build for the future.

We've got about 5 minutes. So, Ms. KAPTUR, if you'd like to take it, then we're going to wrap this thing up.

Ms. KAPTUR. I would just like to say, for investment in our ports, in our airports, in our rail, what could be more important to our country?

When I was born, there were 146 million people in this country. We're now near 320 million people. By 2050, we will have 500 million people in this country. We cannot continue to live like it's 1950. We have to sort of catch up, which is where these public investments come in. They create jobs. They create real wealth that you can't take away or outsource. It belongs to the American people. It belongs here.

I wanted to say a word about Ohio. We're facing this vote on Issue 2 in Ohio, which is an effort, as Congressman RYAN says, to dismantle what's left of the middle class in our State: our teachers, our firefighters, our police. We have a Governor who called an Ohio highway patrolman an "idiot," which I consider a complete degradation of the Office of Governor and an insult to those who put their lives on the line for us every day.

We stand against Issue 2. We're going to defeat Issue 2 in Ohio because we believe in building the middle class; and we are proud of our police, of our highway patrolmen, of our firefighters, of our teachers. They hold us together as a community, and it is our job to push investment into airports, highways, high-speed rail, trains, transit, ports, water and sewer—all of the pieces of "community" that hold us together and make our economies hum. Either you're looking through the rearview mirror or the windshield going forward. This is an "I can" Nation. The last four words of "American" are "I can," and we are an "I can" country.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Indeed, we can.

This piece of legislation, H.R. 613, is one that I've introduced. It simply says that this money that we want to invest in our sanitation systems—high-speed rail and energy systems, whether those are the wind turbines or similar systems—is American taxpayer money. This bill says, if you're going to use American taxpayer money, then you're going to spend that money on American-made equipment. Make it in America. It's our money. Use it here in America.

The Chinese currency bill ought to be passed. I know that our Republican colleagues are going to be following me here in a few minutes, and they're probably going to say the solution is to end regulation. They had a bill on the floor that would end the regulation that would prevent the despoiling of our air with such things as mercury and arsenic and dioxins and other kinds of poisons. We can't build America by ending the regulations that protect America: the food safety regulations, the environmental safety regulations, the clean water regulations. That's not how we're going to build America. That's how we'll destroy this country.

We will build America through the kinds of programs that the President has proposed with the American Jobs Act, which is fully paid for with a fair tax system, one in which those at the top end of this economy, who have

prospered so well over the last 15 years, will now pay just a little bit more so that Americans can go back to work and so that those unnecessary tax breaks that have been given to the oil industry for a century—that 5, 6, \$7 billion a year that they've received on top of their trillion dollars of profit over the last decades—will go back into America's Treasury so that we can build America once again. We will make it in America.

The President is quite right: we can't wait. Americans can't wait. It's time for Americans to go back to work. The American Jobs Act will put Americans back to work without increasing the deficit and, in fact, by creating tax revenues for the American Treasury.

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

AMERICA'S GREATEST GENERATION—OUR SENIOR CITIZENS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, I am here to lead a very important discussion regarding America's Greatest Generation—our senior citizens.

I have the greatest respect and heartfelt affection for this special group of people. This respect and affection originated with the special relationship I had with my grandparents. I valued spending time with them and loved learning from them. I learned how to catch a fish and golf from Granddad Zellmer, how to clean and cook a fish from Grandma Zellmer, how to ride a horse and milk a cow from Granddad Purdy, and how to crochet and make homemade butter from Grandma Purdy.

Out of the love of my grandparents grew a love and respect for all senior citizens. I believe their wisdom should be sought and valued in our society and that generations should be linked to benefit from each other. As a teacher, I initiated programs to bring young people together with senior citizens, and wrote my master's thesis on it. I can tell you that it's a winning combination. Throughout my life, I have been dedicated to advocate for senior citizens. For over 10 years, I served on the Cass County Council on Aging. I helped raise money for our Meals on Wheels program and for other important programs to help senior citizens.

Now I'm honored to represent and to serve the great people of Missouri's Fourth Congressional District, which is home to over 120,000 seniors. You can trust that I will ensure that this cherished generation is never overlooked. There are many challenges facing our Nation's senior citizens: financial stress, health challenges, housing issues, and family difficulties. My Republican women colleagues and I want you to know that we care, that we hear your concerns, and that we are here to stand by you and to fight for you and for workable solutions.

□ 1830

I'm honored to have the privilege tonight of leading this discussion and introducing you to some of the most dedicated women in Congress who, like me, care about seniors and are fighting for you.

I would now like to yield as much time as she may consume to my good friend from just across the State line, a fellow farm girl and my travel buddy back and forth to the Kansas City airport, Representative LYNN JENKINS.

Ms. JENKINS. I thank the gentlelady from Missouri for yielding, and I appreciate my fellow Republican women stepping up this evening to have an honest fact-based discussion about one of our Nation's most valued resources—our senior citizens.

As I travel through Kansas each week, I always hear from folks who have had to tighten their belts over the last few years, and the overwhelming message I hear is that Kansans want their government to do the same, and seniors are no different.

While special interest groups, many in the media, and several of our colleagues across the aisle like to paint our Nation's seniors as weak, terrified of budget cuts, and beholden to the Federal Government for financial security, seniors in Kansas know better. These are strong men and women who have seen our Nation through a world war, cultural upheaval, and cyclical financial turmoil. They have always stayed true to the ideals and principles that make this country great. They have always been willing to make the necessary sacrifices to better their lives and those of their children and grandchildren, and they continue to display that same commitment during our current struggles.

But you know what? Just because our seniors are willing to sacrifice does not mean we should continue to demand it. It's time we, the beneficiaries of their hard work and sacrifice, stopped asking for more and allowed our seniors to have the security and certainty that they have earned through decade upon decade of hard work.

That's why I'm pleased to have supported the Republican House budget earlier this year that will save a Medicare system that could be bankrupt in 8 years if we do nothing, and it makes a plan to save Social Security, which

isn't far behind. Our plan saves these programs for the next generation while preserving 100 percent of the benefits for those Americans currently in or near retirement.

I'll continue to fight to ensure seniors don't see any cuts in their benefits, like the cuts that were provided for under the President's health care law, which cuts Medicare by \$500 billion and allows a board of bureaucrats to begin rationing care. We will, instead, continue to work to protect and strengthen these important programs.

The economic turmoil over the last several years has impacted all of us, including our seniors. Our Nation's senior citizens, the Greatest Generation, worked their entire lives to make this country what it is today. Keeping the promises made to them over the years must be a priority of this Congress and of this Nation.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, lady. I appreciate your great remarks.

Now I would like to yield as much time as she may consume to another farm gal, a fellow friend here, from South Dakota, KRISTI NOEM.

Mrs. NOEM. I thank the gentlelady from Missouri for recognizing me and for facilitating this wonderful discussion that we have tonight in front of us to really talk about our seniors and to talk about the challenges that they face and the promises that we've made to them that we intend to uphold and to keep for the years to come.

I rise to speak on this Special Order with our other Republican female colleagues to discuss a lot of important issues, and I want everybody to know across this country, in South Dakota we have more than the average share of seniors in South Dakota. We have a very high number, and all of us have seniors in our families—grandparents, neighbors, friends who are seniors and live under the programs and policies of this country.

Our seniors have worked hard. They've raised their families. They've raised grandchildren with strong values, with good work ethics that are extremely important to them to deal with a lot of the things that this life may throw at them. They paid into Social Security. They fought our enemies on foreign soil to defend our country and our freedoms. They have built businesses, and they literally have created the fabric of our society in America today.

Our Republican agenda reflects the deep gratitude that we have towards our seniors in this country. We're thankful for the country that they have given us. We're thankful for the values that they have taught us, and we intend to follow through on the promises that we've made to them.

So you're asking me today what are the promises that we've made to our seniors? The first promise we have made is to care for them. That's why we chose to step up and to save the Medicare program. That's why we