

things; and whatever may be our wishes . . . or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, the facts are that the health care reform law is working for millions of young adults all across this country. Yesterday, the Department of Health and Human Services released figures which show that 2.5 million young Americans up to age 26 are now covered because of the Affordable Care Act's provision that allows age 26 coverage for families. Private and public employers all across America now provide this benefit at a cost of only, on average, 1 percent to health care costs. This is a plan which is working.

Last week, figures came out that showed that 2.7 million seniors are now getting relief from prescription drug costs—\$1.5 billion in reduced prescriptions drug costs because the Affordable Care Act is closing the doughnut hole.

Facts are stubborn things, and the facts show that the health care reform law is helping young Americans and older Americans.

FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA

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

Mr. CRAWFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Southside High School chapter of the Future Farmers of America from Batesville, Arkansas. Southside's FFA chapter, under the leadership of Mr. Chase Hilton, revitalized its animal science program 3 years ago. Since resuming the program, Southside has been a powerhouse in State and national competitions.

One hundred thirty-five students at Southside, many of whom have never been involved in livestock, are now working in the school's stockyard raising cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses. Recently, Blaine French and Trenton Tosh won honors at the Independence County Fair with Grand Champion Angus and Hereford cattle. Blaine had Grand Champion and Supreme Champion hogs, and also won Best of the Best Showmanship Award.

Trenton Tosh won Grand Champion Hereford Heifer and Grand Champion Hereford Bull at the Arkansas State Fair.

Southside's Livestock Evaluation Team, made up of Blaine French, Trenton Tosh, Jackson Mead, and Thomas Johnson, were named the Arkansas State Champions and went on to place eighth in Nationals.

More important than any medals or awards are the life lessons those students learn and are learning through State and national competitions.

I commend Southside Future Farmers of America and their instructor, Chase Hilton, for their outstanding achievements. I know they're watching now.

Congratulations. Great work.

THANKING OUR RETURNING TROOPS

(Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Members, thank you, and to my colleagues again, let me acknowledge the wearing of the yellow ribbon in a bipartisan way to say thank you to our troops.

But I do want to thank as well, again, the Young Scholars Academy and Dr. Anella Coleman, who were so kind to make these ribbons and to learn about our appreciation for the work of our troops coming home from Iraq. Over 100,000 have come home in the last 14 months, and I'm asking our Members to go home and yellow-ribbon your offices and your community, and have signs on your marquee that say, Welcome home to the troops, a job well done.

We never want our troops to come home from any battlefield, called to serve their Nation, to a silent America. And again, as we've supported or promoted better conditions for family and troops, we were able yesterday to give them a 1.9 percent increase in salary.

Now, as we go home for the holiday season, doing our work, let us say thank you to our troops. Thank you, Members, for wearing a yellow ribbon today.

□ 1210

PUT AMERICANS BACK TO WORK

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, it's time for President Obama and HARRY REID's do-nothing Senate to work with House Republicans to get America back to work. To date, House Republicans have passed 28 jobs bills, most recently the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act, a bill that ensures all hardworking Americans keep more of their pay, protects Social Security, ensures access to medical care for seniors, and creates jobs.

But President Obama's contempt for job creation through energy development is astonishing. Why would he stand in the way of almost 200,000 new jobs that come with the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline that has bipartisan support? President Obama says he wants to put America back to work, but, at the same time, he threatens to veto a bill that would do exactly that and take us one step closer to energy independence.

The American people can't wait any longer. I urge the Senate and the President to act on measures that will spur job creation and real economic growth.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND). Members are reminded that remarks in debate may not engage in personality toward the Senate.

PASS THE JOBS ACT

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

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be here wearing this yellow ribbon to welcome home our troops from a job well done in Iraq. My thoughts go back to April of 1968 when I came back from Vietnam to a very different America, and I'm grateful that today our troops are coming back to a welcoming and thankful Nation.

In that vein, as we sit here today and think about the holiday season, the majority of us will be fortunate enough to spend this time being surrounded by family and friends; but we should never forget that, at the same time during this holiday season, there are many among us who are homeless, who are hungry, who are out of a job and simply do not know where their next meal will come from.

This should serve as an important reminder to all of us here as Members of Congress that we must work jointly in a bipartisan manner to address the critical issues of our time. It is simply unacceptable that partisan politics prevent us from working for what's best in this country.

THE ULTRALIGHT SMUGGLING PREVENTION ACT OF 2011

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

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, the House will soon have the opportunity to approve the Ultralight Smuggling Prevention Act of 2011. This bill will make changes for those using or planning to use ultralight aircraft in cross-border smuggling similar to those using other aircraft. It will also continue ongoing cooperation between the Department of Defense and Homeland Security that is enhancing efforts to combat illicit cross-border trafficking.

As pressure has been applied to the border, Mexican organized crime has turned to a new and innovative smuggling approach—the use of ultralight aircraft. It's a pressing concern.

A similar bill introduced by my colleague from Tucson was overwhelmingly approved by this body in the last Congress, and those provisions were included in standalone legislation that I introduced in this Congress.

I congratulate the Senate for having passed S. 1974. I appreciate cooperation on both sides of the aisle to get this important matter to the President's desk.

VACANT AND ABANDONED HOMES

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

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the large number of vacant and

abandoned homes in my district and across the Nation.

Remnants of the foreclosure crisis still linger everywhere. Home values plummeted during the country's economic crisis and have continued to decline year after year due to the blighted and abandoned homes. Nationally, nearly 4½ percent of mortgages are in foreclosure. More than a quarter of mortgage borrowers are underwater, and 11 percent of all homes are vacant.

City and State governments need our help. In the Cleveland area, 15,000 homes are vacant and in need of demolition. Demolishing these structures will cost approximately \$100 million.

Homeowners are depending on us to help stop the free-fall of their property values. It is time we develop and pass meaningful legislation that promotes the revitalization of our neighborhoods.

PICAYUNE 5A FOOTBALL STATE CHAMPIONS

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

Mr. PALAZZO. The city of Picayune might be small, but its legacy is one of strength and power. In the early 1900s, trains out of New Orleans stopped in Picayune to pick up steam engines to power them northwards and uphill. This vision of a powerful locomotive steaming ahead is a good metaphor for this year's Picayune High School Maroon Tide football team.

According to Head Coach Dodd Lee, people who really like what they do usually do it pretty well, and if that's the case, Coach Lee's players must really like playing great football.

In a 38-21 win over Starkville, the Maroon Tide clenched the 5A win, bringing Picayune its first State title since 1986.

Aside from the obvious desire to win on both sides of the ball, Picayune has some secret weapons on their team, namely: quarterback, Ben Hickman; leading rusher, Deronte Magee; receiver, Justin Mark; kicker, Dalton O'Meara; and a small but mighty pair of linebackers, Troy Egana and Cody Smith.

Congratulations to the city of Picayune and to Picayune High School on their State championship.

PROTECTING WORKERS' RIGHTS

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

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that my Republican colleagues really don't want to extend the payroll tax cuts and unemployment insurance. Republican Members have called it a gimmick. They've admitted the only reason they brought it up for a vote was that they didn't want to take the political heat for raising taxes on the

middle class. But instead of coming up with an honest compromise designed to actually pass, Republicans have filed a bill with provisions that wind up actually hurting the middle class and many still struggling in this slow economy.

Playing risky political games with our clean air, our clean water, raising Medicare premiums on seniors, that's not the way Americans expect us to govern, and designing a bill that can't pass is the type of political games that my Missouri constituents are fed up with. We need an honest bill now.

I call on my Republican colleagues to stop the obstruction, stop the distraction, stop the games. Let's pass a real payroll tax bill now.

WE MUST DO BETTER

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong objection to the animosity and gridlock that's been the overarching theme of this first session of the 112th Congress.

I make dozens of calls and similar personal contacts directly with my constituents every day, probably more than any other Member of Congress. These people live in the real world beyond the beltway environment in which too many public officials live and work, sheltered from reality, by communication primarily with each other in a self-created climate that bears little similarity to the rest of America.

In my years in public office, I have never heard the level of anger I hear today. Our approval ratings are in the tank, and they should be. We are gripped in gridlock because people on both sides of the aisle in both Chambers and in the White House are more concerned with politics than progress.

As our economy continues to stagger, our attention should be focused on putting people to work and providing a stability in public policy. We can only do that through cooperation, compromise, and civility.

My message to leadership and membership, including myself, in both Chambers is this: We have to do the business the people expect us to do, efficiently and in an adult-like manner. Anything less is both irresponsible and unacceptable. We can and we should do vastly better than what we are.

TAXES

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

Mr. BACA. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome our troops back; and as we welcome them back, let's make sure we take care of them while they're here in the United States as well and make their lives a lot better.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to stop showboating and get to work. If Congress does not act by the end of the year, 160

million Americans will face a tax hike next year and another 60 million people will lose unemployment benefits.

Failure to extend unemployment benefits has a real impact on men and women across every State, people like Norma Lopez from my district in Ontario. While Norma has been looking for work, her unemployment benefits have kept her from getting foreclosed and has helped her make car payments.

Unfortunately, the Republican proposal is full of poison pills and amendments that make the bill dead on arrival in the Senate. Republicans are asking seniors to pay more for Medicare and they're leaving the unemployed out in the cold, yet they refuse to ask millionaires and billionaires to pay their fair share.

Stop the political games. People's lives are hanging in the balance. They deserve help. Let's work together on a compromise bill that will help all of us.

□ 1220

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE WATCHING AND WAITING ON THE U.S. SENATE TO ACT

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

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, with the American people looking on, Members of the House, once again, find ourselves in a waiting position—waiting and waiting and waiting on Senator REID and his Democrat majority in the U.S. Senate as they decide whether they are going to let the government shut down tomorrow night at midnight; whether they are going to let tax relief for millions of Americans, middle class families, expire at the end of this month; whether they are going to let long-term unemployment benefits expire; and whether they are going to keep America's doctors from being hammered with a 27 percent increase on their Medicare reimbursement.

Mr. Speaker, the people's House is doing the people's work. As you know, we've passed 28 bills, all aimed at creating new American jobs. Sadly, all the majority on the other side of the Capitol seem able to do is poke sticks at what we've done, but they haven't offered a realistic option or passed a single thing.

Mr. Speaker, the clock is ticking, and the American people are watching and waiting on the Senate to act.

STEM EDUCATION

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

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, I believe that one of the keys to keeping our country globally competitive is to increase the number of American students who are prepared to pursue careers in science, engineering and technology. So it is with special pride that