

will fund our Nation's critical infrastructure priorities, fund green public transportation projects, and create real jobs. It's time that we all come together to put Americans back to work.

HONORING TOM HEBEL, RECIPIENT OF THE HERITAGE CONSERVANCY'S 2012 BUSINESS LEADER CONSERVATION AWARD

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

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Tom Hebel, who on April 19 will receive the Heritage Conservancy's 2012 Business Leader Conservation Award. Tom has been a supporter of the Heritage Conservancy's land and historic preservation mission for over 10 years, and all in Bucks County appreciate his efforts.

Upon graduating from Penn State University, Tom worked his way up to become the manager of a small landscaping contracting company called Royer Nurseries in 1981. With hard work and dedication, Tom helped the little Doylestown-based company expand by adding a garden shop, two hoop-style greenhouses, a plant sales yard, and a gravel parking lot. Tom acquired ownership of the business in 1993 and changed the name to Bucks Country Gardens. With innovative craftsmanship, the business rapidly expanded, and many claimed it to be "the best garden center and landscape design firm in Bucks County."

Today, the garden center totals approximately 24,000 square feet of enclosed space, and it occupies nearly 7 acres. It is home to a full-service lifestyle center and a landscape design firm. The company has provided top-of-the-line service to its customers and will continue to strive to achieve the best for its employees, all because of the work of Tom Hebel.

For the past 10 years, Tom has managed to use the wealth of his knowledge and resources to better the Bucks County community as a strong supporter and advocate of land preservation. Tom is a distinguished small business owner and a lifelong contributor to the beautification of Bucks County.

I congratulate Tom Hebel today on this well-deserved recognition, and I wish him many years of continued success.

GUN LAWS

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, all Americans, and I being one of them, hope for justice in the Trayvon Martin case; but I stand here today because we must stop stacking the deck against all innocent Americans.

Over 10,000 Americans died a preventable death by gun violence last year—10,000. And over 2,000 of those, Mr.

Speaker, were children. Many of those children were inner-city youth, and many of the victims died at the hands of inner-city perpetrators.

Trayvon Martin's case is a little different, but it is another sad addition to these statistics which are very tragic. But his case caught the attention of the American people and it illuminates problems in our society. This is indeed, ladies and gentlemen, a teachable moment. The Martin family's fight for basic justice has been delayed by Florida's "shoot first and ask questions later" law which, incidentally, is misnamed as the "stand your ground law," and it grants criminal and civil immunity regardless of the facts when individuals take the law into their own hands. We call this "vigilante-ism" or "vigilantism."

Florida's law, like so many similar laws in 25, ladies and gentlemen, of the 50 States, was the result of collusion by some of the Nation's wealthiest corporations in conjunction with the National Rifle Association through a secretive networking organization called the American Legislative Exchange Council, also known as ALEC.

ALEC promotes model legislation written by its corporate members and disseminated to conservative State lawmakers around the country. The public whose votes elect these lawmakers to represent them are kept in the dark about the fact that their Representative is a member of this network of special interest groups and of corporate interest that wine, dine, and support these lawmakers' campaigns with campaign contributions. Any lawmaker who is a member of the group can log on to its Web site—and I would encourage you to do so, too—and if you're a member, you can find hundreds of model bills to copy and introduce in your legislature.

The public, however, is not able to access that information because you must be a member; and in order to be a member, you've got to go through some kind of a screening process so they can make sure that you are of like mind because they don't want any infiltrators in there. They want to keep the business secret.

□ 1110

Membership fees for legislators are very small, \$50 a year, whereas the corporate members have to pay tens of thousands of dollars per year for their memberships. These memberships are mostly big-lobby interest groups, big corporate-lobby interest groups, and what they do when they get into these meetings that they hold at exclusive resort locations, luxurious amenities, wining and dining these legislators, they spoon-feed them legislation which supports their, the businesses, interests.

Now, 60 percent of the legislators in the United States of America, on a State level, secretly belong to ALEC. They are members of that network. Thousands of these ALEC bills have

been introduced around the country and many of them have passed. This gives the ALEC members secret and persuasive influence over our legislators, whom we elect to represent us.

The Florida Shoot First, or, in other words, Stand Your Ground is what it's called, but it's actually the Shoot First law, was written by an NRA, National Rifle Association, lobbyist in one of those committees that the bought-and-paid-for legislators are members of.

I will have further comment on this as the days go by. But the American public needs to be educated about this, and so we will talk further about it.

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 11 o'clock and 12 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

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

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: God of the universe, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

We thank You for this proud day for all Americans and for the human race, when the space shuttle Discovery passed through the Capital's restricted air space for so many to appreciate, with awe, the symbol of our Nation's ability to achieve great things when our will is harnessed.

May that national will once again coalesce within the walls of this great Assembly. We are humbled by the enormity of this task and know well the difficulty of its attainment. Bless abundantly the Members of this people's House, with wisdom and grace, and perhaps heroism, that what is most needed by our Nation would emerge in the business of the House, and the energies that divide would be dissipated.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

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 gentlewoman from California (Ms. HAHN)

come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. HAHN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

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

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF BETTY ROSE STAIR PATCHELL

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

Mr. CRAWFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Betty Rose Stair Patchell. Betty's memory will continue to live on with her beloved family and friends.

Betty was married to Jack Daves Patchell for over 45 years. Together they had three children: George, Jacque, and Mark. Betty was a devoted mother, grandmother of four, and great-grandmother of 10.

Betty began her 50-year career as organist, at the age of 15, for the First Baptist Church of Heber Springs, Arkansas. She was an accomplished pianist and a member of the National Guild of Piano Teachers. Over the years, Betty served countless organizations as an accompanist.

Betty had a love for the arts, as well, as an oil and water color painter. She also loved to garden. Betty was an avid golfer, and for over 20 years she assisted pro golfers in the annual Shell Open Golf Tournament.

My thoughts and prayers are with Betty's family. While her presence here on Earth will be missed, her example will be a guide for her family and friends.

God bless Betty Rose Stair Patchell, and God bless her family.

TAX DAY

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

Mr. KUCINICH. On tax day, remember the ramifications of waging wars abroad.

In 2011, 39 percent of our income tax dollars went to the Pentagon and war, only 9 percent for trade, commerce, education, and employment programs. The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation estimates the war in Iraq and Afghanistan cost the average American family of four almost \$13,000 in 2011 alone.

National unemployment rates continue to be between 9 and 10 percent, while our families struggle to pay their mortgages, send their kids to school, and feed their families. Compared to the approximately \$159 billion budgeted in fiscal year 2011 for wars, the \$6

billion Congress budgeted for the Workforce Investment Act, primary Federal programs supporting workforce development, is paltry.

We have nearly 23 million Americans either unemployed or underemployed and about 5.5 million who have been unemployed for 27 weeks or more. Wake up, America. Wars are ruining our economy. On tax day, remember our government has a responsibility to use our money wisely, not to waste hard-earned tax dollars on unnecessary wars.

The answer to war and economic decline is peace and prosperity.

DOMESTIC OIL PRODUCTION

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

Mr. BUCSHON. I recently conducted a survey on my Web site regarding gas prices because I wanted to hear directly from my constituents how higher gas prices are affecting their lives, and I received over 880 responses.

Henry, from Odon, Indiana, told me he owned a car wash, and when people are paying \$40 extra for gas, they aren't paying for a car wash, affecting his small business and his employees.

Rob, from Lynnville, Indiana, lives in a rural part of the State. He and his wife are forced to drive over 30 miles to get to work. A \$1 increase per gallon of gas can cost them up to \$2,000 extra per year.

An overwhelming majority of responders believe we should expand our domestic oil production and become more energy independent. After paying \$3.91 per gallon in Evansville, Indiana, last week, I agree.

Since President Obama has taken office in January 2009, domestic oil production has decreased by 7 percent on Federal lands. In January 2009, gas was \$1.83 per gallon. It's an average of \$3.86 per gallon today. Under this administration, they have risen over 100 percent, the highest for any President.

I urge the President and the Senate to act on the nine bills the House has passed to reduce energy costs and help reduce gas prices for all Americans.

BUDGET

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

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, before we left 2 weeks ago, my Republican friends attempted to enact their budget, a budget that would have ended Medicare as we know it, shifting costs to seniors and raising their health care costs by \$6,000 a year; a budget that would cut taxes for the wealthiest Americans and multinational corporations by \$4.6 trillion; a budget that would slash Medicaid, food stamps, and Pell Grants for students. Thankfully, the Senate has said "no."

Now, instead of reaching across the aisle and instead of working with us to

pass bipartisan transportation and jobs legislation, Republicans are pushing legislation to allow the importation of animal remains. Yes, that's how we're spending our valuable time today, considering laws to allow hunters to bring back polar bear heads. Really?

I will vote, again, against this budget, and I ask my Republican friends to let go of their tricks, concentrate on what's important, and work with us to create jobs.

BUFFETT RULE TARGETS SMALL BUSINESSES

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the President's proposal of the Buffett rule tax increase is just another political gimmick, rejected by the Senate, which is targeted at small business owners. With our Nation's record unemployment rate of over 8 percent throughout the last 3 years, it is clear the President's policies are destroying jobs and chilling economic growth.

In last week's Washington Post, Charles Krauthammer wrote:

The Buffett Rule is nothing but a form of redistributionism that has vanishingly little to do with debt reduction and everything to do with reelection.

The President is using the Buffett rule tax increase as a way to distract Americans from focusing on his failure to implement policies that will create jobs. House Republicans remain focused on reducing barriers that are discouraging job creation.

I urge my colleagues in the Senate and the President to put party politics aside and work with House Republicans to enact policies that will help create jobs for American families.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

□ 1210

GOP BUDGET AND MEDICARE

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

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, today the House will vote on a rule that once again moves forward the misguided Republican budget. The American people cannot afford this misguided budget which devastates seniors and working families. The Republican budget ends Medicare guarantee, shifting health costs to our seniors. That's a no-no. It turns Medicare into a private voucher system. That's a no-no. It increases prescription drugs for America's seniors.

The American people deserve better than to be left out in the cold with cuts to Medicare, SNAP, and our educational programs. After a long life of service to our Nation, our seniors deserve a strong safety net. Let's stop