

HENNEPIN HEALTH

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

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, the rising cost of health care is one of the most difficult policy decisions and budget challenges that we face as a Nation. The problem will continue to grow unless we act.

Rather than cutting care for the most vulnerable, however, we must develop smart ways to contain costs. A great example of this type of innovative approach is something that I'm proud to describe for you, and it is happening in my district. The program is called Hennepin Health program, and it is in Hennepin County, Minnesota. It is run by Hennepin County, and it integrates care for individuals with the highest need. Low-income, poor individuals needing health care can be very expensive to treat because they end up going to the emergency room, as they don't have a regular care provider, and yet the Hennepin Health adjusts to this situation and treats them on a cost-effective basis.

These individuals often face many challenges such as chemical dependency, chronic illnesses like diabetes and others, and unstable housing. Hennepin Health tries to identify the holistic needs of the individual, whether those needs happen to be medical care, housing, mental health treatment, or finding a job.

Here are a couple of individuals who this innovative program has already helped. A 50-year-old Native American man from my district is chronically homeless and suffers from hepatitis C. He used the emergency room as his primary medical care, but this was only because he didn't have transportation to a clinic. He was entitled to a free bus pass, but didn't have an address to receive it. Hennepin Health connected him with a social worker to pick up his bus tickets, and now he is able to see a clinic for his health care, keeping him out of the emergency room, which is, of course, the most expensive type of care and which you can't be rejected from for good reason, because it would be inhumane to do so.

The program has also helped an African American man in my district who has had a history of heart disease, kidney disease, and homelessness. Hennepin Health was able to connect him to housing providers, which helped him to stay out of the emergency room as well. He is now able to get all of his medical and mental health needs addressed at a health care home.

These are great success stories, people who are low income, who have serious health challenges, who don't have any health care, and so they seek the health care of last resort, the emergency room, which happens to be very expensive to treat them at. This is not the most effective way nor the most compassionate way to treat them. On-going regular treatment from a provider is what is needed. Hennepin

Health has saved money, and more importantly has helped people, members of our society, Americans, get their health care needs met.

As some cities have found, 1 percent of the individuals in a safety net program can often account for up to a third of the cost because of this problem of ending up at the emergency room. By coordinating care for high-need individuals, health care programs can greatly reduce costs while also providing better care.

While Hennepin Health program is new, it is extremely promising and has already demonstrated it can be a model for the Nation. I might add, Mr. Speaker, this is government, yes, government, delivering good service by being affordable, low cost, and smart. Chalk one up for the American taxpayer and people who are in chronic need of health care.

Mr. Speaker, Hennepin Health is a good idea. I'm proud of it.

□ 1030

SMART SECURITY: BETTER INVESTMENTS AND GREATER RETURNS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, yesterday Americans filed their tax returns, sending the Federal Treasury funds for the government to perform vital functions. Unfortunately, much of that money, way too much of that money, continues to be wasted on a policy that has failed miserably.

I'm talking about a policy that has lost the confidence of the American people whose taxes support it, a policy that has cost nearly 2,000 American lives, a policy that has done more to undermine our national security goals than is done to make our Nation safer. Of course, I'm talking about the war in Afghanistan.

This past weekend brought yet more evidence that our continued military presence in Afghanistan, carrying a price tag of roughly \$10 billion a month, is stirring up unrest and emboldening insurgents rather than providing security and stability. Beginning this last Sunday, the Taliban launched a series of bold, coordinated, and simultaneous attacks throughout Afghanistan, hitting the parliament building and diplomatic sites throughout the country.

Thankfully, there were limited casualties. By many accounts, the Afghan security forces handled themselves with skill in response to the violence, which is very good news, because as the Afghans are better able to police and protect themselves, that's all the more reason to hasten our military withdrawal from Afghanistan. Every day that we continue our military occupation, Mr. Speaker, is another day that we breed resentment, that we inflame

tensions and create more impassioned enemies.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are writing the check for this war. In fact, they just sent in their annual check this week. They deserve a better return on that investment. They deserve a set of policies that are more humane, more consistent with our best values as a Nation, and more likely to advance our national security objectives.

They deserve the kind of SMART Security approach I have been talking about for many years now. Instead of invasions and warfare, we need diplomacy, we need multilateral cooperation. Instead of military surges, we need civilian surges. Instead of troops with guns, we need to send humanitarian experts, experts that can help Afghanistan and other developing countries fight poverty, rebuild their infrastructure, educate their people and so much more.

Listen to this quote, Mr. Speaker:

In today's ever-complex world, we must use all the tools of national security to achieve our objectives, including a strong State Department and other civilian-led agencies. Development and diplomacy keep us safe by addressing threats in the most dangerous corners of the world and by preventing conflicts before they occur.

That's an excellent explanation of SMART Security, but that's not LYNN WOOLSEY, and it's not the Out of Afghanistan Caucus talking. It's from a letter to Congress signed by 80 retired military leaders making the case not to cut USAID and arguing for a strong, international affairs budget.

The time is now, not in 2014, Mr. Speaker. The time is now to bring our brave troops home to implement the compassionate and cost-effective SMART Security agenda that can keep our Nation safe, and it can keep peace in the world.

AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGE COUNCIL

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke about a secret organization called ALEC, also known as the American Legislative Exchange Council.

I talked yesterday about how 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 member is a member of ALEC. The legislative member goes on various retreats and junkets. The ALEC corporate members paid tens of thousands of dollars a year to be members, whereas the legislators pay \$50 a year.

You can see the imbalance there. This is something that is funded by the corporations' special interests. The

lawmakers, just to make it look good, have to pay \$50 annually to join.

We don't know who those lawmakers are, although we do know that 60 percent of the lawmakers in the entire United States of America are members of ALEC. The taxpayers are probably the ones who pay the annual membership fee with which the members are then connected to corporate interests by way of ALEC committees, and these committees produce the model legislation that is then introduced by these same member legislators in their respective legislatures.

That was the way that the so-called Stand Your Ground law—but it's really a “shoot first, ask questions later” bill—began. That's how it started in Florida. It was an ALEC-produced bill. It has now spread to one-half of the States in the United States of America. Twenty-five States have adopted similar laws despite the fact that self-defense has always been a defense available to people who find themselves in that situation.

But the reason why they did this is because they wanted to produce more handgun sales. It's nothing but about money. The NRA and the corporations that sell firearms through the retail outlets across the Nation are benefiting, but we have people dying in the streets because of these weapons.

Now that is one question. There is another committee that has been set up by ALEC, and it deals with the private prison industry. Mr. Speaker, the United States imprisons more than any other nation in the world. We currently incarcerate approximately 2.3 million people.

America's high incarceration rate is not fitting for a Nation which is routinely touted as the greatest in the world. Although high incarceration rates hurt the United States as a whole, it definitely benefits the private prison industry. In 2010, the two largest private prison companies, CCA and the GEO Group, received nearly \$3 billion in revenue that's taxpayer money.

The for-profit prison industry is driven by the corporate members of the American Legislative Exchange Council, ALEC. ALEC is a secretive organization that has advocated for harsh sentencing and detention laws that lead to mass incarceration. It provides State legislators with model legislation, and each year ALEC members introduce these bills in State houses across the country. This gives unparalleled access and authority to ALEC's corporate and legislative members, undermining the will of the people and the power of the ballot box. Private prisons have vested interests in maintaining and maximizing their profits.

□ 1040

They are not concerned about public safety or rehabilitation or reducing recidivism. Those principles directly conflict with their bottom line and mantra, which is more prisoners and more money.

Mr. Speaker, I will again be back to continue to discuss this issue. I discussed it yesterday. Today is another day. I think the American people need to know what is going on in the politics of America. If we don't do something, we are all at risk for losing the rights that we as citizens are supposed to possess: government of, by, and for the people—not for special interests.

ADDRESSING FAILED ADMINISTRATION POLICIES

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

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, the failed policies of the Obama administration continue to drag down the economy. The policies of stimulus programs, bailouts, crony capitalism, the Department of Justice investigating only what they choose worthy to be enforced, bowing to Saudi kings, going to China hat in hand asking for more money have brought down the economy.

Indeed, the unemployment rate, which the administration says is 8.2 percent, that's not accurate at all. They simply got it down that low by omitting a whole lot of unemployed people from the unemployment category. There's about 4 million people who have given up looking for a job, and the Obama administration doesn't even consider them as being unemployed.

In my opinion, there are four things we can do to address this, and we need to do it on a bipartisan basis. I have reached out to the White House. I will continue to. And even in an election year, it's far more important to put America first and party second.

The first thing we need to do is pass a budget. Right now, the national debt is over 100 percent of the gross domestic product, a \$15 trillion national debt and a \$15 trillion economy. Indeed, we are on the road to Greece. For every dollar we spend, 40 cents is borrowed.

The United States Senate, under HARRY REID, has not passed a budget in 3 years. That is the constitutional duty of the legislative branch of government. The House has done so. The House passes a budget. We had a great debate 2 weeks ago. We had a budget offered by the Democrats, one offered by the Progressive Caucus, one offered by the Congressional Black Caucus, one offered by the most conservative caucus, one offered by the Ryan Budget Committee. We had a great debate, and we passed a budget.

Now, the Senate doesn't like that. I understand that. Footnote: we even offered the President's budget, which increases the debt \$1.2 trillion—another \$1.2 trillion—and not a single vote from NANCY PELOSI to JOHN BOEHNER, not one vote for the President's budget. The same thing happened in the Senate last year.

But I understand the Senate doesn't like our budget. They don't like the

President's budget. But where is your budget? You have got to pass it. And if you would pass a budget in the U.S. Senate, we can hammer out our differences between the House and Senate. Indeed, both parties will have to give; both bodies will compromise. That's always been the case. But it would send a huge international signal that America, the economic leader of the world, is serious about getting our hands on our debt. We are leading the way instead of falling to the demise of Greece, Spain, Portugal, and so many of the other troubled countries.

So the first thing we need to do to change our economy around is to pass a budget.

The second thing to do is to look at regulatory burden, which is stifling new jobs, and instead of government bureaucracies going to the small businesses with this “I gotcha” attitude—we know you hate people; we know you hate consumers; we know you want to pollute the air; we know you want to poison the food—maybe the Federal Government regulatory agencies should go into the small businesses and say: We recognize what you're doing right; we want to encourage it. And where you're doing wrong, we're going to discourage it; and if you don't address it, we will fine you. But don't go to every business in America assuming they're guilty of something besides creating jobs and delivering goods and services to people.

So we need to ease up and find the balance in the regulatory burden.

Thirdly, we need to drill our own oil, and we need to encourage the new technologies of horizontal drilling, fracking, and all the great promises that are out there. We need to look at the example of Williston, North Dakota, which has brought its oil production from 200,000 barrels to 600,000 barrels in less than a year's period of time. Indeed, America could perhaps become an energy exporter. Not only would that be an economic boon, but the national security advantage of it would be an unbelievable sea change in the world stability today.

Fourth and final, we need to have tax simplification. How many Americans within the sound of my voice fill out their own tax return? More and more people are turning to accountants and lawyers to figure out what the heck we owe Uncle Sam every April 15. And when you pay an accountant \$300 or \$400 or \$500 or \$1,000 to figure out what you owe Uncle Sam, that's a tax in itself. Businesses spend lots of time avoiding taxes. We need a tax system that's certain, that's clear, that's concise and fair so that everybody understands it and everybody pays their fair share. Indeed, tax simplification would help turn the economy around.

So, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, Democrats and Republicans have the moment right now to change the economic direction of America by passing a good, solid budget; by having balanced regulatory reform; drilling our