

Mr. PALAZZO. Mr. Speaker, 2 years ago this Friday, the Deepwater Horizon explosion took the lives of 11 Americans, including four Mississippians, and caused an oil spill of epic proportions. For 86 days, millions of barrels of oil gushed into the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, washed up on gulf coast beaches, and threatened the ecosystems and the economic stability of an entire region of the country.

The images of oil gushing into the Gulf of Mexico, wildlife coated in crude, and tar balls washing up on beaches have long vanished from the national media spotlight, but the spill left lasting effects on the lives of gulf coast residents and businesses.

I ask my colleagues to take a moment this week to pause to remember the lives lost and the millions affected by this tragedy. I urge them to show their support once more to all those affected by the single largest manmade disaster in our history by voting "yes" for today's bill.

Restoring and replenishing the gulf coast is more than just a responsible decision; it's the right thing to do.

HONORING SERGEANT DENNIS WEICHEL

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

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Sergeant Dennis Weichel, Jr., of the Rhode Island National Guard. Last month, while serving our country in Afghanistan, Sergeant Weichel saved a young Afghan child who had crawled underneath a moving armored vehicle in order to collect a brass shell casing. Responding quickly, Sergeant Weichel moved the child to safety, even though doing so placed him in the path of the same armored vehicle and took his life. Sergeant Weichel is an American hero who gave his life to protect a child he did not even know.

Rhode Islanders are often reminded that we come from the smallest State in the Union, but today, Sergeant Dennis Weichel's actions have touched our entire Nation and are an example of the sacrifices made every day by our brave men and women in uniform.

My thoughts and prayers go out to his mother, Linda; his father Dennis, Sr.; his fiancée, Ashley; and his three children.

THE SMALL BUSINESS TAX CUT ACT

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

Mr. BROWN of Georgia. I rise today in strong support of H.R. 9, the Small Business Tax Cut Act.

In my home State of Georgia, there are more than 150,000 small businesses which employ over 1.5 million people. These are the folks that tell me every

day when I come home that a tax break would allow them to hire more employees. Consider this: between 2005 and 2008, more than 130,000 new jobs were created by small businesses in Georgia. But under the current administration, in just 1 short year, Georgia's small businesses have had to let go nearly all of those jobs. That's a crushing 120,000 people out of work because of the Obama administration's policies.

Democrats somehow think that they can solve our unemployment crisis by raising taxes. But job creators know that the only way that they can put people back to work is if they have more money to hire folks. That's why I support H.R. 9 and also why I introduced my JOBS Act, H.R. 660, which would lower taxes for everybody. I urge my colleagues to support both bills.

REMOVING THE PEOPLE'S MUJAHEDIN ORGANIZATION OF IRAN FROM THE FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION LIST

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

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge that the MEK be removed from the U.S. Department of State's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Since its listing in 1997, the MEK has denounced violence and provided valuable intelligence on the Iranian regime, yet they remain on our terrorist list.

Even important allies acknowledge that the MEK no longer poses a terrorist threat. In 2009, the United Kingdom and the European Union removed the group from their lists. The unjust listing has been considered by the U.S. courts, but the Department of State continues to drag its feet regarding the delisting.

In July 2010, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit criticized the Department of State's designation of the MEK as a terrorist organization since the group's due process rights had been violated, and the Department of State has yet to provide specific information demonstrating why the group is a terrorist threat today.

The battle over delisting the MEK has gone on far too long with far too little evidence. I urge my colleagues to follow me in calling for the immediate delisting of the MEK by the Department of State.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

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

Ms. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, last week, one of our colleagues who represents a portion of my alma mater, Wake Forest University, stated that she has "little tolerance" for those who graduate with high student loan debt, based on her personal experience of working her way through school.

I want to share my personal experience. I come from a military family of six children. My father served nearly 30 years. My parents, like many across this country, couldn't afford to pay for all of my college education. But they knew that a college education was our way to achieve the American Dream. And so I had to take out student loans in addition to scholarships and work. I took out nearly \$100,000 in student loans from undergraduate school to graduate school, and I borrowed that. I only paid off my last student loan payment 1 month before my primary election in 2008. I was struggling as a single mother and meeting my other responsibilities, but I was thrilled when I made that last payment.

Contrary to what's been said about those who take out student loans to finance their education, I'm glad the Federal Government now directly issues all student loans rather than through private banks.

Comments that disparage college students and would deprive middle class families like mine to live their American Dream are just out of touch with what's happening across this country and minimize the lengths to which Americans seek higher education to better themselves and their families.

The rungs of the ladders of opportunity must be stable and available to all of us—the Federal student loan program, Pell Grants, work study, private scholarships, and, yes, work all provide the package that so many of our students need for college success.

THE REPUBLICAN BUDGET AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

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

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Let's talk about who wins and loses in the Ryan Republican budget. If you're a millionaire hedge fund manager, this budget is made for you. You get an average tax cut—cut—of \$394,000. If you're a senior citizen woman living on a median income of \$22,000, sorry, you're out of luck.

The Republican budget repeals ObamaCare so you pay more for prescription drugs and preventive services. It takes away your Medicare guarantee and increases your costs. It changes Medicaid to a block grant, meaning you may be on your own if you need long-term care services. And the Republican budget even cuts the Older Americans Act services like Meals on Wheels.

Older women and men shouldn't have to sacrifice so that millionaire hedge fund managers can become even richer. Under the Democratic budget, they don't have to.

THE REPUBLICAN BUDGET

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, budgets are about values and require elected decisionmakers to balance the needs of our constituents with fiscal responsibility.

The Republican Ryan budget this Chamber deemed adopted yesterday is in no way a reflection of the American values that have shaped this Nation. The Republican budget would turn back the clock more than a century to a time when social Darwinism—survival of the fittest—was, in fact, the norm.

Through the leadership of people like Republican Teddy Roosevelt, our Nation began to realize the value in tending to the needs of the poor, the sick, the working poor, the elderly, our children and women. The Republican budget would again put us at risk by making seniors experience a slashing of Medicare and increasing their out-of-pocket costs, and it would further line the pockets of the rich at the expense of the downtrodden among us.

The cuts in discretionary spending put forth by the Republican budget would further set our students behind and create a drag on the economy by disinvesting in research and infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, these are not American values.

BIRTH CONTROL AND MINORITY COMMUNITIES

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

Ms. CHU. For women of color, access to birth control can mean the difference between life or death. Without birth control, they face more reproductive cancers, more unintended pregnancies, and more sexually transmitted infections. And because many times they can't afford to pay for health care, such diseases have a more disproportionate effect.

Without affordable health care—and birth control being part of that health care—women's health is at risk. In fact, birth control pills prevent 200,000 ovarian deaths and 100,000 deaths overall for women. Without birth control being covered, out-of-pocket costs for women and their health care needs can be up to \$600 per year. It's like a tax on women. That's not fair.

That's why I support President Obama's decision that birth control should be part of all health care plans. Women do not have to be second-class citizens.

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STOP STUDENT LOAN INTEREST RATES FROM DOUBLING

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

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to sound a warning: college could become even more expensive.

While it's true that a recent report from the College Savings Plan Network put the value of a 4-year degree at \$570,000 more than a high school education would provide over a lifetime of work, paying for loans to go to school is a ticking timebomb.

On July 1, federally subsidized student loan interest rates will double for low- and middle-income families from 3.4 percent to, yes, 6.8 percent. About 8 million students nationwide will be affected by this change. For a student that takes out \$23,000 in loans over the course of a 4-year degree, this would mean paying back an additional \$11,000 over a 20-year payback period.

But it doesn't have to be this way. This body can act. It can act before July 1 to stop interest rates from doubling.

I stand here today to urge action to stop student loan interest rates from doubling overnight. Our Nation's young people face enough hurdles that range from student debt to finding a job to starting a career. They shouldn't have to worry about this body adding to the list.

JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, roughly 120,000 jobs were added to the economy in March, marking the 25th consecutive month of increased private sector employment.

In 2 years, American businesses have created 4.1 million jobs. Just last month, the unemployment rate was down to 8.2 percent. While the stimulus bill enacted in 2009 aided in the recovery, there is still much more that this Congress can do to close the employment gap. Instead, Republicans in Congress have insisted on either blocking Democratic job creation proposals entirely or aggressively pursuing legislation that concentrates on special interests and the superwealthy.

Mr. Speaker, as long as millions of Americans continue to struggle, we have the responsibility to engage in a meaningful way that will get our economy back on track.

WOMEN'S HEALTH WEDNESDAY

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

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, first let me just thank Congresswoman CHU and our colleagues for standing up for women's health today.

Between 2009 and 2010, the United States teen birthrate saw a record 9 percent decrease to 34 births per 1,000. This decrease is due in large part to increased contraceptives use in addition to sex education. Yet even as African American and Latina teens saw large birthrate decreases of 9 and 12 percent, respectively—and we know it's also

true for Asian and Pacific American women—all three communities still experience much higher rates of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases and infections than white teens.

The reality is not much better for African American women, who, like teens, experience more than double the unintended pregnancy rate of white women. This is unacceptable.

Unintended pregnancy has a very real public health impact, not to mention the increased economic burden on families who are not able to adequately plan for their children. That is why access to affordable birth control is so very important for minority women.

HEALTH CARE DISCRIMINATION

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

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I'm sick of women getting the short end of the stick. On the whole, women earn less than men for the exact same jobs. In fact, compared to men, women basically work for free 3.5 months of the year since we only make 77 cents for every dollar earned by a man.

But here's something that's not free—health care for women. We pay \$1 billion more a year in health insurance premiums than men. That's astounding. And it's not because "the fairer sex" is less healthy than men. In the individual market, a woman, 40 years old, nonsmoking, in Kentucky, actually pays more for her health insurance than a 40-year-old man who does smoke. Even among 30-year-olds in Chicago, women are paying over 30 percent more for health insurance than men of the same age. In South Dakota, a 40-year-old woman pays \$1,200 more than a 40-year-old man for the exact same coverage.

The fact is, women are at the mercy of the vast majority of insurance companies which charge us significantly more than men, even with maternity coverage excluded.

Gender Rating in the individual market is wrong and must end.

And if you want maternity coverage? Forget it.

How's this for family values?

For women who do want maternity coverage in the individual market it's an uphill battle to find it and an even greater challenge to pay for it.

Maternity coverage is only covered by 6 percent of insurance companies unless it is mandated by the state. And the cost can be astronomical. Deductibles could be as high as \$10,000.

Some companies offer special maternity coverage riders. In Kansas a rider could cost over \$1600 a month—well over the cost of a normal health insurance premium.

And some of the riders require long waiting periods before the coverage goes into effect.

Insurance companies call being a woman a pre-existing condition.

And they get away with charging women more for the same coverage as men unless there are laws in place to prevent Gender Rating.