

to those who sell and service, to the people who operate, and, yes, the customers of America's fleet of trucks. Everybody benefits, and we end up with a highway trust fund that is more stable and predictable over time.

I sincerely hope that this is a provision that can find its way into law this year, maybe as early as the transportation conference committee, or in the elaborate dance that will surround the treatment of the expiring tax provisions later this year. Whatever the legislative vehicle, we ought to make the vehicles in America's fleet less expensive and more efficient.

NATIONAL TEACHER DAY

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

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in celebration of National Teacher Day and to say thank you to the many who dedicate themselves to the education of our children. I suspect there's not a person in this body that can't think back to a teacher who made a significant difference in their lives.

I call attention, as well, to two particularly well-performing schools in my district. Just the other day, I had an opportunity to visit one of them, the Rose Tree Elementary School in Media. The other is the Coebourn Elementary School in Brookhaven. Both of those schools have been recognized because they have been named National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2011.

Yesterday, while visiting the Rose Tree Elementary School and talking with the children and the bright faces, the attention from the kids really riveted me because they were really listening. I spoke with the amazing educators, staff, and students at this Blue Ribbon ceremony.

Now, the Blue Ribbon is one of the most prestigious awards our Nation gives for educational excellence, and Rose Tree Elementary is certainly most deserving. The Rose Tree students have attained 100 percent proficiency in science for 3 consecutive years. I got a chance to visit some of the classrooms and to watch and to see how they engage the children, not just in the science but, once again, develop the creativity so that the kids were using the lessons that they learned in practical ways.

In 2010, the school was also ranked number one in Pennsylvania in writing. I want to focus on that as much too because I was impressed not just by the reading level, but the fact that the students were listening, comprehending, and then re-expressing themselves. The skills developed at that level are going to last a lifetime.

The school is led by Karen Daugherty, one of seven principals in the entire country to receive national recognition for her commitment to educating children by overcoming chal-

lenging circumstances. I commend Ms. Daugherty and all of the 2011 Terrel H. Bell Award recipients.

I encourage the communities of Brookhaven and Media to join me in recognition of their Blue Ribbon schools. And further, Mr. Speaker, I call on all Americans to take some time today to thank a teacher for making a difference in their lives.

□ 1010

REPUBLICAN RECONCILIATION RUSE

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, America has always been a nation of diverse cultures, but when faced with disasters, we come together in recognition of our shared values. From World War II to 9/11 to Hurricane Katrina, Americans came together when needed.

That's why it's so sad to see House Republicans draft a budget reconciliation bill that carries dangerous implications for millions of Americans and will fundamentally erode our shared values.

Of course, this is nothing more than political theater because authorization for budget reconciliation has to pass both the House and Senate, which it hasn't. But that hasn't stopped the House Republican majority from trying to deem it to be so. Therefore, the Republican majority has directed six House committees to use this reconciliation ruse to find drastic and damaging investment cuts, not to reduce the deficit, mind you, but to prevent any cut in military spending which they originally agreed to and to give the richest 1 percent yet another big tax cut.

Last year, Congress agreed, in a bipartisan fashion, after the majority brought us to the brink of default, to cut \$2.1 trillion from Federal deficits, establishing automatic cuts designed to be universally painful to encourage us to reach an agreement on a long-term deficit reduction proposal that more equitably spreads the burden.

A bipartisan majority of the supercommittee, including every Senate Republican, did come up with just such a plan to put everything on the table—spending cuts, revenue increases, entitlement reform—but it needed a supermajority; and, sadly, every Republican House Member on that committee voted “no,” which leaves us where we are today: facing damaging automatic cuts to defense and nondefense spending.

But Republican reconciliation ruses won't stop the automatic cuts to the Nation's seniors and disadvantaged. It doubles down on the pain.

The Republican reconciliation ruse literally takes food out of the mouths of needy children and senior citizens. It eliminates social services block grants

providing assistance to States and localities across the Nation to serve millions of disadvantaged Americans. It ends the Meals on Wheels program for 1.7 million seniors. It guts the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps, that serves 46 million of our fellow Americans every month. Under their plan, 1.8 million people would lose the most basic of assistance. In addition, 300,000 low-income children lose their free and reduced lunches at school.

This reconciliation ruse once again singles out Federal employees for ever more sacrifices. Federal workers already have contributed \$60 billion to deficit reduction through a 2-year pay freeze. They've contributed another \$15 billion through recent changes to their retirement system. The Ryan budget demands an additional 3-year pay freeze. The new proposal goes further and cuts paychecks by 5 percent to shift more of the burden to employees. This draconian measure would add another \$79.8 billion in the sacrifice put on the backs of Federal workers, more than double the \$75 billion they've already made.

The reconciliation ruse actually will increase health care costs for millions of American families. It eliminates tax credits that help lower-income families maintain affordable health insurance premiums. In fact, 350,000 people will actually lose their health insurance with their plan.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the one glaring omission in the Republican reconciliation ruse is, not surprisingly, revenue. While millions of lower- and middle-income families are being forced to sacrifice, what do Republicans ask of the wealthiest 1 percent? Nothing.

Over the last 4 years, oil and gas companies made a profit of \$290 billion. Private companies should make profits, and it's a good thing. But in that same time frame, they lobbied to keep their \$16 billion in tax breaks, representing less than 6 percent of their profits, but it sure would make sure a lot of hungry kids go to bed with full bellies at night.

The Ryan budget actually seeks to cut the top income tax bracket from 35 percent to 25 percent. Who pays the current top tax bracket? Those making more than \$388,000 each year. Not only are they not asked to join in any of the shared sacrifice, but they're actually offered a new Christmas present early, just for them.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to call the Republican budget plan what it is: an outright attack on American values. How else do you explain shifting the burden from partisan priorities entirely to the middle class and those who are less fortunate? That's never been an American value.

I urge my colleagues to reject this ruse, to reject the reconciliation process, and to work toward a comprehensive and responsible and bipartisan deficit agreement reflective of our Nation's values.

YUCCA MOUNTAIN NUCLEAR WASTE DISPOSAL SITE

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, before I talk about Yucca Mountain, let me just respond to my colleague from Virginia.

Since 2002, food stamps have increased 267 percent, and this reconciliation bill will cut, I think, about 3 percent. Again, since 2002, food stamps have increased 267 percent.

The Senate has not passed a budget in 3 years, so it's very difficult to admonish the House on the budget process when the Senate still has yet to pass a budget.

And what we're really concerned about is the hollowing out of our military force. If the sequestration goes on as planned, we'll have the smallest Air Force in the history of this country that we've ever seen before the Air Force was enacted, the smallest Navy since, I believe, 1915, and a huge decrease in our standing force. That's what the debate is about, and I look forward to having that chance on the floor.

As the chairman of the Environment and the Economy Subcommittee, one of my jurisdictional responsibilities is high-level nuclear waste. I've come to the floor numerous times to explain to you, Mr. Speaker, the various locations that we store high-level nuclear waste and compare it to where, by law, we should.

By law, we should, based upon the 1982 Nuclear Waste Policy Act and an amendment in 1987, we should be storing it underneath a mountain in a desert. So let's compare that location to a place in Perry, Ohio.

Perry, Ohio, has 452 metric tons of uranium of spent fuel on-site versus zero at Yucca Mountain. The waste is stored aboveground in pools and casks. The waste would be stored in Yucca Mountain 1,000 feet underground.

The waste at Perry would be 12 feet above the groundwater. At Yucca Mountain, it would be 1,000 feet above the water table. And at Perry, it is located on Lake Erie, 35 miles from Cleveland, where Yucca Mountain, the waste is 100 miles from the Colorado River and probably 100-or-so-odd miles from Las Vegas, Nevada.

Clearly, in a comparison and contrast, if you want a safe and secure location—of course we also own the land around Yucca Mountain—clearly, it's easy to determine that Yucca Mountain is a much safer place than on one of our Great Lakes.

So then I talk about, well, have the Senators addressed this in their past? Because the reason why we're not moving forward on Yucca Mountain is Majority Leader REID has stopped it, along with President Obama.

Well, Senator BROWN, when he was a House Member, voted for Yucca Mountain in 2002. So did Senator PORTMAN. Both are Senators from the State of Ohio right now.

Senator MITCH MCCONNELL has stated, and so he supports Yucca Mountain:

When it comes to nuclear energy, we have seen this administration abandon plans and millions in taxpayer dollars before without much consideration of the consequences. Take, for example, its unwillingness to follow through on the nuclear storage site, Yucca.

We've already spent about \$15 billion at Yucca Mountain, and Leader MCCONNELL is addressing that issue.

Senator PAUL, so far, has been silent. We hope that he comes out with a stated position.

So what does that do to our tally of where Senators are? And we've reached over the 50-vote mark, based upon our analysis of past statements and past votes. With 51 Senators who would vote "yes," that would be a simple majority if the Senate moved by majority standards. Nineteen are undecided—Senator PAUL is our recent add—and 20 who identify, based on their past statements, having voted "no" or have made statements in opposition to Yucca Mountain.

Why is this important? It's important because we've spent over almost three decades now trying to find a safe, secure location to store high-level nuclear waste. With the Japanese event of last year, Fukushima Daiichi, and the debate on containment vessels and high-level nuclear waste, it is time now to move public policy, or the other body needs to impress upon Leader REID that it is imperative for this country to have a centralized location.

□ 1020

With these 51 and, hopefully, more that we will identify in the next couple of weeks, we will have close to a 60-seat identification to say it can stop a filibuster, it can stop the majority leader, and it can move to do what we all know is in our best interest: to finally gather up in one centralized location our high-level nuclear waste.

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Allow me to say happy Teachers' Day to every teacher and also to say that it is an honor and privilege to offer a resolution recognizing National Nurses Week, which is May 6 through 12. This year's theme is "Nurses: Caring, Leading, Advocating." Since 1994, National Nurses Week has served as an opportunity to recognize nurses for their hard work, patience, and service, as well as for their contributions to improving our Nation's health care system.

Throughout my career as a registered nurse, I've had no greater privilege than to provide health care to those who have courageously served our

country. As a former chief psychiatric nurse at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Dallas, I know firsthand the importance of providing quality care to those coming home from war. Through Joining Forces, which is a health care and treatment program for military personnel that was recently launched by the Obama administration, more than 500 nursing schools and 150 nursing organizations will work together to "meet the unique health care needs of servicemen and -women, veterans, and their families."

Nurses provide an invaluable service on a daily basis in settings such as hospitals, clinics, schools, workplaces, correctional facilities, and through their service in the military and during natural disasters. With over 3 million strong, nurses comprise the largest sector of the health care workforce, and year after year, nurses are voted the most trusted of all professionals. For the 12th time in 13 years, in a Gallup survey, nursing ranked first for honesty and ethical standards in 2011.

While our country shifts toward a nationwide focus on prevention and promotion, I believe it is the nurses who should stand at the forefront of this reformation. Mr. Speaker, nurses save lives, provide critical care, and advocate on behalf of their patients 52 weeks a year. They deserve more than 1 week of recognition for their tireless work within health care.

I want to thank my many congressional colleagues who cosponsor this bill in honoring nurses. My colleagues Congresswoman LOIS CAPPS and Congresswoman CAROLYN MCCARTHY are also nurses. They have worked with me to promote this resolution, and they are champions of the nursing profession.

This week, remember to thank nurses for the admirable and selfless contributions they make to our community.

HOW ABOUT WE STOP BEING STUPID?

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States traveled to Afghanistan last week to sign the Strategic Partnership Agreement with President Karzai, and while this agreement is intended to signal the beginning of the end of the Afghanistan war, instead it actually looks like it could lock the United States into a military commitment for years to come.

The agreement calls for our Armed Forces to be involved beyond 2014 in the "training, equipping, advising, and sustaining" of Afghan security forces so that Afghanistan can combat terrorism and "secure and defend itself against internal and external threats."

The irony in that statement, Mr. Speaker, is rich. When are we going to realize that the internal threats facing