

Preparing our students for the 21st century workforce, I would argue, is absolutely critical. But it is also essential that we empower the unemployed to be retrained to pursue careers in the STEM field right back at home and across our country.

Back home, I'm working with the College of Lake County, which is working hard to provide STEM education to adults who are interested in preparing themselves for new careers. The College of Lake County will be hosting a STEM education day on Saturday, February 25. This is to motivate our young people about the importance of STEM education, and to especially focus on young women to learn more about careers in the fields of science and technology.

I am impressed with the work that the College of Lake County and other community colleges are doing to bridge the gap between industry and education. By teaming up with local employers, the College of Lake County is putting in place programs that can train the workforce and also help local manufacturers in need.

In the weeks to come, I'll be hosting a manufacturing and education summit at ETA/Cuisenaire in Vernon Hills. The goal of this summit is to find ways in which local industry can invest in local education so that our region has the resources and trained workforce it needs to expand and to invest in the manufacturing sector of our economy.

I will continue to work with Republicans, with Democrats on promoting this critical initiative of STEM education. This will not only help put people back to work, but will enable manufacturers to hire workers right here at home so that they can continue to grow and expand in our local communities.

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 7 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:

We give You thanks, O God, for giving us another day.

There have been many prayers this day rising to You from those engaged in the political discourse of this Nation. We give You thanks for those who were able to gather at the National Prayer Breakfast and those across this land who joined their prayer intentions with the many who attended.

Bless the Members of this people's House now as they gather to do the legislative work they are called to do. May their prayers this day be authentic and heard by You, the living God.

May their work be fruitful and beneficial to those whom You favor, the poor. And may all they do be done in humility and charity, knowing that they are all earthen vessels through whom Your spirit might shine forth.

And finally, 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 gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. ELLISON 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.

YUCCA MOUNTAIN MUST RECEIVE PERMIT

(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 Blue Ribbon Commission, which was tasked with making recommendations for dealing with our country's nuclear waste, recently issued their findings. After conducting a 2-year study, the commission discovered that measures must be taken to deal with nuclear waste currently and interim storage at 121 sites across the country. The editorial response by the Aiken Standard to this anemic obvious conclusion is summarized by one word: "Duh."

We have known for decades that this waste must be properly dealt with and discarded in the proper setting. The scientific community has determined that Yucca Mountain is the ideal location for a safe national repository.

The President and the liberal-controlled Senate must quit playing political games and allow the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to finish analyzing the license permit. It's time to let science dictate policy, not politics.

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

WILLIAM STREET POSTAL FACILITY

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

Ms. HOCHUL. Mr. Speaker, I stand with my good colleague from western New York, Congressman BRIAN HIGGINS, united in opposition to the proposed elimination of the postal processing and distribution center in Buffalo and the 700 jobs of people that are currently employed there.

I understand the Postal Service has gone through some tough times. They need to make some hard decisions. Up in our neck of the woods, 700 jobs is a very big deal. That is 700 families making mortgage payments, 700 families making their car payments, and 700 families that haven't been able to make their tuition payments.

In addition to these individuals, businesses, seniors, and rural communities we represent would be adversely affected if this were to end. This would end the overnight delivery of first-class mail in the Buffalo region, impacting all the businesses that depend on this service. It would probably slow commerce, delay the delivery of medication to our seniors, and impair communications for rural families who don't have Internet access.

At a time when the Postal Service is struggling to retain business, they need to be creative and find new ways to garner more customers.

STOP ATTACKING COAL JOBS

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, President Obama's activist EPA is at it again. This destructive agency, in advancing the administration's war on coal, is forcing the closure of six coal-fired power plants in three States. Just a few weeks ago, it was announced that the Muskingum River Power Plant in my district would have to close and eliminate over 100 jobs because of burdensome EPA regulations.

President Obama's war on coal is nothing new. With just one proposed rewrite of one rule, President Obama is putting tens of thousands of direct and indirect coal-related jobs at risk. Just over a week ago, the President stood in this Chamber and told Americans that he wants to create jobs and grow the economy, but his policies do the exact opposite.

Hardworking taxpayers across America deserve better. They deserve effective leadership that moves us forward rather than holding us back. With over 14 million Americans out of work, we can't afford more of the same failed

policies from this administration. They are hurting America.

PAYROLL TAX CUT EXTENSION

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

Ms. TSONGAS. Mr. Speaker, we are now in the month of February. In less than 4 weeks, the 2-week payroll tax cut extension, which House Republicans begrudgingly agreed to, will expire.

To avoid the same dramatic standoff that threatened a \$1,400 tax increase for the average Massachusetts family, we must work together and adopt a yearlong extension of this vital tax credit rather than waiting till the last minute yet again.

Failure to extend the payroll tax cut to the end of the year would not only severely impact already overstretched households around the country, but would also dramatically undermine our still fragile economic recovery.

Families have already made their budgets for this year. They are counting on this extension to pay their bills, heat their homes, and meet other needs. Let's not let them down.

PBGC SHOULD RESTORE DELPHI SALARIED RETIREES PENSIONS

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

Mr. TURNER of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, today our colleagues at the Education and Workforce Committee held a subcommittee hearing looking into the challenges facing the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing the PBGC is transparency. The PBGC will not release even the most basic documents explaining the denial of the full earned pension benefits of the Delphi salaried retirees. Perhaps it is because of the many conflicts of interest that existed between the Treasury Department and the PBGC.

When these pensions were turned over to the PBGC, approximately 20,000 current and future salaried retirees were subjected to benefit cuts of up to 70 percent. The hardworking taxpayers whose tax dollars were used to pay for the auto bailouts deserve to know who made these decisions to cut these pensions and why they are made.

NFL BLACKOUT UNACCEPTABLE

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

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, tens of millions of Americans will gather with family and friends to watch the Super Bowl. Many from my western New York community will be among them. Unfortunately, western

New York families do not always have the opportunity to watch their hometown team, the Buffalo Bills.

The NFL's blackout rule prohibits the broadcast of a game in a team's home market if the game has not been sold out within 72 hours of the kickoff. In Buffalo, this meant that this past season almost half of the Bills games were blacked out. This is unacceptable. We have a strong and enthusiastic fan base; but with one of the largest football stadiums in the National Football League, Buffalo must sell 6,000 more tickets than the league's average to avoid a blackout.

I have sent a letter to NFL Commissioner Goodell, along with my colleagues Congresswoman KATHY HOCHUL, Congressman ROSS, and Congresswoman BROWN, asking for an end to this unfair policy. It is time for the league to update this regulation, taking into account factors like stadium and media market size and, most importantly, the tough financial situation millions of families across the Nation find themselves in.

□ 1210

STOCK ACT

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

Mr. BUCHANAN. Mr. Speaker, Washington is failing the American people. Our leaders need to be held to the highest standard, and that means obeying the same laws that everyone else has to live under.

I'm pleased to report progress on an important bill that I cosponsored; it's called the STOCK Act. It would prohibit inside trading by any Member of Congress.

This bill is now starting to move in the Senate, and I intend to fight to ensure its swift passage. No one in government should profit from private information obtained through their position. Serving the people is a privilege and it's an honor, not an opportunity for personal gain.

SUSAN G. KOMEN HALTS PARTNERSHIP WITH PLANNED PARENTHOOD

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, today is a sad day. In an effort to strip women of the right to choose, anti-choice groups have blocked access to life-saving cancer screenings.

The Nation's leading breast cancer charity, Susan G. Komen, announced it will no longer partner with Planned Parenthood, the Nation's leading women's health care provider. This fight has pitted two of our Nation's premier and important women's health care groups wrongly against each other.

We on either side of the Capitol and in these Chambers must remember that

rhetoric has real-world consequences. For the health of all women across America, this issue must be resolved quickly and the collaborative relationship between these two great institutions restored. Until then, lives are at stake, sadly, for political gain.

CONSCIENCE RIGHTS

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, institutions across the country are facing an impossible choice: Do they continue in their mission to provide for their employees, or do they violate their conscience?

When the Affordable Care Act passed, there was no thought in the minds of many Catholics that the law would eventually force them into such a terrible choice. In fact, my former colleague from Pennsylvania, Kathy Dahlkemper, recently came out and said, I would have never voted for the final version of the bill if I expected the Obama administration to force Catholic hospitals and Catholic colleges and universities to pay for contraception.

I might add, this rule that will go into effect on August 12 includes not only contraceptives, but abortifacients, drugs like Ella and Plan B, as well as sterilization services.

Catholic and other religious organizations have cared for the sick and educated Americans of all religions since the founding of our Republic, and they've done this because their conscience compels them to show their love to all mankind. Never before has the Federal Government compelled them to violate their conscience in such a terrible way. There are fundamental questions about life and morality that the government has no business forcing on organizations and individuals. To force them to violate their conscience is wrong.

PROMPT SHORT SALE DECISION ACT

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

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to advocate an aggressive response to the housing crisis.

Last year, 30 percent of California homeowners with mortgages were underwater. That's one of the highest rates in the country. To improve our economy, we must fix the broken housing market. Large banks simply wait out short-sale offers, which kills the process.

Back home, I hear from people who are trying to secure short sales and have to wait for months or longer to get a decision from their lender. That's absolutely unacceptable. Banks need to treat people fairly, which is why I'm a cosponsor of H.R. 1498, the Prompt Decision for Qualification of Short Sale Act. This is a bipartisan bill that requires lenders to make a decision within 45 days to approve or disapprove a