

Members of Congress who actually sat in the Supreme Court and listened to five Justices debate and say that they believed that the President's health tax was constitutional, and I watched them debate the four Justices who believed it was not constitutional.

Because one more Justice believed it was constitutional than the four that believed it was not constitutional, our friends on the other side of the aisle believe that we should now step back and do nothing and just allow this health tax to be imposed on the American people.

Well, we reject that suggestion, and the reason we do is because today the number one issue in the American people's minds is the economy, and the number one concern we have about the economy is the loss of their jobs. Yet we have watched as this administration has had 41 straight months of unemployment in excess of 8 percent.

We have watched as their policies have delivered us a net loss of 473,000 jobs, and we are about to unleash three enormous job killers on the American public. In just a few months, we will increase taxes on the American people if we refuse to extend the Bush tax cuts, which will cost thousands of jobs. Yet our friends on the other side of the aisle say we should step back and do nothing, and we reject that notion.

In just a few months, based on legislation this President approved and signed into law, we will have massive defense cuts that his own Secretary of Defense says will cost us 1.5 million jobs, and our friends on the other side of the aisle say we should do nothing and just let that come on the American people. We reject that notion.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, as this health tax gets ready to be imposed on the American people, based on the Congressional Budget Office, it will cost 800,000 jobs. Yet our friends on the other side of the aisle say we should take no action and just let it happen. We reject that notion.

The reason we reject it is because the American people realize that as we take an action to repeal this health tax, we are setting a new course for health care in America. As we set a new course for health care in America, we begin to do what the American people want us to do and set a new course and a new direction for America.

□ 1020

AMERICANS NEED REAL SOLUTIONS TO REAL PROBLEMS

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Boy, my friend from Virginia could not be more wrong.

What exactly are the House Republicans trying to accomplish with today's 31st repeal vote of health care? One of the first votes Republicans brought to the floor when they became

the majority in January of 2011 was to repeal the health care insurance reform law in its entirety. That bill passed out of the House on a virtual party-line vote, so you'd think Republicans would move on to the real challenges facing our economy like unemployment and the expiration of individual and business tax cuts.

In the face of the Supreme Court ruling declaring important health insurance protections in the Affordable Care Act constitutional, House Republicans are not repealing that earlier vote but instead setting up a repeat of it. They have become so ideologically immovable that they can think of no more constructive solution than to simply replay this bit of political theater. Meanwhile, 56 percent of Americans say it's time to move on to the true pressing challenges facing our Nation, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation poll. A quick review of those challenges shows that this Republican House majority has not even tried to address them.

Let's start with the very real threat of expiring tax cuts creating a drag on our economy. There are a number of already expired and expiring tax cuts, including the alternative minimum tax patch, which could affect 34 million Americans. Then there's the payroll tax cut affecting 160 million Americans and numerous businesses, including the Bush tax cuts, which expire later this year. All combined, the expiration of those tax cuts could add up to a \$4,000 per household bill on Americans. So far, House Republicans haven't felt the urgency to hold a single vote to extend any of those tax cuts.

How about the Medicare doc fix? If Congress doesn't extend the sustainable growth rate patch, Medicare and TRICARE doctors will see more than a 27 percent cut in their reimbursements, causing many of them to stop seeing patients. Millions of seniors and military members and retirees could lose access to their doctors. But not a single vote has been proposed by the Republicans to stop that from happening.

Then there's the debt ceiling. Without action, the Nation will once again risk breaching its statutory limit, triggering a historic default. Last summer, we achieved a bipartisan agreement to raise that ceiling and lower the deficit at the same time, warding off the cataclysmic effects of default, but not before House Republicans pushed us to the brink, resulting in the first time ever a downgrading of U.S. credit. The American people don't want a repeat of that sad chapter in our history, and our economy certainly cannot afford it. Ronald Reagan knew the value of ensuring America fulfilled its commitments. He raised the debt ceiling 18 times with no conditionality.

What about a comprehensive jobs bill? After 27 straight months of private sector job growth, cleaning up the mess President Obama inherited, the base of U.S. job creation has begun to slow in the wake of instability in Euro-

pean markets. Before the July 4 holiday, we achieved a rare feat for this Congress in passing a bipartisan reauthorization of the transportation bill, giving a much-needed jolt to the construction sector. But we can and should do more to spur hiring in the alternative energy sector, manufacturing, health care, and more. But instead of focusing on jobs, which they claimed in the last election was their focus, Republicans are creating a sense of *deja vu* all over again on the floor by staging a repeat of the health care reform.

Lost in this political pandering is the fact that the Affordable Care Act is actually working. Seniors who fall in the prescription drug doughnut hole are saving an average of \$651 this year alone. Almost 13 million Americans are eligible for rebates averaging \$151 from their insurance companies, thanks to new requirements in the bill. Premiums for Medicare Advantage are down 7 percent for the first time ever and benefits are up and enrollment is up 10 percent. Medicare is on track to save \$200 billion by 2016, pursuant to the act, without one benefit being cut—in fact, benefits improving.

Mr. Speaker, the House majority is selectively ignoring those improvements to justify this repeat of its repeal vote. With so much to do—with American businesses and families waiting for tax predictability, with the economy bracing for the impending fiscal cliff, with almost 4 million people still searching for employment—House Republicans are still offering more of the same. And sadly, it's not enough. Americans need real solutions to real problems. Let's get on with them.

HIGH-LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I come back on the floor as I have almost weekly throughout this entire Congress for 2 years to talk about the issue of high-level nuclear waste and what are we to do about it. And I really applaud my colleagues who joined me on June 6, 2012, on an amendment to a spending bill. It was a bipartisan vote; 326 Members of Congress supported finishing the scientific study on Yucca Mountain. That's the money that we had appropriated and that Senator REID and President Obama did not spend for the scientific study. Then, in the last two cycles, Senator REID has been blocking additional money for finishing the scientific study. So 226 Republicans and 98 Democrats joined me to really stress the point that we've got to finish this.

Yucca Mountain started in 1982 with the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. It was the defined location—it is the defined location—under current law under the amendments passed in 1987. To not fulfill and not to move forward is, in my estimation, breaking the law of the

land. And who's complicit in this is our friends on the other side and the President of the United States.

Now, how does that affect the rest of the Nation and the Senators involved and Members involved? Well, we compare the current site of Yucca Mountain to where nuclear waste is located around this country. Yucca Mountain currently has no nuclear waste on-site. We've already spent \$15 million over 20 years trying to finish this project. It would be stored a thousand feet underground, it would be a thousand feet above the water table, and it would be a hundred miles from the Colorado River.

Well, let's look at where we have nuclear waste, and nuclear waste is defined by a lot of different titles. Some is just spent fuels from nuclear utilities. A lot of our nuclear waste is defense waste: reprocessed, weaponized uranium or the chemicals needed to effect that.

So we have a Department of Energy location at Idaho National Labs. How much waste is in Idaho right now? We've got 5,090 canisters on-site. Waste is stored above the ground and in pools. Waste is 500 feet above the water table and waste is 50 miles from Yellowstone National Park, a major tourist destination for many of our citizens throughout this country.

This is a Senate issue, really, and not a House issue anymore since the House is on record, especially with this vote this year of 326 of our colleagues in support. Where are the Senators? The last time I came down to the floor, I talked about the State of Missouri and Senator MCCASKILL, who is undecided after being a U.S. Senator for 5½ years. Well, now I turn to Montana, who's a neighbor to Idaho, and another undecided Senator, Senator JON TESTER. Can you imagine being a U.S. Senator for 5½ years, having nuclear waste in the State next to you and never having a position on what do we do with the final position on nuclear waste, whether it's nuclear waste in spent fuel or whether it's nuclear waste in our defense industry?

A place like Hanford, Washington, where we have millions of gallons of toxic nuclear waste that's designed to go to Yucca Mountain, couldn't a U.S. Senator in 5½ years say, I think yes, or I think no? Why is that important? You look at the total tally of what we've done over the past year and a half trying to identify where Senators stand. We have 55 Senators who support moving forward on Yucca Mountain. We have 22 question marks, one of them being Senator TESTER from Montana. And then we have 23 identified "no" votes. Really, to close debate, based upon the Senate rules, you need 60. If we can move Senator MCCASKILL and Senator TESTER, that brings us to 57 Senators and really a game-changing position to resolve this issue of high-level nuclear waste, which is pretty much throughout the country.

In my own State, my colleagues here on the floor in the State of Illinois, we

are the largest nuclear-generating State in the country. We have six locations, 11 reactors. Some are right on Lake Michigan, Wisconsin; nuclear power plants right on Lake Michigan, Michigan; nuclear power plants right on Lake Michigan. Would you rather have high-level nuclear waste in the desert underneath a mountain or would you rather have it next to Lake Michigan or 50 miles from Yellowstone National Park? I think the answer is simple.

This has become politicized because of the Majority Leader of the Senate and his partner in crime, the President of the United States. It's time for us to move on good public policy: identify, centrally locate, and store high-level nuclear waste underneath a mountain in a desert.

□ 1030

THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

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

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, roughly 17 million American children with pre-existing medical conditions can no longer be discriminated against and be denied health insurance by insurance companies. And yet, rather than focus on the key tasks of creating jobs and strengthening the middle class in America, my Republican colleagues want to tear up the health care law. They want to rip up the independent decision by our Supreme Court, by Justices appointed by Presidents of both parties, finding the Affordable Care Act is on firm constitutional footing, and they want to start all over again, putting the coverage of those millions of children I just spoke about at risk.

This vote is personal. Health care is personal. When I was 9, I had a serious childhood illness. I spent 3 months in the hospital. My grandparents, who were raising me, found out that their family insurance didn't cover me. They made great sacrifices to help pay for my care. But if that weren't enough, when my grandparents then looked for insurance that would cover me, they couldn't find coverage at any price. I was considered one of those kids with a preexisting medical condition, never mind that I had fully recovered from my illness. No child should ever be denied coverage for that reason.

I grew up believing that no family should have to go through what ours did. Parents or grandparents shouldn't have to worry, shouldn't have to lay awake at night worrying about whether they can provide for a sick child or whether an illness might bankrupt their family.

Families now know that insurance companies can't discriminate against their children based on a preexisting condition. Turning back the clock so insurance companies can, once again, deny children access to care is simply wrong.

It is time that we all move forward. It is time that we work together. It is time to make this Affordable Care Act work for the American people.

GOVERNMENT BY CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED

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

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, despite talk of political gridlock in D.C., Republicans and Democrats can agree on at least one thing—the economy is in rough shape. For the past 41 months, the unemployment rate has not gone below 8 percent, causing worry, uncertainty, and frustration for many families living in Michigan and across the U.S. But unfortunately, things can still get worse.

It's time for President Obama and the Senate to stop pushing their failed agendas and start applying common-sense policies that work. My Republican colleagues and I in the House have been listening to the American people and remain committed to policies that spur job creation, reduce costs, and restore power back to the people.

Last month's employment report showed that millions of Americans still are without a job and the unemployment rate is stuck at 8.2 percent. Meanwhile, the anemic job growth is even worse in my district where some areas show an unemployment rate of over 9 percent. Nationwide, the rate of "real unemployment," which includes the unemployed, the underemployed, and those that want to work but have given up looking, now totals 14.9 percent. Making matters worse, the number of weeks it takes a worker to find a job has more than doubled since President Obama took office. Is this hope and change?

But it's not just the unemployment numbers which paint a grim picture of our economy. Government spending is out of control. With 84 days left in the fiscal year, the government has already spent its way into another \$1 trillion deficit. Despite this out-of-control spending, the Senate hasn't bothered to pass a budget in more than 3 years. Since that time, the Federal Government has added more than \$4 trillion to our national debt.

Families and businesses in my district and across the country know that they can't spend more than they make, which is why they create budgets and why they sometimes have to make tough choices to prevent them from drowning in debt. They get it, but sadly, their President and Senate still refuse to look at the facts.

But they also refuse to listen to the American people. According to the polls, Americans, and especially those in my district, are angry about having a government takeover of health care and the largest tax increase in history. Health care coverage is already too expensive for many families in my district, and this health care takeover