

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

will not only make it more expensive, but put Federal bureaucracy between them and their doctor. On top of that, it will hinder job creators from hiring by requiring them to either offer costly government-mandated health insurance or pay a steep fine.

So far, my colleagues and I in the House have taken 30 floor votes to repeal, defund, and dismantle the law. After it's gone, we can start over with commonsense reforms that will return choices to the patients and not burden job creators with higher costs, new regulations, and more uncertainty.

It's obvious to the American people that the President's policies are failing and making the economy worse. Instead, they want the government to stop taxing them more, stop creating new harmful regulations, and stop coming between them and their doctor.

House Republicans have been listening. That's why we will continue to work on repealing this unfavorable and costly health care law. It's why we already put forth a balanced, responsible budget, and it's why we put together a plan for America's job creators to create an environment in which small businesses can grow and hire and where health care is affordable again.

Currently, there are 27 bipartisan jobs bills that have been passed by the House and are languishing in the Democrat-controlled Senate. My hope is that the President and Senate stop talking to the American people and start listening to them.

THE AFGHANISTAN WAR: COSTING US DEARLY

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Another day, Mr. Speaker, another wave of attacks by insurgents in Afghanistan. The New York Times reported yesterday that the Taliban killed five police officers with a roadside bomb in what it calls "a relatively peaceful province" in central Afghanistan.

Separate attacks in Kandahar led to the deaths of three officers, with six civilians wounded. A motorcycle bomb took the lives of several more people in Helmand province on Sunday night, and then yet another motorcycle bomb in northern Afghanistan on Monday, wounding 26, with 10 in critical condition. And a deeply disturbing video is making its way around the Internet showing a 22-year-old Afghan woman being brutally executed by the Taliban over accusations of adultery.

Almost 11 years after our military occupation began, the security situation in Afghanistan is clearly abysmal. Our troops are in danger, Afghan security forces are in danger, and innocent civilians are in danger. Nearly 11 years ago, we went to war with the goal of defeating the Taliban, and yet the Taliban is alive and well, winning recruits, operating in the shadows, and

ruling by terror throughout Afghanistan.

I'm not saying that ending the war and bringing our troops home will stabilize Afghanistan overnight. But I am saying that the longer we continue with our military occupation, the more we breathe life into the very forces we're trying to defeat. It is the resentment of our boots on the ground that is helping to sustain the Taliban.

There are clearly urgent humanitarian needs in Afghanistan. Mr. Speaker, and we have a moral responsibility to help meet them.

□ 1040

This is one of the poorest nations on Earth, with infrastructure needs, children who need schools, and malnutrition that must be addressed. But deploying thousands and thousands of troops for more than a decade is not the way to meet these challenges. Our military is not trained or equipped to do that kind of work.

For pennies on the dollar, Mr. Speaker, we can have a true civilian surge, investing in development aid to improve the lives of the Afghan people. We could give USAID a fraction of the \$10 billion a month we spend on the war in Afghanistan and we could do a world of good. This approach isn't just the right thing to do, it isn't just a moral imperative, it's the SMART national security strategy as well.

On the other hand, the existing strategy of invasion and occupation has not served us well. The Afghanistan war has cost us dearly—in precious lives, in taxpayer dollars, in moral authority, and global credibility. It is undermining our national security interests instead of advancing them.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to do the smart thing—bring our troops home and, in return, invest in the hopes and future of the Afghan people—and do it now.

GOVERNMENT INCOMPETENCE

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Indiana prison inmate Ryan Greminger collected unemployment benefits during his 2-year sentence in the county jail for a drug crime. He collected \$14,000 of taxpayer money. He was in jail, and the government continued to pay him anyway.

Only in America would we pay people in jail because they are unemployed. Greminger should not have obtained money from honest American taxpayers, but he did.

Government is becoming incompetent when it comes to paying unemployment benefits. According to CNN, the Federal Government overpaid \$14 billion in unemployment benefits just last year. That means 11 percent of all jobless benefits paid out were not supposed to be paid to those individuals. Those overpayments that should have

gone to people in need were sent by government to those who didn't deserve any money. You see, not all payments are to honest people who are looking for jobs and are out of work.

Inmate Greminger's case is bad, but there's more.

A convicted killer, murderer, in a California prison was receiving at least \$30,000 in unemployment checks. The murderer made sure that his family and his friends cashed his checks while he was locked up. So each month, his family fraudulently cashed his \$1,600 check, which they would then deposit in his jail bank account. Guess where it went next, Mr. Speaker? He shared the jail money with some of his low-life prison gang members while he was in the joint.

There's more.

The Federal Government reportedly sent a man \$515,000 in payments over 37 years—37 years, Mr. Speaker—because he was supposedly unemployed. Thirty-seven years of unemployment benefits for anyone is nonsense to me, but who exactly were they sending that money to in this case? A dead person who died 40 years ago. No wonder he wasn't working, Mr. Speaker; he wasn't around.

We count on our government to spend our tax dollars wisely, but it is inefficiently sending money to those not qualified to obtain taxpayer support—prison inmates and dead people.

Fourteen billion dollars is a lot of money in anybody's book. In the private sector, if a business misappropriated \$14 billion, the people in charge would be fired or go to jail, but not so with government agencies. These overpayments and wasteful incompetent spending really don't shock or surprise Americans anymore at all. There's so much waste of taxpayer money that we have become accustomed to it, and we actually expect government to waste money—too big, too wasteful, too incompetent, and too inefficient.

But the real problem is not waste, but the size and inefficiency of government. We're moving to a society that is just another European nanny state, where government is bigger, bloated, and controlling. The government says it will provide all our needs if we just turn over more power, authority, and money to government and government agencies.

Mr. Speaker, does anybody ever really get warm fuzzies when we hear about government programs like the post office, FEMA, the IRS, or TSA? I don't think so. Government doesn't do things better; it does things more expensively and wastefully. And government promotes a concept of more dependence on government, not independence.

We in Congress need to realize the obvious—that unlimited, out-of-control government is not the answer to our problems. But until we get a grip on government and move to a constitutional concept of limited government,