

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,

we should expect and demand more accountability from the people that are in charge of the people's money.

With hard economic times affecting the unemployed, we cannot tolerate wasteful spending by government bureaucracies. With 8.5 percent unemployment nationwide, 11 percent in the Hispanic community, 14 percent in the African American community, 14 percent for returning military from Iraq and Afghanistan, and 50 percent unemployment for recent college graduates, we should demand that when government helps those we as a society say it should help, government does so properly and efficiently and in a dignified way. Otherwise, more dead people will continue to receive taxpayer money that should go to people that are at least alive.

And that's just the way it is.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT REPEAL EFFORTS

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

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, the passage and implementation of the Affordable Care Act is the culmination of an American political journey that started a century ago with Teddy Roosevelt in 1912 with the Bull Moose Party—also a Republican—and picked up years later by Harry Truman and other Presidents, including Richard Nixon, another Republican. The most recent groundwork for reform was laid in part by the former Republican Presidential candidate, Robert Dole, as an alternative to Hillary Clinton's plan, and by the present Republican Presidential nominee, Mitt Romney. I commend them for championing the concept of the individual mandate back when it wasn't quite as unpopular on their side of the aisle.

The history of reforming our Nation's health care system is a strong one that has historically been championed by lawmakers on both sides of the political spectrum, until this Congress. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have wasted hours upon hours debating and voting upon the various versions of the legislation that would repeal the Affordable Care Act.

My colleagues know that these initiatives are fruitless. They know that voting over and over and over again—more than 30 times total—on measures to repeal the Affordable Care Act is a waste of time, but they keep calling for these votes. Do you want to know why? Because they want to distract the American public from the fact that they are so committed to unseating our President, Barack Obama, that they haven't passed any effective job-creating legislation since they took over the majority in this House in 2010.

The Supreme Court of the United States upheld the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act, and it's time to face the facts. Earlier today, a gentleman from Virginia said, Oh, it was

just 5-4. Bush v. Gore was 5-4. We accepted that the person who got the least votes and lost Florida was President of the United States for 8 years, but the consequences we still have to face.

The Affordable Care Act is the law of the land. As a result, millions of Americans who were previously uninsured or underinsured have access to affordable, high-quality health care. In fact, the number of Americans uninsured is equal to the population of 25 of the 50 States.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, millions of Americans and small businesses have already benefited from lower health care costs, increased access to preventive care, and stronger patient protections.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, 12.8 million families will receive rebates that total over \$1 billion from insurers next month, in August, because the law requires companies to provide value for their premium dollar. Never before has that happened.

Community health centers in my district have received over \$10 million to deliver health care services to underserved and impoverished Memphians, and 170,000 households in my district will get a premium credit so they can afford quality health insurance coverage.

Women no longer are considered a preexisting condition, and insurance companies can't charge them more, which they did, by 40 percent.

Medicare beneficiaries now have access to preventive care and services without any copay.

And 64,000 people in my district will go from uninsured to insured.

32.5 million seniors nationwide received one or more preventive care treatments in 2011.

The doughnut hole is being closed; 50 percent discounts on covered brand-name generics.

Annual and lifetime caps on health care coverage are now illegal, meaning insurance companies can't kick you off the plan just because you get cancer or are in an accident or have a heart attack.

Our children are now protected because insurers are prevented from denying coverage to children under 19 for preexisting conditions. This means up to 17 million children with preexisting conditions are now protected from discrimination.

Young adults can remain on their parents' insurance until they're 26, providing some protection in this uncertain job market.

□ 1050

It's now affordable for small businesses to provide insurance to employees. The tax credits cover up to 35 percent of the cost of coverage and will go up to 50 percent in 2014. In fact, in 2011, 360,000 small employers used the Small Business Health Care Tax Credit to help them afford health insurance for 2 million workers.

One of the most misleading arguments by my colleagues concerns that penalty that will be assessed on those financially-able Americans who choose not to purchase insurance, thereby not taking responsibility for their health care. Responsibility. That's one of the keynotes of the Republican side.

But if an uninsured person in my district gets into a car accident or comes down with an aggressive illness, they're taken to a public hospital in Memphis called The MED. The MED treats everybody because they have to, and when The MED takes cares of those people, the property owners, the responsible people, pay for it through higher property taxes, or you pay for it with your insurance, if you have it, because it's uncompensated care if you go to a non-public hospital.

The time and effort put in by nurses and doctors and assistants at The MED aren't free. The medical devices and supplies that The MED used to treat those uninsured people aren't free. Every single resident of Shelby County pays for those services when a person seeks emergency services there, and the taxes go up.

People who choose not to buy insurance for themselves and their families, even with the Federal Government providing incentives and credits, are irresponsible free riders, and it's the free riders that the other side's trying to talk about, not the conscientious and responsible people who take control of their own lives and their own destinies.

Not taking responsibility for the health of yourself and your family is reckless. The free riders have been a burden on our national health care system for far too long, and it's time they take responsibility for their actions and their health. This penalty, which will be equal to no more than the estimated cost of an insurance premium, is the way we do it.

It's long past time we implement the health reform initiated by Teddy Roosevelt and championed by people of both parties. It's time Americans realize and take advantage of their right to quality healthcare. And it's long past time my colleagues stop playing partisan politics and start working on behalf of the American people, not giant corporations, once again.

STARTUP ACT 2.0

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

Mr. DOLD. Mr. Speaker, this week I welcomed 26 new citizens to this country. It was an inspirational event, and I'm so proud of all they have been able to accomplish. These individuals have worked hard to become citizens, and they are poised to go on and fulfill the American Dream. There is no doubt that times are tough, and yet these individuals have persevered despite all of the obstacles.

As families all over the Nation are struggling with the lagging economy,