

buy weapons to kill our young men and women.

If I could advise Mr. Romney and Mr. Obama, I would say: Listen to the American people on our policy in Afghanistan, because the American people want our troops home. I hear both sides complaining about the debt, the cliffs, sequestration, and all these things. And yet we're spending \$10 billion a month in Afghanistan. And, as "Funding the Enemy" says, we can't even account for most of it. Yet we're going to cut programs here for children and senior citizens. But no, we don't even debate Afghanistan on the floor of the House. That is the tragedy.

Just a few of us on both sides have been speaking out constantly on the failed policy in Afghanistan. The former commandant who has been my adviser for 3 years—I'm not at liberty to say his name for the RECORD—he has said to me:

What do we say to the mother, the father, the wife of the last marine or soldier killed to support a corrupt government and a corrupt leader in a war that cannot be won?

Congress needs to awaken to the fact that we need to bring our troops home in 2013—the spring of 2013 and not the end of 2014.

Madam Speaker, next week I will go to Walter Reed. I will visit the wounded from Afghanistan, some from Iraq. And I will leave with a heavy heart because I will see the broken bodies. I will see the young men and some women that have lost legs, other parts of their bodies, some paralyzed from the waist down, some with burned faces. And yet the Congress sleeps through this war. I ask my friend on both sides, when we get back in November, let's pass a resolution saying that we need to bring our troops home in 2013.

Madam Speaker, before closing, I've signed over 10,855 letters to families and extended families in America because of my weakness and my mistake on Iraq, a war that never had to be fought. Look at Iraq today. It's falling apart. It's time for us to stop trying to build empires and to rebuild America.

ISSUES FACING THIS CONGRESS

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, Republicans have pursued an obstructionist agenda since taking control of this body, cynically willing, seemingly, to risk even harm to our economy for political gain. The refusal of House Republicans to even consider compromise has resulted in the 112th Congress becoming among the least productive Congresses ever. The 112th Congress looks like a Potemkin Congress when it comes to measured productivity.

Consider the most simple, straightforward metric: the number of laws passed per Congress. The legislative output of this Congress, a mere 173

public laws passed, is a pittance when compared to the 900 public laws passed by what was called the do-nothing Congress of the Truman era, or the 333 public laws passed in an era of divided government in the 104th Congress.

□ 1020

Or consider one of our most fundamental constitutional responsibilities, funding the government. Once again, the 112th Congress distinguishes itself for sheer incompetence, having managed to pass zero appropriations bills. The 112th Congress looks even worse when directly compared to the Democratic-led 111th Congress, which boasted a productivity level on par with the legislative records during the era of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Lyndon Baines Johnson in the thirties and sixties, respectively.

The landmark legislation enacted in the 2-year period between 2009 and 2010, from the Recovery Act, the health reform bill, financial regulation, put the meager output of this current Congress to shame.

Further, beyond these big three, at least a dozen other important bills were passed during that time period, including legislation addressing fair pay, student loans, consumer protection, national service, stem cell research, and food safety.

The American people are tired of business as usual. They are tired of Congress waiting until the last possible moment to avert yet another disaster. They are certainly tired of this House returning from a 37-day summer vacation only to hold a couple of show votes this week before rushing Members out of town again next week, leaving in their wake a sea of critical work that remains undone.

Our country faces serious, daunting challenges that demand action now, which is why I advocated canceling the August recess.

The House now has an opportunity to take decisive action in the coming days on at least two major deadline issues facing Congress: passing a 5-year farm bill and enacting comprehensive postal reform.

Despite the 112th Congress being among the least productive and the most dysfunctional in history, the Senate, not known for its speed, has managed to engage in constructive cooperation and addresses both of these issues in an overwhelmingly bipartisan manner.

On two of the most urgent matters facing this Congress, the Senate has exposed the extreme intransigence of this House Republican majority. Two Republicans, a Democrat, and an Independent, developed the 21st Century Postal Service Act of 2012 which passed the Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support.

On the vital 5-year reauthorization of the farm bill, the Senate again developed a reform bill, the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012, and also passed it with a bipartisan supermajority.

Compromise is at the heart of these bipartisan measures, which are far from perfect and contain provisions I would oppose. However, both bills contain provisions vital to saving the postal service, safeguarding the health of Americans and the American agricultural industry, and providing a critical safety net for American families.

In my perfect world, we would pass my Reform the Postal Service for the 21st Century Act. And I'm sure in the House Republicans' perfect world, we'd pass their House Postal Reform Act of 2011. But in the real world, I do not believe either of our constituents sent us here to stubbornly fight for the partisan perfect at the expense of the American good.

If Republican leadership are willing to compromise on behalf of the American people, they will take up and pass the bipartisan bills, S. 1679 and S. 3240, this week or next. I realize I risk appearing naive for even proposing compromise by taking up and passing Senate bills. But my own experience with my predecessor in the 11th District of Virginia gives me hope.

As many of my colleagues are aware, even though former Congressman Tom Davis is a Republican and I'm a Democrat, we get together and we like to say that we belong to the same political party—the party of getting things done. We have roots in local government and that's the ethos of local government, and I appreciate his generosity in working with me in the transition to the 111th Congress.

I recall one extended transition meeting at a local Denny's. We were talking. There was a waitress that was going back and forth. We kind of thought she would recognize us, maybe want to say "hello." In fact, she said, "You need to move on. I need that table."

That's where the American people are. They want us to move on and get our business done so they can get on with theirs.

FARM BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. NOEM. Madam Speaker, today, I wanted to bring to the attention of my colleagues something that is of utmost importance to this country and our food supply and to this Nation's farmers and ranchers. It is the importance of getting a farm bill done.

Growing up on a farm in South Dakota and then farming for years with my family, I certainly recognize how volatile the agriculture industry is. Our producers invest in seed and fertilizer, they put it in the dirt, and they hope that that fall that they have the opportunity to come back and harvest something that will provide for their family and provide food for this country and for this Nation.

The crops that are grown are relied upon to fulfill the need that we have in

this country and across the world. Farming's risky, but because growing our food is in the interest of our national security, we provide a safety net that keeps our farmers on the land in good times and in bad times.

As you can see from these maps that I have here with me today, we are suffering through one of those tough times right now. Farmers can't control Mother Nature. Our farmers are facing one of the worst droughts that we've seen in decades. You just have to talk to a veteran farmer today to say that they haven't seen an instance like this since probably the thirties where we had such widespread, long-standing drought that they are suffering through. It has a real impact on folks in rural America, and the rest of America relies on that food to feed their families.

I want my colleagues to get a picture of just how important the farm bill is to this country and to people in the real world. While it may be easy to ignore the drought if you're in Washington, D.C. or in other parts of the country, when I go home every weekend, and when I was home and traveling all across our State throughout August, it was everywhere around me.

Just yesterday I had the chance to sit down with a couple of producers from South Dakota. Brent and Barb were here from Houghton, South Dakota, and it was evident to me that when I visited with them that their concern was more for the next generation than for getting through a couple of tough days right now.

They spoke of their sons, the love they have for their land, and the responsibility that they feel in feeding this country and making sure that we have a future where the United States can grow its own food to provide for its own people.

They wrote me a letter about what the farm bill means to them, and I wanted to read part of that letter to you:

I know you share our feelings on the importance of the bill. It is not only necessary to us now, but also for our three sons who want to continue our farming operation which has been in our family for four generations. We are so thankful and proud that they want to return to the farm and we want to do all we can to provide them with the same opportunities we have had. The crop insurance portion of the farm bill has truly helped us in the past as we have struggled with wet conditions over parts of the last 20 years. Because of excess moisture, there have been years when we farmed less than half of our total cropland. Now, the tables have turned and we are experiencing drought conditions in some areas of South Dakota and we will again be relying on crop insurance. It is so important to our family farming operation as a business. It has allowed us to stay in business through the tough years.

The safety net this farm bill would provide is crucial to not only rural farmers like us, but our State and country as a whole.

Brent and Barb and other producers across America are in town this week. They were asking this House to take action on a farm bill to give them the

certainty that they need to have confidence to plant next year's crop. It will support both rural America but also every single family that's out there buying groceries today.

Later this morning, I'm going to be joining them at a rally that's called the Farm Bill Now rally. And I'll be asking my colleagues to take action to pass a farm bill. We need to get that farm bill done to know what the policies are going to be in the next 5 years. It's right for our producers, it's right for our ranchers and farmers, it's right for this country, and for every family out there who's wanting to put food on the table that they can afford through these tough times.

□ 1030

LIBYA

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

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, back in 2009, my good friend and the cochair of the House Democracy Partnership, DAVID PRICE of North Carolina, and I had the opportunity to visit former General—and at that time, U.S. Ambassador—Karl Eikenberry, Ambassador to Afghanistan.

We were at the Ambassador's residence in Kabul, and I was struck with a statement that was made by General Ambassador Eikenberry. He said we have a tendency, as Americans, to express appreciation to men and women in uniform, those men and women who served in our Nation's Armed Forces around the world, but too rarely do we extend our appreciation to the men and women who represent the United States of America in the Foreign Service as diplomats around the world, and General Eikenberry encouraged us to do that. And Mr. PRICE and I have consistently done that in the visits of the House Democracy Partnership to the 17 countries with which we've partnered over the past 7 years.

I have to say that 3 years later, just a few months ago, Mr. PRICE and I were leading a delegation to Afghanistan and we recounted that story to our great diplomat, Ryan Crocker, the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan. Ambassador Crocker, when we shared the story with him, reminded us that more U.S. Ambassadors have been killed since the Vietnam War than generals or admirals. We know that down at the Harry S. Truman Building, there is a plaque that lists the names of the 231 U.S. diplomats who have been killed since the first death in 1780. And, Madam Speaker, I have to say that the news that we have of the tragic death of Ambassador Chris Stevens in Benghazi, the U.S. consulate in Libya, is very sad news for all of us.

Now, the upheaval in the Arab world has brought about many great things. For the first time in millennia, there are individuals who have been able to participate in elections and make deci-

sions. But then we get the sad and tragic news that Ambassador Stevens and, according to the early reports, two marines, maybe another Foreign Service officer, were killed in this tragic attack.

I would like to say that we have spent time there. We were just in Libya, Mr. PRICE and I, just a few weeks before Ambassador Stevens arrived, and Libya is a place that has held out great promise. I am determined, as I know Mr. PRICE is, to ensure that the promise that we saw several weeks ago in Libya will not be shattered by the tragic death of Ambassador Stevens.

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to be joined by my dear friend and colleague, Mr. PRICE, and would like to yield to him at this point.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. I thank my colleague for yielding.

Mr. DREIER and I have partnered for many years in the work of the House Democracy Partnership, which we and many others in this body believe in very deeply—that we need to be good colleagues, not just nationally, but internationally. And we need to reach out in ways that can strengthen democracy, strengthen representative institutions, in countries that are friends of our country. We can help encourage and strengthen those parliaments. That's exactly why we visited Libya back in the spring, a delegation led by Mr. DREIER. We were there a few weeks before Ambassador Stevens arrived.

We were struck by the promise of Libya. Of course they've had 42 years of dictatorial rule. The country has been liberated through the efforts of NATO allies. There are still major challenges—obviously, security challenges, as we are learning in a tragic way today—but the country is gradually being secured. Constituent assembly elections have been held and parliamentary elections are on the way. So we have great hope for Libya. We have been and we will be a friend to Libya in helping to realize the promise of the Arab Spring.

Our solemn purpose here today is to mark this tragic loss, the eighth Ambassador in U.S. history to be killed in the line of duty. Our personnel in Libya are dedicated personnel, the best that the U.S. has to offer. The work that they're doing there is challenging and dangerous. The work promotes our national interest and is very, very valuable to Libya and to us. This horrible tragedy is one that we want to mark in this House here today, as we honor the victims of this attack and those who continue to serve.

Mr. DREIER. I thank my friend for his contribution.

Madam Speaker, if I may simply extend condolences to the loved ones of Ambassador Stevens and to say that we need to ensure that those who are responsible for this tragic death are brought to justice. And we need to do everything that we can to continue to encourage the development of the rule