

together rather than divide them? What about rebuilding and renewing America? Certainly the need is there.

Until recently, the T&I Committee was an island of congressional consensus. Since we merely extended the last transportation reauthorization and the new Congress must act in about 97 weeks, let's work on a bolder vision of investing in America, one that puts people to work, improves the economy, the environment, and saves money in the long run. Congress can begin on this now.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, Congress can't ignore the near bankrupt flood insurance program. While we fix the short-term problems, however, let's make it more effective, efficient, and actuarially sound so that it will spare lives, property, and the Federal Treasury. Overhauling the flood insurance program would solve the most immediate challenges caused by extreme weather events likely due to global warming. We may even be able to discuss climate change in a more thoughtful and rational way.

Based on the work I've done in the past with Congressman PAUL RYAN and Senator-elect JEFF FLAKE, I know agricultural reform is a ripe opportunity. Taxpayers cannot afford to lavish unnecessary subsidies on large agribusiness while harming the environment and shortchanging small farmers and ranchers.

Surely Tea Party Republicans and members of the Progressive Caucus can come together to improve nutrition, wildlife habitats, hunting, and fishing while strengthening family farms.

And since Big Bird dodged a bullet during the Presidential campaign, maybe it's time to address the vital role that the Federal support for public broadcasting plays, which we all rely on—not just for news and information, but education for our kids and, as illustrated by Hurricane Sandy, emergency communication.

With incredibly broad public support from Americans regardless of political party, Congress should make a long-term financial commitment to funding the most trusted brand in broadcasting so it can plan for the future.

The last 10 years have been characterized by bipartisan cooperation to promote access to safe drinking water and sanitation around the globe. My 2005 legislation, cosponsored by Henry Hyde, Bill Frist, HARRY REID, saved lives and made friends for America.

In this Congress we have another bipartisan bill, Water for the World, which is cosponsored by my friend TED POE, which would build on that foundation and accelerate progress. It's all teed up and ready to go and could be easily passed next week.

Mr. Speaker, 86 percent of Americans think getting full information about their situation as a loved one faces the end of life should be a top priority for health care. Before the 2009 political "lie of the year" about "death panels," this provision in the health care reform enjoyed broad bipartisan support.

There is new legislation to personalize people's health care so that they get the information they need to make these difficult, sometimes painful, decisions and make sure their decisions, whatever they are, are respected by doctors and hospitals. This refined legislation could easily be achieved now that we're implementing health care reform.

These are all bipartisan, cost-effective initiatives that are overwhelmingly embraced by the public. Is it perhaps time to have a Legislators' Caucus, where Members in both parties who just want to get something done can come together with ideas like these? Who knows? Working together to get something done might become habit-forming.

LOOK OUT FOR OUR FINANCIAL FUTURE

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

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I want to share a plea from home, from Tony, about the impending fiscal cliff.

Tony writes:

We are going to have to go over the fiscal cliff and see the economy crumble before the majority of the people realize how much trouble we are really in.

I have end-stage renal failure, am on Medicare, and receive disability each month. I do dialysis three times a week. That said, I will willingly and gladly take a reduction in my benefits if it means we can reduce our deficit. I have two young nieces, and I am looking out for their financial future. In fact, if I knew that taking away all my benefits would get rid of our debt, I would do that today.

Mr. President, hear Tony's plea. Don't take us over the fiscal cliff. Tony and his nieces need you to lead. They need it now.

□ 1010

AMERICA'S LATINOS

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

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I'm here today to make an introduction. I would like the Republican Party to meet America's Latinos. There are more than 53 million of us. But let me tell you a little bit about who we are and what we do.

First of all, most Latinos are citizens; and, in fact, most of us have been here for many generations. We live all over the United States, and our population is growing fast. In fact, every single year, 500,000 young Latino citizens turn 18 and become eligible to vote. Of Latinos under the age of 18, 93 percent are already citizens of the United States of America. In this last election, one in 10 voters were Latino. In another decade, we will be 25 percent of the voting age population in this great Nation of ours.

Here's a key fact about the more than 16 million Latino immigrants.

They work; and they work hard, often in jobs that are the hardest to fill, picking grapes and garlic, caring for young children in day care centers, sweeping and cleaning as janitors, and, yes, digging ditches and making sure our dishes are washed. You know what else they do? They pay taxes, regardless of their legal status.

But here's one last fact you should know about Latinos. They love America. And, my Republican friends, I promise you, in time, you'll love us, too.

I hope this introduction is helpful, but I know it's a little late. The Republican Party really met Latinos on Election Day. At about 11 p.m., when the race was over, pundits, political strategists, and Republican candidates opened their eyes to discover who really lives and votes in the U.S. It looked liked we were watching Columbus stumble across America. Latino voters, who knew? Demographic changes moving as slow as glaciers, but this one seemed to sneak up on the news media like a sudden thunderstorm.

I've been trying to introduce my colleagues to real Latinos and immigrants for some time. I've worked on bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bills and stayed at the table to work out a compromise even after all Republicans had left the table. But the Republican Party seemed much more interested in the imaginary Latinos they tried to use as a wedge issue, so they crafted messages aimed at the very few Americans who are not offended when immigrants are referred to as criminals, gang-bangers, freeloaders, and lawbreakers whenever they are spoken about in America.

The party nominated a Presidential candidate who carried around a to-do list of creative ways to offend Latinos. It called for the deportation of more than 10 million families and say to self-deport, check; celebrate the extreme Arizona post-immigration laws, check; threaten to veto the DREAM Act and let hundreds of thousands of young people who have applied for deferred action fear for their future, check; stand with other Republicans and begged for their endorsement when they have called for electrified fencing to keep out immigrants because "that works on livestock," check, check, check.

I believe Election Day was a checkmate for extreme, unfair, and intolerant anti-immigrant policies. Now, we need to come together to make progress.

In truth, some Democrats did not seem to really see this new electorate either or see the change coming. Too many Democrats did not see immigration reform as an urgent issue or recognize the need for change in a country that deports 1,000 people a day.

We need to set aside the mistakes of both parties and do what is right for the American people, including Latino immigrants. We need to invite Democrats and Republicans to sit at a big

table to work out immigration reform as soon as possible.

I have suggested that President Obama set up that big table at Camp David and invite leaders from both parties to discuss how we forge the coalition to pass comprehensive immigration reform. I think after the Election Day wake-up call, there are more and more of us willing to come to that table and negotiate, including friends in the Republican Party.

We have heard from Republican leaders who want to be at that table. I know some Republicans want to come to the table because they want the immigration issue off the table. They want it off the table because they are worried about Democrats running the table in statewide and national elections for the foreseeable future.

But listen, whatever your reason for coming to the table, please come. Together, we can fight for justice for immigrants. Together, we can reestablish the rule of law. Together, we can make immigration one of the greatest and most defining aspects of American society instead of something that divides us. Together, we can make Americans see that we can work together—Republicans and Democrats—as Americans first. So, please, join us and do what's right for this great Nation of ours.

THANKSGIVING

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

Mr. AKIN. Mr. Speaker, in just about a week or so, we're going to be sitting down at tables celebrating Thanksgiving and eating turkey and getting a little sleepy maybe afterwards. But as we think about Thanksgiving and we think about the holiday of Thanksgiving Day, it may be interesting and it may add a little richness to that holiday if we remember how it came about and what we have to be thankful for.

There were originally a group of people that came to this country on the Mayflower, and a number of them on-board had the dream of building a new kind of country, something that Europe had never seen before. They believed that they would take principles that they found in the Bible and that they would apply them in a new way and create a new structure of what a country could look like.

So they came to America. And after landing, within the first 4 months, half of them had died. And you would think they would pretty much give up on a dream at that point. The Mayflower had stayed to give them some protection and shelter, so it was in the early springtime that this group of the people that were left—about 55 of the Pilgrims—had to make a decision. You could think of it as actually voting, only voting with their feet.

They were approached by the captain of the Mayflower, and the captain of the Mayflower said, 'Things aren't going so well. I've lost half my crew,

and half of you are dead, and we are going to be heading back to England. And I recommend that you get on the Mayflower because you don't have adequate supplies, and you don't have really a knowledge of how you're going to be able to deal with the wilderness that you are living in.'

So it was that the Mayflower's captain gave the commands, the old seaweed-covered anchor cable was hauled on-board, the yardarms were trimmed to the wind, and first large and then small, the Mayflower disappears over the horizon. The wind is blowing through the trees, and 55 courageous men, women, and children stood on the beach.

Why did they stay? They stayed because they believed in the dream that they had in their hearts, of making a new nation. And by staying, they gave us some things that we should be thankful for, not just the Thanksgiving turkey.

First of all, they came with the idea that civil government and church government were separate types of governments, and the civil government shouldn't run the church or the other way around.

□ 1020

So they were what was called in those days "separatists" because they wanted to separate from the King of England who was running the Church.

So the first thing they gave us was the concept of separating civil and church governments. But the second thing that happened was, when they arrived in Massachusetts, they were blown off course by the storms; and so they had no government. So a group of free people, under God, wrote a document called the Mayflower Compact. It starts: "In the name of God," and it goes on to say to frame just and equal laws.

So what happened was a group of free people, under God, created a civil government, and that of course was the foundation of our Declaration of Independence. And all of American civil government we can trace back to these courageous 55 people who stayed on the beach.

So as you're having your turkey, think about how they gave us the idea of separating civil and church governments, and also how it was that they gave us the idea that our Creator gives us life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Have a great Thanksgiving. God bless you.

OLD REPUBLICAN REFRAIN

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, the Republican refrain is quite familiar: these tax increases will cause economic devastation, a recession, millions of lost jobs. Is that today's fiscal cliff? No. Actually, that's the Republicans in oppos-

ing the Clinton-era tax increases, 1993, opposed by every Republican.

Did their predicted doom and gloom come true? Well, kind of not, actually. We balanced the budget, we paid down debt, and we had 3.8 percent unemployment while the millionaires and billionaires were paying a slightly higher rate of taxes.

Fast forward to today's debate: restore the Clinton-era tax rates to millionaires and billionaires. Republicans have dusted off the nineties rhetoric—economic collapse, devastation, at least 700,000 jobs. The job-creator millionaires and billionaires, they're living on the edge. They have no discretionary income. Any modest increase in taxes to them will stop them from making productive, job-creating investments, like the hundreds of millions of dollars they spent on super PACs in the last election to try and elect a President and a Congress that will bend to their will and lower their taxes even further while cutting middle-income families' programs that are essential, like Social Security and student financial aid.

Now, after their impassioned defense of tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires, Republicans do have a second priority—they're not a one-note party, so you've got to give them credit for that—and that is to somehow kill Social Security, which they've never supported. They think it makes people lazy. Well, there are millionaires and billionaires that don't ever expect they will need it, so they don't care.

And under the guise of deficit reduction, the Republicans are saying, well, we've either got to privatize Social Security, got to increase the retirement age, or we've got to reduce the already inadequate COLA that seniors get. Let's chain the CPI. That's their refrain: we must cut entitlements. Well, guess what, Social Security has never contributed one penny to the deficit or the debt of the United States of America. It is a program which pays for itself.

So why this single-minded focus on cutting Social Security? Yeah, it does have a projected problem of about 23 percent to pay full benefits starting in 2036. So, yeah, there's a long-term problem; but, actually, that's quite easily fixed. All we have to do is close the tax loophole. And maybe we agree there.

Here's a loophole I'd like to close: Why does a millionaire pay one-tenth the rate of taxes to Social Security of a cop on the beat, or a soldier in the field, or a teacher in the classroom? I don't know. That's what the law says. Well, how about we lift the cap and have the millionaires and billionaires pay the same percent of their income to Social Security as cops and teachers and soldiers in the military. Seems fair to me. There's a loophole we could close. And that would give Social Security assets adequate to pay 100 percent of benefits for at least 75 years into the future, as far as the actuaries will