

by not allowing a 4-year-old girl in North Carolina to eat the lunch she had brought to school from home because supposedly it did not meet Federal guidelines. The little girl had brought a very healthy lunch: a turkey and cheese sandwich, banana, chips, and apple juice. Instead, she ate three chicken nuggets apparently okayed by the government, and the school sent a bill for the lunch to her mother.

This is the Big Government nanny state run amuck. This was not only ridiculous and excessive, it was cruel to tell a 4-year-old child the lunch her mother had sent was bad or not proper. Plus, the little girl went home hungry.

We seem to have, Mr. Speaker, a government of, by, and for the bureaucrats instead of one that is of, by, and for the people.

#### REPUBLICAN TRANSPORTATION BILL

(Ms. PELOSI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House in relationship to the transportation bill that we are currently debating in the House this week.

Transportation, as you know, has traditionally and historically been an idea where our two parties have been able to find common ground. Transportation has been an opportunity for Republicans and Democrats, alike, to work to rebuild America, to create jobs, strengthen our economy, move commerce, move people, improve the quality of life, including public safety—that is, up until now; and that is, until this bill.

With the legislation that we are debating today, Republicans put forth the most partisan transportation package in 50 years. It is not just partisan; it's bad for our Nation, destroying more than half a million American jobs. The transportation bill is supposed to be a job-creating bill. It always has been—until now.

Destroying more than half a million jobs, cutting highway investments in 45 States, bankrupting the highway trust fund with a \$78 billion shortfall, and, just the strangest of all, among many shortsighted provisions in the bill, I want to make particular mention of what it does to public transportation. It eliminates all of the dedicated funding for public transportation, leaving millions of riders already faced with service cuts and fare increases out in the cold.

The legislation is so detrimental to our Nation that the Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood, a former Member of this body on the Republican side of the aisle, has said:

This is the most partisan transportation bill that I have ever seen, and it is also the most antisafety bill I have ever seen. It hollows out our number one priority, which is safety, and frankly, it hollows out the guts of the transportation efforts that we've been about for the last 3 years. It's the worst

transportation bill I've ever seen during 35 years of public service.

In recommending that the President veto this legislation, the administration has said:

The legislation would make America's roads, rails, and transit systems less safe, reduce the transportation options available to America's traveling public, short-circuit local decision making, and turn back the clock on environmental and labor protections.

Mr. Speaker, this is so unfortunate because it's so out of character with the American way, the common sense of the American people about what we should be doing for them.

At the beginning of our country, Thomas Jefferson, when he was President, enlisted his Cabinet officers to build an infrastructure plan for America that involved transportation. In the 1800s, this plan, under Secretary Gallatin, the Secretary of the Treasury, was put forth. It recognized that we had made the Louisiana Purchase, that there were Lewis and Clark expeditions going on, and that we had to build America—build roads and transportation out into these territories so that people would move there, commerce would develop, our country would be strong.

Following this, the Erie Canal, the transcontinental railroad, the Cumberland Road, they were all built after the War of 1812—of course, the transcontinental railroad later than that—when our population was sparse and so was our national treasury.

In my own community of San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco Bay Bridge both were built 75 years ago in the midst of the Great Depression.

President Eisenhower in the mid-to late fifties, not a good economic time either, built and instituted the Interstate Highway System, unifying our country. It was a national security issue to unify our country. It was done at a time when our coffers were low on money, but it created jobs. It did what it was intended to do.

Now we are abdicating our responsibility. Again, 200 years ago, Thomas Jefferson; 100 years later, Teddy Roosevelt, and his initiative for infrastructure centered around our national park system and how we make that part of our national patrimony, and some of that falls under the Transportation Subcommittee of the Congress of the United States. Now, here we are, 100 years later, putting forth a bill that loses jobs, diminishes public safety. It's a missed opportunity, and it's no wonder our Republican colleagues are having so much trouble building support for it in their own caucus.

I just wanted to take a moment to share my views with our colleagues about how wrong this is for the future and how out of keeping it is with our great past, which has seen the strength of our country grow because of our investments in our infrastructure and our bringing people together through transportation.

#### BUDGET'S FAILURE TO ADDRESS OUR DEBT CRISIS

(Mr. BILIRAKIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, for the fourth year in a row, of course President Obama's budget fails to seriously address our Nation's debt crisis and calls for higher taxes and increased stimulus spending.

This budget punishes small businesses, job creators, and seniors at the expense of the administration's spending addiction. This is not a recipe for long-term economic growth.

Instead, we need credible solutions that simplify the Tax Code, control Federal spending, and preserve valuable services for our seniors. Washington should create a win-win situation for all Americans.

The House continues to take these steps with jobs bill after jobs bill that will put people back to work and allow job creators and entrepreneurs to grow.

Unfortunately, the President's budget spends too much, taxes too much, borrows too much, and picks the winners and losers of our economic recovery. This is not what America needs right now.

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#### INTRODUCTION OF SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME EQUALITY ACT

(Mr. PIERLUISI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, as a territory, Puerto Rico has always been treated unequally under Federal health programs. While the Affordable Care Act improved the island's treatment under Medicaid, a number of key inequalities remain under both Medicaid and Medicare.

Today, I am reintroducing legislation to eliminate a provision in Federal law that requires Medicare to reimburse Puerto Rico hospitals far less than Stateside hospitals.

Under the current system, Puerto Rico hospitals are paid a base rate that is about 13 percent lower than the base rate for hospitals in the States. Thus, an island hospital will receive substantially less than any urban, suburban, or rural hospital in the States for providing the same inpatient services, making it harder for island hospitals to deliver high-quality care and to remain financially sound.

This is another example of how the people of Puerto Rico are placed at a clear disadvantage in the race of life because of the island's territory status. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support my bill.

#### HELMETS TO HARDHATS

(Mr. HIGGINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, I met with the executive director of the not-for-profit organization Helmets to Hardhats. Since 2003, Helmets to Hardhats has partnered with the Department of Defense, over 82,000 American businesses, and organized labor to help returning veterans prepare for and find work.

The current unemployment rate for returning veterans under the age of 24 is an unacceptable 38 percent. Helmets to Hardhats gives veterans the tools they need to start long-term careers in the construction trades. In 2008 alone, the organization placed nearly 1,800 military veterans into construction careers.

Mr. Speaker, the last of our combat troops has left Iraq, and we are winding down our military operations in Afghanistan. These veterans have put their lives on the line overseas, and they deserve the assistance of a grateful Nation when they return in order to ensure that they can participate in the economy and in lasting careers.

With that in mind, I congratulate Helmets to Hardhats, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

#### MEDICAID

(Mr. AL GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

Mr. Speaker, there is an effort afoot to move Medicaid from a needs-based program to a block grant program. This, of course, by some estimates, would save approximately \$180 billion.

Yet the question is not really how much money will it save. The question is, How many people will have their bodies healed by virtue of a reduction in the moneys that would go to Medicaid? How many lives will be saved is the question we have to ask ourselves.

In a country that is the richest in the world, the rich must pay their fair share of taxes so that all can benefit from the tax coffers and so that those who are poor and those who need health care can get a fair amount of health care.

I remind you again of what Kennedy said: If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

#### RELIGIOUS LIBERTY VERSUS CONTRACEPTION COVERAGE

(Ms. HANABUSA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Speaker, we began today's session with a debate on contraception. It seems to pit the availability and access to care, which I believe is a fundamental right, against

whether you can legislate the behavior of religious institutions. It seems like an intractable dilemma that we face, but that's not so.

Mr. Speaker, look to Hawaii. Since the 1970s, Hawaii has led the way in terms of medical plans and medical provisions. We have had prepaid health care since then, and of course, as you can imagine, we've had this debate. We had this debate in 1999. The way the State resolved it—and I was there—was that there was the religious exemption given for religious organizations broadly defined, but the employee was also entitled to buy coverage from the insurer at no extra cost.

What does this mean?

This means that it may have been, maybe, an additional \$2 or \$3 a month. The reality of it is, Mr. Speaker, that they didn't pay anything. The insurers covered it because they knew that it was in their best interests. And guess what? Many of the religious organizations did not opt out.

So don't speculate. See the reality. Look at Hawaii.

#### CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

(Mr. LANGEVIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Career and Technical Education Month. I am proud to be able to work with my colleague, G.T. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, as he and I co-chair the Career and Technical Education Caucus.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the importance of the initiative that President Obama announced recently that supports partnerships between community colleges and expanding industry. It should be a bipartisan priority.

We've heard a lot about the skills gap that we're facing in this country, and businessowners repeatedly tell me that they cannot fill openings because the applicants lack the necessary skills. We need better collaboration between the companies doing the hiring and the educators who are preparing our students.

In my district, National Grid—the primary utility—and the Community College of Rhode Island offer a model program to prepare workers for available high-skilled jobs. Through coursework and hands-on training, students receive a certificate in Energy Utility Technology and can then become new employees.

Unfortunately, community colleges simply can't afford enough of these programs. The President's Community College to Career Fund is a small price to pay for the resulting benefit. It's a worthwhile program, and I believe that we need to support it.

Mr. Speaker, there are some partisan differences that this Congress, perhaps, cannot overcome, but the idea of mul-

tiplying this effort at our community colleges is a commonsense goal if our goal is, in fact, to put Americans back to work.

#### SMALL BUSINESS

(Mrs. DAVIS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, small businesses, from used furniture stores to restaurants to barber-shops, drive our economy, but they've had to take a haircut recently since they've been more subject to the ups and downs of the economy than, perhaps, anyone else.

Just last week, I visited small businesses in the San Diego communities of Lemon Grove and Spring Valley, and the people told me they need more customers walking in the doors with money to spend. Well, increasing consumer demand is a key part of our recovery, but it won't come right away. Yet we can use a more immediate tool to help these businesses grow in the meantime.

In the State of the Union address, the President mentioned 17 tax cuts for small businesses in order to put money in their pockets soon. Tax credits for hiring unemployed Americans and for health care costs will incentivize hiring and ensure that the Affordable Care Act is affordable for businesses to implement. An exemption from capital gains taxes for small business investments will spur small business spending and hiring. Also, the American Jobs Act has a provision which would reduce employers' contributions to the payroll tax for their employees.

I support measures like these to encourage the growth of small businesses in order to reignite the American Dream.

#### COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, February 16, 2012.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,  
The Speaker, U.S. Capitol, House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on February 16, 2012 at 9:48 a.m.:

That the Senate agreed to without amendment H. Con. Res. 99.

Appointments:  
Washington's Farewell Address.  
With best wishes, I am  
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair