

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 16, 2012.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER BOEHNER: I hereby respectfully submit my resignation from the Committee on Homeland Security effective today, February 16, 2012. I have accepted an assignment to the House Armed Services Committee.

If you and your staff should have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 202-225-3531.

All the best,

JACKIE SPEIER.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted. There was no objection.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on the Budget:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 16, 2012.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER BOEHNER: I resign my position on the House Committee on the Budget, effective today, Thursday, February 16, 2012. Sincerely,

PAUL D. TONKO,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted. There was no objection.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE HONORABLE JOHN D. DINGELL, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable JOHN D. DINGELL, Member of Congress:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, January 10, 2012.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: This is to notify you formally pursuant to rule VIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives that I have been served with a subpoena, issued by the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York, to produce documents in a criminal case.

After consultation with the Office of General Counsel, I have determined that compliance with the subpoena is inconsistent with the precedents and privileges of the House.

Sincerely,

JOHN D. DINGELL,
Member of Congress.

ELECTING MEMBERS TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 553

Resolved, That the following named Members be and are hereby elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

(1) COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES.—Ms. Speier.

(2) COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET.—Ms. Bonamici.

(3) COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES.—Mr. Tonko.

(4) COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY.—Ms. Bonamici.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

(Mr. FLEMING asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FLEMING. Mr. Speaker, President Obama's mandate on abortion-inducing drugs and contraceptive services has not gone away—I repeat—has not gone away. It has not been settled. There is no compromise. The administration's assault on the First Amendment continues. The deeply held beliefs of people who oppose abortifacients are still under attack.

Let's be clear. The President remains as determined as ever to force insurance companies and their customers to pay for services which defy the moral fiber of their beings and which are contrary to religious beliefs and sacred teachings.

Let me be clear. Despite what you have heard, no rules have changed. There has been no accommodation. President Obama is simply hoping to cover this issue with a smokescreen to push it past Election Day so he can still get his way.

That's why this Congress needs to act—and act right now—to put in place conscience protections that the administration cannot violate. We need to safeguard our religious liberties against these attacks by the Obama administration.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HANNA). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. LAMBORN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

America has a long history of religious freedom.

In the 17th century, colonists fled to what would become the United States of America in search of religious freedom. In 1789, Congress drafted the First Amendment, ensuring the right to the free exercise of religion. Throughout the 20th century, the Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld the rights of individuals to practice their religions according to the dictates of their own

consciences. In 2001, President Bush established the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to “encourage faith-based programs without changing their mission.”

But today, the Obama administration's policies threaten that fundamental freedom. President Obama's new health care mandate, despite a flimsy, politically motivated, so-called “compromise,” forces religious organizations to pay for contraceptives and abortion-inducing drugs in their health care plans.

So much for over 200 years of religious freedom.

The mandate is an unprecedented act of government trampling over the deeply held beliefs of millions of Americans. I stand with my colleagues tonight in showing our united opposition to any efforts by the Obama administration to flagrantly disregard deeply held religious beliefs.

I am a cosponsor of the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act, introduced by Representative JEFF FORTENBERRY of Nebraska, which would protect the rights of conscience for faith-based organizations and would leave Federal law where it was before the President's divisive health care plan was passed.

A number of Representatives from around the country are very troubled by this unprecedented government intrusion into the First Amendment right of freedom of religion. We are going to take the next 60 minutes to explore just how wrong this decision was, how meaningless the so-called “compromise” is, and how vital to our country freedom of religion is today.

At this point, I would like to yield to the courageous sponsor of the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act, Representative FORTENBERRY of Nebraska.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. First of all, let me thank the gentleman from Colorado for his leadership in holding this discussion tonight. This is a very important discussion because it is about a fundamental American principle.

As you mentioned, over a year ago, we actually began work on the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act in anticipation that the new health care law may actually be used to undermine religious freedom and the moral precepts, the deeply held beliefs, of many Americans in this country.

You had mentioned that this particular bill—hopefully, we'll get it through this House soon, and there is a companion measure, by the way, in the Senate—would not only protect faith-based organizations, which seem to be most perniciously targeted by this new HHS mandate from the strong arm of government, which is forcing them to pay for drugs and procedures that may violate their ethics norms, but it would also protect all Americans because, right now, these institutions, as well as other people of good will, are being asked to choose: to follow your deeply held, reasoned beliefs or to obey President Obama and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius'

new mandate, which is in violation of your conscience rights.

That's a false choice.

That's un-American.

That violates a deeply held principle of this country, namely religious liberty, which we have held so dear throughout our history.

□ 1830

The Respect for Rights of Conscience Act really does one simple thing: It restores us to where we were a year and a half ago before the new health care law came into being, and it would prevent things such as this new mandate, which is an intrusion of government into the faith life of many Americans, from ever happening.

Again, I'm very pleased for your willingness to hold this hour of discussion with fellow Members. It is a bipartisan bill, by the way. There are Democrats and Republicans on this bill. It is a bicameral bill. There are over 200 House Members who have cosponsored this bill 200, Democrats and Republicans; and there are 37 Members on the companion piece in the United States Senate, dropped by my friend Senator ROY BLUNT from Missouri. In fact, Senator BLUNT has offered this as potential amendments to must-pass legislation in the other body. We haven't seen that go through yet.

So there is tremendous momentum for this piece of legislation because it's not about politics. It's not about partisanship. It's about a principle, a fundamental American principle: the rights of conscience and religious liberty, as applied in health care.

I'm pleased by the outpouring of support from Members of both sides of the aisle here. I think that is due to the intensity of concern across America about how this time, the government has gone too far.

Again, I appreciate your willingness to hold a good conversation tonight on this fundamental principle of religious liberty and the rights of conscience for all Americans.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you. And I do want to applaud Representative FORTENBERRY of Lincoln, Nebraska, for this courageous move that he has taken, for being a leader on this important issue of protecting the rights of the conscience for Americans. I thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Well, I appreciate it. I hope that we continue to hold more conversations about this because America needs to know. America is already speaking. And that is evident in the number of Members who are deeply interested in this bill.

Mr. LAMBORN. And I can certainly count that 200 Members is close to the magic number of 218, which is 50 percent of the House. Likewise, 37 is getting close to the magic number of 50 needed over in the Senate. So you're doing great work. And I appreciate that, and many Americans appreciate your work.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you very much.

Mr. LAMBORN. At this point, I yield to the gentleman from Louisiana, STEVE SCALISE.

Mr. SCALISE. I thank my friend, the gentleman from Colorado, for yielding and for taking the lead on this hour dedicated to standing up for religious freedom.

I also thank my colleague from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) for his leadership and for bringing forth legislation, of which I am a proud cosponsor, that would repeal the decision that President Obama came down with that is an attack on religious freedom.

As a Catholic who attends church, it's rare when you see a Catholic priest talking from the pulpit, calling on the parishioners to call Congress, to contact Congress about any issue. Yet I want to applaud the Catholic bishops who have been so vocal in helping bring this issue to light, for standing up and saying, This is something that we will not comply with because it violates our own religious beliefs.

The beauty of the Constitution—and especially when you look at the Bill of Rights—are the rights that it lays out to all Americans. And when you read that First Amendment, there is a reason why freedom of religion is included in the First Amendment placed in the Bill of Rights, because our Founders believed it was a right that was handed down to us from God through our Founding Fathers and that it was given to all American citizens.

But yet the President came out with this ruling, and he says, Well, we'll tailor a little exemption just for places of worship. Not religious organizations, just places of worship. And everybody else, they're on their own. They've got religious beliefs that—they don't want to have to pay for abortion-inducing drugs, for example, which the President mandated. Then the President basically said, No, you have to do this, even if it violates your religious beliefs. That violates the First Amendment of the Constitution. It violates the Bill of Rights. No President has the ability to violate the Bill of Rights, those constitutional rights we have.

And then the President, just a few days ago, came out with what he called "an accommodation," an accommodation where he said, Okay, we'll carve out a little more exception. It still doesn't apply to an employer, for example, that has those same religious beliefs, so we'll carve out an exemption.

Well, guess what? After the President carved out that exemption, so to speak, they actually issued a final rule. This is the final rule from the Obama administration after he gave a press conference, a political speech. And in the final rule, it says, "These regulations finalize, without change, interim final regulations." In other words, they didn't even put any of the things from the President's press conference where he said he was going to give accommodations. None of that is in the final rule.

The final rule still says, if you're a Catholic school, for example, or a Catholic Church—and I know Colorado Christian University is one of the plaintiffs in a lawsuit because they

would face a \$500,000 fine under this rule. Even if the President gave a press conference, you can't go to court and say, Look, I'm not going to comply with this rule, because they're going to say, Well, you have to comply; it's the law. And they will say, Oh, but the President gave a speech saying I don't have to. It's still in the rule.

Again, any President who thinks that he has the power to issue accommodations to the Bill of Rights is a President who thinks he's got the ability to take away that Bill of Rights. He doesn't have that. And that's why I'm so proud to stand here with my colleague from Colorado and so many others that have stood up and said, we are going to stand up and defend those religious freedoms that are so precious, not just for religious organizations, but for all Americans, as is called for in the Bill of Rights. So it's an important issue that we need to keep fighting for because this is all a component of the President's health care law.

I remember back in those days when the President stood right here on this House floor at that podium and he looked at all Members of Congress and he said, If you like what you have, you can keep it. Do you remember that? All Americans heard that. Time and time again, the President said, If you like the health insurance you have, you can keep it. Guess what: With this ruling, he broke that promise he made to the American people because if you're a religious organization and you like the fact that you don't have to provide—and you are not going to provide—abortion-inducing drugs because it violates your own conscience, the President is now saying, You can't keep it. You have to abide by my ruling. That goes against the will. And if you are a religious organization that is self-insured, they're left out of this too.

There are so many problems with this. I'm glad that they're fighting it in the courts. But the bottom line is, they shouldn't have to go to the court to defend the First Amendment. That should be something that's sacrosanct. The President shouldn't be trying to violate and attack our religious freedoms.

I appreciate the gentleman for his leadership tonight.

Mr. LAMBORN. I thank the gentleman for making his remarks.

And he mentioned Colorado Christian University. The president of that fine institution is former U.S. Senator Bill Armstrong, who served Colorado both in the U.S. House and in the U.S. Senate in such a distinguished manner. And that is not necessarily a Catholic institution. It's more of a Protestant evangelical institution, although people of different Christian backgrounds attend there. But this shows that it's not strictly a "Catholic" issue. All people of faith are concerned about violations of conscience.

You see here this quote from Martin Luther King. February is Black History Month. And I think it's appropriate to look at what he said. He said, There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe nor politic nor popular but because conscience tells one it is right. He pointed to the need to listen to our consciences when deciding matters of great importance. And Martin Luther King left a great legacy for this country, and his respect for the conscience of the individual is one of those marks of his legacy.

I now yield to my colleague and friend, the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HARRIS. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, we have one of the most serious assaults on religious liberty in American history. The President's rule, finalized last Friday, in its unchanged form, as we just heard, violates the individual rights to religious freedom that every American shares.

The Bill of Rights doesn't pertain to organizations. It wasn't written for groups. It was written for individuals, every individual having the right to exercise their religious belief. The President's rule not only restricts individuals, but it restricts everything except what exists between the walls of a church building. Mr. Speaker, that's not what the First Amendment is about.

□ 1840

My parents, like many immigrants to this country, fled countries where those beliefs weren't held. My parents came from communist countries where we don't find it farfetched to believe that they would imprison, they would punish individuals for their religious beliefs.

Let's look at what the President's Affordable Care Act has turned into.

We knew and America knew when that bill was passed, because the previous Speaker of the House said: We just have to wait to pass it; we'll find out what's in it. Mr. Speaker, we are finding out what's in it, and America doesn't like it, because what's in it is the ability, under the current rule, to restrict individual religious freedom. And if you choose to exercise your religious freedom, you are punished by the government with a fine. And it's not just a few dollars; it's \$2,000 per employee.

If an employer has deeply held religious beliefs, deeply held, it's not up to the President or the Secretary of Health or anyone in the Federal bureaucracy or government to decide if those are appropriate religious beliefs. Yet that is exactly what this rule does. It says if you don't share their religious beliefs or their beliefs in certain types of health care, you are going to pay a fine to the government. Well, that sounds a lot like governments where immigrants have fled from to this country to share in the individual religious belief.

Let's go down the list of what this final rule impairs. It violates the Reli-

gious Freedom Restoration Act passed in this Congress two decades ago. It obviously violates the First Amendment Free Exercise Clause because it does place a substantial burden on individuals who choose to exercise religious belief. That's all they're doing. We have made it an effective crime to hold a certain religious belief that this administration disagrees with. That's not America. That describes a whole lot of other countries in the world, but it doesn't describe America.

It violates the First Amendment free exercise rights because it intentionally discriminates—intentionally discriminates—against religious beliefs. It imposes requirements on some religions, not on others. It picks winners and losers. That's exactly what the First Amendment was meant not to do.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's not going to be adequate if we just extend it to religious organizations because, I remind you, the First Amendment is not about groups or buildings or churches or any institutions; it's about the ability of every American to not violate their conscience. And if their conscience says, It would be wrong for me to provide insurance to an employee that would provide something that my religious belief disagrees with, who are we, as the government, to step in and say, You have to violate your religious beliefs; and if you don't, you pay a fine to the government.

That's not the America we believe in. It never has been; hopefully, it never will be.

We know that the President's final rule, because we just heard it—and, Mr. Speaker, you know, some people listening to us will say, That's not true; that's not true. Go Google the final rule and compare it to the rule last summer, the final rule, issued hours after the President claimed a compromise, and compare it with the interim rule issued last summer. Not a comma is different; not a comma was changed. The smoke and mirrors was: Don't listen to what I say; don't watch my hands as I do this magic.

Go and read the final rule. There was not a single change. There was an accounting gimmick. Americans understand accounting gimmicks. That's why we're in the fiscal mess we're in, because Washington likes them. This time the accounting gimmick attempts to override Americans' religious conscience, and you can't do that. Americans understand there's no such thing as free anything. Somebody pays for it. And if the government is going to mandate that an employer provide insurance that includes provisions that conflict with their conscience beliefs, this is an accounting gimmick to say that somebody else has to pay for the rest of that insurance policy that you provided. Every American knows that's not true. We know specifically for larger institutions that self-insure, they are the insurer. There is no other insurance company. Large bodies, and if they happen to be religious, self-insure.

You will now force them to violate their conscience or pay a \$2,000 per person fine.

I want to thank the Representative from Colorado for bringing this point up tonight, reminding the American public to pay attention to the debate. Go look at that final rule and understand that we're in the same situation as we were last week with a violation of religious liberty that we should never tolerate.

Mr. LAMBORN. I thank the gentleman from Maryland for his insight into this issue and his comments.

A couple of organizational things just very quickly. Because of the keen interest to address this important issue, we're going to ask for a 4-minute timeframe for each speaker, and there are several that I need to take out of the rough order that we have to accommodate tight schedules.

So, as Mr. KELLY comes forward, I will read a quote here from John F. Kennedy. Let me read what John F. Kennedy said about conscience:

I would not look with favor upon a President working to subvert the First Amendment's guarantee of religious liberty.

What a powerful statement.

I now yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. KELLY. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, where I come from in western Pennsylvania, there's an old saying that goes something like this: Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.

And I think that tonight, my colleagues and I come before you and come before this House to talk about some very egregious action that this administration has just taken. And for the President, who at one time was a professor of constitutional law and who knows better, he relies on constitutional convenience. When it's convenient, he follows the Constitution; when it's not, he follows what he wants to do. And then he looks upon us, saying, You just didn't get it. Maybe I didn't use the right words to frame it.

And so he takes policy that is horrible policy, policy that is against our First Amendment, policy that restricts our free speech, restricts our freedom of religion, and puts an onerous burden on people not to be able to choose what they want but what this administration wants. And he says, You know what? Let me take what I just told you, put it in a little different box, a little different color paper and put a little different bow around it, and this is what we're going to use.

And some people sit back and say, Oh, my gosh, I'm so glad he was accommodating. That is not accommodating.

Now, I'm a Roman Catholic, and I will tell you that for many, many months and for many years I have wondered why our religious leaders, the people we look to for spiritual guidance, have been silent and have taken a back seat and have let things happen that they should not have let happen.

Bishop Zubik from Pittsburgh, Bishop Trautman from Erie, and my

priest, Father Steven Neff in Butler, have all spoken up from the pulpit, and they have spoken very clearly about this violation, and they have articulated much better than any of us can. They have done it from the pulpit. They have done it in the papers. They have done it on the radio and on the TV. The American people now know what is going on.

Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. No way.

And we are here tonight because we have had enough of an administration that continues to trample on our Constitution, marginalize it, and use it only when it's convenient. And when it doesn't meet their means, we talk about constitutional niceties. We talk about a Constitution that was well written at the time, really doesn't address the needs of today.

I would tell you that the needs of today have nothing to do with the needs of the American people, the rights of the American people, the freedom of the American people in speech or religion. It has to do with an administration that finds it a little too onerous for their agenda.

So I thank the gentleman from Colorado, and I would hope that all Americans, not just Catholics, not just Christians, but all Americans, are outraged by this attempt to violate our First Amendment rights.

□ 1850

Mr. LAMBORN. I thank the gentleman for his remarks.

There are a number of freshmen, including Mr. KELLY, who are making a big impact here in Congress just at 13 months of service.

Another one, who I would like to refer to as speaking next, is ANN MARIE BUERKLE of the State of New York.

Thank you for coming and speaking.

Ms. BUERKLE. I thank my colleague for putting together this hour that is so meaningful and so important not just for Democrats or Republicans but for every American, not just for people of faith but for those who have no faith. This is a First Amendment issue.

I stand here tonight as a health care professional, someone who is so vitally aware of the importance of conscience and the protection of conscience rights.

This HHS rule is the largest intrusion that we have ever seen from the Federal Government on our rights of conscience. Every American—every American—must understand what an insult this is to our constitutional rights.

I want to just take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to challenge our media as they listen to this debate, and it is a debate that really encompasses so many unlikely bedfellows, I would say, that you see liberals, conservatives, Catholics, atheists, Christians, and Jews coming together in an outrage because our First Amendment rights have been assaulted and have been attacked by this administration. But I would challenge the media to not be

fooled by the red herring that this administration continues to throw out there. Mr. Speaker, this is not about contraception. This is not about women's health. This is not about Catholicism. This is about protecting the most fundamental right that we, as Americans, have.

So many of my colleagues have mentioned about the reasons people came to this country and they continue to want to come to this country, because we ensure that you will not be persecuted for your beliefs, for your religious beliefs. That's the bedrock of the United States of America. That's why there's such outrage over this HHS rule.

As my colleague from Maryland mentioned, this rule has not been changed. Do not be fooled by the smoke and mirrors of this administration. This rule remains the same. It remains an assault on our First Amendment rights. I plead with America and I plead with the media to understand what's at stake in this debate.

I thank my colleague again for this opportunity.

Mr. LAMBORN. I thank the gentleman for her comments.

There's one other person who has a strong scheduling issue that I would like to come forward, from the State of Kansas, another person in his first term who has impressed me greatly, Representative HUELSKAMP.

Mr. HUELSKAMP. Thank you, Congressman. It's a pleasure to stand with you today. It is a pleasure to be here. But it is a real shock to see what is happening today.

I would agree with the comments of my colleague and many others. I must admit—and I guess in today's environment it is an admission. I must admit I am Roman Catholic. This issue is not about what faith you call your own. This issue is about our religious freedoms, whichever we choose.

Who would have thought of an administration that would identify and select a certain group and say, We are going to violate their conscience? We knew this was coming. We knew this was coming.

I'm reminded of a few quotes that I've heard in the last few months—actually, in the last few years—a famous quote that was already used previously, that we have to pass this bill to find out what's in it, the former Speaker of this House. We're finding out what was in it. We found out many things that we did know were in it.

Actually, when this was debated on the Senate side, there was an attempt by our leadership, Republican leadership, that said, no, let's make certain that this doesn't happen. This was anticipated by this administration, I believe, to attempt to violate the conscience of millions and millions of Americans, and yet they continued forward with that.

We also found out that, once we read the bill and it was passed—or passed and then read it—that this administra-

tion, the HHS Secretary who we talk about, Kathleen Sebelius, began to give waivers and said, well, it applies to some groups and not others. If you happen to know the Secretary or happen to be from the right district or happen to work for the right company, you can find a waiver, and I remember speaking out about it. What I didn't anticipate was having to ask a waiver to actually have your beliefs, still hold those in America. Who would have thought that we'd have to get permission from the President of the United States and his Secretary, Kathleen Sebelius, for permission to believe what I believe? That's shocking.

As I mentioned, I am a Catholic, and Pope Benedict XVI a few months ago said that freedom of religion is the most American of all freedoms. And I think about the thousands of folks that have served in this Chamber, that have walked up here and fought for our freedoms and spoke on the floor for them; they would have never guessed that if you are of a particular group—in this case, Catholic, and others that disagree with this administration—you would have to pay a fine to actually disagree with them.

Congressman, you have showed a real civil rights leader in the history of our country, Martin Luther King. One of his other tremendous quotes was that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. That didn't just apply to his beliefs. He thought it applied to all Americans. But what is shocking to me is that we have a President who disregards basic American freedoms and is willing, somehow—it's just shocking to me that he's willing to risk his election, to alienate folks because of what he's attempting to impose. But that's what we expect from ObamaCare. That's what we expect from his health care plan, because it is government mandates. It is government control.

As the Attorney General of Virginia said, the President's health care plan, the debate over that is not about health care. The fundamental issue is liberty. And that's what we're finding out right here.

I call upon this President, I call upon Kathleen Sebelius, please, reach deep down into your soul, and also think about your next election. Because we know if this rolls back, it's about the next election. But we don't care about the next election. Americans care about their freedoms and liberties.

I want to thank my colleague for bringing this to our attention. We've been fighting this on many routes, and I think it's just absolutely critical. I thank you for your efforts, and, hopefully, we will recall those words: An injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Mr. LAMBORN. If I could ask the gentleman, is there any chance that Kathleen Sebelius will issue waivers to religious organizations, not just the labor unions who up until now have been the main ones getting waivers?

Mr. HUELSKAMP. That is an excellent idea I guess we would expect from

the administration, but, fundamentally, that is favoritism. That is picking who gets to believe what. And as previous colleagues talked about escaping, immigrants that came to this country came here for this particular reason, to avoid paying a fine for what they believed. That's exactly what we are being forced to do.

Do we get permission from the President not to pay the fine? Do we get a waiver? Well, how do we accommodate religious freedom, Mr. President? How do we accommodate that, Secretary Sebelius? How do we balance? It doesn't say anywhere in the Constitution we're going to balance what you want with our freedoms.

The First Amendment is very clear. And the first part of the First Amendment is the freedom to believe in the God as we choose. And I appreciate and thank you for that.

I'll do this. Let's ask for a waiver for everybody in America to actually get a waiver so we can believe what we want to believe. I would ask for that as well.

So thank you, Congressman, for your leadership, and we will continue to join you in this effort.

Mr. LAMBORN. I thank the gentleman from Kansas. He's been an excellent addition to the newer Members coming here to Congress, an excellent addition.

Among those who are having scheduling conflicts, unfortunately, is me. I have a committee that's meeting right now that's having a markup. We're having recorded votes on amendments and passage of bills out of committee, so I have to leave in just a moment. As much as I so badly wish I could finish up this discussion and hear the comments that have been moving to me so far, I have to depart.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

□ 1900

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, might I make an inquiry as to how much time I have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 26 minutes remaining.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I thank the Speaker.

At this time, I would recognize the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. NUNNELEE). We are trying to keep it to about 4 minutes apiece. And I'm not just saying that because you're ready to talk, but that's the time we have.

Mr. NUNNELEE. I want to thank the chairman, the gentleman from California, for your leadership in this area.

Religious freedom in America is under attack, not from some outside source, but from within. And if we've learned anything from history, we should have learned that great civilizations are at a greater risk of destroy-

ing themselves from within than they ever are in danger from any outside peril.

Freedom of religion is one of the cornerstones of our society. In 1789, when James Madison and the rest of the Framers of our Constitution were crafting that great document, their genius created the concepts of separation of powers, checks and balances, limited government. However, when that document was presented to the States, the people said that with all of its genius, that document was inadequate. While it outlined a framework for government, it failed to guarantee individual rights.

So in order to establish the Government of the United States of America as we know it today, our ancestors insisted that our Nation adopt the Bill of Rights—10 amendments to the Constitution that would guarantee rights to every individual. That Bill of Rights begins:

Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

Yet the Obama administration has displayed a disturbing contempt for the religious liberty guaranteed in that Bill of Rights. The message coming out of them seems to be: it's okay to have religious beliefs as long as you confine that practice to your church. They just don't get it. They don't seem to grasp the fact that our faith is part of who we are. We don't check it in and check it out when we walk into our places of worship. We take it with us everywhere we go.

Now, defenders of this health mandate are attempting to play a clever political game. They're attempting to frame this as a narrow debate between women's rights and the Catholic Church. The truth is, this is about an outrageous idea that the State can force citizens of this Nation to violate their religious beliefs by some degree of regulation, and that some bureaucrat at Health and Human Services can violate constitutional rights.

All Americans—its individuals, not just religious institutions—should be free to purchase and provide health insurance that does not violate their religious beliefs. This principle is so basic that it's tragic that we even have to introduce legislation to reaffirm it. But it's the position of the Obama administration that has put us in the position we're in today. That's why I'm a proud cosponsor of the Rights of Conscience Act, and I urge its swift passage.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I thank the gentleman for his comments.

It is now my pleasure to yield to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. STUTZMAN).

Mr. STUTZMAN. It's a privilege to be here to stand on the House floor with my colleagues this evening and discuss an issue that is facing Americans today that really we should not be standing here talking about. We face tough economic times, but instead we

have to be dealing with the administration's rule that he is implementing that came out of the health care bill passed several years ago. This is a freedom-of-religion issue. This issue is not about birth control. This issue is about government control.

I'd like to share a couple of lines from our founding documents that I think are very important. I think one thing that has happened over the past couple of years is that Americans have become more familiar with our Constitution, because I believe the Constitution has the answers for the problems that we face today.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share this particular line that actually influenced the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment:

All men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience.

That is found in the Virginia Declaration of Rights. The First Amendment says this:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today and I believe that this is a threat to our freedoms. I stand here as a Baptist, along with my colleagues from many denominations who believe that this is a threat to our freedom of religion. Can you imagine the outcry if the President told journalists what stories they could write? This is no less appalling. The President's decision to force individuals of faith to violate their conscience is a blatant assault on the First Amendment.

One of the things that is so foundational here in America is that we are a people of strong convictions. We are a people of faith. What this rule does is it puts the real American safety net at risk. We have so many faith-based organizations, charities, people that organize to help those who are in need. They are the backbone of the social safety net of this country. I believe that this rule interferes with those core beliefs and that HHS has jeopardized the mission that so many Americans have to help people across this country.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share this quote by one of our famous and well-respected Founders and Forefathers of our country, and it is Daniel Webster, who said this in addressing Americans about preserving the principles of the Constitution. He said:

It is hardly too strong to say that the Constitution was made to guard the people against the dangers of good intentions. There are men in all ages who mean to govern well, but they mean to govern. They promise to be good masters, but they mean to be masters.

Mr. Speaker, I'd submit to you today that this administration, past Congresses, has good intentions; but they are beginning to control and to rule

the people in ways that violate our constitutional freedoms and our liberties.

So I want to thank the gentleman for organizing this Special Order because I believe that the people must know that this is a rule that will infringe on their First Amendment rights.

The last quote I'd like to read tonight is a quote from Thomas Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson says:

All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent.

I ask the American people to voice their opinion, to voice their freedom, and to let their Member of Congress know what this ruling does to the freedom of religion.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I thank the gentleman for his comments.

It is now a pleasure on my part to be able to recognize for his words the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG).

Mr. WALBERG. I appreciate the opportunity from the gentleman from California to stand with my colleagues tonight to speak on an important issue.

It was an amazing experience for me this morning to be part of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee and to have a hearing where we had numerous members of religious organizations, including leaders in the Catholic, the Jewish, and the Protestant faiths, in front of us, men who were appealing for rights that should be taken for granted in this country, the rights of religious freedom.

It brought back to me the thoughts that I experienced just a year ago almost this very day when I was in Israel and had the opportunity to hear from the Prime Minister of Israel as he spoke with glowing admiration for America. He talked about the religious liberty that was unlike any other place in the world in Israel today for all faiths, all religions, based upon, as he said, the experience, the value, and the documents of America and its foundings.

□ 1910

And so, today, to hear our religious leaders speaking for their religious liberty was unreal. Those documents that the Prime Minister of Israel referred to going back to the Declaration of Independence, where it says:

We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and endowed with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Liberty.

And our First Amendment has been quoted numerous times tonight. The beginning of the Bill of Rights:

Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

These truly sacred documents, documents that we live by, at least we should, documents that we can carry and quote from, are under serious attack today. These documents of lib-

erty, liberty, not just for organizations but for individuals, not just for churches, but for parishioners who have businesses, who are body shop owners, who are lawyers, who are doctors and have employees that they want to care for.

We have today a Justice of the Supreme Court who recommends to a country looking for a constitution to write, not America's Constitution, but constitutions of other countries. Unbelievable.

And attorneys, labor attorneys pooh-poohing the opposition to attacks on our own Constitution as constitutional niceties. This is not America that we understand.

And now the attack on the constitutional right of religious conscience, the foundational liberty upon which this great land was birthed, our churches and our individuals.

We would do well to listen, Mr. Speaker, to the warnings of our Framers and Founders.

And with this I close: Jonathan Witherspoon, a minister who signed the Declaration of Independence said:

A republic once equally poised must either preserve its virtue or lose its liberty.

John Adams followed by saying:

Liberty lost once is liberty lost forever.

We would do well also to take the heed of enemy voices who desire the destruction of America and its liberty, lest we unwittingly follow and fall into their advice, advice such as this that was said:

America is like a healthy body and its resistance is threefold; its patriotism, its morality, its spiritual life. If we undermine these three areas, America will collapse from within.

Joseph Stalin.

May God grant us, Mr. Speaker, wisdom so that our President, this Congress, and all of America will never let these words be a prophecy fulfilled.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I thank the gentleman for his powerful words.

At this time I would yield to the gentleman from Tennessee, Dr. ROE.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank the gentleman for holding this Special Order tonight.

Mr. Speaker, as a young man, I swore an oath to protect and uphold the Constitution of the United States when I was sworn into the United States military. Literally, millions of young men and women have sworn that oath, shed blood, precious blood, to protect the individual liberties and freedoms that we take for granted in this Nation. And now, no longer, due to the actions of this President, can we take those for granted.

I want to associate my remarks tonight with my colleagues who've so eloquently spoken. Once again, it tells us why government should be out of these individual decisions that we make. We passed almost 2 years ago, and Mr. LUNGREN remembers this very well, on this House floor we debated this health care bill that now mandates

not only what we should buy, an essential benefits package, but what's in it and how it's administered. How ridiculous that is. Individuals have that right and should maintain that right and that freedom to do that.

Our government was established to protect rights of conscience for all Americans, not just some Americans, but all Americans. Neither the HHS nor any other government Department should have the power to force people to violate their conscience. Since 1973, health care and coverage providers—and I am a physician, I am an obstetrician and gynecologist—were granted protections in the law to follow their conscience. This rule that was passed and will be the law of the land cancels those protections. Cancels those protections.

This HHS rule will force individuals and organizations to violate deeply held moral convictions with no opportunity to opt out, no opportunity to opt out. Protection of the rights of conscience is a fundamental American principle, a fundamental liberty, not a marginal consideration to be subordinated or ignored because of Federal mandates. It's guaranteed in this book right here, the Constitution. The freedom of religion is the first one mentioned in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights.

The HHS rule gives people and me, a provider, an impossible choice: either break the law, or violate your beliefs. This rule is causing buyer's remorse in someone who previously supported the health care reform bill.

Former Representative Kathy Dahlkemper recently said:

I would never have voted for the final version of the bill if I expected the Obama administration to force Catholic hospitals and Catholic colleges and universities to pay for contraception.

Christians cannot distinguish between purely religious activities and provisions of health care. Because of this rule and because of this President, many may have no choice but to stop providing coverage for their employees. And providers like myself and others with conscience clauses may have to stop providing care.

This is not a choice that any of us should have to make. It's a freedom guaranteed by over 200 years of bloodshed for this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, the American people cannot stand by and let this happen.

I appreciate very much the gentleman holding this Special Order tonight.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I thank the gentleman for his remarks.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to share the last 9 minutes with the gentleman from New Jersey, the man I call the William Wilberforce of this Congress, Mr. CHRIS SMITH.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank my great friend from California for his leadership, former Attorney General of California, one of the most decisive and

wonderful debaters in the House of Representatives and a great champion of life.

Mr. Speaker, President Obama's slick public relations offensive this past Friday contained neither an accommodation nor a compromise, nor a change in his coercion rule. It was, instead, a pernicious attack on religious freedom.

The Obama final rule promulgated on Friday is an unprecedented government attack on the conscience rights of religious entities and anyone else, and I repeat that, anyone else who, for moral reasons, cannot and will not pay for abortion-inducing drugs, such as ella, or contraception and sterilization procedures in their private insurance plans.

Mr. Obama is arrogantly using the coercive power of the state to force faith-based charities, hospitals and schools to conform to his will at the expense of conscience.

Mr. Obama's means of coercing compliance, ruinous fines of \$2,000 per employee when faith-based organizations refuse to comply, and they will refuse to comply, will impose incalculable harm on millions of children educated in faith-based schools. It will also impose harm on the poor, sick, disabled, and frail elderly who are served with such extraordinary compassion and dignity by faith-based entities.

For example, Catholic Charities employs 70,000 employees. They will be hit with a fine by the Obama administration of \$140 million per year. That's the fine. That's the penalty: \$2,000 per employee.

Notre Dame has about 5,000 employees. That will be a \$10 million fine on Notre Dame. And so it goes for those faith-based organizations.

Let me just say to my colleagues that vocal apologists of the Obama coercion rule say over and over again that the IOM, the Institute of Medicine, panel that reportedly researched and did recommend the coercion rule was somehow independent. Nothing could be further from the truth.

□ 1920

Journalist Kathryn Jean Lopez reported that the Human Life International organization looked into the members of the panel. You stack the panel, you get a predetermined outcome. They found that it was packed with pro-abortion activists.

For example, member Claire Brindis, member of the organization of NARAL Pro-Choice America; Angela Diaz, member of Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health; Paula Johnson, chairwoman of Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts; Magda Peck, also on the board of directors, or was, of Planned Parenthood of Nebraska and Council Bluffs. She was chair of the board as well as vice chair. If you just stack an IOM or any other panel, you will get a predetermined outcome, and so they did.

Mr. Speaker, finally, the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act reasserts and restores conscience rights by making absolutely clear that no one can be compelled to subsidize so-called services in private insurance plans contrary to their religious beliefs or moral convictions. This legislation must be on the floor soon, and I hope the American people will realize how important this bill offered by Mr. FORTENBERRY is to conscience rights in America.

I thank my good friend for yielding.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind Members to avoid personalities with regard to the President, such as accusations of arrogance.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I thank the gentleman for his comments, and I thank him for his leadership on many, many issues of human rights, not only in the United States but around the world.

I was astounded when I heard the comments of the leader of the minority party in the House of Representatives several days ago when she referred to those who were concerned about this decision by the President of the United States and the secretary of HHS as using religious liberty as an excuse. What an insult to those men and women of good faith who've expressed their concern about how this will require them to either violate their consciences or pay fines in tribute to the Federal Government.

Interestingly enough, Alexis de Tocqueville said this about Catholics:

The American Catholics are faithful to the observance of their religion. Nevertheless, they constitute the most Republican and most Democratic class of citizens which exists in the United States. Although this fact may surprise some observers at first, the causes by which it is occasioned may easily be discovered upon reflection.

What he suggested was the consciences of Catholics who utilized their consciences to bring to the public debate did not undermine America, it fortified America.

We've crossed this bridge before. Unfortunately there were those who claimed to be Republicans in the 1800s who led the fight against men and women of conscience who happened to be Catholic. This caused Abraham Lincoln to say these words in a letter to Joshua Speed in 1855:

As a Nation, we began by declaring that all men are created equal. We now practically read it "all men are created equal except Negroes." When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read "all men are created equal except Negroes and foreigners and Catholics."

What does it mean? The Know-Nothings feared that Catholics would bring their conscience and their values of faith to the public debate.

We've been across this bridge before. We should not accept it. It's not just

Catholics. It is men and women of all religious beliefs and even those of no religious beliefs who understand that a government that commands that you do something against your conscience is a government that can basically take anything away from you, and in this case, perhaps the most precious thing there is in you, your faith.

We cannot let it stand. It is a question of the culture of America, the tradition of America, the first amendment to the Constitution of America.

This is a serious debate because it questions whether anyone, anybody in government, can basically tell you that you must check your religious values at the door.

Interestingly enough, just a week and a half ago, I was present when I heard the President speak at the National Prayer Breakfast and say he does not and we do not and we cannot check our religious values at the door. That's precisely what this edict—and that's what it is—this edict does.

We ought to understand. We speak not just for Catholics, we speak not just for Christians, we speak not just for Jews, for Muslims, for Hindus, for people of faith, and for those who have no faith. We speak for all Americans in understanding that the First Amendment is not made up of mere words; it is made up of first principles. And we cannot allow first principles to be cast aside.

That's why we must stand in unity against this rule, this unprincipled, this unlawful, this unconstitutional rule that has no basis in fact, has no basis in the Constitution, and has no basis in the culture of this country properly understood.

I thank the gentleman for his contribution. I thank all for their contribution.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order this evening.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. SCHMIDT. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start tonight by continuing our discussion on conscience protections and our First Amendment rights.

As I did yesterday during the press conference on the same topic, I'd like to read the First Amendment to our Constitution. It states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Our Founding Fathers thought that those specific five tenets were crucial to the citizens of America—so critical that they needed to be guaranteed first and foremost.

The conscience protection debate that started a few weeks ago with the administration's announcement of a new rule regarding contraception, sterilization, and insurance policies is a perfect example of the importance of these rights.

The government cannot, and should not, be forcing any employer, whether they are Catholic charities and schools or an individual businessman, to violate the tenets of their faith.

As this debate continues, it highlights the great need to have a standard that explicitly protects employers from attempts to erode our First Amendment rights.

We need to fight for the standard in H.R. 1179, the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act of 2011, introduced by my good friend from Nebraska, Mr. FORTENBERRY.

It simply protects employers from being forced to violate their religious or moral beliefs by an overreaching mandate from the administration. It takes nothing away from the public, nor does it prohibit women from getting services that are already provided, as some have alleged.

H.R. 1179 is a responsible and reasonable response to clarify what can and cannot be mandated through the healthcare law regarding conscience protections.

We cannot allow the federal government to start going down the slippery slope of eroding our constitutionally protected rights—we took an oath to uphold the Constitution.

As a mother and grandmother, I will do everything in my power to ensure that the rights we enjoy today continue to be guaranteed for my daughter, grandchildren, and generations to come.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3630, MIDDLE CLASS TAX RELIEF AND JOB CREATION ACT OF 2012

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina (during the Special Order of Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 112-400) on the resolution (H. Res. 554) providing for consideration of the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 3630) to provide incentives for the creation of jobs, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, thank you for the time.

The Progressive Congressional Caucus is that caucus in Congress that comes together to talk about the most important values that our country is founded on—ideas like fairness, inclusion, prosperity for all, protecting our

world and the environment that we live in. The Progressive Caucus can be found talking about civil and human rights, standing for an economy that is fair and inclusive and has shared benefits and responsibilities for everybody. The Progressive Caucus is that caucus in Congress that will stand up for peace and diplomacy and also will make the case for the human rights of all people.

We bring you the progressive message to illustrate what's at stake in America today. I'm very pleased that I'm joined by my good friend from the great State of Illinois, JAN SCHAKOWSKY. We're going to bring the progressive message tonight and just talk a little bit about the values that we share.

You know, I want to set up a question I have for you, Congresswoman SCHAKOWSKY, because we have been dealing with this transportation bill over the last several days, and we will be up until the week of February 27.

One of the things about it that I found most galling is that one of the ways that the Republican majority intends to pay for the transportation bill is by charging Federal employees a fee, and really a tax, on their retirement and then using the money that they're going to gain to pay for their transportation bill.

□ 1930

When I think about people who are Federal employees, I'm thinking of people who take care of our veterans—the nurses at the VA. I'm thinking of people who make sure our roads and our parks are safe. I'm thinking about Federal employees who make sure our water and our air is clean. So I just want to ask you:

Do you think it's fair to sort of go after Federal employees, working people, to try to pay for this transportation budget we've been talking about over these last few days?

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I thank you for that question and for leading this hour in this important discussion.

No. In fact, our colleagues in the majority want to pay for the legislation in the transportation bill, but what they want to continue to do is to refuse to touch a single hair on the heads of millionaires and billionaires, and they stand firm in their defense of the big oil companies and the corporations that ship their jobs overseas. Instead of asking the wealthiest Americans to contribute a little bit more, they want to ask Federal workers. Instead of going to the 1 percent, they want to ask people who are solidly in the 99 percent to pay the price.

Federal employees are hardworking, middle class Americans, who work for the Federal Government all across this country, not just in Washington. In fact, only about 30 percent of Federal employees are in Washington. Of course, some of them work in our offices, and they work in this House of Representatives. We all represent Federal workers.

So who are they? You mentioned a few. Yet there are also those benefit specialists who help our seniors get their Social Security and Medicare benefits, and they're the law enforcement professionals who defend our borders and our ports and our skies and us when we're here in the Capitol.

Mr. ELLISON. FBI agents who are protecting us from everything from terrorism to drugs to guns, are these people Federal employees?

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Those are called Federal employees, as are the Capitol Police; and they're computer and network specialists who spend their days making sure that we're safe from cyberattacks. They're medical and scientific researchers who are looking for cures for devastating diseases. They're the nurses and doctors who take care of our wounded warriors. They're the men and women who make sure the food supply is safe and that our water is clean enough for our children to drink. They're the hardworking support staff. I just left my office, and I was having my trash and recycling taken away.

Those are all Federal employees. There are 423,000 Federal employees who earn less than \$50,000 a year; and 48 percent of them are women, but 60 percent of the employees earning less than \$50,000 a year are women. They are the people who have seen their pay frozen for 2 years while health care and other costs are going up.

Mr. ELLISON. If I may just ask the gentlelady a question.

Do you mean to tell me and the American people and the Speaker tonight that not only is this transportation bill proposing to cut into and to basically tax Federal employees' retirement benefits, but they've already had a freeze on top of this?

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. For 2 years. That's about \$30 billion a year in cuts. So they've already given up, really, about \$60 billion from a normal increase in wages just to pay for the cost of things going up. Everybody knows that the cost of food and gasoline and those kinds of things are going up, and still we aren't asking millionaires—or they aren't. The Republicans who propose these cuts, these additional contributions from Federal employees, are not asking millionaires and billionaires to contribute their fair share.

Mr. ELLISON. I will say to the gentlelady that I have brought a document here with me today. I had a great meeting with some Federal employees the other day, and they said, Explain it to me, GOP.

One person, Paul here, says: I earn less than \$45,000 a year. Explain it to me, GOP, how cutting my pay creates jobs. This person, Paul, represents the Tobyhanna Army Depot workers. They do something really important.

Then there is another Federal employee: Twelve percent of my salary I earn caring for veterans goes to my retirement. Explain it to me, GOP, how cutting my retirement puts people to