

MORE VIEWERS NOTE MEDIA BIAS

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

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Madam Speaker, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted last month, more viewers feel the national media are biased than ever before. The survey found that 67 percent of Americans say there is a "fair amount" or a "great deal of bias" in news coverage. Only 10 percent responded that there is "no bias at all" in the national media.

These percentages show a significant increase in the number of Americans who believe that they receive biased coverage of current events by the national media. The national media owe it to the American people to be honest and fair. Americans' distrust of the national media will continue to grow until the media adhere to the highest standards of their profession and provide the American people with facts, balanced stories, and objective coverage of the news.

HOUSING CRISIS FACING AMERICANS

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

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to talk about the housing crisis facing Americans. In California's San Joaquin Valley, we know firsthand the pain the housing crisis has caused our families and communities as foreclosure rates have continued to hover well above the national average.

The \$25 billion settlement announced last week gives significant relief to homeowners; but it's not the wholesale, systemic change necessary to put our housing market back on solid ground.

Homeowners are tired of waiting for meaningful change, and tweaks are not enough. Enacting the HOME Act and a homeowner's bill of rights would go a long way toward stabilizing the market and leveling the playing field for the future. We know it's essential to get our economy back on track.

Restoring economic security starts with passing meaningful policies that rebuild the foundation of our communities and the American home. After all, the American home is the single largest investment that the average American family makes in their lifetime. It's part and parcel of the American Dream and the foundation of America's middle class.

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

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 554 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 554

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 3630) to provide incentives for the creation of jobs, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the conference report to its adoption without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate; and (2) one motion to recommmit if applicable.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. CAPITO). The gentleman from South Carolina is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume.

During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, House Resolution 554 provides for consideration of the conference report on H.R. 3630, a bill to extend the payroll tax deduction, protect Medicare payments for doctors, and begin responsible reform of the unemployment benefits system.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of this rule. Today, we are taking up legislation that does three things: extend the payroll tax deduction, reform our unemployment benefits system, and protect Medicare payments for doctors.

First, on the bright side, Republicans and Democrats were able to find a compromise to pay for two very important things: much-needed reforms to the unemployment benefits program and protecting Medicare payments to the physicians who serve our seniors.

In regard to the payroll tax deduction, unfortunately our friends on the left did not think it was important to pay for the extension. Spending without making the proper adjustments is a notion I am not fond of. My voting record makes no secret of that. This is what makes this vote so difficult today. You cannot always get exactly what you want; but, today, I applaud both sides for attempting to get fairly close to it.

We cannot continue to pay unemployment benefits for 99 weeks indefinitely. We cannot allow payments to our doctors to be affected, as that will only turn around and affect the care available to those in need.

□ 0920

And we cannot raise taxes on American families. By voting for this rule, we are signaling it is time to move forward, plain and simple.

Once again, Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this rule. I encourage my colleagues to vote "yes" on the rule, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I thank my good friend from South Carolina for yielding me time.

Millions of Americans all across this country are struggling, and they need our help. What they don't need is more Republican gamesmanship at their expense. The Democrats have literally forced the Republicans to realize that they can't just make policy measures that help the rich while taking away from the poor.

I may support this bill in light of the fact that it will give a payroll tax cut to 160 million Americans. It also extends unemployment insurance to those Americans who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own, and it will allow seniors access to their physicians under Medicare. And, as a footnote there, we really should do the doc fix permanently and stop piecemealing and playing games with this particular measure.

The bill is not perfect, the pay-for is nowhere near perfect, and the length of the extension is not perfect, but it does contain critical provisions that many Democrats negotiated to keep in the bill. While we were able to compromise today, I do not think that my Republican friends deserve too much credit. Since they regained the majority, the American people have seen firsthand their obstructionist policies in action. In fact, earlier this week, my friends on the right attempted to bring to the floor a transportation bill so flawed that my former colleague and Transportation Secretary and good friend of mine, Ray LaHood, stated:

This is the most partisan transportation bill I've ever seen, and it is also antisafety. It hollows out our number one priority, which is safety. It's the worst transportation bill I've ever seen during 35 years of public service.

The American people want a government that understands the challenges they face daily. Republicans want an economy that works great for the greediest and leaves the neediest out in the cold. Just ask a teacher in my constituency in Belle Glade or Margate or a firefighter in Fort Lauderdale or Pompano Beach and they'll tell you an extra \$1,000 in their pockets makes a huge difference in putting food on the table, gas in the car, and being able to stay in their homes.

We've been forced to strike this compromise because, for decades, Republicans have pushed policies that favor the wealthy. We should not forget that, while we are debating how to pay for this payroll tax cut, unemployment insurance, and payments to Medicare

physicians, our Nation's massive deficits are due in large part to Republican tax cuts for the wealthiest in America.

The fact of the matter is that the wealthy have continued to pay less and less taxes. In the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan started to lower tax rates, and then President George Bush slashed capital gains and income tax rates for the wealthy to their now historic lows.

As I travel throughout the constituency that I'm privileged to represent, into areas where the unemployment rate in some places in the Glades is 40 percent, I ask myself: Who's actually benefitting from these tax cuts for the rich? It's certainly not the police officer living in Boynton or the nurse working at the VA hospital or the community health center in West Palm Beach.

Madam Speaker, while I'm pleased that we've come to a compromise to extend unemployment insurance, I remain deeply concerned that this bill reduces benefits from 99 weeks to as little as 73 weeks through December. I hear daily from constituents who are approaching the end of their unemployment period and are at a loss as to where to turn next.

Although the economy may be starting to recover, what are we supposed to tell those people who have been looking for a job for months and months on end? What kind of compromise are they supposed to strike with unemployment?

The best way to reduce the deficit is to put money into the hands of people who spend it. This is how we support our communities. If we invest more money in Main Street, consumers will have more money in their pockets to spend on putting food on the table, gas in their cars, and, as I said, being able to stay in their homes.

Every American should have the opportunity to succeed. Opportunity should not be limited by geography, race, gender, or the size of one's bank account. Yet thanks to massive gaps in the Tax Code, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

The top 1 percent of earners are responsible for 20 percent of the Nation's annual income, up from 10 percent in 1981. The wealthiest CEOs are paid 400 times what the average worker earns. Only 30 years ago, it was 20 times as much.

Americans in the highest tax bracket are supposed to pay 35 percent of their income in taxes. However, since President Bush slashed the capital gains rate to 15 percent, the top 400 wealthiest that we continue to identify, one of about the top 4,000, for example, pay only 15 percent in taxes on 80 percent of their income. As the law is currently written, any wealthy American paying the full 35 percent needs to get a new accountant.

In addition to reducing the term of unemployment insurance coverage, this bill raises an additional \$15 billion by requiring Federal employees to con-

tribute a larger amount to their retirement accounts. My understanding is this is a grandfathered measure that will protect the ones that are Federal workers now; but I'm not sure that this is going to satisfy Members on either the right or left, or the Democrats or Republicans on this measure, since it's addressing Federal employees and there were other ways to get to that \$15 billion.

Federal employees are currently in their second year of a pay freeze, while my colleagues across the aisle only a few weeks ago voted to freeze Federal employees' pay for a third year. Republicans don't think twice about limiting Federal workers' ability to support their families but are more than willing to shut down the government when bankers are asked to pay their fair share of taxes on their bonuses.

How much can we continue to pick on Federal workers? They are not fat cats. They are postal workers, receptionists, janitors, teachers, nurses, social workers, and police officers, to name a few. They are the fundamental underpinning of this Nation. How much can we continue to pile on their backs? We've already broken their bank accounts. How much weight should the wealthiest American, who can afford it, carry?

Investing in America is how we are going to create jobs. Let's build the infrastructure for the coming era of green energy. Let's fix our aging highways and bridges. Please, let's adequately fund our schools so our children can get a good education and can compete on a global level. Doing these kinds of things today will create a brighter America for generations to come.

With that, Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, my good friend on the left, Mr. HASTINGS, talks a lot about taxes this morning, and that's probably an appropriate conversation to have.

I will say, however, that as we examine the facts around the capital gains tax, let us not forget that President Clinton lowered the capital gains tax from 28 percent to 20 percent, according to the American Thinker. But we also have to keep in mind that the most tax-driven piece of legislation in the last 3 or 4 years is, in fact, the folks on the left and the national health care reform, a \$500 billion increase of taxes and fees on the middle class.

□ 0930

Let us not get lost on the fact that those on the left continue to find ways to tax the middle class.

When I think about the notion that we're going to have a conversation about taxation, it kind of gets me excited. I'm looking forward to this opportunity to debate the worthiness of the payroll tax deduction and how both sides have come together. This is a good thing; we've found some common

ground on the issue of the payroll tax. But where we will not find common ground is on the issue of slicing taxes for the middle class.

My friends on the left, they talk a good game, but they don't walk the talk. Because when you look at the national health care program, you must concede that \$500 billion of new taxes is a bit much for the middle class. You must say that the surtax on investment income—another \$123 billion to start 11 months from now—that is a pain for the middle class. It's a pain for the middle class.

When I think about the excise tax on comprehensive health insurance plans—\$32 billion just a few years away. When I think about the hike on Medicare, another payroll tax—\$86 billion of new taxes starting in another 11 months. My friends on the left, they seem to have this concept that if we just wait a little while, the American people will forget who, in fact, is raising the taxes on the middle class.

I would say that my good friend from Georgia wants to chime in on the debate, so I'm going to yield, Madam Speaker, 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY).

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I do rise in support of the rule. And of course I want to thank my colleague from South Carolina, the beautiful Lowcountry, for yielding me this time.

While I am, Madam Speaker, supporting the rule, I must also inform my colleagues that I will be opposing the underlying conference report.

In December, this House passed responsible legislation that afforded a full-year extension of the payroll tax holiday. It provided long-overdue reforms to unemployment benefits. And of course it mitigated the looming 27.4 percent physician-reimbursement cut for 2 years so that all seniors would still have access to medical care.

Most importantly, Madam Speaker, that fiscally prudent legislation was completely offset. My colleagues understand that by that we mean it's paid for with spending cuts. Yet when it came time for the other body to stand with us for the American people, it failed; and it forced us into this 2-month extension. So here we are again. Madam Speaker, I thought that this approach was wrong then, and I still believe that it is wrong now.

While I am opposing the conference report, I do need to commend Chairman CAMP for ensuring that necessary unemployment insurance reforms stayed in the bill; and I want to also commend Chairmen UPTON and WALDEN for working diligently to include sensible spectrum auction legislation, as well as for their work to make sure that seniors—at least through the end of this year, 10 months—have the ability to see their doctors.

As a physician, I have and I will continue to fight for the long-term solution to eliminate this flawed SGR system once and for all. However, despite

these efforts, I cannot and I will not support legislation that extends the payroll tax holiday without paying for it. This will add \$100 billion to the deficit, and it will create an even greater shortfall within the Social Security trust fund that already has over a \$100 billion shortfall just in the last 2 years. And what is it, \$2.4 trillion that the government owes the trust fund that's not there, just IOUs in a file drawer in West Virginia. We did the right thing in December, and I believe that it is a travesty that we would now reverse that course.

So, Madam Speaker, make no mistake, I support tax relief for hardworking Americans, but by reducing their marginal tax rates. But this legislation is simply an election-year gimmick that jeopardizes our already-fragile Social Security system while literally tricking voters—160 million of them—with the hopes that they believe it's real tax relief.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. I thank the gentleman.

Madam Speaker, we can do better, and quite frankly, the American people deserve better. It's time to end all of these games—the smoke and mirrors, the bait-and-switch, the political gamesmanship, all with concern for this next election and to the detriment of this current and future generations.

For that reason, Madam Speaker, while I support the rule, and I thank the gentleman for yielding, I will be voting “heck no” against this conference report.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I'm very pleased to yield 2 minutes to my very good friend from California, the distinguished gentleman, Ms. MATSUI, a former member of the Rules Committee.

Ms. MATSUI. I'd like to thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, this bipartisan agreement will ensure that 160 million Americans will not see a tax increase at a time when so many families are still struggling to make ends meet. The payroll tax cut provides American families an average of \$1,000 annually to help pay their bills and for day-to-day necessities.

I am also pleased that this agreement will extend unemployment insurance. With the unemployment numbers in my district over 12 percent, continued unemployment benefits are important for so many to make ends meet while still trying to find work.

Additionally, providing for a Medicare physician payment fix will ensure that seniors have continued access to care. But I do urge my colleagues to continue working for a long-term solution to this critical issue.

I am supportive of the spectrum provisions in this bill, which will finally provide public safety with a nationwide

interoperability network and ensure a path for continued American innovation. However, Madam Speaker, I do have reservations about other ways this package is paid for.

The second-largest job provider in my district behind the State government is the health care sector, employing nearly 30,000 workers. The Medicare bad debt reductions in this bill would seriously hamper the health systems in my district. For example, UC Davis Medical Center would lose \$4 million over the next few years.

Additionally, I am greatly disappointed by the cuts to the Prevention and Public Health Fund—which I actively worked to get included in the Affordable Care Act—as prevention is the best way to improve public health.

While passage of this bill is critical for America's middle class, unemployed, and seniors, I have strong concerns that it should not be at the expense of our country's health care and Federal workforce.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California, Chairman DAVID DREIER.

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, I rise first to congratulate my good friend from north Charleston, a hardworking member of the Rules Committee, for his stellar management of this rule. And on the other side, a pretty fair job is being done by my friend from Fort Lauderdale, I have to say.

Madam Speaker, I will say that I listened to the opening statement of my colleague from Fort Lauderdale. As he talked about the plight of those in Florida, constituents of his who are struggling, I was thinking about the fact that today I deal with in an excess of 14 percent unemployment rate in the Inland Empire, part of the area that I represent in southern California.

When I hear the stories all across this country of people who are suffering, it does resonate. And it leads me to say, Madam Speaker, Why is it that we're here today? Why is it that we're here looking at an extension of unemployment benefits? Why is it that we're here looking at an extension of the payroll tax holiday? The reason is that we have an abysmally low, unacceptable gross domestic product growth rate in this country.

We have a GDP growth rate which is not acceptable. Yes, we've seen some positive signs, and we're all gratified about that. I truly believe that the positive signs that we have seen are in spite of, not because of, anything that has come from Washington, DC. I mean, years ago we passed a stimulus bill that was supposed to guarantee that we wouldn't see an unemployment rate that would exceed 8 percent. We all know what has happened. We've seen a great deal of suffering.

We've looked at the 82 percent increase in nondefense discretionary

spending that took place in the 4 years leading up to our winning the majority. That, obviously, didn't play a role in getting our economy growing.

□ 0940

The reason our economy is growing is that there is a great deal of innovation, creativity, diligence, hard work on the part of our fellow Americans, small business men and women, working Americans who are out there doing it. That's the reason we're seeing these positive signs.

Now, if we did have pro-growth economic policies put into place, if we had those put into place, it's obvious that we would not have to rely on an extension of unemployment benefits. We would not have to look to extending the payroll tax holiday.

We all know that the payroll tax is designed to specifically go to ensure that people who are retirees are able to have those benefits. So we are, obviously, undermining that.

Now, we all argue, certainly on our side, that increasing taxes for anyone during slow economic times is not acceptable policy, and that's the reason that we are doing what it is we're doing, supporting this measure. It's obviously something that is essential because of the fact that we have not seen the kind of GDP growth rate that we can put into place.

That's why I believe that after we move beyond this, it is essential for us to do all that we can to implement the kinds of policies that will, in fact, spur the kind of incentive, create the kind of incentive that our job creators need. And there are a wide range of things that we have talked about. We all know what those are. I hope that we can come together in a bipartisan way to do just that.

I congratulate my friend, DAVE CAMP, and the other conferees who have come to this agreement. It is acceptable to some of us. Some of us are not enthusiastic.

My friend from Marietta, a few minutes ago, was talking about the package that existed last December. That was good public policy. It ended up not being good politics. I'll recognize that. It was the exception to the rule that good public policy is good politics, because what it did is that accepted what it is we're doing today, what the President requested, that we would extend this package for 1 year rather than just 2 months, which is what we had to reluctantly agree to last December.

And I also have to say that, on the sustained growth rate issue, that is, ensuring that hardworking doctors out there have the adequate compensation for their labors, we need to have major reform of the SGR structure; and I think that what we have done today is a step in that direction, and I hope very much that we are going to be able to do that.

So, again, I thank all my colleagues who've been involved in getting us to where we are. Now that we are going to

do this, it's essential that we move ahead with very positive pro-growth policies.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 2 minutes to my good friend from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE).

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, today's payroll tax conference agreement will provide \$1,000 in the pockets of more than 160 million Americans and ensure that approximately 3.5 million Americans will continue to benefit from much-needed unemployment insurance. We've also protected seniors' ability to see their doctors with an SGR fix through the end of the year.

Despite these critical provisions, though, this is a difficult vote to take. I'm greatly disappointed over how these extensions are offset.

First, the unemployment extension is paid for on the backs of middle class Federal workers. These hardworking men and women continue to be targeted in this Congress, but yet they are not the reason for our Nation's deficit. Meanwhile, my Republican colleagues refuse to require the wealthiest few to pay their fair share.

Secondly, the SGR fix is being paid for with critical health care dollars. In fact, the bill slashes one of the most important investments this country has ever made in preventative health. This is extremely shortsighted. We cannot continue down that path or we'll never address the real cost concerns of our health care system. And, sadly, the bill also manages to cut from one provider, hospitals and nursing homes, to pay for another, physicians. We can't rob Peter to pay Paul, and our health care system can't sustain further provider cuts. Meanwhile, there's still no permanent solution to an ongoing SGR problem that can't continue to be kicked down the road.

I will vote in favor of this bill, but I do so with reservations. I know that on our Democratic side, our conferees fought very hard for the best deal that they could get. So I think we have to vote for this bill because it does a lot of very important things, but I also have to express my reservations.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas, Mr. JOE BARTON.

(Mr. BARTON of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I want to thank the gentleman from South Carolina for yielding.

I've been in the House, this is my 28th year, 14 years in the minority and now I'm in my 14th year in the majority. I don't believe I have ever voted against a rule when I was in the majority, but I'm going to vote against this one. I'm also going to vote against the underlying bill.

I'm not saying anything disparaging about the leadership on both sides of the aisle and the leadership in both bodies, but we are taking money away

from the Social Security trust fund and we are substituting an IOU that may or may not ever be repaid. So on principle alone, I think we should at least shoot straight with the American people. So I will vote "no" on the underlying bill.

On the rule, when we became the majority, we, the Republicans, we promised the American people that we would be more open and more transparent than the previous majority that was headed by Speaker PELOSI; and one of our primary promises was that we would give the American people 3 days, or 72 hours, before any bill was voted on the House floor. This rule waives that principle. And I know it's expedient and I know that there is majority support, as you can tell by the debate for both political parties on this bill, but I think to go back on a principle to the American people, that what we vote on, especially bills that are very important, should have enough time that people can look at what's in the bill. I don't think that's something that you compromise for political expediency.

So I will vote "no" against this rule for the first time in my career in the House of Representatives as a member of the majority when a majority rule is up, and I would hope that this is a one-time exception that we violate the principle that we promised when we became the majority.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I had hoped that Ms. VELÁZQUEZ or Mr. ENGEL would be here, but I'll say to my friend from South Carolina: Do you have other speakers?

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. I do not at this point.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. All right. Then I'm in the position of having to go forward. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

When the payroll tax cut and unemployment insurance renewal came before the House just 2 months ago, my friends on the right refused to renew either provision, while Democrats tried to avert a tax hike on the middle class. I believe that Republicans would rather let the payroll tax cut expire and unemployment insurance run out than ask the wealthiest Americans to pay their fair share.

Madam Speaker, if it's at all possible, I'm midway, but I still have the time and, with your permission, I would like to yield 2 minutes to my colleague from New York (Mr. ENGEL).

Mr. ENGEL. I thank my good friend from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS).

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the legislation being considered today; however, I really just need to say this is not the agreement I would have written.

I recognize the importance of making sure our physicians don't receive a 27 percent pay cut, and I have been very, very vocal on the doc fix. I think it's something that is warranted, is much needed, and is fair and equitable, but I

strongly oppose the cut in DSH funding to pay for this package.

As a member of the Health Subcommittee of Energy and Commerce, we fought hard to have DSH in the Affordable Health Care Act. And in my home city of New York City, teaching hospitals are very important and they help the people who are poor, and that's why DSH funding is so important.

We'll always need a safety net for hospitals to provide that safety net to our most vulnerable citizens, and cutting DSH payments only makes the task harder. This will certainly have a harmful effect on my district. I really just have to say that.

But, ultimately, I'll vote for this agreement because, at a time when the Great Recession is finally showing signs of ebbing and the recovery is taking root, we cannot remove \$1,000 from middle class taxpayers' pockets and expect the recovery to continue.

So I am very glad that we will still have a payroll tax cut. I'm glad that Democrats have been in the forefront, along with the President, of pushing for this payroll tax cut.

We need to do more to help the working people and middle class people in this country, not only the rich. The poor, the middle class, the working class people, they're the ones that need help, and this bill is helping them today.

This conference report is also a slap in the face to our federal work force. Public workers serve their country and without them, our country would not be what it is today. Without their efforts, we would not be the leader in medical research. Seniors would not have their Social Security benefits processed as quickly. People waiting on their tax return would have to wait longer.

Yet, time and again—while asking no sacrifices of large oil companies or the wealthiest income earners—we are asking the federal work force to bear the brunt of paying for extension of unemployment insurance benefits. How can we expect to recruit and retain a qualified, effective federal work force if we continue to decimate their pay and pensions, and attack them for serving their country?

But ultimately, I will vote for this agreement because at a time when the Great Recession is finally showing signs of ebbing, and the recovery is taking root—we cannot remove \$1,000 from middle class taxpayers' pockets and expect the recovery to continue.

This bill also fully extends unemployment insurance benefits. While I strongly disagree with the pay-for, at a time when our country is showing strong signs of recovery, I cannot vote against benefits for those who are still looking for work.

I urge my colleagues to support this agreement.

□ 0950

I'll just say again, Madam Speaker, that again this body was able to reach a compromise today. The unfortunate fact is that the Republican Party still seeks to implement policies that unfairly favor the wealthy. Let me identify some of those people.

We would have me in the position of looking in the mirror. We do better than other people in our society, and we ought to pay more in light of that, not just the top 400, but all of us that are doing better so that we don't fall into that category of not taking care of those who have the greatest needs.

It is time to stop playing politics with the livelihoods of those who have been hit the hardest and need our help the most. I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on the rule.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, it is time for us to move forward in this debate. The conference committee has done their job and brought us a compromise, which is exactly what the American people have been asking for from Congress, and that is for us to work together.

Supporting the rule for the conference report signals that we are ready to finish this debate and move on to the most pressing issue facing our Nation today, and that is creating the environment that creates jobs.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Mr. CAMP. Madam Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 554, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 3630) to provide incentives for the creation of jobs, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 554, the conference report is considered read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of February 16, 2012, at page H834.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) each will control 30 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I would inquire of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) whether or not he is opposed to the conference report.

Mr. LEVIN. I support the conference report.

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, in that event, I claim the time in opposition to the conference report.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XXII, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP), the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CAMP. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the conference report to accompany H.R. 3630.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. CAMP. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I come to the floor today in strong support of this conference report as a result of a lot of long hours, hard work, and determination on both sides of the aisle and both sides of the Capitol. This agreement shows the American people that Congress can govern and Washington can work.

First and foremost, this legislation prevents a tax increase on 160 million Americans. As a conservative, I look at the agreement and see some very big wins. Chief among them are the most significant reforms to the Federal unemployment program since it was created in the 1930s, all designated to promote reemployment and paychecks instead of unemployment and benefit checks.

While extending unemployment benefits through the end of the year, this agreement creates a national job-search standard for the first time, covering benefits from beginning to end and requiring every American to look for a job if they receive unemployment benefits.

The agreement allows States to spend unemployment funds on paying people to work instead of just sending them a check when they are out of work. It ensures taxpayer funds are properly spent by permitting drug testing under commonsense rules that help people get ready for a job. It expands work-sharing programs to help avoid layoffs in the first place; and it improves fiscal responsibility by not only recovering more overpayments, which currently total a staggering \$12 billion per year, but also by making sure that this program is fully paid for.

And the last item is something I want to focus on for a moment. All government spending in this agreement is fully paid for, and not with one dime of higher taxes. All spending on unemployment and health care are fully paid for. This is a significant victory for those of us concerned about the national debt and the culture of deficit spending that has gripped Washington for far too long.

For example, the unemployment program has added nearly \$200 billion to our Nation's debt over the last 4 years. No more. We paid for it in December, we're paying for it today, and we set a clear precedent that Congress must live within its means, no more spending unless its paid for. Period.

Now, I understand this is a compromise, and not everyone likes everything in here. If I had my way, the bill passed by the House in December would be the law. That was the only bill that extended these programs through the end of the year. It was the only bill that was fully paid for, and it was the only bill that ensured seniors and their doctors were protected from dramatic cuts for at least 2 years. But we don't control Washington.

Democrats still control Washington. They control the Senate, and they control the White House. Yet utilizing the process that dates back to our Founding Fathers, House Republicans have scored significant victories in this conference committee. Our Founding Fathers recognized that Washington would not always be united. In their wisdom, they knew that even divided government must still govern, and that's what we're doing here today, governing and providing a solution to the very real problems Americans are facing in their daily lives.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in supporting this legislation, which pays for new spending with spending cuts, prevents working Americans from getting hit with a tax increase next month, reforms our employment programs, and ensures seniors continue to have access to their doctors.

Madam Speaker, I come to the floor today to speak in strong support of this conference report. As a result of a lot of long hours, hard work and determination on both sides of the aisle, and both sides of the Capitol, this agreement shows the American people that Congress can govern and Washington can work.

As a conservative, I look at the agreement and see some very big wins. Chief among them are the most significant reforms to Federal unemployment programs since they were created in the 1930s, all designed to promote reemployment and paychecks instead of unemployment and benefit checks. This agreement:

Creates a national job search standard for the first time, covering benefits from beginning to end, and requires every unemployed American to look for a job if they receive unemployment benefits;

The agreement allows States to spend unemployment funds on paying people to work, instead of just sending them a check while they are out of work;

It ensures taxpayer funds are properly spent by permitting drug testing, under commonsense rules that help people get ready for a job;

It expands work-sharing programs to help avoid layoffs in the first place; and

It improves fiscal responsibility by not only recovering more overpayments, which currently total a staggering \$12 billion per year, but also by making sure that this program is fully paid for.

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that extended these programs through the end of the year; it was the only bill that was fully paid for; and it was the only bill that ensured seniors and their doctors were protected from dramatic cuts for at least 2 years.

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And, that is what we are doing here today—governing and providing a solution to the very real problems Americans are facing in their daily lives.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in supporting this legislation which pays for new spending with spending cuts; prevents working Americans from getting hit with a tax increase next month; reforms our unemployment programs; and ensures seniors continue to have access to their doctors.

In the Joint Explanatory Statement of the Committee of Conference for H.R. 3630, the description of sec. 7003, Points of Order in the Senate, was erroneously included in the joint statement.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The basic fact is that this legislation is very different from the December House Republican bill, very different, and any efforts to mask that are faults. That House bill was the main bill before the conference committee.

The basic fact is the conference committee made major changes to the House bill that passed in December essentially on a partisan basis. Therefore, this legislation is much better for the American people.

The Speaker said this about this bill:

Let's be honest. This is an economic relief package, not a bill that's going to grow the economy and create jobs.

That's not an honest statement. It's wrong. This is a bill that relates to the economic growth of the United States of America. We're recovering, and this bill will provide a boost to continue that recovery.

□ 1000

It continues the 2 percent payroll tax through the calendar year; and it is not offset, as was true of the House Republican bill in December. It had massive harmful cuts that would have been countercyclical and that would have undermined further economic growth. In that respect, this is very different.

It's also very different in terms of unemployment insurance. Let's be clear about that. The bill that the Republicans passed through the House that was the main bill before the conference committee would have slashed 40 weeks of unemployment insurance for millions of Americans in every State regardless of the unemployment rate in that State. This bill essentially changes what was in the House bill. It extends unemployment insurance

through the rest of the year up to—this is the maximum—up to 89 or 99 weeks through May, up to 79 weeks through August, and up to 73 weeks through December, depending on the level of unemployment.

Let me just say, our chairman has talked about job search and now a requirement that people be looking for work. That's already in the law of every State. That isn't a meaningful reform. In terms of job search, everybody not only registers, but also, as I said, is required to look for work. I find it an insult to the unemployed of this country to say, essentially, that we're simply giving them a check instead of a paycheck.

If you talk to the unemployed, through no fault of their own, they are looking for work. They had a paycheck in most cases year after year after year. They worked for their unemployment insurance. To simply label this an effort to get people off of unemployment insurance—unemployment insurance is not a welfare program. People work for it, and they need that subsistence as they look for work.

The bill that passed through the House had a GED requirement. That is out. To say to people you don't get a check if you're not in a GED program when there are 160,000 people in this country who are on waiting lists for education, that's out of here because it deserved to be out of here.

In terms of the drug programs, the effort to test people for drugs, it is so limited. So it is really masking the reality to call this major reform. It freezes the reimbursement for physicians through December.

Let me just close by saying a few words about the limits on this bill, because there are limits.

It would have been much better to treat unemployment insurance as an emergency, as we have for 20 years. This is the highest level of long-term unemployed on record in this country, which is another reason not to blame the unemployed for the unemployment, as the House bill in December did and some of the rhetoric on this floor continues to do. We were not able to obtain this, and I want to say this in terms of a precedent. In my judgment, it should not serve as a precedent. The precedent is 20 years treating it as an emergency.

Let me also say, it is deeply unfortunate that some on the other side insisted that Federal workers carry a disproportionate share of the cost of this bill, even after there were put forward bipartisan pay-fors that would have covered the cost of UI. In the bill that came through here on a partisan basis in December, there would have been an impact on Federal employees of \$67 billion. This bill has a provision that will apply to pension programs, \$15 billion over 10 years compared to the \$67 billion that was in the bill that the House Republicans passed.

Let me just say in closing, this argument provides tax relief to working

families, certainty for unemployed workers that a framework is in place for the year, and a real commitment—and I emphasize this—by us Democrats to aggressively continue to pursue efforts to strengthen the economy and boost job growth so that those hardest hit by the recession can return to work as they desperately want to.

I just want to reiterate how wrong the Speaker was when he said:

Let's be honest. This is an economic relief package, not a bill that's going to grow the economy and create jobs.

The opposite is true. The provisions in this bill will help to continue economic growth, the payroll tax. Most economists say that. Unemployment insurance people spend, and that is not only good for their subsistence but good for the economy of our country. For all those reasons, I urge support of this conference committee.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 5 minutes.

I have taken the unusual process of claiming time in opposition to this bill. I have done so so I would have sufficient time to place in context the bill that we're considering. I do not rise to necessarily defeat this bill. I'm going to vote against this bill. I'm for almost all of this bill. What we are funding this bill with was unnecessary, unfair, and ought to be rejected.

I want to say at the outset that my friend Mr. CAMP and I had a very positive discussion. I believe that Mr. CAMP and I could have reached an agreement, which would have put me in support of this legislation. We didn't get there. We tried late in the game, and we didn't get there. I regret that. I think Mr. CAMP tried.

I know that everybody on my side would have supported the agreement that Mr. VAN HOLLEN and I put forward. That agreement would say, as the current agreement, that the only individuals paying for this bill out of 315 million Americans are the 2 million civilian workers who work for us, who work for all of us, who day after day, week after week, month after month make sure that we give services to the people of the United States, protect the United States, ensure that our food is safe, ensure that we have FBI agents on the job, make sure that at the Defense Intelligence Agency we know what other people are doing. These are all our civilian employees, highly skilled, highly trained, highly educated, and, yes, highly motivated. Every day they give outstanding service to the people of the United States. We talk here and we pass laws here, but none of that talk and none of those laws makes a difference unless somebody implements what we say and the policies that we set.

This Congress is on the path to being the most anti-Federal worker Congress that I've served in. I'm going to place that in context for you, which is why I wanted the time.

□ 1010

What is the context we find ourselves in? First of all, we have a very struggling economy. The good news is the economy is coming back, but not fast enough. We need to create more jobs, expand opportunities, and make sure that the American Dream is alive for all working Americans, working Americans like our Federal employees, working Americans like the folks at GM who have just done very well, working Americans who work in the hardware store, the grocery store, the gasoline station, hardworking Americans. And we don't have enough jobs for them. As a result, we have high unemployment.

I congratulate my friend from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) for his leadership in making sure that the unemployment provision in this bill is sufficient to try to reach those folks and make sure they don't fall off the ledge. We walked away from them in December. I'm glad that we're not walking away from them today.

We also have, as all of us know, a struggling economy; and, therefore, we put into effect giving \$1,000 more to each and every worker. Now, many of your leaders did not support this 2 percent reduction, and I understand that. I won't go into their names. Some are in the Chamber. But the fact of the matter is, it puts an additional \$1,000 into average working Americans' pockets—people who pay FICA, that is, people who are making less than \$106,000. That's an important thing for us to do to try to keep this economy growing. I'm for that. I was for it in December. I'm for it in February. I'm glad that we're going to have consensus on that today.

In addition to that, we are playing a silly little game with the doctors and with Medicare patients; and this silly little game pretends that we're going to extend SGR for 10 months. That's baloney, and everybody knows it. We're going to continue to extend SGR over and over and over again. We should have done it permanently in this bill. We should have done it last year and in the last Congress, the Congress in which I was the majority leader. We should have done that.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HOYER. I yield myself 2 additional minutes.

So with respect to SGR, ladies and gentlemen, we're playing a game, and the doctors all over this country and the Medicare recipients all over this country know we're playing a game. We're giving them no certainty, no confidence that, come this September, October, November, we won't have another one of these silly little debates.

Now we also, in that context, have a deep deficit and debt that confronts this Nation that we have to deal with. And we had two commissions that said we had to deal with it. One was Bowles-Simpson—my friend from California (Mr. BECERRA), who sits in the Cham-

ber here with me, sat on that commission—the other was Domenici-Rivlin. And we've had others, including the Gang of Six in the United States Senate. And all of them had as a premise that we needed to deal with the fiscal problem that confronts us. And the other premise was all of us need to contribute to that solution. All of us.

Now what do we see that's being proposed in this Congress, partially in this bill, but only partially in this bill? We have either on the floor proposed or passed over the last 2 years—listen to this, ladies and gentlemen—we are about to cut or propose to cut \$134 billion out of our Federal employees over the next 10 years. Nobody else in this bill—not a millionaire, not a billionaire, not a carried-interest beneficiary, not an oil company—nobody in this bill, other than Federal employees, is asked to pay.

I understand we have hospital cuts. By the way, how do we have \$5 billion of that? Because we just increased by 1 year the cut that they know they got. It's the same for some other things. No individual, other than a Federal employee, is asked to take a cut in this bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has again expired.

Mr. HOYER. I yield myself 2 additional minutes.

Now, you will say to me, Oh, it's future Federal employees, so it doesn't really matter. That's \$15 billion of the \$134 billion that has been proposed. They've already paid \$60 billion, \$60 billion. And by the way, your side of the aisle is not going to give them that 0.5 percent that the President asked for, so that will be \$30 billion. So in 3 years—Mr. and Mrs. America ought to know, Madam Speaker—Federal employees will have paid \$90 billion in contributions to help bring this deficit down. And by the way, Federal employees, as a percentage of our population, are down by a third over the last 20 years. It's not that the bureaucracy has grown. Yes, our population has grown. We are trying to serve them. They are down by a third in numbers.

Now, I know something about Federal employee pay. I represent 60,000 Federal employees. And you could say, Well, HOYER is up there defending his people. You would be right. You would be very right. But most of the Federal employees don't live in the Washington metropolitan area. They live in your districts, all over this country, serving your farmers, serving your drugstores, serving everything that you do.

Do I think it's the private sector that makes this country great? Absolutely. Do I believe they need an energized, high-morale, highly educated Federal workforce as their partner? I do. And you will not have that, ladies and gentlemen, if we keep along this path of every time we come to a bill that's a little bit of trouble, the pay-for is to reach into the Federal employees' pockets. They're pretty much going to say, I'm not with you any longer.

And I want to tell you: in terms of recruiting and retaining, you will not do it. Forty percent of the Federal workforce, ladies and gentlemen, can retire in the next 5 years.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has again expired.

Mr. HOYER. I yield myself 1 additional minute.

Ladies and gentlemen, you are going to be able to recruit those folks only if you have a competitive workforce.

Let me give you a figure that you might find interesting. There are 33,300 employees at Goldman Sachs. Average salary, ladies and gentlemen: \$367,057, the average salary of 33,300 people. You won't be able to compete. You won't be able to get NSA employees, as opposed to Siemens or Microsoft or some of those other corporations, many of which are in Ms. ESHOO's district. You won't be able to recruit them, and you won't retain them to have the best and the brightest defending America and making America the strongest and greatest country on Earth. Do you want America to be an exceptional country? Then you'd better have the best civil service on Earth, as well as the best private sector.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has again expired.

Mr. HOYER. I yield myself 1 additional minute.

Ladies and gentlemen, I don't know whether most of you know this. I saw a gentleman from Florida who's been here for a couple of months pontificate that I didn't know anything outside of the Beltway.

I was the sponsor of the Federal Employee Pay Comparability Act. And George Bush Sr. signed that act, and we worked with his OMB to get it. And what does it say? Federal employees cannot get a raise unless the private sector gets a raise. We're precluded from getting a raise unless the private sector gets a raise. And what does it further say? That the private sector—which is the economic cost index, by the way, in case you want to know exactly what the statistic is—says, we're going to take a half a point less.

So what have you done in this bill, unnecessarily? Because you're going to freeze their salary for a third year in a row. Bowles-Simpson said do it for three. But Bowles-Simpson said, Everybody ought to share, everybody. We ought to get \$1 trillion in revenues, \$1 trillion in cuts. Everybody.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has again expired.

Mr. HOYER. I yield myself 1 additional minute.

But nobody but Federal employees, nobody is targeted in this bill other than Federal employees. You can tell I'm angry about that because that's not fair, and that's not how you ought to treat our employees, America's employees. America's public servants, we call them. We ought to stop dissing

them. We ought to stop demagoguing them. We ought to stop using “bureaucrat” as an epithet. America needs them.

I will have some other things to say in a few minutes, Madam Speaker. But we ought not walk away from our Federal employees any more than we ought to walk away from those 160 million people who need this tax cut or walk away from those 2.4 million who need that unemployment insurance or walk away, as we have, from the doctors who need certainty, long term—not for 10 months, but long term.

I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1020

Mr. CAMP. Before I yield, I just would like to say to the gentleman that he did characterize our conversations correctly. It was very late. I do look forward to working with him in the future on these issues as we move forward.

With that, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN), a conferee.

Mr. WALDEN. Madam Speaker, I thank Mr. CAMP, and I want to thank the gentleman from Michigan for his extraordinary leadership in pulling the House and the Senate together as chairman of our conference.

One of the key elements of this legislation is freeing up an enormous swath of spectrum for use, to grow jobs in technology and innovation, generate \$15 billion to the treasury to help pay for some of the things that are being discussed today, to extend the middle class tax cut, to provide unemployment for those who are seeking work. And in the process here, there are estimates of building out the 4G network, which will take spectrum like that which will be made available here, could generate somewhere between 300,000 and 700,000 American jobs, and unleash technology and innovation in America.

In addition to doing that, the Republican House, in concert with our colleagues across the aisle and across the Chambers, have come together to finally take care of our public safety officials who, on that terrible day of September 11, discovered that their devices did not communicate well with each other, if at all. So, finally, we have come together to create an interoperable, public safety broadband network that they can operate on wherever they are, wherever disaster may strike, and they'll be able to communicate with each other. We've allocated money to build it out. I think we've put a governance structure in place. While it is not exactly as I hoped would happen, I think it will function. We will see.

So we have built out a public safety network for our public safety officials. That will get underway. This bill will help generate 300,000 to 700,000 American jobs, generate \$15 billion in private sector money coming into the government to help pay for some of this, and protect our over-the-air broadcasters. Our TV broadcasters who

will be asked in a voluntary auction if they want to give up their spectrum are protected so that the viewers out there in America will still be able to see and watch their over-the-air public and private broadcasters.

Madam Speaker, this is good legislation, and I hope Members will support it.

Spectrum is increasingly becoming the lifeblood of our communications sector and our economy. U.S. investment in 4G wireless networks could range from \$25 to \$53 billion in the next five years, produce \$73 to \$151 billion in GDP growth, and create 371,000 to 771,000 new jobs, according to a recent study. But that can't happen without spectrum, and a spectrum crunch is looming. Back in December, the House of Representatives tackled the spectrum crunch head on when it passed the Jumpstarting Opportunity with Broadband Spectrum Act of 2011, also known as the JOBS Act.

Title VI of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act follows the spectrum auction framework from the JOBS Act to free up valuable spectrum that when put into service will unleash new technologies. It will help meet the growing demand for mobile broadband, foster private-sector investment, and promote hundreds of thousands of jobs. To raise billions of dollars in federal revenue, it authorizes truly voluntary incentive auctions, ensures that any spectrum cleared with federal funds spectrum is auctioned, and enables all wireless carriers to compete in open auctions. The FCC should not be picking winners and losers. The market should.

Unleashing the pent-up demand of the commercial sector will drive innovation and help snap our country out of its fiscal doldrums. The innovation of the mobile sector has helped America lead the world in wireless and bring the power of the Internet to every corner of the country. No longer bound by wires to one location, wireless Internet access has spawned the creation of countless new technologies, a proliferation of wireless devices of all shapes and sizes, and even services so revolutionary they fostered actual revolutions. This legislation takes all of that innovation to a new level and creates real private-sector jobs.

The bill also provides the best protection of any competing legislation to make sure American viewers can continue to watch programming and news from the Nation's free, over-the-air broadcasters, who just went through an expensive and difficult federally mandated conversion to digital. And using the money from spectrum auctions, this legislation should generate upwards of \$15 billion in net revenues while also helping build a nationwide, interoperable broadband network for our first responders.

It also includes a priority of my colleague, JOHN SHIMKUS, who has been an ardent and articulate supporter of next-generation 911 services. Thanks to his tireless advocacy, we were able to secure \$115 million for NG911 deployment modeled on the Shimkus-Eshoo NG911 Act, and we did so in a fiscally responsible manner, making sure we hit our revenue targets first before spending the money.

This legislation didn't just drop out of the sky. It is thoughtful and carefully crafted legislation that finds the right balances. Its provisions were improved as a result of the input

and counsel from five hearings and 11 months of discussions with members of both sides of the aisle, the FCC and TIA. Throughout this process my staff and I have worked in good faith with broadband providers, broadcasters, and public safety officials.

Our economy needs the help, Americans need new jobs, and we need to generate federal revenue for the American taxpayer. This legislation does all of these things—and it does them well.

Mr. LEVIN. I now yield 2 minutes to Mr. WAXMAN, a member of the conference committee and the ranking member of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

(Mr. WAXMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material.)

Mr. WAXMAN. Madam Speaker, I'll vote for this bill, but I do so with reservations. We should have done better in meeting our responsibilities to the American people.

There are important provisions in this legislation that will do a lot of good for families and our economy. We are extending the payroll tax reduction for millions of families, extending unemployment insurance, and ensuring that doctors serving seniors will be paid for their services through the end of year, and we are making spectrum available for new innovations in wireless communications.

While these are provisions I support in the conference report, there are significant missed opportunities and poor choices that affect Federal workers and preventive health programs.

Nowhere is this lost opportunity more apparent than our failure to end the Medicare physician payment formula, known as the SGR, and set us on a path to a fair and reasonable physician reimbursement system. Having to settle for another temporary solution, which leaves us at the end of the year even deeper in the hole in terms of a permanent solution, is a real failure and one that fails Medicare beneficiaries and doctors alike. I did not agree with the cuts in reimbursement for hospitals and nursing homes and, unbelievably, in prevention services in order to pay for the physician reimbursement levels at a reasonable rate.

I'm deeply concerned about the Federal employees' provisions. I think that is very unfair.

I do not have similar reservations about the spectrum provisions in the conference report. Our bipartisan, bicameral negotiations resulted in legislation that will make new spectrum available for broadband services, will create a nationwide band of spectrum that can be used for innovative, uncensored applications, and will provide for the construction of an interoperable broadband network for first responders.

Taken as a whole, I believe we should support this package even with its serious shortcomings.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the conference report for H.R. 3630.

Although I will vote “yes,” I do so with reservations. We could and should have done better in meeting our responsibilities to the American people. Nevertheless, I commend the members of this conference for the positive things they achieved.

First and foremost, we are doing a lot of good for families and our economy in this legislation. We are extending the payroll tax reduction for millions of families, helping them in a difficult economic time and providing much-needed stimulus to our economy.

We are extending unemployment insurance, which is a lifeline to those out of work.

We are ensuring that doctors serving seniors will be paid for their services through the end of the year.

And we are making spectrum available for new innovations in wireless communications at the same time as providing public safety with a national broadband network. These spectrum policy decisions will be an engine for economic growth.

While these are the provisions I support in this conference report, there are also significant missed opportunities and poor choices that affect federal workers and preventive health programs.

Nowhere is the lost opportunity more apparent than in our failure to end the Medicare physician payment formula known as the SGR and set us on a path to a fair and reasonable physician reimbursement system. Having to settle for another temporary solution, which leaves us at the end of the year even deeper in the hole in terms of a permanent solution, is a real failure, and one that fails Medicare beneficiaries and doctors alike.

We had the opportunity to use the war savings from Iraq and Afghanistan to pay for this solution. The Republicans said no. At the minimum, we should have used these savings to pay for the debt caused by previous short-term temporary fixes. The Republican leadership refused to allow that to happen.

As a result, we are, once again, forced to accept a short-term “solution” that simply stops an immediate crisis, but ensures that physicians in Medicare face another emergency a year from now. This is a poor result.

It is not right to ask Medicare beneficiaries to bear the cost of the failure of an arbitrary formula written into the law in 1997. It is not right to ask other providers, particularly safety-net providers serving a disproportionate share of low income seniors and individuals with disabilities, to take cuts in their payments for the same reason. And it certainly is not right to reduce our commitment to prevention by robbing the Prevention and Public Health Fund of critical dollars that could help us keep people healthy instead of paying for them when they are sick.

I am also deeply concerned about the federal employee provisions. It is simply unfair to ask working Americans who happen to serve the taxpayers through their work for the government to pay for half the costs of continuing unemployment benefits for the entire nation. This denigrates public service, and it is unworthy of us to impose such an involuntary sacrifice on them. Moreover, it is a bad precedent to be paying for this emergency economic relief at all. We have not done so previously, and I am sorry we are doing it in this legislation.

Although I have serious reservations about these provisions, I have none recommending

that the House adopt the spectrum provisions in the conference report. Our bipartisan, bicameral negotiations have resulted in legislation that will make new spectrum available for smartphones and tablets, will create a nationwide band of spectrum that can be used for Super WiFi and other unlicensed uses, and will provide spectrum to fund the build-out of an interoperable broadband network for first responders. Establishing a nationwide public safety broadband network allows us to complete the major piece of unfinished business from the attacks of 9/11. These provisions will promote innovation and economic growth while contributing \$15 billion to pay for this legislation.

These spectrum provisions are the result of many members' hard work. Two Senators not on the conference made an enormous contribution, Senator ROCKEFELLER, the chair of the Senate Commerce Committee, and Senate Majority Leader REID, and I thank them for their leadership. On the conference, Senator KYL and Chairmen UPTON and WALDEN deserve great credit for their work in crafting this pro-growth, pro-innovation compromise.

Taken as a whole, I believe we should support this package, even with its serious shortcomings. It is not what any of us would have written. This is indeed a compromise.

But the alternative would be worse. Failure to pass this package would let the middle class tax cut lapse and undermine our economic recovery, cause the unemployed to lose their benefits, and slash physician payments in Medicare so that our seniors and disabled lose access to their doctors. It would also mean a halt to progress in developing the wireless superhighways of the future and ensuring we have an emergency broadband network in place to respond to terrorism and urgent events.

That is why I support this conference report and ask my colleagues to do likewise.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
February 2012.

SUMMARY OF THE SPECTRUM PROVISIONS
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE,
DEMOCRATIC STAFF

The payroll tax relief conference has reached agreement on landmark bipartisan legislation to ease the nation's growing spectrum shortage, create a nationwide, interoperable broadband network for public safety officials, and raise \$15 billion.

The legislation gives the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) the authority to pay TV broadcasters for underutilized broadcast spectrum and resell it at higher prices to wireless companies to meet the growing spectrum demands of smartphones and tablets. This provision is expected to make a large band of prime spectrum available for auction, raising over \$25 billion. The bill provides \$7 billion in auction proceeds and spectrum worth \$2.75 billion (called the “D Block”) to a new “First Responder Network Authority” to build a broadband network for police, firefighters, emergency medical service professionals, and other public safety officials. A key provision in the legislation authorizes the FCC to create guard bands in the broadcast spectrum auctioned to wireless carriers that can be used for innovative unlicensed uses like Super WiFi.

The legislation agreed to by the conferees is based upon two existing pieces of legislation: H.R. 3630, the spectrum provisions passed by the House, and S. 911, the bipartisan legislation approved by the Senate Commerce Committee. The conference re-

port incorporates most of the auction-related provisions included in the House legislation, with changes regarding unlicensed spectrum and FCC auction rules. The public safety provisions are based on the national model outlined in S. 911, with changes to ensure flexibility for states.

THE AUCTION PROVISIONS

The auction provisions in the final legislation are largely the same as those in H.R. 3630 as passed by the House with two significant exceptions: (1) the provisions relating to unlicensed spectrum and (2) the provisions relating to FCC auction authority.

Unlicensed Spectrum: Unlicensed spectrum has been an engine of economic innovation and growth, enabling new forms of communication like WiFi and Bluetooth. Many advocate that allowing unlicensed use in the broadcast frequencies could lead to new breakthroughs like Super WiFi. The conference report advances this goal in three ways: (1) it gives the FCC the authority to preserve existing TV white spaces; (2) it gives the FCC the authority to optimize these white spaces for unlicensed use by consolidating them into more optimal configurations through band plans; and (3) it gives the FCC the authority to use part of the spectrum relinquished by TV broadcasters in the incentive auction to create nationwide guard bands that can be used for unlicensed use, including in high-value markets that currently have little or no white spaces today. Nationwide, unlicensed access to guard bands will enable innovation, promote investment in new wireless services, and enhance the value of licensed spectrum by protecting against harmful interference and allowing carriers to “off-load” data to alleviate capacity concerns.

FCC Auction Rules: Under current law, the FCC has broad authority to craft auction rules in the public interest. The agency has used this authority to ensure that communications markets remain competitive and spectrum is not concentrated in the hands of only one or two providers. H.R. 3630 would have restricted the FCC's future ability to limit participation in spectrum auctions, regardless of the size or market dominance of potential bidders. The conference agreement modifies this prohibition by expressly preserving the FCC's ability to ensure competition through spectrum aggregation limits and other rules.

The legislation also drops a provision in the House-passed bill that would have limited the FCC's authority to set license conditions, such as open-internet requirements, on auctioned spectrum.

THE PUBLIC SAFETY PROVISIONS

The conference report provides our nation's first responders with access to the spectrum and advanced wireless broadband communications they need to protect the public and to communicate with each other across the country. The legislation provides for the construction of a nationwide public safety broadband network, as envisioned in the Senate bill, with an “opt-out” option for states that demonstrate the capacity to build their own networks and connect them to the national network.

The legislation creates a First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and provides FirstNet with \$7 billion and a license to use the “D Block” and adjacent public safety spectrum to build the nationwide public safety network. To ensure national interoperability, the legislation also creates a technical advisory board at the FCC to develop interoperability standards. States that want to construct their own portion of the national public safety network have the option to apply for federal grants to build and

operate the radio access network in the state if they can demonstrate to the FCC that the network will meet the interoperability standards and to NTIA that they have the resources and capability to provide comparable coverage and security and maintain ongoing interoperability.

Unlike the House-passed bill, the legislation does not require public safety officials to return the important 700 MHz "narrowband" spectrum to the FCC for auction. Instead, the legislation requires the return of less efficient spectrum known as the "T-band." This transition occurs 11 years from the date of enactment, and public safety relocation costs will be reimbursed from any auction proceeds.

Finally, the legislation provides funding for critical public safety research and development activities and deployment of Next Generation 9-1-1 services, which will complement the advanced broadband capabilities of the public safety network by enabling the delivery of voice, text, photos, video, and other data to 9-1-1 call centers.

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I now yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN), the ranking member of the Budget Committee.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mr. HOYER.

This bill accomplishes three very important objectives: it extends the payroll tax cut for 160 million Americans; it extends unemployment insurance to millions of Americans who are out of work through no fault of their own; and it supports the Medicare program. So I am not here on the floor today to urge my colleagues to vote against this bill. In fact, I'm confident it will pass.

The bill is also significant for what it will not do. Unlike the original Republican House bill which cut compensation for current Federal employees by about \$40 billion, this bill does not cut compensation for any current Federal employee, not one cent. Let me repeat that. I'm pleased that Senator CARDIN and I and other members of the conference committee were successful in holding harmless our hardworking current Federal employees.

That being said, I'm going to vote "no" to send a message that enough is enough when it comes to using the Federal workforce as a piggy bank to fund our various national initiatives. Here's why. While no current employees are impacted by this bill, it does cut compensation for future employees hired starting in January 2013; and that will, as Mr. HOYER said, it will make it much more difficult for us to attract the Federal employees we need to do our national work together as part of our Federal service.

And indeed, one-half, a full half of the 10-month extension for unemployment insurance that benefits the entire country, \$15 billion is financed by cutting compensation for future Federal employees. That is a disproportionate share from the Federal workforce. The Federal workforce has already contributed over \$88 billion toward deficit reduction by the denial of two COLAs and the proposed COLA cut this year, and the Republican transportation bill would cut another \$42 billion from Fed-

eral employees to finance our national highways. That's a ridiculous approach.

Federal employees, as Mr. HOYER said, are willing to do their fair share to help reduce our deficit, but stop singling them out and making them scapegoats. They had nothing to do with the financial meltdown on Wall Street. They are not the drivers of our national debt. And I am sick and tired of hearing some Members of Congress bad-mouthing and belittling Federal employees.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HOYER. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. They are an easy political target for some, as Mr. HOYER said, but it is irresponsible to denigrate their good work. These are the men and women who care for our veterans and many of our wounded soldiers. These are the people in our intelligence community who helped track down Osama bin Laden. These are the folks at NIH and elsewhere who help find treatments and cures, that help prevent diseases that plague every American family. They are the folks who protect our borders. They are the folks who help run the Medicare and Social Security system. They're the folks in the Capitol Hill Police that protect this great center of democracy right here.

So while this conference report does many good things, we need to send a message that it's time to stop scapegoating Federal employees and using them as the piggy bank for our national objectives.

Mr. CAMP. I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. ELLMERS), a member of the conference committee.

(Mrs. ELLMERS asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

□ 1030

Mrs. ELLMERS. Yesterday afternoon, I happily signed the conference report that was very, very well put together; and I commend Chairman CAMP for the hard work that he did and my fellow conferees. This joint conference committee came together, and it was tasked to negotiate the payroll tax holiday extension.

This is a very important breakthrough and shows that we can actually work together and compromise for the sake of the American people. I would like to thank, again, Chairman CAMP and my fellow conferees once again for the honor and privilege to serve on this committee.

Our report does what is necessary to provide a responsible level of certainty to job creators and ensures that millions of hardworking Americans will be protected. In this Obama economy, it is important that American taxpayers keep more of their money and use it to make ends meet. Gas prices are projected to go up above \$4 a gallon,

Madam Speaker, by the summer. If this puts a little more money in individuals' pockets so that they can pay for a half a tank of gas or one-quarter of a tank of gas, then I say I'm all for it.

Furthermore, this deal strikes the most dramatic blow to ObamaCare yet, keeping a promise I made when I first came to Washington. With this agreement, we are cutting spending by more than \$50 billion and using a portion of these savings to pay for the doc fix. What is the doc fix? The doc fix ensures that millions of Medicare patients, our seniors, will receive that medical care. It will prevent the 27.4 percent cut to physicians for Medicare services.

We must now return our focus to the most pressing issue facing our Nation, which is job creation and fixing this economy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. CAMP. I yield the gentlewoman an additional 30 seconds.

Mrs. ELLMERS. Madam Speaker, the President has submitted another bloated budget that ignores the economic crisis we are all living through under the Obama economy. It's time to roll up our sleeves and get to work on removing these barriers to prosperity and focus on the one thing that matters most—job creation and continuing to provide certainty to millions of Americans who are looking to us to make concise decisions about their future and the future of their children.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Just as a reminder, the time remaining is the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP) has 11¾ minutes remaining, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) has 10 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) has 5 minutes remaining.

Mr. LEVIN. It's now my pleasure to yield 1 minute to our distinguished leader, Ms. PELOSI, from the great State of California.

Ms. PELOSI. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank him for his relentless and persistent advocacy on behalf of a thriving middle class in our country and his work to ensure that we would have this payroll tax cut as well as the extension of unemployment insurance that he fought so hard on, as well as on making sure that our seniors are able to see their doctors under Medicare. Congratulations and thank you, Mr. LEVIN.

I rise today, Madam Speaker, in support of this legislation. Of course, I identify with the concerns expressed by our distinguished whip, Mr. HOYER, and of Mr. VAN HOLLEN regarding our public employees.

Before I talk directly about what is in the bill, I do want to say that for our country to thrive and for us to do our very best, we must have a great relationship between the public and the private sector. The private sector is the driving engine of job creation in our country, but it cannot succeed unless we also have an effective and thriving public sector. It's about so

many things that relate to our public safety. The courts, the implementation of laws passed in Congress, they don't exist unless the public sector then implements them. So this is a symbiotic relationship that has existed from the beginning of time in our country.

It's not a zero sum game. We cannot say we're going to do this in the private sector at the expense of the public sector. So I salute them for their persistent leadership and recognizing the important role that the public sector plays. It was not necessary for us to go down the path that has been taken in this bill, and I'll get to that in a moment.

First, I want to say that this represents a victory for the middle class in our country, and I salute President Obama for going out there so strongly and taking this message to the American people that it was very important for us to have a payroll tax cut for the middle class. It's important to those families because it puts \$40 more into a paycheck to buy groceries, to buy gasoline, and to make ends meet—to make ends meet.

In addition to being personally helpful to families, it has a macroeconomic effect because these families will immediately spend that money and inject demand into the economy, and that is a job creator. Any economist will tell you that this is very important to continuing the economic recovery in our country. To have rejected it, as had been in the mix earlier, would have halted, if not turned back, our economic recovery.

So let us recognize that we had three pillars that we insisted be in this package, we on the Democratic side, one that we would have a payroll tax cut for 160 million Americans, preferably unpaid for, and that is the way it is in this bill. What is unfortunate is that we did not use our choice of a pay-for, should it be paid for, the surcharge, to cover the unemployment insurance. That would have been a preferable place to go, the extension of unemployment insurance. It could have also been used to pay for the SGR, the ability for seniors to see their doctors instead of taking money out of the prevention piece of the Affordable Care Act. Prevention makes America healthier, it saves money, and it expands opportunity for people to get in the health care loop. That's unfortunate, and it could have been avoided as well as the unfortunate provision relating to our public employees.

Even on that score, Mr. HOYER said, as Mr. VAN HOLLEN did, there was a further compromise that could have been made that addressed some of the needs of the Republicans to vote for this bill without doing more harm to, as Mr. HOYER said, the recruitment and the retention of public employees, the best—the best—public employees to help implement our laws. And I want to salute all of them for their patriotic duty to our country, to make and keep us safe in every possible way, and to

allow commerce to proceed in a very positive way.

Now let's get back to why this is important, this victory for the middle class. This was a fight. Why should it have been a fight? There's something out there in the public, the "ground truth," the common sense coming up from the ground that this was an important thing to do; and the American people overwhelmingly supported it. There's a ground truth out there from the public, common sense coming up from the ground, that in order for us meet our needs and also reduce the deficit, that we should have a surcharge on the wealthiest people in our country, people making over \$1 million a year—not having a million dollars—making over \$1 million a year.

That was not contained in this bill, but it will be part of the debate as we go forward. So let's take a moment to say that we recognize here on this floor of the House the importance of a thriving middle class to our democracy—to our democracy—and that this action taken today is an important step, but we have much more work to do.

Democrats are committed to re-igniting the American Dream, to building ladders of opportunity for all who want to work hard, play by the rules and take responsibility. But we have work to do. In this thriving—this re-igniting—American Dream, it's about recognizing the role of entrepreneurialism in our system of small businesses and what they do to grow our economy and how we have a public-private relationship there to encourage small business. And also, again, all of this relates to a thriving middle class.

□ 1040

So I urge my colleagues to be ever-vigilant about every opportunity we can take to support the middle class. Today is a good day in that regard. It's just one piece of it, though. We have much more work to do.

In any bill that comes up, there are things you may not like in it, and you say: Well, I'm not going to vote for it for that reason. On balance, I come down in favor of supporting what the President asked us to do, which we did do, and what the American people want us to do. But I don't want to go forward without registering the concern that we could have done better in this.

One place we can start on our next legislation is to look at the surcharge for the wealthiest people in America instead of taking billions of dollars from preventive care so that we can offset the cost in here. None of it needed to be offset. The payroll tax cut has not been, unemployment insurance has not traditionally been paid for, and we didn't have to do it now. In fact, paying for it diminishes some of its stimulative effect because economists will tell you unemployment insurance benefits paid out are immediately spent back into the Treasury, as the payroll tax cut will be too, and stimulates the economy by injecting demand and creating more jobs.

SGR, we should have gone all the way with it. We should have done it permanently. We could have paid for it with our war savings or with a surcharge at the high end. Republicans said no.

Having said all of that, the fact that we are here today is an admission that this is the right thing to do in terms of the payroll tax cut and unemployment compensation and our seniors. It's a recognition that the American people are watching, and they have little appetite for us to be fighting over what they know is the right thing to do, which is to take every action we can to grow our economy, focusing on the middle class, small business, entrepreneurial spirit, and the rest. Again, we have important work to do to reignite the American Dream in even bigger ways.

So with that, Madam Speaker, I urge our colleagues to support the legislation.

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY).

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. I thank my colleague.

I support the doc fix in this bill. I support the payroll tax cut extension in this bill. I support the extension of unemployment insurance to so many of our fellow Americans who have suffered in the Great Recession. Sadly, I cannot, however, bring myself to vote for this bill.

I represent the third largest number of Federal employees in the United States. They're asking a simple question: What is the nexus, what is the relationship between their employment and these worthy subjects? And the answer is "none."

Three times this week the Republican majority has attempted to get at benefits and pay and compensation of the Federal workforce, and often it's based on misinformation—a bloated workforce. We entered data into a hearing record just the other day that shows that the Obama administration, in absolute terms, has 350,000 fewer Federal workers than those that served during the administration of President H.W. Bush. As a ratio to thousand population in America, it's the lowest since John Kennedy was in the White House in 50 years.

They've already given \$90 billion to debt reduction through pay freezes and future pay freezes. And of course there is legislation to whack at their pensions, affecting both current and future employees in the pending transportation legislation that I hope will die of its own weight. It is not fair to ask only one group in America to make a sacrifice. Shared sacrifice should mean shared sacrifice.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to a member of the House-Senate conference committee, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. HAYWORTH).

Ms. HAYWORTH. I thank the chairman.

Madam Speaker, this conference report that we bring to our colleagues for a vote today represents a remarkable good-faith effort by the members of a committee who combined—who worked together, Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate—to act responsibly for the American people and in response to what the American people have asked us to do.

As a physician—and I practiced for 16 years in the Hudson Valley in New York—the importance of extending reimbursement assurance for our seniors who rely on Medicare, for the doctors who care for them who have to keep their doors open is a crucial issue. But not only did we provide that assurance through the end of this year, we also provided for some other crucial provisions for our rural hospitals, for our ambulance services, for a number of other aspects of care that rely on our action and on the responsible action that we take today.

And, yes, we did pay for those extensions in a responsible way, as we must in a time of looming fiscal crisis. We have a debt that extends to \$50,000, roughly, per man, woman and child in this country. It is unconscionable for us to fail to acknowledge that responsibility. For all of us to do our part in that way, we have, yes, asked our Federal employees to help us. Because as the employer, the Federal Government has to take its responsible steps as well.

The hope that all of us have is that we will continue to work through this year. We will move from here with this consensus document and continue to work on the growth that our economy desperately needs and do so together by controlling what the Federal Government does.

Mr. LEVIN. I now yield 2 minutes to another conferee, the gentleman from California (Mr. BECERRA).

Mr. BECERRA. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

In December, this Congress gave 20 conferees three tasks to achieve by February 29: to extend the payroll tax cut for 160 million middle class Americans; to ensure Americans who lost their jobs through no fault of their own receive their unemployment insurance benefits; and to guarantee our seniors on Medicare have access to the doctors of their choice and the care that they need.

We achieved this goal. But let's be clear, this agreement is by no means free of controversy. The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) eloquently illustrated that. Our Republican colleagues succeeded in extracting a pound of flesh from middle class working Americans who also serve ably in our Federal Government.

But what was the alternative that we faced? A House Republican bill passed in December that quadrupled the cuts to workers in their salaries and their benefits; that increased the cost of

Medicare for millions of seniors; that eliminated and restricted access to physical speech and occupational therapy in hospital settings for Medicare patients; that eliminated the child tax credit for millions of modest-income families; and that eliminated unemployment insurance benefits for nearly 3 million Americans who had lost a job through no fault of their own.

This agreement represents a rejection of the approach in the House Republican bill of December. It is a compromise, free of the controversial and extraneous measures in that Republican bill in December. But it is a bill of controversy because we are asking American workers who work very hard, who give their all and just happen to work for the Federal Government, to pay the cost of helping other Americans who are unemployed.

We could have made this a good bill. We could have asked every American—especially those most able to contribute—to help out. We didn't in this bill, and that's why it's a compromise. It could have been much better, but we faced a deadline by February 29 where 160 million American families would have seen their taxes increase. We would have seen a situation where millions of Americans would have lost their unemployment insurance. We needed to act, and we did.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this compromise measure.

Mr. HOYER. I yield 1½ minutes to the distinguished ranking member of the Government Reform Committee, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS).

Mr. CUMMINGS. Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that we are extending the payroll tax cut through the end of the year, which is essential to support our continued economic recovery.

I am also pleased that we are providing unemployment benefits to ensure that millions of Americans have access to benefits they so urgently need and that we are implementing the doc fix to ensure that seniors on Medicare can continue to see the physicians of their choice.

That said, there are a number of provisions in this agreement that deeply disappoint me.

□ 1050

For example, this agreement will reduce by 30 weeks the maximum number of weeks of unemployment insurance available to residents of States with average unemployment rates.

While the unemployment picture certainly improved in January with the creation of 243,000 jobs and a reduction in the unemployment rate of 8.3, there are still 12.8 million people unemployed in this Nation and millions more who work part-time but want full-time work. For millions of our fellow citizens, unemployment benefits are truly a lifeline.

I'm also deeply disappointed that the conference report requires new Federal workers to contribute more to their

pensions. Our Federal employees are not a piggy bank. We should not reach into their pockets anytime we need to pay for something.

Federal workers are the backbone of our government. In return for their hard work and dedication, the majority has rewarded Federal workers with an unprecedented amount of criticism; assault on their compensation and benefits, including proposals to extend their current 2-year pay freeze and to arbitrarily cut the number of Federal employees; and, now, to slash their retirement benefits.

So I'm going to vote against this conference report. It is an important bill to get through, but I have to vote against it in the name of my employees.

Mr. CAMP. I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. UPTON), the chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee and a member of the House/Senate conference.

Mr. UPTON. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from the great State of Michigan for yielding.

I rise, obviously, in support of this conference report. It's not perfect, but it is certainly the right thing to do now.

Our economy is still struggling big time. Families are struggling. In my home State of Michigan, we know better than anywhere else the pain of high unemployment and anemic economic growth. And extending the temporary payroll tax relief and unemployment benefits, it's not the way to fix the economy, but we need to do it now to offer a measure of relief to those in need.

But our long-term goal is certainly much bigger: We've got to fix the economy. We've got to create jobs. We need to return America to a place where these temporary patches are not needed.

In addition to the payroll tax and unemployment health extension, this package includes the doc fix through the end of the year to protect seniors who depend on Medicare and prevent physician reimbursement rates from being slashed by nearly 30 percent. Again, it is but a temporary solution to a long-term problem.

As chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, I am absolutely committed to working with my good friend Chairman CAMP to develop a permanent solution to the Medicare physician payment system, one that protects seniors and their doctors in the long term while also protecting taxpayers and making sure that Medicare is efficient, effective, and sustainable.

These temporary solutions are a big part of the package, but, Madam Speaker, it would be a terrible mistake to ignore another part of the package, one that will help support literally hundreds of thousands of jobs, one that will spur billions of dollars of investment in our economy and affect the daily lives of nearly every American. I'm talking about spectrum reform.

Spectrum, it's the airwaves that carry wireless communication. Spectrum is all around us and we sure do use it. With the explosion in smartphones, tablets, mobile broadband devices, Americans are using more spectrum than ever before. This bill helps our country make more efficient use of those airwaves.

We're clearing large swaths of spectrum for innovative wireless investments, and the upshot is that wireless companies will pay the taxpayers billions of dollars for the right to build the next generation of wireless networks. It's a huge win for consumers and taxpayers.

This package is the culmination of years of effort, bipartisan effort, numerous hearings, extensive stakeholder input, cooperation on both sides of the aisle.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. CAMP. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. UPTON. I want to recognize my good friend and chairman of the Communications and Telecommunications Subcommittee, both GREG WALDEN and ANNA ESHOO from California, for their tireless efforts to push this bill across the finish line.

No qualified bidder can be excluded from the auction, and we're not giving away airwaves that the taxpayers paid to clear. These are good, solid reforms with clear congressional intent, and I appreciate the hard work to get an agreement and advance this wireless future.

I thank all my colleagues on the conference committee. We worked together, we got it done, and the taxpayer's going to be better off.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield 2 minutes to another hardworking member of the conference committee, Mrs. SCHWARTZ from the State of Pennsylvania.

Ms. SCHWARTZ. This conference committee was charged with resolving differences between the House and the Senate so that we could extend middle class tax cuts, protect seniors' access to their doctors, and extend unemployment benefits for Americans looking for work. As a member of the conference committee, I'm pleased we found a compromise to meet these goals and we are able to provide stability for millions of Americans.

Action today means 160 million American taxpayers will be able to keep more of their hard-earned dollars. These are middle class families struggling to pay their mortgages, their food bills, child care costs, and college tuition. This tax cut will better enable them to meet their obligations and contribute to growing the economy.

Action today means that 13 million of our hardest working Americans will receive unemployment benefits and be better able to provide for their families.

There are encouraging measures of economic growth in our country, but recovery is still fragile. We've had 23

consecutive months of private sector job growth. Unemployment numbers are down, yet millions of Americans are still looking for work. Action today better ensures that losing a job will not mean economic disaster for families who have worked hard and played by the rules.

An action today means that we will keep our promise to 47 million seniors by preventing a drastic 27 percent cut to physicians who care for Medicare beneficiaries. This is a win for American seniors, but it does not relieve us of our responsibility to permanently repeal the SGR and replace it with a new payment system.

For over a decade this failed policy has created uncertainty and instability for patients, for health care providers, and for the Federal budget. Throughout this process, I advocated for both permanent, fiscally responsible repeal of the failed Medicare policy and a path forward to new payment models to improve quality while reducing costs. Despite bipartisan support for this approach, a long-term agreement could not be reached. I will continue to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to end this perennial threat to the promise of Medicare once and for all.

I urge support for middle class families, for America's seniors, and for millions of Americans still searching for a job. I urge support for this conference report.

Mr. HOYER. I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. MORAN. I thank my good friend from Maryland.

I appreciate the work of the conferees, but I oppose this conference agreement, not out of concern for the welfare of the tens of thousands of Federal employees that I represent, but out of concern for the welfare of the great Nation we serve.

We are blessed with the least corrupt, most effective, least discriminatory, most responsive Federal workforce in the world. And yet how do we repay them? We are requiring them to increase their pension contributions by 400 percent, with no increase in benefits.

So we are sending them a signal: We don't really appreciate what you're doing. You're expendable. It's a signal that will not be lost on the recruits that we desperately need in the future, let alone the hundreds of thousands, really, of Federal employees who could easily be making much more in the private sector.

The whole country is going to pay a price for the signal that this bill sends, and that's why I think we should defeat it.

Mr. CAMP. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield 1 minute to the distinguished Representative from California (Ms. ESHOO).

Ms. ESHOO. Madam Speaker, I rise today as the ranking member of the Communications and Technology Sub-

committee on this legislation because I think it's so important. It will define our Nation's ability to lead the world in wireless broadband deployment. It also will define how we finally provide our first responders with a nationwide interoperable broadband network.

This legislation will usher in more competition, enhance innovation, bolster the American economy, and very, very importantly, create jobs, good jobs.

I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and the other Chamber for coming together to develop legislation that promotes the public interest and ensures a return on investment for the taxpayer by supporting unlicensed spectrum, a nationwide interoperable public safety broadband network, and provisions to ensure that our Nation's 911 call centers will have the modern tools needed to improve the quality and the speed of emergency response.

Incentive auctions will ensure that we have the world's leading wireless infrastructure, and the future for unlicensed innovation in the TV band is bright.

□ 1100

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield the gentlewoman an additional 15 seconds.

Ms. ESHOO. Public safety will have the tools to finally build out a critical nationwide interoperable broadband network and the inclusion of provisions to promote and fund Next Generation 911, which will enable the delivery of voice, text, photos, videos, and other data to 911 call centers.

Our country has been counting on us to make smart, bipartisan choices. I'm proud of what we've accomplished and what it represents for American entrepreneurship, competition, and ingenuity.

I thank my colleagues, and I urge them to support the legislation.

Mr. HOYER. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMP. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEVIN. I now yield 1 minute to the distinguished Representative from Maryland (Ms. EDWARDS).

Ms. EDWARDS. I'd like to enter into the RECORD three letters from representatives of public employees and retirees who are wondering why it is that they've had to sacrifice \$60 billion of reductions over the last decade when they didn't create the deficit and yet they're asked to pay for it.

THE NATIONAL
TREASURY EMPLOYEES UNION,

February 16, 2012.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the 150,000 federal employees represented by NTEU, I am writing to urge you to VOTE NO on the conference report on H.R. 3630, the payroll tax extension legislation. This conference report singles out one group—federal employees—to offset fully half the cost (\$15 out of \$30 billion) of the unemployment insurance extension included in the bill, while there are no offsets included for the payroll holiday extension.

Federal employees are in the second year of a two year pay freeze that is contributing \$60 billion to deficit reduction. It is unconscionable to come back to them for a second \$15 billion hit, while no other group has been asked to sacrifice. Under this agreement, millionaires and billionaires continue to keep their tax cuts and corporations that have shipped jobs overseas keep their tax loopholes, but middle class federal employees who guard our borders, keep our food and water safe and protect our financial systems will get a 2.3% pay cut due to increases in pension contributions with no increase in benefits. While the payroll tax holiday extension and the unemployment insurance extension only last for the next 10 months, the loss to a new federal employee making \$50,000 a year that is \$1,000 per year, every year for the rest of their career.

This is not shared sacrifice, it is targeting one group of middle class workers for an extremely disproportionate burden. We urge you to vote no on the conference report on H.R. 3630. For more information, contact Maureen.Gilman@NTEU.org.

Sincerely,

COLLEEN M. KELLEY,
National President.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO,
Washington, DC, February 16, 2012.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, which represents 650,000 federal workers throughout the nation, I am writing to urge you to vote against the Payroll Tax Holiday/Unemployment Insurance extension conference report that pays for the latter by taxing the working and middle class Americans who make up the federal workforce. Forcing new federal employees (hired after 2012) to pay an additional 2.3 percent of their incomes to cover the cost of lengthening the period of eligibility for Unemployment Insurance is not a compromise and it is not a form of shared sacrifice.

For a GS-3 nursing assistant earning \$27,322 while working in a VA hospital psychiatric ward, this will be a \$628 annual tax increase. For a GS-5 USDA meat and poultry inspector earning \$31,825 while protecting Americans from E. Coli and other deadly diseases caused by contaminated meat, this will be a \$732 annual tax increase. For a GS-7 federal penitentiary correctional officer earning \$38,790 while guarding ruthless gang leaders in dangerously understaffed institutions, this will be an \$893 annual tax increase. In short, this "deal" is an outrageous injustice that deserves the vociferous opposition of every Member of Congress with a conscience.

Please note the following:

The extension of unemployment insurance is temporary, but the additional 2.3 percent tax on new federal employees in this bill would be permanent.

The 2.3 percent tax on new federal employees will go to a retirement trust fund that is already fully funded; it is not to address any kind of shortfall in federal retirement financing.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' data on private sector defined benefit plans, 96 percent of employers require no funding contribution from their employees, but this plan would force new federal employees to pay 3.1 percent of their incomes for this modest benefit.

This plan is entirely unfair, unnecessary, and undeserved.

There is simply no legitimate rationale for imposing this tax on federal employees. Federal employees are extremely sympathetic to the dire situation of the long-term unemployed. We strongly support the extension of unemployment benefits, but we absolutely

oppose placing a full 50 percent of its cost on federal employees, and forcing them to pay these insupportable rates in perpetuity.

If there must be offsets to counter the cost of extending unemployment insurance, let them come from a group that has not already given \$80 billion toward deficit reduction in the form of a two-year pay freeze, and is slated to give \$28 billion more from the plan to withhold salary adjustments in the future. The millionaires and billionaires who have continued to profit during this economic recession haven't been asked to pay one nickel more in taxes. Americans continue to pay massive subsidies to oil companies as well as bail out the banks that started this recession with their shady lending practices that caused millions of Americans to lose their jobs, their homes, and their savings.

Please stand up to this shameful maneuver and vote to oppose the conference report.

Sincerely yours,

BETH MOTEN,
Legislative and Political Director.

NARFE,
Alexandria, VA, February 17, 2012.
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the 4.6 million federal employees and annuitants represented by the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), I am writing to urge you to oppose H.R. 3630 because of its cuts to federal retirement benefits.

President Obama has already imposed a two-year pay freeze and proposed only a marginal pay raise for 2013, that together save about \$88 billion. H.R. 3630 would force newly hired federal employees to pay 2.3 percent more, permanently, for retirement benefits. This would save \$15 billion, for a total budget savings from federal employees of \$103 billion over 10 years. No other group of Americans has been asked to sacrifice in this way. I urge you to stop singling out federal employees for unfair cuts.

Even more importantly, these actions undermine the federal government's ability to attract and retain the highest level of skilled talent it needs to deal with the challenges facing us. Singling out federal employees for disparate treatment threatens to do permanent harm to a federal civil service critical to meeting the increasingly complex and deeply important tasks of government. At a time when more is being asked of our government, the American public deserves an engaged and efficient workforce, not one that members of Congress characterize as the source of our country's problems.

Federal employees ensure that the food we eat and the water we drink are safe; they protect our borders and our airways; they take criminals off our streets and keep them behind bars and they care for our veterans and provide the intelligence needed to thwart terrorism. Day after day, they perform the tasks needed to maintain the stability and security of our country. The constant assault on the federal workforce will only undermine the strength of our government and the welfare of our nation.

President John F. Kennedy once said: "Let the public service be a proud and lively career. And let every man and woman who works in any area of our national government, in any branch, at any level, be able to say with pride and with honor in future years: 'I served the United States Government in that hour of our nation's need.'" We are proud of the service we have given to this country, and we ought to instill that same pride in the next generation of public servants. Sadly, that is not what is happening today.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote against H.R. 3630, and specifically to oppose the provisions unfairly targeting federal employees.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH A. BEAUDOIN,
President.

I rise in opposition to the conference report on behalf of Federal workers, and I wonder where it is that we will be able to find the next Robert Ball, who lived in my district, who was the architect of Social Security. I wonder whether we will be able to find the national security and intelligence specialists, who live out in my district in Collington, for the next generation. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, whether we will be able to find the next negotiator of a START Treaty, who lives in my district. We won't be able to find them because we've asked Federal workers to continue to sacrifice for a deficit that they didn't create.

With that, I would just say, please let's vote against this legislation, vote against the conference report. Support Federal workers and the talented workforce that we have, for future generations.

Mr. CAMP. I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN).

Mr. WALDEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise again to support this legislation.

Once again, we're reading about how troubled the economy is. This is the weakest recovery since the Great Depression. It is certainly the kind of economy we all want to improve.

The underlying piece of this legislation frees up spectrum that will generate hundreds of thousands of jobs as 4G is built out. They need spectrum to build out 4G. This provides spectrum.

This is a voluntary incentive auction, so nobody is being forced off the airwaves; but they have the opportunity to leave the airwaves and then repack the bands and then make this spectrum available. People say, What is that? That's what powers your devices, whatever you have on whichever hip, your iPad, your Android, whatever needs this spectrum. In the process, it will generate \$15 billion from the private sector into the government by auctioning off this spectrum to help pay for the middle class tax cut and pay for unemployment extension and the doc fix.

Now, we would have, on our side of the aisle, preferred a 2-year fix for our physicians taking care of seniors on Medicare, but that was not to be, and we know that. But we could not let them fall off the cliff and see their reimbursement rates cut 27.4 percent.

So contained in here are solutions both for the long term and short term we're going to have to revisit.

But the other thing we did that's really important is we're going to build out an interoperable public safety broadband network for our first responders. Our brave men and women, public servants, police and fire, will finally have this Congress answer the call that has been pending since 9/11.

Post-9/11, they said you've got to get our public safety people an interoperable broadband network, and it didn't get done until now. So when you vote for this legislation, you're voting to help your public servants and police and fire finally have the tools to keep them safe and do their jobs.

Mr. LEVIN. How much time is there for each?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WOMACK). The gentleman from Michigan has 3 minutes remaining, the gentleman from Maryland has 1 minute remaining, and the gentleman from Michigan in support has 4¾ minutes remaining.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield now 1 minute to the very distinguished Representative and a leader in our caucus, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN).

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I support this compromise because it ensures that we will be able to continue tax cuts for millions of American workers, and it preserves vital benefits for unemployed Americans that are essential for the overall economy and safeguards seniors' access to their doctors.

While I will vote "yes," this agreement is not perfect. I have serious objections to the continuing demonization of public servants in the Federal Government. We should not keep cutting their pay and benefits while refusing to ask the top 1 percent to pay one penny more. Federal employees have sacrificed now, and they should be given time to share in the sacrifices. All of us should.

I'm also disappointed that this bill cuts money for prevention which is so important to the health of all Americans. Mr. Speaker, I believe that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cheer.

Mr. HOYER. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMP. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEVIN. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMP. If we're prepared to close, I will yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. I yield myself 1 minute.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Maryland is recognized for 2 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. I thank my friend the Speaker. I'm glad that he's in the chair. He and I have worked together because we understand what needs to be done in order to meet the fiscal crisis that confronts our country. All of us need to participate—not just our Federal employees, but all of us.

In the short term, we need to do what this bill does:

160 million people will get an extra thousand dollars that hopefully will help build our economy, create jobs, and expand opportunity for our people;

The unemployed will make sure that they've had that safety net that is critical for them and their families;

The doctors will have a short period of time to have some confidence that they will be compensated to serve Medicare patients over the next 10 months.

The only people asked to pay for that, as I said before, are Federal employees. That is why I took this 20 minutes, to say to each and every one of us in this House, first of all, Federal employees ought not to be the piggy bank out of which you pretend that we're going to be able to pay the deficit. That's wrong. It's not been recommended by any of our groups.

I've had the opportunity of working with Mr. CAMP, who, in my view, is a very conscientious Member of this body. I'm glad that he's the leader. Actually, I wish Mr. LEVIN were the leader, because he's of my party. But since my party is not in control, I'm glad that Mr. CAMP leads it, a reasonable person.

Ladies and gentlemen of this House, America must know that we all need to contribute. The Federal employee has paid \$60 billion over the last 24 months, over the next 10 years already. This year, they will have their pay reduced from what the law requires another \$30 billion. That's \$90 billion. Forget about this bill. Forget about the highway bill which says \$44 billion in additional reduction in benefits. It's \$134 billion that's on the table. It hasn't passed, but it's on the table.

Let us, as conscientious Members of this Congress, as representatives of our people, come together and have a plan that does not require nickel-and-diming of Federal employees, nickel-and-diming of doctors, nickel-and-diming of Medicare patients, and nickel-and-diming of America. Let us come together and do what America knows what needs to be done.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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Mr. LEVIN. How much time is left for Mr. CAMP and myself?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Michigan has 2 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Michigan on the proponent's side has 3¾ minutes remaining.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield myself the balance of my time.

I think this has been a healthy discussion, and I think all of us respect very much the positions that have been put forth. I think we need to look at where we came from.

The main bill before the conference committee was the bill that passed on a partisan basis here in December. It essentially would have countermanded the effort at continued economic growth through the payroll tax bill. It would have required very inimical pay-fors. It would have threatened the pay of 160 million people. That bill also would have drastically cut unemployment insurance.

Cutting unemployment insurance is not reform. It is not reform. People have worked for it. These are people

looking for work who can't find it. We have worked so hard—so hard—to defend and to preserve the lifeline of unemployment insurance as best we could; and essentially it does preserve it in major ways through the rest of this year. For seniors, we have made sure that health care and their physicians are available.

With respect to differing points of view, I strongly urge support for this conference committee report. It is said it isn't perfect, and it is often said no bill is perfect; but we have worked to preserve the basic ingredients to promote economic growth and to preserve the unemployment insurance so critical for the unemployed of this country.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMP. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This conference report extends the payroll tax cut to 160 million working Americans. It prevents a cut in physician payments through the end of the year so that seniors can get the medical treatment and care that they need under Medicare.

This represents about \$800 for working families in America over the next 10 months. Most importantly, this agreement includes no job-killing tax hikes to pay for more government spending. The deficit spending on unemployment stops with this legislation. This agreement firmly establishes that extensions of unemployment benefits must be paid for.

This legislation also includes some of the most significant reforms to unemployment since the 1930s—job-search requirements, drug screening and testing, reemployment programs. These are all critical for work readiness and for reemployment, and these are essential reforms to the unemployment system. We also reauthorize Temporary Assistance for Needy Families with this legislation; but while doing so, we make reforms to that program, as well, by closing the loophole that allowed welfare funds to be accessed at ATMs and in strip clubs, liquor stores, and casinos.

The government spending in this bill is fully offset. Reductions to ObamaCare pay for more than half of the health spending in this legislation. This also restores to the Congress a process dating back to our Founding Fathers. They knew that, at times, government would be divided and that we wouldn't always agree. This agreement was debated in public while using that time-honored process.

With that, I urge all Members to support this bipartisan House-Senate conference agreement, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, what are we doing?

The bill before us today, which would extend the expiring payroll holiday for 10 more months, exemplifies all that is wrong with Washington. No wonder the American people's faith in Congress is at an all-time low.

First, the agreement steals \$93 billion from the Social Security Trust Fund to pay for a 10-

month extension of a temporary program that was supposed to expire two months ago.

Second, there is no offset for this new spending. It adds \$93 billion to the deficit this year—money we will have to borrow from countries like China, which is spying on us, taking our jobs and has terrible record on human rights.

Third, this bill only asks for sacrifice from a small number of Americans—federal employees and postal workers—to pay for the unemployment insurance extension and the Medicare “doc fix.”

Fourth, this “holiday” has proven to have little impact on economic growth and job creation, while significantly growing our deficit.

Finally, the House Appropriations Committee led efforts to cut \$95 billion in spending in the 2011 and 2012 fiscal year appropriations bills. This bill undoes all of the discretionary spending cuts achieved by the House in one fell swoop.

As chairman of the Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations subcommittee, I have cut \$11 billion from the budgets of the Commerce and Justice departments since Republicans reclaimed the majority. These were difficult cuts, but necessary to start reining in our unsustainable deficit and debt. And they will be completely undone after today’s vote.

Have we already forgotten the debates over the deficit last year?

A year ago, we hoped to consider \$4 trillion in debt reduction under the Bowles-Simpson Commission and the “Gang of Six” proposals. By the summer, we were voting on the Budget Control Act, which established a supercommittee charged with finding an additional \$1.2 trillion in savings over 10 years.

Now, the White House and Congress are going in the other direction and choosing to spend away the \$95 billion in deficit reduction actually achieved last year.

This is shameful.

The American people are right to be disappointed that the President and the Congress have walked away from every serious deficit reduction effort.

They should be appalled that both sides have joined together to spend more money and weaken Social Security.

This agreement is giving away the store. And for what? A payroll “holiday” that most Americans haven’t even noticed, according to a recent nationwide poll.

Our country is going broke. The national debt is over \$15 trillion and is projected to reach \$17 trillion by the end of this year and \$21 trillion in 2021. We have annual deficits of over \$1 trillion. We have unfunded obligations and liabilities of \$65 trillion. We are going the way of Greece.

Why are we voting to extend a policy that does nothing more than steal from the Social Security Trust Fund, which is already going broke?

Social Security is unique because it is paid for through a dedicated tax on workers who will receive future benefits. The money paid today funds benefits for existing retirees, and ensures future benefits. Because you pay now, a future worker will pay your benefits. That is why, until December 2010, this revenue stream was considered sacrosanct by both political parties.

Social Security is already on an unsustainable path. Today’s medical breakthroughs simply were not envisioned when the

system was created in 1935. For example, in 1950, the average American lived for 68 years and 16 workers supported one retiree. Today, the average life expectancy is 78 and three workers support one retiree. Three and a half million people received Social Security in 1950; 55 million receive it today.

Every day since January 1, 2011, over 10,000 baby-boomers turned 65. This trend will continue every day for the next 19 years. Do these numbers sound sustainable to anyone?

The Social Security Actuary has said that by 2036 the trust fund will be unable to pay full benefits. This means that everyone will receive an across-the-board cut of 22 percent, regardless of how much money they paid into the system.

Does it make sense that everyone, regardless of income, will get money from this “stimulus?” Does anyone think that Warren Buffett or Jimmy Buffet changed their buying habits as a result of this temporary suspension?

Or did General Electric’s CEO, Jeffery Immelt, the head of President Obama’s Council on Jobs and Competitiveness who recently shipped GE’s medical imaging division from Wisconsin to China, really benefit from this “holiday?”

We all know what needs to be done to address the deficit and debt and that is why I have supported every serious effort to resolve this crisis, including the Bowles-Simpson recommendations, the Ryan Budget, the “Gang of Six,” the “Cut, Cap and Balance” plan and the Budget Control Act.

I also was among the bipartisan group of 103 members of Congress who urged the supercommittee to “go big” and identify \$4 trillion in savings. I continue to work with my colleagues to advance the Bowles-Simpson report. I voted for the Balanced Budget Amendment. Since 2006, when George Bush was in office, I have introduced my bipartisan legislation, the SAFE Commission, multiple times in hopes of dealing with this problem.

While none of these solutions were perfect, they all took the necessary steps to rebuild and protect our economy. In order to solve this problem, everything must be on the table for consideration: all entitlement spending; all domestic discretionary spending, including defense spending; and tax reform, particularly changes to make the tax code more simple and fair and to end the practice of tax earmarks and loopholes that cost hundreds of billions of dollars annually.

Some of the pay-fors in today’s bill could be better used to address our deficit, such as the profits from the spectrum auction. Another pay-for that was previously proposed, and signed into law last December, raised the rates that mortgage lenders can charge on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac loans. This 10 basis point increase makes a home loan more expensive for thousands of individuals looking to buy a house, while doing nothing to further reform these two lending entities. But rather than putting these offsets to good use, we’re spending them away for a 10-month extension of this “holiday.”

But the bill before us now is even worse than what was previously considered because the biggest portion, the \$93 billion cost of the payroll holiday, is not being offset. Once again, only a small segment of our society—federal employees and postal workers—are being used to pay for the other measures wrapped into this proposal.

While there are many federal employees in the Capital region, it is worth noting that more than 85 percent of the workforce is outside of Washington. Eighty five percent. More than 65 percent of all federal employees work in agencies that support our national defense capabilities as we continue to fight the War on Terror.

Has anyone fully considered the impact that this legislation will have on our ability to recruit qualified individuals to the CIA, the NSA, the National Reconnaissance Office and the National Counter Terrorism Center?

Or the impact it will have on the FBI, which has, since 9/11, disrupted scores of terrorist plots against our country?

Or the impact on our military, which is supported by federal employees every day on military bases across the Nation?

Or the impact on VA hospitals across the country, which are treating veterans from World War II to today?

Or the impact on NASA, its astronauts, engineers and scientists?

Or the impact on NIH, and other federal researchers, scientists and doctors?

Federal employees are currently working under President Obama’s two-year pay freeze as they do their part to address our deficit. But to ask them to spend the rest of their careers paying for a 10 month policy? That doesn’t make sense.

Leadership from both parties has said that extending this payroll “holiday” is paramount. I see what has happened. We all know that the President has used the power of his bully pulpit to push for the policy. Just look at the headline of this morning’s National Journal Daily: “Payroll Deal Hands Victory to Obama.” But he missed the opportunity to support his own Bowles-Simpson Commission to seriously deal with the deficit.

The fiscal tsunami that is coming demands that we make tough decisions. Should laws be passed just because they are perceived as popular? I regret that months have been spent on this flawed policy instead of tackling the difficult choices to address our nation’s massive unfunded spending obligations.

There is never a convenient time to make hard decisions. The longer we put off fixing the problem, the worse the medicine will be and the greater the number of Americans who will be hurt. I understand that many feel they need help. But, as many have said, “there’s no such thing as a free lunch.”

America is living on borrowed dollars and borrowed time. We must stop leaving piles of debt to our children and grandchildren.

We can’t afford this debt financed spending. I voted no on this policy in 2010. I voted no on this policy on December 13. I voted no on December 20. And I vote no today.

Mr. PASCARELL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that today, I am witnessing a glimmer of hope that bi-partisanship based around enacting job creating legislation and helping the middle class is possible. This is something that has been sorely missed throughout the 112th Congress.

The actions we take today will put over \$90 billion into the economy. In the Garden State, this means \$100 million into the construction industry, over \$285 million into manufacturing and the creation of almost 1,500 retail jobs. More importantly, this means families in Bergen, Passaic and Hudson counties will receive between \$1,000 and almost \$1,500 directly in their pockets over the course of the next year.

While people say this isn't a lot of real money, I will tell you, every dollar matters when people are in need and every dollar matters to help continue our economic recovery.

Over the last couple of months, we've seen signs that our recovery is accelerating, including 23 month of private sector job growth, 247,000 new jobs in January added, with the highest increase in manufacturing jobs since the late 1990s. This week, initial jobless claims dropped yesterday to their lowest level since March 2008, recent economic surveys showed strong gains in new orders, and the Dow Jones is at its highest level since May 2008.

However, despite this good news, now is not the time to take our foot off the gas. The President has proposed a whole list of job creating ideas contained within the American Jobs Act that will kick this recovery into high gear, including a \$5 billion fund to hire and retain police and firefighters, and a bold plan to invest in American infrastructure, that stands in stark contrast to the politicized and broken bill we are debating in the House.

As we pass this legislation, we mustn't stand here and simply savor this hard fought victory for the middle class, we should use it as the foundation to further economic growth and create more jobs.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bipartisan legislation to extend the payroll tax cut through 2012, delay a massive Medicare physician pay cut until January 1, 2013, and extend unemployment benefits for long-term unemployed workers.

It's not often we get to laud bipartisan legislation these days. Nor did this bill start out that way. The bill the House Republicans passed late last year on this topic was highly partisan. While extending the payroll tax cut for a year and preventing a physician pay cut for two years, it achieved those goals by shifting costs to Medicare beneficiaries and undermining low-income financial assistance in the Affordable Care Act. It extended unemployment benefits, but the price for that extension was cutting off benefits for the long-term unemployed and mandating onerous new rules such as drug testing and GED requirements. It was standard Republican fare—give with one hand, but take away more with the other.

After an embarrassing debacle to end 2011, House Republicans backed down. Now, with today's legislation, they've backed down even more. That's good news for working families, Medicare beneficiaries, and unemployed workers. But don't be fooled that they're suddenly ready to govern. They are not.

They recognized the political risk of not enacting this legislation and then reluctantly came to the conclusion that they had to work with Democrats to get this done.

Once this bill passes, they'll go right back to the issues they really care about: lambasting President Obama for creating a solution that protects religious institutions while providing free contraceptives to American women; trying to require the building of the Keystone pipeline across our country—putting our environment at risk—in order for Canada to export oil to other countries; and pursuing the most partisan transportation authorization bill in history—one that actually defunds mass transit and eliminates vital safety programs. All the while, doing nothing to create jobs or strengthen our economy.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the conference report to accompany H.R. 3630.

I am very pleased that we are extending the payroll tax cut through the end of the year, which is essential to support our continued economic recovery.

I am also pleased that we are providing unemployment benefits to ensure that the millions of Americans have access to the benefits they so urgently need, and that we are implementing the "Doc Fix" to ensure that seniors on Medicare can continue to see the physicians of their choice.

That said, there are a number of provisions in this agreement that deeply disappoint me.

For example, this agreement will reduce by 30 weeks the maximum number of weeks of unemployment insurance available to residents of states with average unemployment rates.

While the unemployment picture certainly improved in January with the creation of 243,000 jobs and a reduction in the unemployment rate to 8.3 percent, there are still 12.8 million people unemployed in this nation—and millions more who work part-time but want full-time work.

For millions of our fellow citizens, unemployment benefits are truly a lifeline.

I am also deeply disappointed that the conference report before us requires new Federal workers to contribute more to their pensions.

Our Federal employees are not a piggy bank. We should not reach into their pockets every time we need to pay for something.

Federal workers are the backbone of our government.

In return for their hard work and dedication, the majority has rewarded federal workers with an unprecedented assault on their compensation and benefits, including proposals to extend their current two-year pay freeze, to arbitrarily cut the number of federal employees, and now to slash their retirement benefits.

As a result of the current freeze in their pay, Federal workers have already contributed \$60 billion toward the reduction of our Federal deficit.

They are now being asked to pay for unemployment insurance and the "Doc Fix" while we still refuse to ask millionaires and billionaires to contribute one additional penny.

It is time we stop the assault on our Federal workforce. We must implement policies that will ensure that our investments in our nation are a shared national priority.

Ms. VELAZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, we have before us a less than ideal piece of legislation. All of us recognize it is vital the payroll tax cut be extended. This cut has put money in the pockets of 160 million Americans—17 million of them in the tri-state New York area. These consumers—indeed our entire economy—cannot afford for this measure to lapse.

At the same time, this bill does not go far enough in helping those who have been hurt by the recession. Millions of Americans are seeking employment but still cannot find it. Indeed, our economy would need to create 230,000 jobs each month—for two years—to regain all the jobs lost since December of 2007. This bill makes it more difficult for out-of-work Americans, by shortening the amount of time they may receive unemployment benefits to 73 weeks. At the same time we cut these benefits, our Republican colleagues insist on protecting those "vulnerable millionaires" who continue receiving tax cuts.

Mr. Speaker, I will vote for this bill—but reluctantly. We cannot afford for Unemployment Insurance or the payroll tax cut to expire. Still, it is my hope that in the future we can do more to protect working families who have suffered from this downturn.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the importance of extending the payroll tax cuts for middle-class Americans, but with a few concerns regarding the source of its funding.

The recent compromise on H.R. 3630, the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act, highlights the critical need to have sensible negotiations with the average American in mind at all times. I believe that it is a success that this Congress was able to extend the payroll tax cut, which will provide a typical middle-class family with an additional thousand dollars in their paychecks over the course of a year. For most low- and middle-class families, a thousand dollars can go a long way to buy food for their family, put gas in their car, and cover minor medical expenses.

The payroll tax cut extension also continues federal Unemployment Insurance programs through the end of 2012, providing job-seeking Americans additional time to find work in a persistently sluggish economy.

I understand that the final version of the payroll tax bill puts off a 27.4 percent reduction in pay to Medicare doctors by making a handful of health care cuts. The nearly \$20 billion cost of the so-called "doc fix" is covered largely by a \$6.9 billion cut to Medicare hospitals, as the federal government decreases how much they will pay hospitals and doctors when Medicare enrollees fail to pay their premiums and co-pays. It also slashes \$5 billion from a fund earmarked for preventive medicine established in the 2010 health care law, cutting a third of the total money appropriated for the fund under the law.

Mr. Speaker, President Obama has already imposed a two-year pay freeze and proposed only a marginal pay raise for 2013, which together save about \$88 billion over ten years. I am concerned that H.R. 3630 would force newly hired federal employees to pay 1.5 percent more, permanently, for retirement benefits. This would save \$15 billion, for a total budget savings from federal employees of \$103 billion over 10 years. No other group of Americans has been asked to sacrifice in this way. I worry that this action would undermine the federal government's ability to attract and retain the highest level of skilled talent it needs to deal with the challenges facing us. Singling out federal employees for disparate treatment threatens to do permanent harm to a federal civil service critical to meeting the increasingly complex and deeply important tasks of government.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report on H.R. 3630, the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2011.

I have never believed in short-term tax policy because uncertainty is the enemy of prosperity. For that reason I have authored the Tax Relief Certainty Act which would make permanent the tax cuts established in 2001 and 2003, repeal the estate tax, and provide permanent relief from the Alternative Minimum Tax.

While I would have preferred this conference report was more than another piecemeal approach to tax relief, the question we

face today is whether this Congress is going to avoid a tax increase on working families. During these difficult economic times I believe that we should not allow a tax increase on working families, and therefore, I will support this bill.

I am pleased that this conference report includes important reforms in unemployment benefits. As I travel around Indiana, small business owners in one community after another have told me about the need to reduce dependency on unemployment insurance. I believe we can provide a safety net for those who have fallen on hard times while at the same time protecting the incentive to work.

This legislation takes an important first step toward reforming unemployment insurance by reducing the maximum number of weeks of eligibility for benefits based on a state's unemployment level and creating national job search requirements for everyone collecting state and federal unemployment insurance benefits. I am also pleased that this conference report contains language that will not interfere with Indiana's efforts to return the state's unemployment trust fund to solvency.

The deal before us today is nothing to write home about, but it does avoid a tax increase on working families during these difficult economic times and starts us down the road toward unemployment insurance reform—and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleagues for reaching an agreement on a longer term extension of the payroll tax cut. While this bill is not perfect, it does provide the average American middle-class family with an additional \$1,000 over the year through the payroll tax cut extension, it continues Unemployment Insurance through the end of the year, and prevents cuts in Medicare physician payment rates. More than 160 million Americans will benefit from the payroll tax extension and millions of seniors using Medicare will be able to continue to see the doctor of their choice.

Despite the assistance this legislation will provide to millions across the country, I have reservations about a number of problematic provisions. The Republican Majority continues to put the burden of the recession on Federal public servants. By requiring an increase in retirement payments by new employees, this legislation further undermines the Federal Government's ability to attract and retain the best talent. The vital services provided by the more than 2 million civilian employees cannot be compromised. It is time this Congress recognized the service that Federal employees provide to our senior citizens and the disabled, to our military service members and veterans, and to our overall safety and health. In addition, the reduction in weeks of unemployment insurance benefits starting in May will put a hard burden on some of America's hardest hit families. Lastly, the cuts to reimbursements for hospitals who serve large numbers of un-and-under-insured patients will put the load of the cost directly on the hospitals providing care.

Despite these concerns, I support this bill today because the extensions help this country continue on a path of job creation and economic growth. We are well in to the second session of the 112th Congress and still my colleagues on the other side have failed to bring meaningful jobs legislation before the House for a vote. It is time the Republican Majority responded to calls from the American

people to strengthen our workforce for middle class families.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I voted in favor of the conference agreement on the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 because I believe it is necessary for our nation's continued economic recovery, which still remains fragile. Economists of every stripe have endorsed the three major components of the bill which will provide some additional confidence for both consumers and business. However, I have serious concerns about parts of the compromise, chiefly the lack of a permanent repeal of the sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula and the funding sources for the ten-month SGR "patch."

Medicare cuts to community hospitals and skilled nursing facilities included in the compromise threaten the already thin financial margins these institutions are operating on. Also included in the compromise is the elimination of \$5 billion from the Prevention and Public Health Fund created by the Affordable Care Act. These cuts will stifle progress on disease prevention which in the long-term is the best way to reduce health care spending. And, the fact that these programs will be cut to pay for a short term fix of a broken SGR formula that was passed into law nearly two decades ago and has proven to be totally infeasible, is particularly galling.

While the window of opportunity to repeal the SGR permanently in this package has passed for now, Congress still has an obligation to enact a permanent fix to this flawed policy when the ten-month fix expires. We know now that the longer a permanent fix is delayed, the more precarious our system of care for seniors and veterans will become. On a positive note, growing bipartisan, bicameral support for abolishing the SGR is building, paid for with savings from the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funds. The Congressional Budget Office has confirmed these funds are available which provides a promising opportunity in the coming months to repeal the SGR finally once and for all.

Fixing this long standing problem must be a bipartisan priority for this Congress. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle towards a permanent solution to the SGR that gives our doctors, seniors and veterans the long term certainty they need—and deserve—in their care.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand with the President and working Americans today by supporting this measure, which will add an average of \$1,000 to the paychecks of working North Carolinians this year, extend unemployment benefits for Americans who have lost jobs through no fault of their own, and ensure seniors on Medicare will be able to see their doctors. After a year in which Republicans in Congress took the country from one manufactured crisis to the next, this bipartisan agreement is a step in the right direction and at a time when so many families are still struggling to make ends meet, it may be our last chance to help revive the economy as we head into an election year.

Once again, however, House Republicans are asking us to rob Peter to pay Paul, and the positive economic impact of this measure will be undermined in part by their senseless and misguided insistence that federal employees, hospitals, clinical laboratories, and preventive health programs must bear the cost. Unemployment benefits are paid out during

true economic emergencies and should not require offsets. And to the extent we should offset the cost of the other programs extended in this measure, we should do so by asking corporations and the wealthiest Americans to pay their fair share—not by asking middle-class Americans and providers of health care who have already sacrificed in the name of deficit reduction to do even more.

I'm particularly troubled by the demonization of federal workers by Republicans in Congress, which has reached a crescendo of late. To be effective and respond to the needs of the American people, government needs to attract the best and brightest to public service. Federal employees have already been subjected to a pay freeze, and now we are asking them to open their wallets again to pay for unemployment benefits for workers who have lost their jobs.

I cannot in good conscience oppose a measure that puts money in the pockets of American workers, protects our fragile economic recovery, and maintains the safety net for unemployed workers and health care for seniors. But we simply must do better if we are to maintain the promise of expanding opportunity for working and middle class Americans.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my concerns with a health provision in the Payroll Tax Compromise. Even though we have successfully protected Medicare beneficiaries from significantly increased premiums on Medicare patients with incomes below \$40,000, and prevented attempts to undermine the Affordable Care Act's mission of expanding coverage to millions of Americans, the Payroll Tax compromise still contains provisions that will hurt middle-class and economically disadvantaged Americans. Specifically, I am concerned about the inclusion of cuts to Medicare laboratory services. Under this legislation, clinical lab payment rates will be cut by an additional 2 percent in 2013, on top of the cuts that were included in the health reform law. These new cuts also rebase the lab fee schedule, resulting in lower rates for clinical lab services for years to come.

In some independent clinical laboratories, especially those serving rural communities or nursing home populations, 80 percent or more of their patient-base consists of Medicare beneficiaries. The cuts being faced threaten their practice's existence and no additional cuts—big or small—can be absorbed without adversely impacting patient care. Medicare payment amounts for clinical laboratory services have already been reduced, in real terms, by about 40 percent over the past 20 years. While clinical laboratory testing is less than 2 percent of all Medicare spending, it has been subject to significant freezes in payments and cuts over the last decade.

Clinical laboratories are an important part of the health care system. Their tests inform up to 70 percent of a doctor's medical decision-making. As the first point of intervention, laboratory tests serve as the foundation for the diagnosis and clinical management of conditions like heart disease, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, and infectious diseases. These clinical laboratories do more than just draw a person's blood. They are a major part of the medical process.

Independent clinical laboratories also are essential for those who must depend on the laboratory's mobility for testing. Medicare

beneficiaries in nursing homes rely upon the services provided by independent clinical laboratories that can deploy medical professionals to their place of residence. If these laboratories continue to have their Medicare payments cut, not only will jobs be lost, but patients will suffer.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to repeal these cuts.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today I voted against the Conference Report to accompany H.R. 3630, but within this legislation, there are provisions that I do support. I support giving a payroll tax cut to 160 million Americans, extending unemployment insurance to those Americans who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own, and to allow seniors access to their doctors under Medicare. But there is a damaging aspect of this bill that will affect the pensions of future federal employees.

This bill raises an additional \$15 billion to extend unemployment insurance coverage by requiring federal employees to contribute a larger amount to their retirement accounts. Federal employees are currently in their second year of a pay freeze while my colleagues across the aisle only a few short weeks ago voted to freeze federal employees' pay for a third year. Republicans don't think twice about limiting federal workers' ability to support their families, but are more than willing to shut down the government when bankers are asked to pay their fair share of taxes on their bonuses.

How much can we continue to pick on federal workers? They are not fat-cats. They are postal workers, janitors, teachers, nurses, social workers, and police officers. When did they become the bad guys? How much can we continue to pile on them before their backs break? How much weight should the wealthiest Americans, who can afford it, carry?

I am also concerned that this compromise to extend unemployment insurance reduces benefits from 99 weeks to as little as 73 weeks through December. I hear daily from constituents who are approaching the end of their 99 weeks and are at a loss as to where to turn next. Although the economy may be starting to recover, what are we supposed to tell those people who have been looking for a job for months and months on end? What kind of compromise are they supposed to strike with unemployment?

Furthermore, this legislation will blow a \$100 billion hole in the deficit by not paying for the measure. It is a precursor from the Republicans for the beginning of the end of Social Security.

Millions of Americans all across this nation are struggling and they need our help. The Republican majority would rather implement policies that unfairly favor the wealthy, while asking the least among us to make enormous sacrifices. I am sick and tired of Republican gamesmanship. I voted against this measure, because 'enough is enough.'

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, with reservations, to support H.R. 3630, the Temporary Payroll Tax Cut Continuation of 2011.

Benefits paid out by Social Security now exceed payroll taxes collected, and with no change the trust funds will run out by 2035. While this conference report would continue our policy of replacing uncollected payroll taxes with funds from general revenue, the

\$93 billion cost for ten months of this policy makes clear we cannot afford to continue it for the long term. Our focus on Social Security should be reforming it to ensure its viability for those who have paid in, not infusing it with hundreds of billions of additional dollars we don't have.

However, H.R. 3630 allows Americans to continue to keep more of their paychecks for the rest of the year in this delicate economy. This bill also contains important reforms to Medicare and unemployment insurance and ensures this new, current spending is paid for. We cannot indefinitely pay out 99 weeks of unemployment benefits, and this bill begins phasing out these extended benefits. While I would prefer we permanently reform Medicare, this conference report ensures seniors have access to care through the end of the year by addressing physician reimbursement rates and other payment issues while laying the groundwork for permanent payment reform. We also reform federal employee benefits and will expand access to wireless broadband through this bill. These are important accomplishments worthy of support.

Because of these achievements, I ask my colleagues to support H.R. 3630. I also ask we continue our work to permanently reform both the tax code and our entitlement programs to provide Americans the long-term certainty they need, rather than continuing our reliance on piecemeal legislation.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Conference Report on H.R. 3630 "Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2011." The Conference Report extends the 2 percent payroll tax cut, the Medicare SGR "doc fix" and various Medicare and Medicaid extenders through the end of the year.

There are currently 160 million workers who will benefit from a payroll tax holiday and millions of unemployed workers in desperate need of an extension of unemployment insurance. In addition it would prevent 170,000 Americans from losing their health coverage. It is in consideration of the millions of Americans that will benefit from this legislation that I cast my vote today.

Although certain improvements have been made to this bill that have made it more palatable in the name of compromise, in comparison to the version offered by House Republicans, I still believe we could have done more.

Instead of a temporary fix to the Medicare sustainable growth rate formula (SGR), commonly known as the Doc Fix, we could have had a permanent solution which would have addressed the concerns of doctors across this country and the patients who utilize their services. We cannot continue to rely upon short-term patches that arise every few months. It is time to bring certainty to our system of payment. We must act now—the cost to repeal SGR today would be \$300 billion. If we wait five years that cost will double to \$600 billion. Without addressing the SGR head on and instead continuing to kick the can down the road, it is only making a flawed system more costly to resolve.

Under this Republican led House measures continue to be offered that are being paid for on the backs of federal workers. These workers are responsible for aiding in crafting the legislation that we put forward in this body. They are responsible for implementing and creating regulations that ensure that our sys-

tem of governance runs smoothly, that our airways, roadways, ports, and food are safe.

These dedicated civilian employees are paid less than they would be in the private sector. Their reward for these dedicated federal servants is for the Republican led House to use their pay and their benefits as a piggy bank, instead of issuing a surcharge on the wealthiest among us, a simple 1 percent increase in taxes on those who earn over one million a year. Instead, we are targeting the federal worker.

Under Republican pressure the fate of 315 million Americans will be borne by the 2 million federal civilian workers who serve them. To be clear, federal employees will be the only people paying for this bill.

Again, under a Republican led House, Republicans have continued to use federal civilian employees as a piggy bank. Which in many ways is an attack on the fabric of the middle class.

In this Congress alone the federal workforce has already contributed \$80 billion to deficit reduction. This was done by freezing their pay, preventing two cost of living increases, and other measures. Which is really code for what a federal employee is making today is less than what she was making two years ago (when you adjust for inflation).

Federal workers are highly skilled, highly trained, and highly educated. We must remember that none of the laws that we pass here today will make a difference without having people around who will implement them.

My Republican colleagues appear to believe that they can continue to target federal workers without repercussions. When we are no longer able to recruit and retain the best and the brightest, then we can look to the measure pushed by my Republican colleagues. Although I support many of the provisions in this bill; I must make clear I am concerned with how this bill is constructed.

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT

I will repeat again that this conference report would require new hires into the federal government to have a significantly higher portion of their wages diverted to pay for their retirement.

Even though it is very uncommon in the private sector for employees to contribute any portion of their pay toward retirement, this conference report would require newly hired federal workers to contribute 3.1 percent of their wages to pay for their pensions, a 2.3 percent increase over current levels that will cost even the lowest paid federal workers hundreds of dollars per year in take home pay. This amounts to a targeted tax on middle class federal workers like VA nurses, border patrol agents, food inspectors, and wild land firefighters. Targeting these middle class workers again as a "pay-for" when the wealthiest Americans have not been asked to contribute anything is unconscionable. Federal workers have already been asked to make significant sacrifices.

As I said before, I will say again being dedicated to this country they accepted a two-year pay freeze (for 2011 and 2012) which has been a great burden to federal employees and their families who are struggling just like everyone else in this tough economy. This sacrifice alone saved American taxpayers \$60 billion.

Treating newly hired federal workers differently than current federal employees is a

very disturbing precedent. Federal agencies are only able to recruit the talent they need because, though they do not pay as much, federal government jobs are still considered good jobs.

If we go down this path of taking away key benefits from future federal employees that will no longer be true. The days of federal agencies hoping to attract the best and brightest will be over.

Taking a giant symbolic step in the race to the bottom by undermining middle class federal employees' retirement security is unfair to workers and it is bad policy.

I have repeatedly pushed for a surcharge on individuals who earn over one million dollars a year to pay for this bill. I offered legislation to that effect and in each instance, I did not garner significant Republican support. This would have protected the middle class and protected civilian workers from having to continue to bare the full brunt of the economic down turn.

Republicans once more protected the interest of the wealthiest among us. Using the benefits of future federal workers as a piggy bank, is just another example of the assault on the middle class.

There is good news in this bill, the Conference Report reauthorizes the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program through the end of the fiscal year. I have been an ardent supporter of a TANF and although I believe more could be done. I am pleased with the compromise that was able to be reached on this point today.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Finally Republicans have begun to realize they cannot continue to target the unemployed. There are more than four unemployed Americans for every job opening. Never on record in our nation's history have there been so many unemployed Americans out of work for so long. There is nothing normal about this recession. Republicans were clearly out of touch with the needs of American families. It is about time they recognized that the American people want Members of this body to work together.

I am committed to producing tangible results in suffering communities through legislation that creates jobs, fosters minority business opportunities, and builds a foundation for the future. I believe and have been an advocate for extending unemployment insurance.

Every American deserves the right to be gainfully employed or own a successful business and I know we are all committed to that right and will not rest until all Americans have access to economic opportunity.

According to a report released by the Department of Labor late this afternoon, 3.3 million Americans would lose unemployment benefits as a result of the original House GOP bill compared to a continuation of current law. In the State of Texas alone 227,381 people will lose their sole source of income by the end of January. Under this compromise unemployment insurance programs will be extended until the end of 2012, will be gradually reducing the number of weeks, and with some adjustments in requirements.

Again, I have been a supporter of Unemployment Insurance benefits and I am not fully satisfied with all elements of this provision. Although it retains the current maximum level of 99 weeks of total Unemployment Insurance benefits through May.

I am disappointed that it will reduce the maximum to 79 over the summer, and to 73

in September—depending on a state's unemployment rate. This is a significant compromise when considering the bill the Republicans put forth previously which would have cut federal UI benefits by more than half, with the total number of weeks of unemployment insurance down to 59 weeks for most states by the summer.

I recall when making my decision about this bill, the previous bill that was presented which was a shining example of how the Republicans failed to keep their pledge to the American People. A little over a year ago, Republican leadership released to the public their Pledge to America. In which they told the American people that they would "end the practice of packaging unpopular bills with 'must-pass' legislation to circumvent the will of the American people. [Further] Instead, [Republicans] will advance major legislation one issue at a time." This is what my colleagues stated less than one year ago. So as I consider the measure before me today, I have to consider how far the Republicans have decided to come on this issue. I have no desire to gamble with the much needed assistance that the American people today.

If there is a single federal program that is absolutely critical to people in communities all across this nation at this time, it would be unemployment compensation benefits. Unemployed Americans must have a means to subsist, while continuing to look for work that in many parts of the country is just not there. Families have to feed children.

Although according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statics the state of Texas continues to have the largest year-over-year job increase in the country with a total of 253,200 jobs. However, there are still thousands of Texans like thousands of other Americans in dire need of a job.

GED AND DRUG SCREENING REQUIREMENT REMOVED

In the previous Republican package which included drug testing on those who received UI or a requirement for GED/High school Diploma receive. I am glad that by working with Democrats the Republicans were able to remove these poisonous positions.

I am pleased this measure has a more common sense approach to the unemployed, as it drops the draconian provisions which required people to get a GED and allowed a blanket drug testing. Instead, the bill before us today permits states to drug screen and test anyone who (1) lost their job because of drug abuse, or (2) is seeking a job that regularly requires a drug test. Further it codifies current state practices requiring those receiving unemployment benefits at both the state and federal level to look for a job, which is important to ensuring that people know this benefit is given to them to help them while they search for permanent income.

Rather than requiring a GED or requiring people to join an already 160,000 persons waiting list for job training. The measure before us would allow the Department of Labor to approve waivers for up to 10 states for re-employment programs. Although this represents the beginning of the journey as a step in the right direction it is not the end.

I found the drug testing element to be one of the most disturbing parts of the Republican unemployment reforms. It was an insult to the unemployed. Further, the requirement to insist that to qualify for benefits that a person has or is in the process of attaining a GED or a high

school diploma would have had a negative impact on minorities who have been hit the hardest during this economic downturn.

We need job training programs that are funded rather than penalties for those who for a multitude of reasons have not attained a high school diploma or GED.

Unemployed workers, many of whom rely on public transportation, need to be able to get to potential employers' places of work. Utility payments must be paid.

People use their unemployment benefits to pay for the basics. No one is getting rich from unemployment benefits, because the weekly benefit checks are solely providing for basic food, medicine, gasoline and other necessary things many individuals with no other means of income are not able to afford.

Personal and family savings have been exhausted and 401(Ks) have been tapped, leaving many individuals and families desperate for some type of assistance until the economy improves and additional jobs are created. The extension of unemployment benefits for the long-term unemployed is an emergency. You do not play with people's lives when there is an emergency. We are in a crisis. Just ask someone who has been unemployed and looking for work, and they will tell you the same.

With a national unemployment rate of 9.1 percent, preventing and prolonging people from receiving unemployment benefits is a national tragedy. In the City of Houston, the unemployment rate stands at 8.6 percent as almost 250,000 individuals remain unemployed.

Indeed, I cannot tell you how difficult it has been to alleviate the concerns of my constituents who are unemployed that there will be no further extension of unemployment benefits. It is clear that it is more prudent to act immediately to give individuals and families looking for work a means to survive. This Conference Report reflects changes that are much better for the American people, but it is also flawed measure.

Until the economy begins to create more jobs at a much faster pace, and the various stimulus programs continue to accelerate project activity in local communities, we cannot sit idly and ignore the unemployed, the uninsured, the elderly, and those with a low income and our middle class. I am committed to rebuilding the American dream. I firmly believe that we could have done more than what is before us today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 554, the previous question is ordered.

The question is on the conference report.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on adopting the conference report will be followed by a 5-minute vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, if ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 293, nays 132, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 72]

YEAS—293

Alexander	Griffin (AR)	Miller, George
Altmire	Grijalva	Moore
Amodi	Grimm	Murphy (CT)
Andrews	Guinta	Murphy (PA)
Austria	Guthrie	Myrick
Baca	Hahn	Nadler
Baldwin	Hanabusa	Napolitano
Barletta	Hanna	Neal
Barrow	Harper	Nunes
Bartlett	Hartzler	Nunnelee
Bass (CA)	Hastings (WA)	Olver
Bass (NH)	Hayworth	Owens
Becerra	Heck	Palazzo
Benishek	Heinrich	Pallone
Berg	Hensarling	Pascrell
Berkley	Herger	Pastor (AZ)
Berman	Herrera Beutler	Paulsen
Biggert	Higgins	Pelosi
Billray	Himes	Pence
Bilirakis	Hinchey	Perlmutter
Bishop (GA)	Hinojosa	Peters
Bishop (NY)	Hirono	Pitts
Blumenauer	Hochul	Platts
Bonamici	Holden	Polis
Boren	Holt	Price (GA)
Boswell	Honda	Price (NC)
Brady (PA)	Huelskamp	Quigley
Brady (TX)	Huizenga (MI)	Rahall
Braley (IA)	Hultgren	Reed
Buchanan	Hunter	Rehberg
Bucshon	Hurt	Reichert
Butterfield	Inslee	Renacci
Calvert	Israel	Ribble
Camp	Issa	Richardson
Canseco	Jackson (IL)	Richmond
Cantor	Jackson Lee	Rigell
Capito	(TX)	Rivera
Capps	Jenkins	Rogers (KY)
Carnahan	Johnson (OH)	Rogers (MI)
Carney	Johnson, Sam	Rooney
Carson (IN)	Jones	Ros-Lehtinen
Castor (FL)	Kaptur	Roskam
Chandler	Keating	Ross (AR)
Chu	Kelly	Rothman (NJ)
Cicilline	Kildee	Roybal-Allard
Clarke (MI)	King (NY)	Runyan
Clyburn	Kinzinger (IL)	Ruppersberger
Coble	Kissell	Rush
Coffman (CO)	Kline	Sánchez, Linda
Cohen	Kucinich	T.
Cole	Lance	Sanchez, Loretta
Conaway	Langevin	Scalise
Conyers	Larsen (WA)	Schakowsky
Costa	Larson (CT)	Schiff
Courtney	Latham	Schilling
Cravaack	LaTourrette	Schock
Crawford	Latta	Schwartz
Crenshaw	Levin	Schweikert
Critz	Lewis (CA)	Scott (SC)
Crowley	Lewis (GA)	Scott, David
Cuellar	Lipinski	Serrano
Culberson	LoBiondo	Sewell
Davis (CA)	Loeback	Sherman
Davis (KY)	Lofgren, Zoe	Shimkus
DeGette	Long	Shuster
DeLauro	Lowe	Sires
Denham	Lucas	Slaughter
Dent	Luetkemeyer	Smith (NE)
Deutch	Lujan	Smith (NJ)
Diaz-Balart	Lungren, Daniel	Smith (TX)
Dicks	E.	Southerland
Dingell	Mack	Speier
Doggett	Maloney	Stark
Dold	Manzullo	Stearns
Donnelly (IN)	Marchant	Stivers
Doyle	Marino	Stutzman
Dreier	Markey	Sutton
Duffy	Matheson	Thompson (MS)
Ellmers	Matsui	Thompson (PA)
Emerson	McCarthy (CA)	Tiberi
Engel	McCarthy (NY)	Tierney
Eshoo	McCaul	Tipton
Fattah	McCollum	Tonko
Fincher	McGovern	Towns
Fitzpatrick	McHenry	Tsongas
Fleischmann	McIntyre	Turner (NY)
Flores	McKeon	Turner (OH)
Frank (MA)	McMorris	Upton
Frelinghuysen	Rodgers	Velázquez
Garamendi	McNerney	Walden
Gerlach	Meehan	Walsh (IL)
Gibbs	Meeks	Walz (MN)
Gibson	Michaud	Wasserman
Gonzalez	Miller (MI)	Schultz
Green, Al	Miller (NC)	Waters
Green, Gene	Miller, Gary	Watt

Waxman
Webster
Westmoreland
Wittman

Womack
Yarmuth
Yoder
Young (AK)

Young (FL)
Young (IN)

NAYS—132

Ackerman
Adams
Aderholt
Akin
Amash
Bachmann
Bachus
Barton (TX)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Bonner
Boustany
Brooks
Broun (GA)
Buerkle
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Capuano
Cardoza
Carter
Cassidy
Chabot
Chaffetz
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Connolly (VA)
Cooper
Costello
Cummings
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DesJarlais
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Edwards
Ellison
Farenthold
Farr
Filner
Flake
Fleming
Forbes

NOT VOTING—8

Bono Mack
Brown (FL)
Campbell

Gosar
Paul
Payne

Nugent
Olson
Pearce
Peterson
Petri
Pingree (ME)
Poe (TX)
Pompeo
Posey
Quayle
Reyes
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Ross (FL)
Royce
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Sarbanes
Schmidt
Schrader
Scott (VA)
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Simpson
Smith (WA)
Sullivan
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thornberry
Van Hollen
Visclosky
Walberg
Welch
West
Whitfield
Wilson (FL)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Woodall
Woolsey

□ 1140

Messrs. LABRADOR, GRAVES of Missouri, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Messrs. GOODLATTE, OLSON, and HALL changed their vote from “yea” to “nay.”

Messrs. CROWLEY, ALTMIRE and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ changed their vote from “nay” to “yea.”

So the conference report was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 72, had I been present, I would have voted “yea.”

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, which the Chair will put de novo.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 1380

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to remove my name as a cosponsor of H.R. 1380.

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

There was no objection.

□ 1140

RELATING TO THE MATTER OF REPRESENTATIVE MAXINE WATERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the chair of the Committee on Ethics:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ETHICS,
February 17, 2012.

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

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to House Rule XI, clause 3(b)(5) and Committee Rule 9(e), and with the unanimous approval of the Committee on Ethics (Committee), I am writing to request the appointment of six substitute Members, necessitated by voluntary recusals, to serve for any Committee proceeding related to the Matter of Representative Maxine Waters (the matter) currently before this Committee.

TIMING OF RECUSAL

Prior to the end of the 111th Congress, the bipartisan leadership of the Committee/each recognized the need to hire outside counsel to complete this matter. On July 20, 2011, the Committee announced that it voted unanimously to hire Attorney Billy Martin as outside counsel to review, advise and assist the Committee in completing the matter.

A key phase of Mr. Martin's assistance is to review allegations that this Committee violated due process rights or rules attaching to Representative Waters. In addition, Mr. Martin was asked to address whether recusal of any Members of the Committee should be considered and when would be the most appropriate time for his recommendations regarding recusal.

Mr. Martin has informed the Committee that he has reviewed tens of thousands of pages of documents, and has interviewed current and former Committee Members as well as current and former Committee staff. Each current and former Committee Member and current employee, who was requested for interview, fully cooperated with Mr. Martin.

However, Mr. Martin has advised that one necessary witness has refused to appear voluntarily and, when subpoenaed to testify, communicated to the Committee that the witness would refuse to answer questions on the basis of the witness's Fifth Amendment privilege.

The witness's refusal to answer questions prevents the completion of the due process review. While Mr. Martin had advised that the most appropriate time to present his recommendations regarding recusal would be upon the completion of his due process review, he has now counseled the Committee to advance that timing and consider the recusal recommendations prior to considering the witness's refusal to testify.

As the Committee must now determine its next steps in this matter, Mr. Martin has recommended that the leadership of the current Committee/and four Members who