

from our Supreme Court that basically said:

At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of the human life.

I suggest that at the heart of Dr. Gosnell's trial is this understanding on the part of Dr. Gosnell that he had the liberty to define his own concept of existence and of meaning and of the universe. But that's to be juxtaposed with what our Founders described as self-evident truths, that we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among them are the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

That concept was enshrined in our Constitution, where our Fifth Amendment provides that no person is to be deprived of life without due process of law; and, again, our 14th Amendment adds that no State shall deprive a person of life without due process of law.

As we watch this trial unfold in Philadelphia and continue to hear the daily testimony of what's happening, I think it's appropriate that we reflect on those words of the Founders and how far we've come from those days.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank my friend for coming from his markup to be with us here today.

There was a report in the Philadelphia Inquirer—again, just tell the truth, just tell the story about what's happening in the trial—and they report that this week an ex-employee of Gosnell talked about how she perceived the brutal snipping of the spines of newborns still alive after abortion.

"Did you know it was murder?" Assistant District Attorney Joanne Pescatore asked ex-clinic worker Lynda Williams, referring to the clinic's practice of snipping the spines of babies born alive during abortion procedures.

"No, I didn't," said Williams, 44.

She goes on to say that one of her duties was to retrieve fetuses from women who would sometimes spontaneously abort in the waiting room after getting large doses of drugs. "One day," she testified, "a woman expelled a second trimester fetus and it was moving." Williams said she took a pair of scissors and snipped the spine as Gosnell showed her. "I did it once," she said, "and I didn't do it again because it gave me the creeps."

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude. Dr. ANDY HARRIS a few moments ago talked about the bioethicists who had made statements that after-birth abortion is justified because the newborn, or children who have been out of the womb for even weeks, have the same moral stature—and that is none—as an unborn child. Those two bioethicists say: "The devaluation of newborn babies is inextricably linked to the devaluation of the unborn." They said: "We propose that this practice of after-birth abortion be called that, rather

than infanticide, in order to emphasize that the moral status of the individual killed—that is to say the baby—"is comparable to that of the fetus."

Whether she will exist is exactly what our choice is all about. So the choice to kill extended to the point of snipping the spines of children who were born and struggling and gasping for breath and for some kind of outreach of hands that would save that child, but it wasn't there. That is now being prosecuted, as it ought to be, as murder.

Our hope is that the blackout of this trial of Kermit Gosnell will end. It is ongoing. It's occurring today. It's occurring every day. I don't know how long it will take. But to NBC, CBS, and ABC and to the major news media, The Washington Post, The New York Times, and others, just tell the story. Keep your editorials on the editorial page—you are absolutely entitled to that—but don't let that creep onto and bleed onto the other pages. Just tell the story. And the indifference, again, and the lack of coverage suggests a coverup.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. POCAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. POCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. We are here today to talk about a specific item in the President's budget, and that item is the chained CPI in Social Security.

The chained CPI is an idea that originated with the Republicans and was included in the President's budget as a way to try to convince them to come to the table and have a budget for the Nation. But the chained CPI is more than that. We have a problem with the way the chained CPI works.

Chained CPI. No one in the real world talks about chained CPI. It's like sequester. I don't know a single person who tells their child, I'm going to sequester your toys.

Chained CPI is another Washington idea. What that idea is, in layman's terms, is essentially a cut in how people will receive the cost of living increase for Social Security. A real important way to talk about this is currently the consumer price index is how we determine any increases to people who receive Social Security.

□ 1530

When you do the chained CPI, it takes the rate that we provide for that cost of living increase and changes the cost of living increase in a different way that makes it a smaller increase for people who receive that.

The problem is specifically for seniors and disabled and children who are

receiving Social Security. Seniors, especially, pay about 20 percent to 30 percent of their incomes on health care, and health care costs have risen more than the consumer price index or the cost of living increases that people have had. So by doing the chained CPI, essentially it is a cut in Social Security to people who need it the most.

There is a famous Midwesterner, a former Senator from the State of Minnesota, Hubert Humphrey who once said:

The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.

Our moral test today is Social Security. It's our moral promise to seniors for their economic security. That promise comes in the form of Social Security.

It's also our promise to veterans, to people with disabilities and to our children and orphans in this country. If we break that American promise by moving to a chained CPI, it'll have real consequences to real people.

Granted, this was a Republican proposal that the President included. This is a Republican idea that the President included in his budget in order to try to get them to the table. Nonetheless, it is a bad idea no matter where it comes from.

Let me give you a little example about the amount of cuts that would be provided on average to some seniors through this. Benefits for someone who's 75 years old would see \$658 less a year. If you're 85 years old, you would see \$1,147 less a year. If you're a 95-year-old, you would see \$1,622 less a year. And for our 3.2 million disabled veterans in this country who sacrificed for our country, it means they would see reduced disability in Social Security benefits as well.

These cuts grow deeper and deeper, as I explained, the older you get, but they also are especially hard on women in this country. Women have longer life expectancies. They rely more on their income from Social Security, and they already are more economically vulnerable than men.

Let me give you an example of what this means in real terms.

My mother is 84 years old. My father died in 1991, and she has been alone all those years living on Social Security. I called her and I asked her specifically what she gets from Social Security every month. She gets \$1,101 a month. That comes out to \$13,212 annually.

I asked her to break out her expenses for me. I went through every possible expense that we could, just to get an idea of what it's like to be 84 and to be on a modest income. I grew up in a lower middle class family. She's already gone through most of her savings, living to 84. Her mother lived to 101. Should her genes hold out, her savings will definitely not hold out that amount of time.

First of all, her utilities, her gas, electric and her water bill come to \$130 a month. She said she spends \$40 to \$50 for groceries and other essentials a week. That comes to an average of \$180 a month.

The average senior's health care is 20 percent to 30 percent of their income. That's why the chained CPI is especially hard on seniors, because it's such a large percent of their income, because so much of their income goes to health care, whether it's copayments, prescription drugs, or other needs. So with that income of \$13,212, let's just go right down the middle and take 25 percent. That's \$275 on average a month.

Her car insurance and home insurance averages out to \$77 a month. Her property taxes are \$3,285. She's fortunate she owns her home, but she has property taxes that come to about \$273 a month on average. Her phone and cable bill, combined, comes to \$140 a month. She has to have help doing her snow shoveling, mowing her grass, and other errands around the house. That comes to about \$50 a month. Finally, her gas she has estimated—she doesn't do as much traveling as she used to—is about \$40 a month.

That grand total is \$1,165. That means she is underwater. She is in the red by \$64 a month. That is before other expenses.

Now, she is fortunate that she doesn't have a mortgage anymore. But could you imagine if you had a mortgage and on top of that \$1,165 you added another \$600, \$800, \$1,000, \$1,200 a month.

She has her car paid for, but it's from the nineties. That car, if it was a payment, would be \$200 or \$300 a month. Add that on top. She was just telling me about repairs. She spent \$1,700 fixing her furnace at her home. That's not calculated in all of her other monthly expenses, car repairs, et cetera.

The bottom line is that that \$1,101 a month, which is essentially what she lives on—and one in three seniors live on that Social Security payment a month. You cannot afford to lose, at her age range, over \$100 a month. At \$100 a month, that means she's either cutting back on her food, cutting back on her medicine, turning the thermostat down in winter or up in the summer. But it has real-life implications on people who can afford it the least, people like my 84-year-old mother and millions of seniors across this country.

There are some in this body who try to rewrite history. They are trying to say that our economic woes, our deficit, is somehow caused by Social Security. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Social Security, by law, cannot contribute one dime to our deficit.

Are there long-term issues with Social Security? Well, long-term we do have to make sure that we're making sure that those funds are available in the future, but there are other ways we can do that. But the chained CPI merely extends the Social Security program

for 2 years. Those real cuts to every single senior that receives those payments are real dollars that people will lose.

I respect the President's desire to achieve a comprehensive and bipartisan budget proposal. I'm one of the freshmen in this building. I came from a State legislature. When we did a State budget—and I used to be the co-chair of that committee—we spent 8 hours a day, 3 days a week for 3 or 4 months crafting a budget. And every single line of that budget meant something. It was a statement of your values. It's a moral statement of your values as a government.

This government hasn't had a budget to work off of for a number of years. We just can't seem to get people on both sides of the aisle in both houses to be able to sit down and have a document that guides the country.

So the President, in an effort to do that, said, I heard the discussions we've had on the fiscal cliff, on the debt ceiling, on the sequester. He's listened to the people on the other side of the aisle. And one of the things that's been asked for by the Speaker of this Chamber and the others is the chained CPI, a cut in Social Security benefits. So the President included it in his budget in order to try to bring them to the table.

Now, I sat through the Budget Committee today, which I serve on here in the House. I can tell you, it was not bringing people to the table. With no surprise, it just brought criticism from the Republicans on the President's budget in general.

So I think the President does not need to keep the chained CPI in his budget proposal. It is a break, I believe, to the promise we've made to seniors about what they will see from us. In fact, 107 people in this House, Democrats in this House, including myself, have signed a letter to the President explicitly stating that we don't want to see any cuts to Social Security, Medicare, or Medicaid.

If I can, let me just read a little bit of this letter to you that was signed by a majority of the House Democrats back in February.

□ 1540

We thank the President for standing strong and the American Taxpayer Relief Act to protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid from benefit cuts that would jeopardize the well-being of millions of Americans.

We write to affirm our vigorous opposition to cutting Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid benefits in any final bill to replace sequester. Earned Social Security and Medicare benefits provide the financial and health protections necessary to keep individuals and families out of poverty. Medicaid is not only a lifeline for low-income children, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and families, it is the primary source of income of long-term care services and supports for 3.6 million individuals.

We cannot overstate their importance for our constituents and our country. That is why we remain deeply opposed to proposals

to reduce Social Security benefits through use of the Chained CPI to calculate cost-of-living adjustments. We remain committed to making the changes that will extend solvency for 75 years, but Social Security has not contributed to our current fiscal problems, and it should not be on the bargaining table.

Then it goes on to discuss Medicare and Medicaid.

We have been very explicit that there are other ways that we can extend the solvency of Social Security. Remember, it did not cause the financial situation this country is in right now. That was an economic uncertainty caused by the financial institutions and the housing crisis that put every State in this country into fiscal chaos, but that was not caused one dime by Social Security. So for us to balance the budget on the backs of seniors and the disabled, of veterans and the children who receive Social Security doesn't make sense.

Now, there is something that does make sense. Currently, we take a portion out of every person's check to pay for Social Security. It is your earned benefit. You pay in in every paycheck to Social Security so that, when you need it, it is available for you whether it be at retirement or through disability. At \$113,700, you are capped when you make that much income. Not \$1 more in income do you pay additional dollars into Social Security. If we lift that cap and, like so many other provisions, you continue to pay taxes on your salary—so, if you make \$500,000, you don't just stop at \$113,700 and paying into Social Security, but you would continue to pay into Social Security like you do on all your other taxes—that would extend the solvency of Social Security for at least 75 years.

Now, that is a commonsense way for us to make sure a program that is probably one of the most popular and crucial programs the Federal Government offers to its citizens that we've all paid into—our money, our social contract, our insurance so when we need it we have it—can be extended simply by lifting that cap, and that would go a long way to providing the economic certainty that we need.

So while we are supportive of so many of the measures that the President has in his budget, the President's budget focuses on what we need to, which is the immediate need to make sure that we are improving the economy and that we are creating jobs. That is our focus that we need to do in this country.

In fact, the Congressional Budget Office, which is our nonpartisan agency that we work with—that both Republicans and Democrats work with to get the financial numbers that we work with in our bills and to make all the decisions we make—has said that three-quarters of this Nation's deficit in the next year that we're all talking about a budget for, 2014, is caused by economic weakness—in other words, unemployment and underemployment. If we address those two issues, that is

the best way to stop the trajectory with the deficit and the debt. By getting people back to work, you can do that.

I'll tell you, in this budget, the President does much of that. The President includes extra funding for research and development. It's what we have been told by businesses is the best thing we can do to be competitive in a global market. It includes \$50 billion for infrastructure investment—to get people working now, to have us help stimulate the economy.

I can tell you, when we had the last recovery dollars that happened at the very start of the recovery that we had with this bad economy—when we were at our worst and our lowest point—we were bleeding hundreds of thousands of jobs a month. When those recovery dollars came to the States and my committee, the Joint Committee on Finance, we had to approve every single dollar that went to roads and schools and other programs. We had our road-building industry and our vertical construction industry in our State tell us that 54,000 jobs were saved or created because of those dollars.

In the Budget Committee, I asked the question of Dr. Elmendorf from the Congressional Budget Office nationally, what did that do for us, those recovery dollars. They estimated—not the Democrats, not the Republicans, not anyone else but our official agency—up to 3.3 million jobs were saved or created because of those recovery dollars.

The President has \$50 billion in infrastructure to make sure that people are working again, and he's getting them back out, while we need to, to keep the economy moving. He has focused on advanced manufacturing: some innovative ideas that we could create these hubs where people can create new jobs and have jobs come back to America from overseas. He also provides tax credits for small business owners who will hire new workers so that we can, again, continue to have the private sector, as well as what we can provide through infrastructure, to help get the economy to grow and to create the jobs we need to.

Those are all good provisions the President has. At the same time, he is working at \$1.8 trillion in deficit reduction, which, on top of the previous \$2.5 trillion, takes us exactly to the target people have been talking about of the \$4 trillion deficit we need to address in the immediate amount of time. It has the long-term picture in mind as well. It's not saying the Holy Grail is the deficit reduction, but the Holy Grail is the economy and job creation to solve our deficit problems, and the budget does that.

There are many strong provisions in the President's budget, but many in this House—107 people who signed a letter in this House on the Democratic side and many of us in the Progressive Caucus—have been especially outspoken about the one provision that we

think takes a completely wrong turn. That completely wrong turn is the Chained CPI—to change how we deal with increases for Social Security, how we estimate the payments for Social Security—which essentially turns out to be a cut, a real dollar cut, to people on Social Security. I can tell you they have given us some really better ways to illustratively explain what those cuts mean.

If you take the cuts under Chained CPI and if you are 65 years old, that cut will be about 2 weeks' worth of groceries. When you're at 70, it's about 6 weeks' worth of groceries, and it continues to grow. At 75, 9 weeks of groceries; at 80, 13 weeks of groceries. That's a quarter of the year that you have less for groceries that you need to get by. At 85, people like my mother, 16 weeks of groceries, and if you make it to 90 and 95, 20 and 23 weeks of groceries. That's the cut in real terms that comes from Chained CPI.

We stand to make sure that we are raising the issue that as we continue to talk about the budget—and we need to go to conference committee. We have a House budget; we have a Senate budget; and we have the President's budget. But do you know what that means? We have no budget. That means we will continue to have continuing resolutions, that we will continue to fight every 2 or 3 months and do stopgap measures with chewing gum and Band-Aids unless we have a budget.

So I appreciate what the President did. He's giving us a measure specifically to make us all come to the table to try to do this. His intention was to take a Republican idea, Chained CPI, and put it in his proposal to show he's willing to compromise. Unfortunately, all we've heard from the Republicans has been criticism of the budget.

In the House, their budget is a fantasy as far as balancing the budget in 10 years as they claim. It is a fantasy because it repeals the Affordable Care Act, benefits of which include making sure that people with preexisting conditions have health care, making sure that children up to 26 have health care, making sure that we have dollars for preventative care. It repeals the benefits, but it keeps the savings and the revenue. Well, you can't do that. We can't tax the people in the Affordable Care Act so that we can pay for the benefits but not give them and keep that money and try to balance the budget. So it's not a real budget.

What we need to do is have a real budget, and we need to get people to the table. I urge this House to announce conferees so we can start the hard work of doing that. The three positions are on the table. We need to do that.

We want to say strongly—the Progressive Caucus and 107 Democrats in this body—that the one thing that is unacceptable is to balance that budget on the backs of people who didn't create the crisis, and they are our seniors, the disabled, our veterans, and our

children and orphans who rely on Social Security; and the Chained CPI would provide just that sort of a cut to those people.

□ 1550

So, Mr. Speaker, those are some of the strongest problems that we have with the change in the Consumer Price Index. That is called chained CPI. There are a number of organizations, Mr. Speaker, that have joined us in this. They range from the AFL-CIO, on behalf of the working people of this country, to PCCC, to MoveOn, and a number of other national organizations that have stood with us at multiple press conferences this week to try to raise awareness that this is a bad idea.

This is taking the budget situation we have in the future and balancing it today on those who can least afford it. We need to have the backs of our seniors and our disabled, not put the budget on their backs. And the chained CPI is a provision that, unfortunately, does just that.

So while it is not the President's idea, it is absolutely not the Democrats' idea. It was an idea proposed by the Republican Speaker and other Republicans just in the last couple of years. It was put forward in the President's budget to try to bring people to the table. We want to make sure that it is heard loud and clear that many of us will not support a bill that includes a chained CPI. It will not get the support of many people in this room if it includes those cuts to our country's promise, which is to our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, it is a huge concern to those of us in the Progressive Caucus. There are a number of groups, including Strength in Social Security, who join us in our efforts against this, who've put out some various estimations of what this means. They have said that for someone who is 75 years old, the cut they would see would be about \$658, which is 3.7 percent of what they are currently receiving in Social Security.

If you're 85, they estimate that to be \$1,147 a year, 6.5 percent. Again, to my mother, who's getting that \$1,101, that is almost a \$100 a month cut. As I estimated from her utilities to her groceries to her other payments that she has, none of those are necessarily luxuries at 85. None of those are excessive payments. They are the basic payments just to get by that she comes up with, for about \$1,165 a month. After burning through savings for 20 years, she just doesn't have it left.

So like a third of Americans who live on that Social Security check, they live on \$1,101. They live on that \$13,212 a year. And I don't think there is anyone who could honestly say that that's too much. After you've paid in your entire life, it's your earned benefit that you paid into, that insurance for when you need it, for when you are a senior and you retire, or when you become disabled, or God forbid your parents die and now you're an orphan, that payment is this country's promise to each

and every one of those people. So to go after that \$13,000 payment to this 84-year-old person and get that 6.5 percent cut, that means real things.

I remember a few years back, before, in Wisconsin, we created about a decade ago a program called SeniorCare to help seniors afford prescription drugs. It has been a great success with bipartisan support. But prior to that, my mother was one of those people who cut pills in half because she couldn't afford her medications. She doesn't have to do that anymore because of SeniorCare, but we're the only State, Wisconsin, which has SeniorCare in the entire country. There are seniors in the other 49 States who, if they get that cut, that means cutting pills in half, that means deciding which pills you're taking, and it means deciding which meal you're not eating. It means those sort of basic, basic cuts.

It is estimated that at 95 years old, according to Strength in Social Security, it's a \$1,622 cut. That is a 9.2 percent cut. We're balancing the budget on the backs of those who can least afford it who didn't create the financial times we're in, and that seems entirely wrong.

What that means in a lifetime, what your cumulative benefit loss is, and that is where it really starts to add up, and maybe this will be more illustrative:

At 75, at that point on Social Security, you've lost \$4,631.

At 80, you've lost \$8,660.

At 85, people like my mother, she has lost \$13,910 of what she has paid into and expected to get during her twilight years. That's the enormity of these cuts.

I have been joined by an extremely articulate and solid progressive colleague of mine, a mentor of mine, someone who is not only a strong leader, not only in this entire House, but especially during this hour with the Progressive Caucus, and I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE of California. First, let me thank the gentleman for yielding and for your kind words, and also for your tremendous leadership and for really coordinating the message hour of the week, not only on behalf of the Progressive Caucus, but for this entire body and for the American people. It is so important that the truth be told and that we continue to beat the drum to protect the priorities of all of the American people, not just the few. So thank you very much.

We are here today to talk about the budget and its priorities, and also some of the issues that are very troubling, which I'll mention in just a minute.

I'm pleased, though, to see that the President's budget clearly understands the need to create jobs and to grow our economy. This budget makes critical investments in early childhood education and brings down the cost of higher education. The budget protects vital nutrition programs like SNAP

and WIC. This budget permanently extends vital expansion of the child tax credit, the earned income tax credit, which has lifted about 1.6 million Americans out of poverty in 2010 alone.

In stark contrast, our Republican colleagues proposed yet another \$6 trillion tax cut for the wealthiest, while focusing a majority of their draconian budget cuts on shredding our Nation's safety net.

Every Member of Congress may claim to support the goal of cutting poverty in America, but gutting programs that families rely on to put food on their tables is simply not how we achieve that goal. Now, as I said, I was very pleased to see some of the innovative and groundbreaking proposals that the President included in his budget.

However, I have to join Mr. POCAN in our strong opposition to the inclusion of the so-called chained CPI in the budget. As many of us have said, chained CPI is a benefit cut, which it is, to Social Security, and I wholeheartedly oppose it.

So thank you again for beating that drum today on this because this is not the President's ideal deficit reduction plan. We should not be bargaining for Republican goodwill with policies that hurt our seniors. Social Security was established more than 77 years ago, providing economic security to generations of Americans who have made contributions over their lifetime. They worked for this.

Changing the cost of living adjustment now will disproportionately hurt seniors who rely on every single dollar of support as income. The chained CPI would cut one full month's income from a 92-year-old beneficiary's annual Social Security benefits. Seniors cannot afford that. The chained CPI will also cut living standards, and most deeply for the poorest households, which tend to rely on Social Security for all or most of their income.

The fact of the matter is Social Security should not even be a part of this discussion. It should not be a part of this budget. The program has accumulated assets of \$2.7 trillion and does not contribute to the Federal budget deficit. Voters across the political spectrum oppose cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security benefits, and we must do whatever it takes to protect these vital benefits from cuts.

Democrats believe that the best way to reduce our deficit and make our economy grow is to create jobs. That's why I join my CPC colleagues in rejecting any and every cut to Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security benefits, including raising the retirement age or cutting the cost of living adjustments that our constituents earned and that they need.

We also know there are commonsense reforms that would reduce health care costs and save taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars without cutting benefits. If Republicans are serious about deficit reduction, we really can make additional savings, and they should

come from those who can most afford it. We can save over \$110 billion just by eliminating wasteful subsidies to oil companies who have already made record profits. We can close corporate tax loopholes—that would save billions of dollars to invest in education—and we can end wasteful Pentagon weapons programs and focus our military on addressing 21st century threats.

So there are many ways that we can accomplish this. Instead of supporting policies that harm seniors, let's get back to the real problems facing our country, and that's creating 21st century jobs and growing our economy for all.

So thank you again for your leadership. This has been a tremendous hour that you have put together, and I hope that the American people are listening today. So much is at stake.

□ 1600

Mr. POCAN. Thank you so much, Ms. LEE. We really appreciate it. And again, your history in this House has been recognized by so many of us who are new and proud to be here. We appreciate all that you've done on behalf of the middle class and those who are striving to be in the middle class and those who are just getting by in this country.

Ms. LEE is also leading an initiative for the Democrats to address poverty. We are doing everything we can on the Democratic side, but it's under your leadership that's happening, and thank you so much for that.

We've been joined by another colleague who is from California who has been another one of our freshman Members of the House, and he is here to talk to us also about the issues before us on chained CPI and perhaps some other issues. I'd like to introduce, from the State of California, Mr. MARK TAKANO.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you. I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin. I will be speaking today on equal pay. Today I signed the discharge petition to bring the Paycheck Fairness Act to the floor to ensure that women across the country receive equal pay for equal work.

This week, on Tuesday, we recognized Equal Pay Day, which is the symbolic day that marks the time it takes for women's earnings to equal men's earnings from the previous year. Thanks to the 23 percent wage gap, it takes an extra 3 months for women in America to catch up. The wage gap persists at all levels of education and exists across occupations.

In my home State of California, the typical woman, working full-time, year-round, is paid, on average, only 84 cents to every dollar her male counterparts make. In my home district the pay discrepancy is even worse. Women living in the Inland Empire make 81 cents to every dollar, and many are the sole breadwinners in their households. This isn't just an insult to women who work hard at their jobs every day, it hurts families and children.

In my district, the wage gap amounts to an average loss of \$8,900 that could be used to pay for rent, groceries, and child care. This is unacceptable.

When President Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law, he criticized the unconscionable practice of paying female employees less wages than male employees for the same job. Fifty years later, this unconscionable practice is alive and well, which is why we have a duty to our mothers, sisters, and daughters to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act in this Congress.

Mr. POCAN. Mr. TAKANO, would you yield to a question?

Mr. TAKANO. Yes, sir.

Mr. POCAN. Mark, I just want to ask you, you've been a leader in this body on chained CPI.

Mr. TAKANO. Yes.

Mr. POCAN. We did several press conferences this week. You're the author of a major letter from many people in this House about it.

Could you just address a little bit about why you're so passionate about the need to make sure we have Social Security for generations in the future and why you oppose the chained CPI.

Mr. TAKANO. Well, I believe chained CPI is bad for veterans and it's bad for our seniors, but let me focus on the seniors for a moment.

The chained CPI, explained in a very simple way, is a way that the government would ostensibly index Social Security COLAS, cost-of-living increases. Said very simply, under chained CPI, seniors would be paid less over time.

The assumption is that seniors would be able to substitute less costly items for the current items they might currently buy. But, you know, seniors really use health care a lot more than the rest of us, and that's the largest burden that they're facing, trying to pay for their health care costs, prescription drugs.

I think it's a false premise to say that seniors will be able to find less costly substitutions. More and more of their income would be going to that.

I believe that many people call Social Security, Medicare, entitlements. I call them sacred promises that we made to our seniors. I don't believe that we should break those promises. We must keep those promises.

People have earned these benefits over a lifetime. They planned their lives around them, and we simply can't go back on what we've promised our parents and grandparents.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you, Representative TAKANO, again, for your leadership on this issue. As I said, you've authored one of the major letters that's out there talking about chained CPI and cuts to Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare.

And also, as a member of the Veterans Committee, I know you've been especially articulate on the effects on veterans. I thank you for your time.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, sir.

Mr. POCAN. As Representative TAKANO said, these are sacred promises

to people who've paid into the program, and now the expectation is, as with any insurance, you've paid in and now you're able to get the benefit when you need it. That's why you've paid in all your life.

And that benefit is for people who retire and for people who become disabled and, God forbid, children who become orphans. It allows them to be able to continue, in our society, to get by.

But as I've shown, an 84-year old woman like my mother—this is my mother's actual story—gets \$1,101 a month. That's \$13,212 a year. We went through her expenses, from utilities, \$130 a month, food and other miscellaneous items she has to buy, \$180 a month.

Health care, as Representative TAKANO said, it's about 20 to 30 percent of the average senior's monthly expense or their income. I'll take it right in the middle, 25 percent; that's \$275 a month.

Her car and house insurance, \$77 a month, her taxes, \$273 a month, her phone and cable, \$140 a month, miscellaneous, having people mow her grass and shovel, et cetera, \$50 a month, and her gas about \$40 a month.

That's \$64 a month more than she makes. And unfortunately, she has, at the age of 84, having been widowed since 1991, expended through almost all of her savings and, like a third of seniors, is living on that Social Security paycheck.

But what about the senior who's in the exact same situation, receiving and living off that check, but they still pay rent or have a mortgage? Six hundred to \$1,200 more dollars you're going to have to add on to that.

And what if they have a car or they have a bus pass? Two to \$300 a month you're going to add on to that.

Miscellaneous repairs. My mother, this year, had to replace her heater, at \$1,700. How do you do that with a cut in Social Security?

So additional expenses, still, on the low end, add that up, you're almost at \$2,000 a month. There's no way that \$100 hit that'll happen is something that the average senior or person with disabilities, veteran, or child can be able to get by. That is a real life cut, and where they have to cut and make tough decisions is on their groceries, on their medicine, on whether or not they're going to be able to drive the car that they have. It's serious consequences.

And I know that the Democrats have been especially strong in the Progressive Caucus. The Progressive Caucus penned a letter that 107 Democrats in this House have signed on to that said, do not do any cuts to Social Security, Medicare, or Medicaid.

Now, there are some who say that you can't ignore it, that in the future, far down the road, decades in the future, we have to make sure that these programs, these earned benefits are still alive. But we have argued there are ways to do that.

If you lift the cap at which you pay into Social Security, you could extend it, the program, Social Security for 75 years into the future. And remember, Social Security has not added one dime to the deficit. By law, it can't add one dime to the deficit.

But, instead, we are balancing the budget, with this provision, on the backs of the very people who can least afford it.

So the senior who makes \$1,101 is going to see a cut, but the company that sends jobs overseas under the Republican budget still gets a tax break for sending jobs overseas. And that CEO with the corporate jet still gets a tax break under the Republican budget.

And when you go down the list of breaks that are out there for the most wealthy, we need to find a different way to do this than balancing the budget on the backs of those who can least afford it, those who've paid in their entire lives, those who didn't create the financial situation we're in.

Our Progressive Caucus has been strong in talking about this. We have tried to take quite a bit of time today to really explain this as plainly as we can and as absolute simply as we can a person's monthly budget.

□ 1610

We all know you have other surprise expenses like your heater goes out at your home or your car needs repair. We don't even factor that in. Most people will probably still have some rent or perhaps a house payment to make. When you add all this in and if you have expended your savings like one-third of our seniors who live on that Social Security check, it is impossible to continue to get by. And to take a cut to the very people who can least afford it seems wrong.

We are honored in our Progressive Caucus to have two people that lead us, Representative RAÚL GRIJALVA and Representative KEITH ELLISON. Representative KEITH ELLISON is a fellow Midwesterner and I think a man of incredible common sense, coming from the Midwest, like we like to at least think we do back in the Midwest, coming here. And he has done an extraordinary job of leading the progressives and the Democrats in this House to make sure that we stand up for our seniors and our disabled and our veterans and the children who receive Social Security. I would like to yield to the chairman of the Progressive Caucus, the gentleman from Minnesota, Mr. KEITH ELLISON.

Mr. ELLISON. Congressman POCAN, thank you. Thanks for holding down this very important Progressive Caucus progressive message. The fact is that the Progressive Caucus and the Democrats generally are about protecting seniors. That's who we are. That's our brand. That's our identity. Social Security came out of the Roosevelt administration, came out of core Democratic values. That's what we stand for, that's what we believe in,

and that's why we are standing opposed to the chained CPI. We're not going to relent. We've been fighting this thing for months. We're not going to give up the fight. We're going to keep on pressing until this thing is settled.

The reality is that this chained CPI takes place within the general debate on budget, a general debate on fiscal items. And I happen to know that the chained CPI is an idea that emerged from Republican leaders only a few months ago. That's who came up with this. And so now the President has offered a budget in which he says, Okay, we're going to try to compromise from the beginning. We're going to try to take some compromise ideas and put them in here, along with some other good ideas like early childhood education, like investing in infrastructure and jobs. Those things are okay. But I think it was a mistake to ever include anything about Social Security in a budget because the Social Security does not contribute to the deficit. And so if you want to deal with lifting the sequester, deal with something that has to do with taxes or spending. If you want to deal with the budget, deal with something that adds to or takes away from the budget. If you want to deal with deficit reduction, deal with something that has to do with that. But don't drag in something that is actually irrelevant.

The fact is that Social Security is one of the oldest, best programs that this country has ever seen and it has taken care, literally, of millions of people. It's not an entitlement. It's an earned benefit program. It is social insurance people pay into. They earn it and then they pay into it. And then they expect it at the end years of their lives. Congressman POCAN, I think it's important just to point out that a full third of widowed women on Social Security rely entirely on Social Security.

Some people like to say chained CPI is not that big of a cut. Well, it depends on how much money you have, doesn't it? It depends on what you start with. If you're getting by on \$13,000 a year, or under \$20,000 a year, \$250 may seem like a lot of money. My own experience as a Member of Congress is that people would ask me at community meetings all the time, Are we going to get our COLA check? Are we going to get that \$250? Why? Because that's a lot of money to folks who are really trying to get by.

And so what I'm saying is let's embrace our core Democratic values. Let's look after our seniors. Let's take care of this great program, Social Security, that has done so much for so many for so long. And let's reject this idea of chained CPI, and let's stand together and say chained CPI is not a good idea. It's not something we should offer as a bargaining chip for a grand bargain. Let's just take it off the table.

I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you, Mr. ELLISON.

As a leader of the Progressive Caucus, I have been talking about how 107

Democrats in this House and the leadership of the Congressional Progressive Caucus have signed a letter and asked the President to not cut Social Security, Medicare, or Medicaid. So the majority of the Democrats have already signed a letter saying, Keep the hands off. As we deal with our Nation's budget, the one place we shouldn't go is to those who need it the most—our seniors, our disabled, our veterans, and their children and orphans who receive Social Security benefits.

As I talked about the realities of that \$1,001 a month, as Mr. ELLISON just said, when you receive that additional \$100 cut, that additional \$100 cut is almost 10 percent of your budget. Think about if you had a 10 percent cut in your budget and you're not able to make any more money. At 84, I'm sorry, my mom is not going back to Taco Bell. She worked there in her seventies to continue to make money because she just didn't have it and to have something to continue to get by on. But at 84 she's already had a couple of falls. There's nothing else she can do to make additional money. So she has to make that tough cut. And I would argue that this bad idea that the Republicans came up with and the President included just to get them to the table to talk about the budget, this bad Republican idea, chained CPI, will have a real effect on tens of millions of people across this country. There are way too many seniors for whom this means just about everything in their lives.

She can't really cut her utilities. She can change the thermostat. She can set it to 60 in the winter. She cannot use any kind of air conditioning in summer. In Wisconsin, I won't recommend that in the summer. We have some humid, humid days. So you can't cut this line. Her groceries and other things she has to buy for the home, she can cut back. But she already tells me stories. There's a place in her neighborhood she'll go to that has a \$1 burger special. She'll go there. This is going back over the holidays. We had to convince her to tip 35 cents. Because she said, My God, that's 35 percent. I don't tip 35 percent. But we're trying to explain to her in the economics of it, it's 35 cents to give. But she gets a burger for \$1. And she says, Sometimes I get two. So she's deciding about a \$2 meal. Are we going to take that away from someone, the very groceries they live on?

Health care: with rising health care costs, the facts are that 20 to 30 percent—I think specifically 26 percent is the current number—of your annual costs, seniors' health care costs. She can't change that line. Insurance: Does she not insure her vehicle? Does she not insure her home in case of a fire? That's \$77 a month. We all know you can't get away and not pay your taxes. That line is off the table.

I'm going to jump down a line to her miscellaneous. She has to have people shovel and do other things around the home. That's very hard to change.

That's only a \$50 item. Finally, gas: she doesn't control the price of gas. So the only line she really has left is her telephone and her cable bill.

And with the way we have to deal with the budget, rather than making those who can most afford it in the country and all the tax loopholes and tax breaks for some of the wealthiest in this country, instead we're going to go to this 84-year-old woman and say you can no longer have a telephone to talk to your family and friends on, or lose the little bit of entertainment you have through a television seems wrong. It's not the values of this country. It's certainly not the values of the Democrats in this House. Yet that's what they'll face with a chained CPI cut. That's the bottom line. And when those other expenses come up, how does a senior pay for them?

So we really want to express to the President in the strongest possible terms that the Republicans may have had this bad idea of chained CPI to provide a cut to Social Security payments, but you included it in your budget to bring them to the table to make them negotiate, and all you've heard for the last 36 hours is criticism and that they won't sit at the table. You've got dollars in the budget to help grow the economy. The Progressive Caucus had a Back to Work Budget. We worked hard and steadfast in talking about growing the economy as our best way to solve the deficit and our economic problems. But if the Republicans are going to criticize that and refuse to have one more dime in revenue, not one more CEO can't still get his tax break for that corporate jet, not one more company can't get that tax break for sending jobs overseas—those are the types of tax breaks we have in this country.

And if we can't get one more dime from programs like that so that a senior doesn't have to make those tough, real-life decisions, then we're failing as a government and we are breaking our promise to the seniors of this country.

□ 1620

So I would hope that we can continue to get people who are watching this to realize it may be called chained CPI, it may have an obscure term—we're the body that came up with a sequester, right? It's a term. It's in the dictionary. But I guarantee not one person that I know of has ever used it in real life. No one has said to their child: I'm going to sequester your toys today. It's just not something that real people do. Well, chained CPI is the same thing. It may be an obscure economic term, but the bottom line, the reality of what it means to the average person who's listening, is it means a cut to those who can least afford it, to those third of seniors who live on that check exclusively to get by. And all the other seniors who rely largely on that to get by, should they have the good fortune to grow old, they'll have the bad fortune of seeing that savings go down, as they have these expenditures.

In the end, we have made a promise—a sacred promise, as Representative TAKANO said—to the people of this country that as we take their money, their Social Security, through their earned benefit they have paid into—we have put up a social insurance program to ensure that when they retire or become disabled or, God forbid, lose their parents and become an orphan, they will continue to have an ability to live in this country. It's not those people that created our financial woes that this country has. There are real ways to deal with the deficit. There are real ways to deal with Social Security. But those real ways are not the ways that are proposed through the chained CPI.

In fact, another thing that was said, I believe it was by Ms. LEE from California, was she talked about, on this floor, we have other people trying to fix Social Security. We had 104 Members of the other side of the aisle vote for a version of the budget that raised the Social Security retirement age to 70. I'll tell you, I don't know many construction workers or nurses or teachers who could necessarily still be able to do that job as well as they would like to between 67 and 70. The construction field, there is not the ability to do that job. As a nurse, when you have to lift bodies and help move people, you just can't do that job for those additional years. So, to me, to raise the Social Security retirement age is, again, part of breaking that promise.

There is a way we can continue the promise, and that is to lift the cap on Social Security. Right now, no matter how much you make, we tax for Social Security up to \$113,700; but as soon as you make a dollar more, you don't get taxed for Social Security. Now, we tax in every other way in a progressive way, as you make more, you pay more in taxes, but we don't tax a dime more at \$113,700. If we were simply to lift that cap or raise that amount, you would extend Social Security for decades. In fact, if you lift the cap entirely, it is estimated at least 75 years of life would go into the Social Security program. Wouldn't that make a lot more sense than instead nickel-and-diming those who can least afford to, to preserve the program?

So that is the hope of this Progressive Caucus that we have. You've heard from a number of leaders, both freshmen and people who have been here for a long time. You've heard from people from different parts of the country. It is an important promise that we have to the public.

We are the party that has been there to protect seniors. The fact that the President has it included in his budget, we all know—and the President has been very clear—it is not his idea. This was an idea from the Republican Speaker and other Republicans, and he put it in his budget proposal to try to get them to come and finally have a budget for this country, to make them come to the table.

Right now, we have very different documents. We have the Democratic

document in the Senate and the President's document that invests in the economy so we can create jobs and grow the economy right now. And we have a Republican version of the budget that focuses almost exclusively on getting rid of the deficit. The holy grail is the deficit; it will cost us millions of jobs. Just in the next year it is estimated 2 million jobs will be lost. But you can't have those diverse documents and still fund Congress. So what does Congress do? We continue to have continuing resolutions that get us by for months at a time.

I have heard on this floor so many times where people will talk about a wasteful program—and there are wasteful programs in the Federal Government we should address. There is a GAO report that specifically outlines about 45 areas of duplication, where we are doing the same thing across different agencies. We have a focus on the Oversight and Government Reform Committee to find waste, fraud, and abuse wherever we can. We are working on that. The problem is when you don't have a budget that says we're going to cut these programs so we can fund these programs, we punt. And as a government, we have punted far too many times. We have not had a serious budget in place.

So the President's goal is indeed sincere, that he wants people to come to the table. I, perhaps, would have waited to compromise until we got to the table, but the President in this case put their request right in his budget and put it on the table. The problem is, that is a bad compromise. There are so many other things that we can do that will better serve the public than to cut the benefits from our seniors and our veterans and our disabled and the children and orphans who rely on Social Security.

So, Mr. Speaker, our Progressive Caucus has been here for close to the last hour to make sure that we are talking about an important program that the public, I'm sure, is concerned about. I know I'm getting the calls in my office. But we really plead with the President to make sure that as we move forward and try to bring the Republicans to the table to try to have a national budget—as we all need to—do not balance that budget on the backs of those who can least afford it.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I yield back the balance of my time.

ADMINISTRATION IN REVIEW

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEWART). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I know the intention of my friends on the other side of the aisle. We all want the country to run at maximum peak performance so that people have jobs. But it's interesting the ways we have going about trying to see that that happens.

Interesting, in fact, we got the President's budget yesterday—of course it took 2 months or so beyond what the law says that the President must do. We also know that when it comes to people being in the country illegally, the President decided that he didn't like the laws that were passed by Congresses of the past, both Democrat and Republican, signed into law by Presidents, both Democrat and Republican, and so President Obama got up and did what you don't normally find in a country with representative government, he just announced: I don't like the law the way it is, so here's the new law, and basically pronounced new law into being with regard to who will be allowed to have amnesty in the country, and that program has already started.

In the past, the Founders' intent was well carried out because I've been advised by people who worked here in Democratic majorities as Democratic leaders and Republican leaders of the past who said, yes, in the past, if you had a President stand up and say, I'm choosing to ignore the law that has been passed by prior Congresses, signed into being by their Presidents; I'm going to ignore those and just pronounce new law: So as I say it, so shall it be—if you had a President that acted like that, then both Democratic and Republican leaders would get together and they would head down Pennsylvania Avenue, that way. They would announce themselves and let the President know that either he would begin to comply with the law and stop doing what is solely the responsibility of Congress, or they would cut off all funding to everything he cared about. And that would take care of it.

□ 1630

Unfortunately, these days the President, those in power in the White House and executive branch, have noted that since the Democratic Party is the majority in the Senate, then even when there are enough people in the Republican Party in the House who have the nerve to stand up and say we will no longer allow violations of the law or creations of law out of whole cloth without following the Constitution, the Senate would stop those actions because they're not going to let anything like that pass the Senate. And, therefore, we have bureaucrats who begin to announce to elected Members of this government that they really don't care what we have to say, that we're not going to stop them from doing whatever they want, because the Senate will block anything we try to do here at the House.

Because this is a divided Capitol building with the Senate in the majority of Democratic hands and the House in Republican majority control, it is very important that we note what the other branch, the Presidency, is pronouncing. Under the President's proposed budget, there is an article here dated April 10 from CNS News that says: