

that. That number has grown. We're now at about 200,000 people a year who die in hospitals because of preventable death. That's about 3,800 people every week, which is basically the equivalent of two jumbo jet passenger airplanes crashing and killing all of the passengers.

The fact of the matter is that this is something that we as a Nation need to step forward and do something about. It's something that is in our power to do something about. The thing that we need to do to prevent these preventable deaths is to coordinate. It is possible to eliminate these deaths. It is possible through a series of measures to even eliminate them completely.

What we need to do is first of all look at this problem in a holistic way. There's not one magic thing that is going to stop all of them, but a series of small things that are going to prevent and eradicate these preventable deaths.

The first thing I think we need to do is to come together to figure out how to connect our technology, the people and ideas and figure out how to cooperate and, most importantly, make a commitment to prevent these deaths from happening.

Ten years ago, there was a young woman named Lenore Alexander, who had a healthy 11-year-old girl, Leah. Leah underwent elective surgery to correct pectus carinatum at a prestigious southern California hospital. Though the surgery went well, Lenore awoke at around 2 a.m. on the second postoperative night to find Leah dead, the victim of undetected respiratory arrest caused by a drug that was intended to ease her pain. If Leah had been monitored continuously after the surgery, hospital staff and Lenore may have been alerted, and Leah would probably have been rescued.

There are also other sorts of preventable deaths that have to do with the transfer of infections when hands aren't washed properly. Monitoring was already pointed out by Lenore's tragic situation. The fact is that Lenore's situation is not unique, unfortunately. The Patient Safety, Science & Technology Summit is a gathering of people who came together to figure out what we can do to solve the problem—going back to that coordination and cooperation that I spoke about earlier.

The fact is that at this Patient Safety, Science & Technology Summit trained professionals came together to figure out what we can do about it. They came together to talk about, yes, technology, but also just more safe procedures to protect, eliminate, and save people from preventable deaths.

These preventable deaths are tragedies for the families that suffer them. Imagine going into a hospital for a routine procedure that you don't think is going to be serious only to get the tragic news that your loved one has passed away in the course of it.

So today I want to bring attention, Mr. Speaker, to this situation that is

within our power to eliminate and stop. I want to salute the people who attended the Patient Safety, Science & Technology Summit, who came together to try to bring real attention to this problem.

A good friend named Joe Kiani brought this issue to my attention. He's a person who has given a lot of time and attention to try to figure out how we can save families from tragic incidents such as what happened to Lenore's family. And, of course, everyone has something that they can do to prevent these serious problems.

□ 1010

At the end of the day, our goal should be to make zero the number of deaths in hospitals, to make preventable deaths something of the past, and to bring Americans to attention so that we can focus our technology, our procedures, our energy, and our love and attention on trying to make sure that no family suffers these tragic incidents anymore. 200,000 deaths is too many. One is too many. Zero should be our goal. Let's stop preventable hospital deaths.

KEEP CRUSHABLE PAIN PILLS OFF THE MARKET

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

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, today marks a critical turning point in our country's battle against prescription drug abuse—what CDC has called a national epidemic. It takes more American lives than car crashes.

Unless the Food and Drug Administration takes action today, generic drug-makers will be free to dump cheap painkillers, lacking abuse deterrence, back into U.S. markets—pills that can be easily crushed and which are to be blamed for tens of thousands of emergency room visits and accidental overdose deaths in the last decade.

Two weeks ago, at the National Rx Drug Abuse Summit, FDA Commissioner Peggy Hamburg acknowledged the many "individuals and their families whose lives have been shattered by prescription opioid abuse, misuse, and addiction." She also affirmed that FDA has the authority to keep these crushable pills off the market when abuse-deterrent technologies are available.

It is time to execute that authority, FDA. On behalf of the thousands of families in my region and all over this country, keep crushable pills off our streets and out of our children's hands.

SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISAS

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. In the aftermath of the 10th anniversary of the war in Iraq this spring, those of us who op-

pose the war, as those who thought it justified, are all sorting through what happened. More important, we are united in our support for our men and women in uniform who fought that heroic effort regardless of our feelings about the war's justification or history's verdict.

We have an obligation to all those who served to smooth their reentry and to minimize the price they paid for that war.

But there is another group who put themselves at risk for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am speaking of the Iraqi and Afghan nationals who worked with the American soldiers—thousands who were shoulder to shoulder with our troops, often in the most difficult of circumstances. They provided services as guides and interpreters that literally made the difference as to whether our soldiers lived or died.

I've talked to returning servicepeople who made clear how important it was that they had that help and how grateful they were to the Iraqis and Afghans who played those vital roles. I've worked with some of those soldiers to try and bring to America—to safety—some of those people who worked with them.

There is another group who knows about their contributions—the hostile elements still on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan. These are people with long memories, who have vowed to take retribution for what they felt was an act of betrayal. Countless foreign nationals who worked with us have paid the price. They, along with members of their families, have been attacked, kidnapped, and killed.

We have an obligation to get them out of harm's way.

That is why I worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and on both sides of the Capitol in 2007 to create a special immigration visa program to enable them to come safely to the United States. It's a program not just for Iraqis; but starting in 2008, it was extended to Afghans as well—anyone who faced an ongoing and serious threat as a result of their employment for and on behalf of the United States Government. These two programs have enabled us to save the lives of these brave Iraqis and Afghans who often were in the heaviest fighting and whose contributions were most critical.

But we're facing two serious problems:

One, the programs are set to expire—for Iraq, September 30; for Afghanistan, 1 year later. Even more critically, we need to make sure that the special immigration visas, the SIVs, that have already been authorized are utilized. The processing has been incredibly slow.

Recently, joined by 18 of my colleagues of both parties, including six of our colleagues who were veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, we urged the administration to work with us to extend and reform the visa program. Let's cut through the extensive paperwork, the numerous agencies and timelines involved with all the background checks,

provide the transparency to applicants so they know where they're at, and address the adverse decisions by a chief of missions so people have a chance to correct the record.

Make no mistake—this is urgent.

Just yesterday, on the front page of *The New York Times*, there was the story about an Afghan interpreter named Sulaiman, who has been working with us in Afghanistan for over a decade in over 300 missions in highly dangerous Special Operations assignment. Over the course of the last few years, the Taliban has attempted to kill Sulaiman three times; but despite his exemplary service and the extreme threat to his life, that visa we created is not functioning for him. After 2 years, he remains in limbo, with no visa and the program set to expire. Only 22 percent of the Iraqi visas and 12 percent of the Afghan visas have been issued. These are ready to go.

Last fall, *The Post* reported that over 5,000 documentarily-complete Afghan applications remained in a backlog. No doubt, the past performance is abysmal, but we have an obligation to extend and reform the programs and to make sure we give the resources necessary to deal with the understandable paperwork involved.

This bipartisan issue offers Members of Congress and the administration the chance to work together to save lives and ensure the safety of our troops currently serving in harm's way and future missions abroad. Otherwise, no one in their right mind is ever going to cooperate with U.S. forces under these circumstances.

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S FY14 BUDGET PROPOSAL ON NUCLEAR WASTE

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the Department of Energy's budget proposal on nuclear waste. It's a joke—but as a representative of nuclear electricity consumers and taxpayers, I don't find it funny.

DOE Assistant Secretary Peter Lyons says we should "cut our losses and move on" from Yucca Mountain. We've spent \$15 billion on Yucca Mountain, but this administration says we should just give up and go try somewhere else, hoping some other State will be a willing host. The DOE budget proposes spending \$5.6 billion over the next 10 years to start over and maybe, just maybe, have a permanent repository by 2048.

The details provided for this new plan are scant to say the least—14 pages. DOE proposes to abandon \$15 billion and 30 years of work, start over, create a new government entity to be responsible, and find willing States to host two interim storage facilities and a repository—all within 14 pages. I consider it brainstorming, not a plan. It's certainly not something that justifies

\$5.6 billion. In addition, DOE has repeatedly stated the need for Congress to pass legislation, but has yet to propose any. That shows the administration is not trying to solve this problem, just avoid it by pointing the finger at Congress.

Nuclear electricity consumers pay for a permanent repository for spent nuclear fuel. What would they get after spending another 10 years and \$5.6 billion? A pilot interim storage facility with limited capacity.

□ 1020

A pilot facility? Dry cask storage, the same technology that will be used at the interim storage facility, is currently used at 65 locations. As for transportation, the U.S. nuclear industry has completed 3,000 shipments of used nuclear fuel over 1.7 million miles of roads and railroads. What's the purpose of having a pilot facility?

The only other pilot facility is the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico. I've been there, and it's an impressive facility. But that pilot project became a permanent facility with a 10,000-year environmental standard. Given that backdrop, does DOE really think some unsuspecting State will actually fall for the idea that a pilot interim storage facility will truly be temporary?

But \$5.6 billion doesn't begin to address the real costs hidden in this proposal. Instead of merely paying for a repository, nuclear electricity consumers will now have to write off the cost of abandoning the Yucca Mountain site where we've spent \$15 billion. DOE's previous estimates for transportation were \$19 billion; so if DOE is now going to have to transport it twice, once to an interim storage and then later to a repository, ratepayers will be on the hook for an extra \$19 billion. All this, plus the \$5.6 billion in the budget, equals \$39.6 billion.

And that's just the bill for nuclear electricity consumers. Taxpayers will continue to pay for the liability costs of DOE's failure to provide disposal. That cost is \$2.6 billion so far and projected to be \$20 billion by 2020. The Government Accountability Office tells us that it's faster to finish Yucca Mountain than to start over with interim storage. Yet this administration prefers to start over, disregarding the cost to the taxpayer.

Electricity consumers and taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for President Obama's campaign promise to HARRY REID, certainly not \$39.6 billion worth. Mr. Speaker, DOE's proposal is a boondoggle at a time when our citizens can least afford it. I, for one, am not laughing.

Mr. Speaker, as we remember the tragic events of yesterday, we are reminded that there is sin and evil in the world. We pray for Boston, our country, and the world, but the business of the Republic must go on.

PROTECTING AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to reflect again on yesterday's tragic and obviously painful events. I think it's important for our colleagues, and certainly for those we represent across America, to recognize that our attention on those issues are equal to the pain and the devastation that they represent. It is important to again offer sympathy to those who lost their loved ones, to those who still are under the care of the medical team in Boston, to the city of Boston, the State of Massachusetts, the mayor and Governor, my colleagues from the State of Massachusetts, and certainly the people there. You have our prayers and, again, our commitment to never cease until the perpetrator or perpetrators are brought to justice.

In saying that, I believe it is important that we proceed in a discussion that will also move this country forward, and that is to finally get to a point of passing a budget that eliminates, takes away, never to be seen again, this horrific sequester that the American people do not deserve.

Let me congratulate the President on having a humane budget, a budget that considers the needs of Americans. It is outstanding that he has offered a universal pre-K, having seen the tears of grown men when the sequester came through and their child was eliminated from Head Start, grown men, parents crying at the Head Start center. And everywhere I go in my district, people who are in charge of Head Start literally in pain about those that they have to eliminate from those positions because those families don't have the resources for private child care.

So I congratulate the President on his astuteness in recognizing the importance of that and recognizing to not stray away from the necessities of job creation and putting in place major transportation jobs and infrastructure jobs: passenger rail, which I am so passionate about; surface transportation; and a most important one, rebuilding your neighborhoods and communities and cities where jobs are in short demand and where the infrastructure and the city is crumbling.

I want to congratulate the President for his saving of Medicaid and ensuring that seniors who are in nursing homes will be protected. But, more importantly, that those without health insurance will have the ability under the Affordable Care Act to ensure that they will have that.

But I serve as well on the Homeland Security Committee, and I think it is important to say and be honest that the sequester is devastating to America's homeland security. It is good to have a budget that respects those needs, but it is important to tell the truth. We are desperate when it comes to recognizing the needs of our Border Patrol agents and the numbers, even at