

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of Oklahomans who even as we speak this evening are laboring to find and rescue all those affected by this afternoon's severe tornadoes in Moore and other areas in the great State of Oklahoma. At this time, we don't know the full extent of the damage and the potential human toll, but we are inspired. We're inspired by those who are sparing no effort to assist their neighbors and even many people they don't know.

Disasters like the Moore tornado bring out the best in the people of Oklahoma. I pray for each victim of these storms, for all of the emergency first responders and the ordinary citizens who are stepping forward to help in any way they can. We are grateful for everyone working to secure the affected area and to account for every man, woman, and child.

STANDING WITH ADVOCATES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

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

Mr. ROTHFUS. Mr. Speaker, it has been 1 year since human rights activists Chen Guangcheng and his wife, Yuan Weijing, arrived in the United States of America. I recently had the honor of meeting both Chen and Yuan. They are heroes in the cause of human rights, and their story of fighting forced abortion and sterilization in the People's Republic of China has captivated and inspired all those who love freedom.

Their courageous stand has not come without a personal price. Chen and Yuan's extended family in China has been subject to continued harassment. It is time for this to stop. Respect for human life and freedom are universal aspirations, and Chen and Yuan serve as witnesses to these transcendent values.

I encourage Beijing to protect Chen Guangcheng's family and all those who serve as advocates for freedom and human rights.

RECOGNIZING OPPORTUNITY PARTNERS FOR 60 YEARS OF SERVING MINNESOTA

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

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate a long time Minnesota nonprofit organization, Opportunity Partners, for serving the needs of developmentally disabled adults for 60 years. The latest statistics reveal that only 33 percent of Americans aged 18 to 64 with disabilities are employed.

The founders of Opportunity Partners recognized the many challenges the disabled encounter when trying to integrate into the workforce, so they

acted, creating an organization that gives ongoing support to people with disabilities, helping them lead independent and fulfilling lives.

In 1953, Opportunity Partners was serving 15 teens with disabilities. And now today, the organization is reaching over 1,700 people and equipping them with the work skills and the training these individuals need to gain successful employment.

I have toured this amazing operation myself. I have seen first hand the lives that are impacted and affected by Opportunity Partners. The staff and the volunteers are dedicated to empowering others through a simple, but powerful, mission—to help those with disabilities to live, learn, and work.

Mr. Speaker, I want to send my congratulations and a thank you to all those at Opportunity Partners for serving Minnesota.

□ 1930

LET'S BUILD THE KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE TODAY

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, "Job killers win, American workers lose" is how the Laborers' International Union of North America, a rare critic of the administration, summed up the President's 2011 call to block the Keystone XL pipeline.

The move, they said, would "inflict a potentially fatal delay to a project that is not just a pipeline, but is a lifeline for thousands of desperate working men and women."

And what of America's energy needs or diplomatic priorities? By cutting access to North American oil, it is American consumers who will continue to suffer, not the Canadian company seeking to permit the Keystone pipeline.

TransCanada's chief executive noted "If Keystone XL dies, Americans will still wake up the next morning and continue to import 10 million barrels of oil from repressive nations, without the benefit of thousands of jobs and long-term energy security."

When jobs and affordable North American energy are at stake, Americans deserve better than groundless delays from the President. Let's build the pipeline today.

LET'S STAND UP AND BE OF HELP

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I know that many of our colleagues in the tornado corridor are not here today. I want to offer my deepest concern and prayers as the recovery begins, and pray for those who've lost their lives, some, of course, in north Texas, and of course now in the area in Oklahoma.

This is a devastating time with these enormous tornados, as evidenced by a

quote by Bill Bunting of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Storm Prediction Center, who told CNN, our worst fears are becoming realized this afternoon.

I hope that we will be able to find all of those who have been harmed safely, and all of those who are missing.

But, Mr. Speaker, the most important part is that the Nation needs to stand up and be of help. This is time, frankly, for bipartisanship to take the highest level, and partisanship to end. It's time to end this sequester. There's too much need in this country.

And I hope that we will be able to serve all of those who are now suffering from across America because that is what this Congress needs to do.

IT'S TIME TO FISH OR CUT BAIT

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

Mr. RICE of South Carolina. I rise in support of the Keystone pipeline. The Keystone pipeline represents 40,000 American jobs. It's been under study for 1,700 days—5 years.

It is a project that could drive down the cost of energy, cut our imports from our enemies in half. It could invigorate our economy, and yet, we continue to study and study. We could study this program for decades, and we'll never resolve all the issues.

It's time to move forward. We're the greatest country on Earth. Nobody can beat us if we stand toe-to-toe, but we've got a noose of regulation around our own necks, and we're strangling ourselves.

It's time to fish or cut bait. Let's make a decision. Let's move forward with this very valuable project.

NO LABELS

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RIBBLE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my special order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. RIBBLE. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud and honored to lead this discussion on the House floor this evening. I organized this special order to show the American people that there are Members of Congress who can have a civilized conversation and who actually want to solve problems.

Everyone here tonight is a member of the organization No Labels. As you can

see, we're all wearing orange pins as a symbol of our solidarity. These problem-solver pins represent a lot about who we are and who we want to be as legislators. Instead of wasting time fighting, we're committed to fixing what's broken here in Washington.

Being identified as either a Republican or Democrat says a lot about each of our values and our ideologies, but it's not the sum total of who we are. I am proud to be a Republican and have a conservative voting record, and that supports my beliefs.

But just because there's an R or D after someone's name should not automatically make them enemies. It's possible to find ways to work together, and all of us are here tonight as proof of that.

I recently introduced a biennial budgeting bill that has both Democrat and Republican cosponsors. This is just one of many examples that show that both sides of the aisle can get behind legislation that will help better our economy.

Unfortunately, Congress has come to a point where problems are not getting solved because too many are yelling and not enough are listening. I was taught that the best way to attack a problem is putting all possible solutions on the table and having a conversation about the pros and cons of each.

Nowadays in Washington, the meaning of solution has become a euphemism for undercutting the other party. Sound bites have replaced conversations, which has made attacking others easier and more widespread.

It seems like every time you turn on the television or open a newspaper, there's some headline about Republicans and Democrats spewing vitriol at each other, or playing another round of the never-ending blame game.

This type of behavior and unwillingness to work on solving problems must end in order for our country to move forward, and that's why we're all here tonight, to show that Washington doesn't have to function this way.

All of us came to Congress because we wanted to do our part to make our country better and to help our constituents back home. And coming together on the House floor is a small way to reaffirm our dedication to the American people and let them know that we'll work for their best interest.

This evening you'll hear from both Democrats and Republicans who are committed to problem-solving. I'm proud to say that these people are not just my colleagues but they're my friends. And while we don't see eye to eye on everything, we have all made it a point to put a stop to the spiteful tone that has become the norm here in Washington, and to actually have a real conversation with one another. And tonight the American people watching get to be a part of that.

With that, I'd like to yield to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG).

Mr. YOUNG of Indiana. I thank my good friend from Wisconsin.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand here tonight as a member of this Problem Solvers Coalition. The coalition offers a common ground for lawmakers to make government work better and to negotiate solutions without the blinders of partisan talking points.

Our country has a history, during difficult times, times more difficult than these, times of great political strife, of coming together, rank-and-file Americans and legislators alike.

During the early days of our Republic, Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter to his friend, Edward Rutledge, and he said this:

You and I have seen warm debate and high political passions. But gentlemen of different politics would then speak to each other. It is not so now. Men who have been intimate all their lives cross the street to avoid meeting, and turn their heads the other way lest they should be obliged to tip their hat.

Well, we, as Americans, made it through those difficult times, and eventually this hall was populated by people who were prepared to tip their hat.

During this time in our history, we too need to be hat tipplers. We need more hat tipplers in the U.S. Congress. We need more statesmen, more men and women who are prepared to root out waste, to improve the performance of our largest programs of government, to modulate our discourse.

We need to recognize that our public disagreements aren't always about ends; sometimes they're merely about means.

So I invite my colleagues to join this coalition of problem solvers. Let's work together, Republican and Democrat. Let's work together for the common good for the future of this country.

□ 1940

Mr. RIBBLE. I appreciate the gentleman's comments. Thank you for being here tonight.

I now yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MURPHY).

Mr. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ran for Congress on a pledge of bipartisanship. I ran on behalf of citizens who were disappointed in their leaders in Washington who focus on partisan bickering rather than problem solving.

In my first days in Congress, I was also disappointed in Washington. I was disappointed that everything in D.C. was separated by party affiliation. This is why one of my first actions as a freshman was to join the No Labels Problem Solvers group, of which I am now proudly a cochair.

Mr. Speaker, No Labels has offered a way for Members of both parties to get to know each other. Simply put, it's easier to solve problems when you know the person you're working with. However, No Labels does more than break down barriers. It helps build trust between Members that is necessary to solve problems.

Many of the fiscal problems we face today developed over many decades.

Fixing these problems will take steady, committed work. No, we won't agree on everything, but I am optimistic. I'm optimistic because more and more leaders are focusing on problem solving rather than partisanship. I've already seen more bipartisanship and substantive action in this Congress than many in recent memory. In fact, I've seen an overwhelming amount of bills introduced by No Labels members, with both Republicans and Democrats as lead sponsors.

We must urge and support our leaders to go big to solve the fiscal issues we face. We must push for a grand bargain. We need long-term solutions, not short-term political gimmicks.

Unfortunately, a number of scandals have contributed to one of the biggest problems our country faces: a lack of trust in government. The public sees their leaders focusing on beltway intrigue rather than pragmatic solutions. Mr. Speaker, that is why I invite more of my colleagues to join me in this group to work together to solve problems and to restore the trust of the American people. There is no ideological litmus test to join this group. What is required is a willingness to respect one another and resolve to work together to solve problems. No Labels is doing just that—fix, not fight.

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentleman for his comments.

I now yield to a very good friend of mine, the gentleman from Oregon, Mr. KURT SCHRADER.

Mr. SCHRADER. I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin.

We've collaborated on a number of endeavors, most recently in the Agriculture Committee. There was great bipartisan debate in the Agriculture Committee. I commend to those late-night insomniacs for their 11-hour viewing enjoyment, come watch how a real committee should work in the Congress of the United States, where there's give-and-take, people hold strong positions, but at the end of the day the process moves forward.

I would like to echo my friend and colleague's comments here. The Problem Solvers caucus, of which we're all members, is an outgrowth of the No Labels movement that's been going on for several years. Late last year, No Labels approached a number of us in Congress about getting together and were we truly interested in solving problems.

I think the thing that got all of our attention is it wasn't giving up who you were, it wasn't giving up your philosophy. We have extreme right members, we have extreme left members, and we've got some of our centrists, or as my colleagues like to call it, squishy people, in the middle. And that's not a bad thing, necessarily.

But what we are all about is solving problems, not dealing with the minutia, the differences that we have, dealing with all these one-off issues that our constituents don't send us to Congress to deal with, but we are trying to

deal with bigger issues. The GAO, or General Accounting Office, sends us information every year about things that should be fixed in Congress—non-partisan, bipartisan issues that we should be addressing. The No Labels group is starting to pick those things up.

As the gentleman from Florida talked about, there's a plethora of issues upon which we can agree. The mark of a true statesman, I think, is not focusing on what you disagree on with your colleagues but what you can agree on. I think that, and some of the bigger issues that, hopefully, we'll go forward on and the No Labels group will be attacking, you'll see us also start to look at some of the reforms of the process.

I alluded to the Ag Committee the other day. There are ways to make this process work here and make America proud and, as we've heard so far, restore faith in your government once again.

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentleman.

When I first came here it was interesting how few places there were where both parties could get together and talk about issues. It just didn't really exist. And those of us that have decided to get together and talk, we've never asked anyone to lay down their own personal beliefs or ideologies, but we did ask for them to stand up and defend them and to speak about them and to encourage others and to, most importantly, listen to each other and to try to learn why we believe what we believe.

I'd like to now yield to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. COFFMAN).

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I want to join my colleagues today to affirm our collective effort to put aside partisanship wherever possible and seek the solutions our country needs.

As I meet with constituents across Colorado's Sixth Congressional District, I constantly hear the refrain, What is Congress doing to help our country? The people of Aurora, Colorado, and the surrounding communities in my district want to know what is being done to fix the economy, to generate jobs, to care for our veterans, and to defend our Nation. They don't ask about the current beltway infighting. They want to know what is being done about our debt and to help with their children's schools.

I'm glad to stand here today and repeat the message that Members of Congress need to put aside partisan agendas and seek solutions together.

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentleman.

I would now like to yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. MALONEY).

Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York. I want to join my colleagues in commending the terrific work of the No Labels group.

I, like others, came to Congress not to fight but to fix problems. And I've always thought there's so much work to do, if we just start working on the things we agree about, we'll all be tired

at the end of the day and we won't have time to fight. And it's in that spirit that we've approached our work, many of us that are new to Congress, and I think we're seeing results.

The last Congress was content to have an argument about a farm bill. And as my colleague noted, we're working in a bipartisan way to bring one to the floor and to get results for the American people. The last Congress was content to give us the sequester, but a bunch of us working across the aisle in this Congress are more interested in implementing the nonpartisan recommendations of the GAO to help us cut government waste that we can all agree shouldn't be there. We've agreed on things like no budget, no pay. We've agreed on things in a bipartisan way like the Violence Against Women Act. These are delivering real results for real families.

I represent the Hudson Valley of New York, and I'm proud to say that we've got one of the largest chapters of the No Labels group in Westchester. I didn't come here to be part of the red team or the blue team. I didn't come here to fight. I came here to find solutions and to get results for my constituents and the people who pay the bills, the taxpayers. And I'm encouraged and delighted that there are so many friends across the aisle in the Republican Party who want to do the same thing. I think if we can get more of our colleagues to join us, we can create a real movement in this Congress and we can start a new day.

It may be too soon to say that we've turned the corner, but I believe we've made an important start. I'm committed to continuing to work across the aisle to get results.

Mr. RIBBLE. That's encouraging to all of us. I appreciate your comments.

I now yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BENTIVOLIO).

Mr. BENTIVOLIO. Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo what my friend, Congressman REID RIBBLE, said a moment ago. The people of southeastern Michigan sent me here to solve the problems affecting our great Nation. The Problem Solvers coalition offers a chance to break the partisan gridlock by bringing Democrats and Republicans together to focus on good governance. Our coalition meets regularly to find commonsense solutions because Washington's inability to work together has put the future of our children and grandchildren in jeopardy.

More than two centuries, Members of the first Congress were summoned to uphold and defend the Constitution. The proudest boast then in the civilized world was, "I am an American." Today, we must ensure that being an American makes you the envy of the world.

□ 1950

I recognize that we all have different viewpoints. I understand that this is a contentious time in Congress—different viewpoints clash, sometimes

rightfully so. However, I do think that there is one goal that everyone here has—to hand the next generation a country that is in better condition than when we found it. We must strive valiantly, and we must dare greatly to solve problems here in Washington by working together to find common ground.

We all have been sent here to serve the people, and I urge my colleagues to join the Problem Solvers Coalition and to start doing the work of the people. Thank you, and God bless you.

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentleman for your comments.

I now yield to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MATHESON).

Mr. MATHESON. I thank my colleague for yielding.

It's a pleasure to join my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to discuss No Labels.

You know, I think one thing that hasn't been mentioned tonight is the fact that it's about "no labels." We're going to get away from Democrat, Republican, liberal, conservative. This is about bringing people together to try to reach consensus and solve problems. Because when you really think about it, our political dialogue in this country has been reduced too often to this notion where there are only two points of view, only two ways to look at an issue: all Democrats think one way; all Republicans think the other. There's no other way to look at an issue.

Well, as we all know, life generally is not that simple; and it's important for us to constructively come together in a way where we act as Representatives, because our system of government is not a parliamentary system where just two points of view are to be discussed. Our system of government is a representative system of government. We have 435 people in the House of Representatives who all can bring a point of view to the table to try to solve problems and make progress. That's why I'm pleased to be associated and participating with the No Labels group.

I'm pleased that across the country people are signing up to join ad citizen activists for No Labels as well. It tells you where the country wants us to go as an institution—no more bickering, no more playing the blame game. Let's sit down and let's try to work together to get things done.

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentleman.

I would like to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK).

Mr. FITZPATRICK. I thank my friend for yielding.

You know, the one thing that I hear more than anything else when I travel back home to Pennsylvania is the frustration with Washington and the massive divide that they see that prevents us from solving real problems, from solving American problems. And as I've heard from my colleagues here tonight, that feeling is not limited to my communities of Bucks County and Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

It doesn't take much to see that our Nation is facing some pretty serious problems. It's long been clear to me that we need lawmakers to come together and put aside politics and do what we were elected to do, which is to solve problems.

When I served as a local official back home in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, on a bipartisan board, it didn't take long to figure out that there was no Republican way or Democratic way to fix a bridge or to care for an abused or abandoned or neglected child. It was just the right way to do it.

So now, as a member of the No Labels Problem Solvers, I'm proud to be part of the solution and to enthusiastically subscribe to our motto, which is "Stop Fighting and Start Fixing." Once we cross the so-called "political divide" and talk to each other, we readily find common ground, balance, and ultimately solutions.

I was proud to be an early proponent of the No Labels initiative No Budget No Pay, which passed the House recently and yielded real results—the first budget resolution from the Senate in 4 years.

Recently, I wrote an editorial piece with my colleague, Representative CHERI BUSTOS, that highlighted the importance of bipartisan problem-solving to address wasteful government spending and advance commonsense legislation that we can all agree upon.

We must restore faith in our elected leaders. The public's trust has been shaken—and rightly so. As we've seen lately, partisan politics tarnishes everything from national security to tax enforcement. We can no longer afford partisan politics as usual, so we're here to be problem-solvers, going forward to get something done for the good of the people, and there's no time to waste.

Mr. RIBBLE. Indeed, there's no time to waste.

I yield to the gentlelady from Illinois (Mrs. BUSTOS).

Mrs. BUSTOS. I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Far too often, people tend to focus on our differences instead of what brings us together. Despite what we all may hear, common ground does exist among lawmakers from opposing sides.

Although the group we call No Labels is made up of Democrats and Republicans, what unites the 68 of us making up this group is the idea that work can and should get done in Washington.

The people of each of our regions in the United States sent us to the Nation's Capital not to position and posture, but to use common sense and compromise to move our country forward. That is why I joined the bipartisan No Labels group and have been identified as a "congressional problem solver."

No Labels is the only bipartisan, bicameral group in Congress and is made up of liberals, moderates, conservatives. Yes, the left, the right, and the middle coming together. While we surely don't agree on every issue, there

are plenty of areas that we can find to achieve results for the people who we represent.

Let me just share a recent example. I'm a member of the House Ag Committee, and last week we completed an exercise in bipartisanship by working together to pass, by a large margin, a 5-year farm bill. The Republican chairman, FRANK LUCAS, and the Democratic ranking member, COLLIN PETERSON, and the entire committee were civil, accommodating, and worked well together. It was refreshing. In fact, nine of my fellow congressional problem solvers on both Democratic and Republican sides are on the Ag Committee with me.

Although we didn't agree on every aspect of the bill and I believe there still is room for improvements, we all come from different regions of the country where people expect their elected officials to put politics aside and do their job. Period.

Last year, Congress wasn't able to get its act together and pass a 5-year farm bill, so instead had to resort to a short-term extension that expires in a matter of months. I am hopeful that this year will be different.

The family farmers I talk with back home in Illinois want the security and stability that come with a 5-year farm bill so they can plan for future growth and investments and continue to provide the food our Nation—and the world also—depends on.

If we approached more issues on a bipartisan basis like we did on the Ag Committee and like we do in No Labels, Congress would be more productive and the American people would be better off. I'm committed to working with my No Labels colleagues to achieve this goal of bipartisanship and urge all Members of Congress to join us in this pursuit.

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentlelady. I'd like to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. DENT).

Mr. DENT. I thank the gentleman, and I thank the Speaker for allowing me to address the House tonight regarding the Problem Solvers group. I, too, am a proud member of this group—a group of Republicans and Democrats who I think have really one thing in common more than anything else; it's a group of Members of Congress who believe we have an affirmative obligation to govern. That is, we're trying to find a way to get to "yes" on some of the big issues of the day because the problems are huge.

Clearly, when the country sees a lot of the mindless bickering and fighting that goes on here, it does not inspire confidence, and it certainly does contribute to greater uncertainty. And while nobody here is checking their ideologies or their philosophies at the door, people understand that we must be practical and pragmatic at times to try to find a solution to a common problem. That doesn't mean we'll always get to a solution; sometimes we will and sometimes we won't. But you

know what, it's important that we try. I think that's what this group is about, trying to find solutions to the big problems of the day—not running away from them, not hiding, not each side running to their safe camp and then ignoring the problem and hoping that somebody else at a later date will deal with it.

What I'm most proud about with this group is that many of these Members have demonstrated political courage on both sides of the aisle and have stood up time and again to try to do the right thing for the good of the country.

Like everybody else here, too, I hear from my constituents. My constituents are very much alarmed by what they're seeing happening in Washington. They think that we're in warring camps; no one likes each other and no one gets along, but worst of all, no one is trying, no one is trying to solve the great problems of the day.

I'm really pleased, as has been mentioned previously, that this Problem Solvers group, the first issue out of the box for us was No Budget No Pay—an idea that originated with this organization. And sure enough, within fairly short order, it became law. It's a step. It's an important step. I'm proud that this group was part of it. I know over time, in the near future, this organization will be coming up with more ideas that we can present to the American people in a way that I think they will find very helpful and very useful.

So again, I just want to commend my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, many of whom I call friends. We're all friends who are really trying to do the right thing. So I just wanted to say thank you, and I commend the efforts. We need more of this, not less of it.

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentleman.

It is now a privilege of mine to yield to my friend from Georgia (Mr. BARROW).

□ 2000

Mr. BARROW of Georgia. I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for the time, but more importantly I thank him for the leadership he is showing in this common endeavor.

I want to echo what my good friend, Congressman DENT, just said, but I want to make an additional point. The folks in Georgia sent me to Washington to help get things done, not get caught up in scoring political points. They are fed up with the hyperpartisanship in Congress, and that's why I've joined this group.

The scandals at the IRS and the Justice Department contribute to one of the biggest problems in our country right now. Americans don't trust their government to do the right thing. The goal of this group is to strengthen the faith that folks have in government.

The Problem Solvers coalition offers a chance to break the gridlock by getting Democrats and Republicans focused on actually getting things done in Congress. Unlike some folks, we don't think "compromise" is a dirty word.

Washington's refusal to respect and work with one another means we are failing this generation and the next generation. No Labels offers a common ground for lawmakers to make government work better and negotiate solutions without the blinders of partisan talking points.

We have real problems that are crying out for compromise right now, and we all just can't sit here arguing just to get us through the next election. If we continue with that approach, we won't be doing this country and the folks we represent any good down the road.

Mr. Speaker, my Bible says:

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor more than silver or gold.

I believe that both parties have a great deal to contribute to this country's past, have a great deal to be proud of in their path, and they have a lot to contribute to our country's future. But the label, the name, the good name that folks are looking for is "problem solver." That is the name that brings us together. That is the name that describes our function. That is why I'm proud to support this group and its work.

Mr. RIBBLE. Mr. Speaker, with that, I would like to yield to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE).

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin, my friend, for yielding, and want to really echo the comments of my friend from Georgia, Mr. BARROW.

I first came to Washington to serve in the House a little more than 2 years ago after spending 8 years as mayor of the city of Providence. When you're a mayor of a city or town, you are a problem solver. You have lots of issues that come before you, lots of decisions to make, but most importantly, you have to get things done. You don't have a Republican pothole or a Democratic tree that needs to be cut. You just have things that need to be done and action that needs to be taken.

The men and women and families of Rhode Island's First Congressional District didn't send me to Congress to score political points or engage in political games. They sent me here to get things done, to confront the challenges facing our country and my State.

I'm very proud to be a founding member of the Problem Solvers of No Labels, a coalition that's offering a venue for Republicans and Democrats to come together, to work together, to find solutions to, most importantly, govern our Nation.

And really importantly, as my friend from Wisconsin said, we have people in No Labels who come from a whole range of different ideologies, who feel very passionately about issues that are important to them and to their constituents and make the case in very, very spirited discussions. But we come to it with a willingness to listen to each other, to consider each other's views, to engage in civil discourse and,

most importantly, come to it with a commitment to try to solve problems, to work together to grow our economy, responsibly cut the deficit, protect critical programs like Social Security and Medicare.

There's no question that in the last few years Washington has stopped working the way it should. Republicans and Democrats have grown more concerned with 30-second ads than serving our constituents. Washington has failed to do its job.

There are real problems facing our country. We need to start working together again in the spirit of bipartisanship that has defined our Nation over the years through global conflict, economic depression, and even fierce internal political debates.

We have always come together to get things done and to act in the best interest of our country. I know that's what No Labels is committed to, that's what we're committed to on both sides of the aisle as part of Problem Solvers, and I urge all my colleagues to join us in this effort.

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentleman for his comments.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I would like to yield to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. MICHAUD).

Mr. MICHAUD. Thank you very much for yielding.

I want to thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for his leadership in the No Label Problem Solving group, and I really enjoy working with you.

I came to Congress after serving in the Maine Legislature for 22 years—a place where Democrats, Independents, and Republicans did work together to get things done.

The House Veterans' Affairs Committee also works on a bipartisan basis, and I'm proud to serve on the committee. Chairman MILLER and myself work very well together, along with our committee members, to try to find solutions to the problems that our veterans are facing today. We are doing it in a nonpartisan way, and that's how things should work.

However, I do remain concerned about Congress, and Washington as a whole. There is too much division, gamesmanship, and too little cooperation. But the group that you see here tonight on this floor that I'm speaking of is a group that actually gives me hope, a group of individuals, Republicans, Democrats, from all different facets of life, from different parts of the country, that are willing to sit down and work together to get things done.

I'm very proud to join my fellow Problem Solvers because it's long past time to work together and get things done for the American people.

Mr. RIBBLE. I remember very clearly, Mr. Speaker, I had been in Congress only a few days—the President of the United States came into this Chamber for the State of the Union address—and my good friend from Maine invited me to sit with him. We began a relation-

ship there and continued to work together throughout these last few years.

Thank you very much for coming to the floor tonight.

With that, I would like to yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. VALADAO).

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, as I travel around my district, I've witnessed firsthand many of the problems my constituents face on a daily basis—water shortages, difficulty pursuing a higher education, and high unemployment. While there are many ways to address each of these issues—and we may not always agree on the best course of action—one thing is clear: Americans are sick of the gridlock in Washington.

Congress cannot continue to be sidetracked by political games and at the same time expect real progress to be made. We must put aside our political differences and, as leaders, come together to do what's best for our constituents—the American people.

That's why I joined the Problem Solvers coalition. The group is made up of both Republicans and Democrats, alike, who are committed to focusing on policy, not politics. We meet on a regular basis to discuss, debate, and find common ground on the most pressing issues of our day. It is only through a mutual understanding and respect that we will begin to address the serious issues our Nation faces and move forward together.

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentleman for his comments.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I would like to yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS).

Mr. OWENS. Thank you, Mr. RIBBLE, and thank you for conducting this hour this evening.

As I travel around my district in upstate New York, which forms the convergence of Vermont, Quebec, and New York, I hear a couple of questions from my constituents. The first is about jobs, and the second is why can't you fellows work together?

No Labels is a big part of that answer. We must work at the process of discussing issues, of gathering facts—and I want to repeat that, of gathering facts—then discussing those facts, and then reaching compromise. That is what the American people sent us here to do. That is why I came to Congress 3½ years ago.

We all recognize that no one—no party, no group—has a monopoly on good ideas, nor on the facts. I urge all of my colleagues in Congress to work with us so that we will develop the kind of relationships, the kind of action, the kind of motivation that allows us to work for our friends and neighbors at home, those whom we call constituents.

□ 2010

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentleman for his comments.

With that, I'd like to yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. BERA).

Mr. BERA of California. Thank you to my colleague from Wisconsin for organizing this, and thank you to my colleague from New York.

I am honored to be here with colleagues from both sides of the aisle. As you've heard us talking about the Problem Solvers, that's what we're elected to do—to solve problems. One of the first organizations I joined when I got here was the No Labels organization. One of the first bills that I had the honor of cosponsoring was the No Budget, No Pay legislation. What a novel idea—putting together a budget. That was a bill that was an idea that came out of the Problem Solvers. We sponsored that bill, we put it forth, and lo and behold, the House of Representatives has a budget, the Senate has a budget, and the President has a budget.

We've got to continue moving forward, and that is exactly what this organization allows us to do. It brings Democrats and Republicans together to have a conversation, to listen to one another and to solve problems. We're not going to agree on everything. In fact, in divided government, it isn't necessary that we agree on everything. You want to have all the ideas, but we're not asking anyone to give up their convictions. What we are asking, though, is for us to listen to one another, to hear the ideas that are being put out there and then to find common ground so we can start working together on that common ground, moving forward and addressing the challenges that our Nation faces.

We don't have to look too far back in our history to see how this works. The great Speaker, Tip O'Neill, was able to work together with President Ronald Reagan to not only address some of our debt and deficit but to also strengthen Social Security. President Bill Clinton was able to work with Speaker Newt Gingrich to not only balance our budget but to create budget surpluses.

Now, the American people expect us to start working together. I grew up in a country that always talked about what we could do, that focused on the challenge of the day. It is time that we start coming together as Democrats and Republicans, and it's time we start solving problems. That's why I'm so glad to be here and to be a member of the Problem Solvers and a cochair of the Problem Solvers.

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentleman. I would now like to yield to the gentlelady from Hawaii (Ms. GABBARD).

Ms. GABBARD. I would like to thank my colleague from Wisconsin for leading this effort and for his leadership in bringing together Members from all parts of the country that represent many diverse viewpoints.

I know, for me, one thing that I often hear every time I go home is a sense of frustration from constituents, from people within my community, who ask: Why can't Congress get anything done? What are you doing to take action for the American people? Is there hope, is there any way to fix this mess that we seem to be in?

I was talking with some of my Republican colleagues, new Members, and I found that the answer that we were giving people when they expressed their frustrations was the same. And that was, the hope that we see every day as we do our work here lies in the fact that, collectively, we recognize that we have a mandate from those in our communities to work together, to do the people's work and to remember every single day that the most important thing we share in common is that we serve at the pleasure of our constituents as Representatives, as voices for the people.

To me, that's really what this Problem Solvers Caucus is all about. It's about Democrats and Republicans coming together, finding these practical, real solutions that will allow us to make true progress in the spirit of service. As my colleagues know, I often talk about how this is what we in Hawaii call the spirit of aloha: when you can have a conversation with someone with whom you may disagree on some issues but whom you can respect, whom you can listen to sincerely and have a true conversation with to come up with the best idea and the best solution on how we can serve the people.

Earlier today, I had the opportunity to go with some of my colleagues, a bipartisan group of us new Members, to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We laid a wreath there at the tomb, as we head into Memorial Day, and we had an opportunity to reflect on the great sacrifices that have been made in the history of our country, and it personally gave me the opportunity to remember some of the sacrifices that my friends and battle buddies have made. It reminded me of what our responsibility is, which is to honor them, and it reminded me that there are no labels when you're in a foxhole, that there are no labels when you're walking on a patrol, and that, when these great heroes are out serving our country, there is no label identifying their party affiliations, their religious practices, the communities that they come from, because they understand it's about one team, one fight, serving one awesome Nation.

That's our responsibility here—to serve in that same spirit and recognize we have many problems that need to be solved now, not next month or next year or after the next election cycle, but that we have to stand up, honor them and work together to find our common ground and pursue these commonsense solutions. If we do that, then we will truly honor them, and we will embrace the trust that has been placed with us.

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentlelady, and I thank her for mentioning our veterans.

My own father left the mainland in 1945, and the first place he went was to Pearl Harbor on the Island of Oahu, in your home State, before he went into the Pacific Theater. I can't help but think that he would have wanted this

very thing to have happened here in that we would actually come here and spend our time honoring the sacrifices that those men and women made and finding solutions for the American people, making the American Nation a better place to live and work, to study and grow up and excel, and to become the type of people we can become.

So thank you very much for your comments today.

Now I would like to yield to a good friend of mine from Illinois, a Chicago Bears fan himself, Mr. LIPINSKI.

Mr. LIPINSKI. I want to thank Mr. REID RIBBLE for yielding, and I want to stand here on the Republican side of the well to just express how important it is that we stand here together.

As Mr. RIBBLE just mentioned in talking about our veterans, yesterday I was at an early Memorial Day commemoration. The people there weren't talking about Democrats and Republicans. We were talking about those men and women who had given their lives for our country—standing together, fighting together to maintain our freedom.

Today, we see too much division here in Washington. Now, my background is in engineering. Engineers are problem solvers, so I came to Congress 8-plus years ago determined to solve problems. As our Nation's problems have gotten bigger, Congress has gotten smaller, not smaller in size and certainly not smaller in ego, but smaller in the capacity to get things done. My constituents certainly see this. What they want to see is Washington working together to help with job creation, to work on reducing our debt and to work on solving the many other problems that we face. Instead, they see fighting in Washington.

Now, where I come from on the southwest side of Chicago, in the bungalow belt, we know that when we are sent to do a job there is a bottom line—get the job done. Businesses, families, organizations know, if they're going to survive, they must solve problems. It's time for Washington to get this because we must come together to face these big issues, and that's what Problem Solvers and No Labels are all about—coming together. Not to lose the fact that we are Democrats and Republicans, liberals or conservatives, but to work to solve problems.

We must do this. If we do not, we will be failing the American people—failing our constituents, those who have sent us here. If we do come together, we can work to solve some of these problems and make sure that America's brightest and best days are still ahead of us. The American people are counting on us.

So I am glad to stand here with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and I thank Mr. RIBBLE for leading us here tonight to say we are united to solve problems. We are no labels. We're not going to solve the problems overnight, but this is where we need to start to let the American people know

that there are Members of Congress, there are people in Washington who want to work together and solve these problems. I pledge my support to my colleagues here, and we are going to work together as America's brightest days are yet to come.

□ 2020

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentleman for his comments. And I just have to say if a Green Bay Packer fan like myself, Mr. Speaker, and a Chicago Bear fan like Representative LIPINSKI can get together and talk about things—if we can talk about that, we can talk about anything.

In fact, around Christmastime 2009, is when I became convinced about possibly running for Congress for the first time. I'm in my second term, Mr. Speaker. I came here to this Chamber not just to represent the citizens of northeast Wisconsin, but I came here because I believe that the fabric of trust between the American people and this government has been torn. But fabric torn can be mended. It can be mended by common thread that binds us together not as Republicans and Democrats, men and women, but common thread that binds us together as Americans.

Common thread can only be used if it's found; common thread can only be found if you seek it.

One of the reasons that I feel we sometimes can't repair this torn fabric is because it's so difficult to find the common ground. But common ground, indeed, can be found when representatives are willing to seek it out.

Mr. Speaker, our Founders established a representative Republic and instructed us. They said that if we can find agreement, do those things. But if we couldn't find agreement, they warned us as well. They said, Where you can't find agreement, it might be best for you not to do those things until you can, in fact, find agreement.

So we have to go out and we have to look for it, and I could talk to my Republican colleagues every single day. In many respects, it's like preaching to the choir, and I think that preaching to the choir is a fine thing. I mean, you often preach to the choir because you want them to sing. The fact of the matter is I have agreement with my Republican colleagues on most things—not everything, but most things. So therefore I must go and talk to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

The fastest way to mend that torn fabric is by meeting people, by building trust, by taking the time to understand them and then seeking the areas of common ground, to find the common thread that binds us together, and when we find that, we can begin to repair the torn fabric between the American people and its government. It's really what we've been sent here to do.

We've been sent here to find and solve problems, not to fight about them. Disagreement will happen. In fact, you can look historically into this

Chamber, and there's been a lot of disagreement. It dates back to the beginning of our Nation's founding. There's also been a lot of agreement.

Think about the differences from 1787 to today. Think about the America that exists today. Much of it exists because the men and women who were sent by the citizens of their districts to lead came here, and through statesman-like qualities, were willing to lead. They had the courage to make tough decisions and then lead this country to the place that it is today.

I am filled with hope about America. I'm filled with hope because of the colleagues that I work with here. I'm filled with hope, Mr. Speaker, because of men like you.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

CBC HOUR: HIGHER EDUCATION

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 days to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor and a privilege to once again have this opportunity to anchor the CBC Special Order along with my very distinguished colleague, my good friend from the Silver State, Representative STEVEN HORSFORD, where for the next 60 minutes during this hour of power, members of the Congressional Black Caucus will have an opportunity to speak directly to the American people about the issues facing higher education here in America.

We are at a crisis moment as it relates to our capacity to make sure that we can provide an affordable college education to as many Americans as possible. The problem that we in this country confront is twofold. First, the cost of a college education keeps going up, but the amount of financial aid available to younger Americans keeps coming down. As a result, higher education is increasingly out of reach, particularly for low-income Americans or working families or the sons and daughters of the middle class.

A college education is a pathway to the American Dream. The fact that it's increasingly out of reach is incredibly problematic for this great country. Compounding that fact secondarily is the reality that the amount of student loan debt for younger Americans has increased exponentially. If the Congress does not act in advance of July 1, then the interest rate for federally subsidized student loans will double in its

amount. It will increase from its current rate of 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. This increase will impact more than 7 million younger Americans. It's a crisis that we must confront.

The CBC today will lay out a vision for how we can deal with the immediate crisis that we confront that's approaching as we march toward July 1, as well as ideas for tackling the broader issue of college affordability. Many of our members will also lay out the problems with the GOP approach as represented in H.R. 1911, which will only make the problem worse—not better.

We're pleased that so many of my distinguished colleagues have joined us today to participate in this Special Order. To get us started is our eloquent and dynamic leader, the chairperson of the Congressional Black Caucus, Representative MARCIA FUDGE.

Ms. FUDGE. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I want to thank my colleagues, Congressman JEFFRIES and Congressman HORSFORD, for once again leading the Congressional Black Caucus Special Order. I cannot think of a more timely topic for today's Special Order as once again our youth are facing a student loan crisis.

Mr. Speaker, George Washington Carver once said, "Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom." Nowhere is this truer in this country, where we know for a fact that access to a quality education is the ladder to a better and richer tomorrow. Providing access to education is in America's very DNA, and it goes back to when two of our Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, established State universities.

This tradition continued in 1862 when President Lincoln signed the Morrill Land-Grant Acts to create land-grant colleges, an effort to promote higher education for working class citizens. Nearly 100 years later, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Higher Education Act of 1965, and thus the Pell Grant was created.

Today, an affordable college education is more important than ever in this country's history. In the next decade, 63 percent of all jobs will require at least some post-secondary education. And in order to compete for jobs in the future, our children must be equipped and not saddled with debt. Congress has a duty to ensure that Federal education assistance is both affordable and accessible.

On July 1, if Congress does not act, rates for college students taking out subsidized Department of Education loans are scheduled to double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this week the House, the place affectionately referred to as the "people's House"—believe it or not—will consider a bill that would do more harm than good.

□ 2030

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle will bring the so-called