

Those that will be making health care decisions for the American people on the Independent Payment Advisory Board, IPAB, will never appear on a ballot. The American people will never be able to hire or fire those making medical decisions on their behalf. Is that fair? Is that democratic? Is that what America is all about?

Mr. Speaker, this need not be a partisan issue. The American people deserve an effective, efficient Federal Government—a government that works for them and not the other way around.

I fear that as the government continues to grow and Obamacare is fully implemented, the consequences of transferring so much power, national treasure, and control to the Federal Government will be felt widely, personally, and painfully.

In the meantime, it is the duty of this Congress to vigorously oversee the Federal agencies, and root out those political appointees and bureaucrats who've abused their positions and violated the trust of the American people.

SAFETY NEEDS OF CHILDREN AS A NATIONAL PRIORITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the horrific tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, where 20 children were murdered, the issue of keeping children safe has been on the minds of all Americans. Since this tragedy occurred in a school, districts and States have, understandably, focused conversations on preventing and responding to violent crime that occurs in the school building itself. However, protecting children will require much more than preventing an outside intruder from committing acts of violence against students or a good emergency response plan to deal with an event. We need to recognize that violence—or the fear of violence—against children does not begin or end at the schoolhouse door. That's why I've devoted this month to introduce legislation that focuses on the safety needs of children as a national priority.

First, I introduced legislation to establish the minimum safety standards to prevent abusive seclusion and restraint practices in schools across the country. The Keeping All Students Safe Act would protect schoolchildren from inappropriate uses of seclusion and restraints and provide school personnel with the necessary tools, training, and support to ensure the safety of all students and school personnel. These practices are, at best, cruel and, at worst, deadly. They continue to be used on children across the country.

In Indiana, an 8-year-old girl with Down syndrome had her shoes duct-taped painfully to her ankles because she refused to put her shoes on. In North Carolina, a 14-year-old boy with a traumatic brain injury was confined inside a cardboard box as a form of timeout. In some cases, children have even died from improper restraints and

seclusion. My bill also would stop these abusive practices, but safety shouldn't stop at the schoolhouse door.

Investigations conducted by the Government Accountability Office, at my request, in 2007 and 2008 found that private and public residential programs, including therapeutic boarding schools, wilderness camps, boot camps, and behavior modification facilities are not always run in a safe manner. Recently, the Tampa Bay Times confirmed that problems of abuse and neglect continue, with stories of children being bruised, bloodied, and choked into unconsciousness at these programs, all in the name of discipline. More horrific stories of child abuse, including deaths in some cases, have been documented in seven States' residential programs in just the past 2 years.

Last week, I introduced the Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act, a bill that would set basic health and safety standards the State would need to adopt to enforce and protect teens from physical, mental, and sexual abuse in these programs. It would also create easily accessible information for parents about the safety records of the programs so that parents can make sound decisions about if they want to send their child there or not.

No one disputes that our schools and residential programs must be a safe place for children where they can focus on learning and improving their lives, not fearing for their lives. Though some States have made progress developing policies to protect children from acts of violence, abuse, and neglect, a patchwork of protections, riddled with holes, is not acceptable when it comes to our Nation's children. We cannot sit idly by as incidents of children being abused or killed continues to occur.

Today, I'm introducing legislation that will prevent registered sex offenders and criminals convicted of crimes against children from working at schools. The Protecting Students from Sexual and Violent Predators Act would require public schools to conduct comprehensive background checks on any employee, using State criminal and child abuse registries and the FBI's fingerprint database. It would also prohibit school districts from hiring or retaining anyone who has been convicted of certain violent crimes, including crimes against children, crimes involving rape or sexual assault, and child pornography.

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Mr. Speaker, keeping our children safe isn't a partisan issue; it's a moral obligation. This Congress must do more to protect our children. One way Congress can immediately help to ensure that students and schools have the support needed to address all aspects of violence is through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Through a bipartisan rewrite of the Nation's education law, we can ensure that schools and students

have the necessary support to provide key nonacademic services essential for students to succeed in a safe and healthy learning environment.

In the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Democrats will be fighting for these critical services, including other measures to promote safety, such as school services for violence prevention activities, bullying and harassment prevention, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, and programs to prepare for and respond to natural disasters and emergencies in our schools.

Mr. Speaker, on my last point, my thoughts continue to be with the victims and families of all those who have suffered and continue to suffer from the terrible tragedy that took place in Oklahoma earlier this week. We are just amazed and honor all of the efforts of school staff, teachers, and parents trying to get children out of harm's way, and our heart goes out to those who were unsuccessful. I hope that Congress can support these communities in healing in every possible way. As always, keeping kids safe requires the coordinated efforts of children, principals, superintendents, community partners, and parents.

And protecting children from violence and freeing students to learn and better their lives means ensuring that states, districts, schools and communities have the resources and supports needed to implement evidence-based approaches that are tailored to the unique needs of children in that area.

My bills are only part of the solution, but an important step forward.

We owe it to parents and to the children and to the school officials who follow the rules to consider these bills.

We also owe it to them to send a strong message that people who abuse children or do not do their jobs to keep children safe will face serious consequences.

I hope that this Congress will be able to take an even more comprehensive approach to protect children in our schools and residential programs, and I urge all of my colleagues to support these bills.

NORTHERN ROUTE APPROVAL ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, this week, the House of Representatives is going to vote on a very important piece of legislation that should be unnecessary.

Due to the President's objection—at the insistence of Hollywood and the EPA—a critical piece of North America's energy security puzzle languishes on a desk in the Oval Office while thousands of unemployed workers collect government benefits instead of a paycheck. That is why I cosponsored and am doing all I can to pass H.R. 3, the Keystone pipeline Northern Route Approval Act, a bill that renders the northern route of the pipeline approved for construction, eliminating the need for a Presidential permit.

As vast reserves of oil are discovered and new technologies unlocked, energy security in this decade is well within our reach. The amount of oil that could be flowing to U.S. refineries in the Keystone XL represents nearly 50 percent of the oil that we currently import from the Middle East.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to sitting on two of the subcommittees that held hearings on this legislation, I have a long history of involvement with TransCanada and the Keystone pipeline as a former environmental regulator in North Dakota. From 2003 until my election to Congress last year, I carried the pipeline portfolio as one of three members of the North Dakota Public Service Commission.

As you might imagine, the oil and gas pipeline construction business is robust in my State, as the Bakken shale development has elevated North Dakota to the position of the number two producing State in the country.

One of the pipelines we sited while I was on the PSC was the original TransCanada Keystone pipeline. It carries over 500,000 barrels of crude from the Western Canadian Sedimentary Basin in Alberta to U.S. refineries in Illinois and Oklahoma.

The first 217 miles of this pipeline actually run through our State. It crosses the border in Cavalier County, North Dakota, and runs through seven more counties, crossing 600 landowners' land, two scenic rivers, and includes five pumping stations.

While not universally loved, I can tell you that not a single inch of this line in North Dakota required condemnation proceedings—not because I was such a great regulator, but because I represent such great citizens. Our citizens understand the value of energy security and the jobs that energy development creates, and that same sentiment exists in our Nation today.

The environmental safeguards we demanded on the Keystone are rigorous and appropriate. They've been tested and they work.

I toured the Keystone during construction and met many of the men and women, who were grateful for the good-paying jobs that built the line, and many other local restaurant and hotel proprietors, retailers, subcontractors who were happy to have the work and the business. The local officials and school administrators are grateful for the tax revenue that would not be there but for the Keystone pipeline, and, of course, the tax relief it provides local farmers, in addition to the easement payments, are a blessing.

Mr. Speaker, I've sited hundreds, maybe thousands of miles of oil pipelines that operate safely and efficiently throughout North Dakota, but none as thoroughly vetted and safe as the Keystone XL.

I've heard the arguments from my friends across the aisle who claim the Keystone only helps Canada and does nothing to the benefit of the United States. They also claim that the car-

bon footprint is too great. The fact of the matter is the Keystone has already signed up over 60,000 barrels of North Dakota crude and has the capacity for at least 100,000 barrels.

Today, 71 percent of North Dakota crude is shipped by rail. Now, I have nothing against trains, but rail oil costs more and is not as safe as pipelines. It also requires trucks to get the oil to the train.

According to the director of the North Dakota Department of Mineral Resources, Lynn Helms, approval of the Keystone XL will cause two things to happen: 300 to 500 truckloads per day will be taken off North Dakota highways, and there will be one to two fewer trains leaving the State. He calculates that greenhouse gas emissions from rail are 1.8 times and trucks 2.9 times greater than the emissions from pipeline transportation, and spills from truck transportation occur at three to four times the rate of spills from pipelines.

Approval of the Keystone will result in 450,000 to 950,000 kilograms per day less in greenhouse gas emissions in North Dakota alone, as well as significant decreases in dust, and 60 to 80 fewer spills per year.

North Dakota officials also expect highway fatalities will be reduced by three to six per year, and injury crashes by 85 to 150 annually if the Keystone XL is built.

Mr. Speaker, America's national security and America's economic security are tied directly to America's energy security, and the Keystone XL pipeline is a critical weapon in that security.

END HUNGER NOW

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today for the 12th time this year to talk about the need to end hunger now.

I am honored to serve on the House Agriculture Committee, and last week the committee held a markup on H.R. 1947, the farm bill. I believe we need a farm bill that contains a smart, forward-thinking policy, a farm bill that ensures that farmers are able to make a living, a farm bill that benefits the American economy, a farm bill that ensures that the food grown in America makes it to the plates of every American, and a farm bill that isn't rife with fraud, waste, and abuse.

The good news, Mr. Speaker, is that a component of that smart, forward-thinking policy already exists. It's called SNAP. This program ensures that 47 million people out of the 50 million hungry in this country are able to put at least some food on their tables when they otherwise couldn't do so. This program ensures that the food grown on our farms makes it to every American's table, not just the wealthy few.

SNAP provides an economic catalyst because the SNAP benefit is spent in our local grocery stores and farmers' markets, generating jobs and revenue. Indeed, every SNAP dollar results in \$1.72 in economic activity—an amazing return on our investment. And SNAP has one of the lowest error rates of any Federal program.

But H.R. 1947 would undermine all of this. It cuts \$20.5 billion from the program. That cut means that 2 million people would be kicked off of SNAP entirely. It means that 210,000 kids would be kicked off the free school meal program. It means that 850,000 people will see their SNAP benefits cut by \$90 a month, and this is on top of a \$25 a month cut for a family of four that will already take effect in November no matter what happens to the farm bill.

You know, there was a time not so long ago when solving the problem of hunger in America was a bipartisan priority. Former Senators George McGovern and Bob Dole worked tirelessly in the 1970s to make America hunger-free. Their partnership brought us to the point where we nearly eradicated hunger altogether. And I will insert at the end of my remarks an op-ed from yesterday's New York Times highlighting this bipartisan work.

Mr. Speaker, the problem today is that it has become far too fashionable in this House of Representatives to beat up on the poor. In fact, there is now a bipartisan effort to cut hunger programs. I'm sad to say that even some Democrats are willing to support this farm bill, even with these terrible SNAP cuts. Instead of moving forward together, we are moving backward.

Mr. Speaker, the farm bill, with these SNAP cuts, is a bad piece of legislation. It's bad policy. It deserves to be defeated. Whatever good may be in this bill—from increased access to organic foods, to more humane treatment for animals, to increased job creation in agriculture—it is not an understatement to say that this bill will make hunger worse in America.

For the life of me, I do not understand why we should be forced to choose between cutting access to food and providing jobs for our ailing economy. We can and we should achieve the joint mission of ending hunger now and creating jobs together. They are very much connected and should not be pitted against each other. But that's exactly what the farm bill would do—to the tune of \$20.5 billion.

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We should end hunger now, not make hunger worse. We need a comprehensive effort to end hunger now. We need Presidential leadership. We need a White House Conference on Food and Nutrition. And we need a Congress determined to address hunger in America and bring it to an end, not make it worse.

Hunger in America is a political condition. Nothing demonstrates that more than this farm bill. We have