

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the balance of the time.

At this time, I'd like to thank Mr. SMITH. This is our third bill that we've worked on in these positions, and I think we've become better friends over the years. We understand each other. We know that we, at times, will have disagreements.

I have to confess, I've been married now 50 years, and my wife and I have had a couple of disagreements. I was always wrong, and she's stood by me, and we've had a great relationship.

And we have a great relationship working in this committee. Likewise, our staff. I think they have done yeoman's work to get us to this point. And our subcommittee chairmen and ranking members that we've heard speak here today.

And I have to agree with Mr. SMITH on the sequestration.

□ 1840

We, I think, all understand that this is bad for our Nation. We voted on it, those of us who did, knowing that, understanding that it would never happen. Well, reality set in, and it happened. I've had a few people come to me and say, gee, sequestration isn't that bad. They really haven't seen the full impact to this point. We're just starting into the first year of sequestration. And I was meeting with General Breedlove today, our new European commander. And he's just a month into his new job, and he's starting to feel the sequestration.

I think what we need to understand is—and I've talked to each of our military leaders as they came in and secretaries as they came before our committee for the hearings that led up to this bill—that if something doesn't happen between now and September 30, all of this work, everything that we're working on is, as Mr. SMITH has pointed out, going away. We are cutting \$487 billion out of defense over the next 10 years. That's in the bill. We also, through sequestration, cut another \$500 billion out of defense over the next 10 years. That is not reflected in this bill. Our Budget Committee in the House passed a budget, and they kept the top line number from the Budget Control Act of \$967 billion, and they gave us additional money for defense, which we've used in this bill. But if we're not able to resolve the differences between us and the Senate on September 30, it will be like Cinderella and that magic shoe. Everything goes away. The carriage becomes a cantaloupe, or a pumpkin, and it's bad times.

We've got to deal with that, we've got to deal with raising the debt limit, and there are a lot of very serious things on the table. So I would encourage all of our colleagues to join in the debate tomorrow.

We had a great debate in committee. We had differences, and we talked about them. We didn't get personal,

and we didn't get rancorous. We came out with a vote of 59-2 because everybody on this committee understands how important our work is, how important our national defense is, and how important the men and the women and their families in uniform are, and we stand behind them. Now we do need to make sure that we have the resources that they need.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would encourage all of us to support this bill tomorrow. Join in the process. Make it a better bill if we can.

I yield back the balance of my time. The Acting CHAIR. All time for general debate has expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia) having assumed the chair, Mr. COLLINS of Georgia, Acting Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1960) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2014 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

AMERICA'S FUTURE

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

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, my friends on the other side of the aisle like to refer to the House majority as the Party of No. And do you know what? I'm okay with that. We've said no to unending and out-of-control spending and passed a budget that balances in 10 years. We've said no to the largest tax increase in history and repealed ObamaCare. We said no to fraud and political games and demanded answers from the Internal Revenue Service.

We've said no to the fact that four Americans in Benghazi are dead and we will not rest until we have answers. We've said no to the tax more, spend more, save less, Big Government, job killing machine that is crushing the American spirit and our economic growth.

We've replaced government growth and regulations with reform. We have restored transparency and trust. We're giving our Nation a reason to believe that one day our children won't be looking for a job, they will be creating jobs.

America was founded by patriots who said no to the tyrannical government that was crushing their freedom and economic future. And America's future rests in the hands of those who will carry on the torch of freedom to protect the future of their children and grandchildren. America's future rests in the hands of those who are sometimes willing to say no.

SAFE CLIMATE CAUCUS

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

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, State governments, institutions, businesses and private individuals are organizing to meet the challenges and opportunities of climate change.

For example, experts from New York State's land-grant college, Cornell University, have partnered with others at McGill University in Montreal and the private sector to define the needs of the region's agricultural sector in a warmer climate. Farmers will need new plant varieties. The longer growing season will open possibilities for growing new crops. The timing of planting and fertilizing will change.

Pest management will, indeed, be different. Climate change can be approached with a positive perspective for agriculture, but only if we plan now to take advantage of new opportunities and prepare for the transition.

So where are we, as a body, on this issue? We should be talking climate change and taking it into account as we move a new 5-year farm bill forward. We should be taking action to adapt our infrastructure and economy to these changes. But there is no discussion or action on this crucial issue.

Change is underway. We have little time to lose. We can meet this challenge, slow down the rate of change, adapt to the new conditions and take advantage of new opportunities, but only if we begin today.

PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLLINS of Georgia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me just say I am truly honored tonight to anchor this Special Order on the farm bill on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. And I just want to thank our cochairs, Congressman KEITH ELLISON and Congressman RAÚL GRIJALVA, for their tremendous leadership and for giving us the opportunity to really speak to the American people once a week about what has truly taken place here in Washington, D.C.

As the cochair of the Out-of-Poverty Caucus, which we founded actually during the Bush administration, and now chair of the new Democratic Whip Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity, let me just highlight how truly important it is to continue to support programs that lift Americans out of poverty.

Even as our economy slowly recovers, income inequality continues to grow. Unfortunately, too many people who are working are poor, and they're living on the edge.

I want to take a moment now and just yield a few minutes to my colleague from Minnesota, the cochair of

the Progressive Caucus, and I will return and complete what I have to say, but I know he has to leave, and I would like for him to be able to engage in this discussion at this point.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the gentlelady from California, BARBARA LEE, who has been leading this country for years on the question of economic justice, civil rights and human rights. This issue of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as food stamps, is critical. We have a farm bill that contemplates a \$20 billion cut in the food stamp program, and I think it's just important that Americans know just a few basic things about the food stamp program. One is that many people on food stamps have jobs and work every day. These folks work hard. They work in jobs that pay so little that they don't have enough money to make it without some assistance. But these are the people who probably are making sure that the office buildings we go into are clean and sanitary. These are the folks who prepare fast-food. These people are the folks who make sure that it's safe, because some of the security guards making very low wages.

In fact, in 2010, 41 percent of SNAP recipients lived in a household with earnings. That means 41 percent were earning some income, but they still didn't earn enough money to make a go of it. So this idea that food stamps promote dependency is wrong.

□ 1850

In fact, what food stamps do is provide enough food for families to make it, nearly half of whom are working a job.

It's also important to bear in mind, too, that 76 percent of SNAP households include a child, a senior citizen, or a disabled person, and about 45 percent of SNAP recipients are in fact children. The reality is that if you have a problem with SNAP, then we're talking about children, seniors and disabled people, three-quarters of whom are those households that receive SNAP.

Now, it is also true that there are some single adults who get SNAP. I had a chance to meet one on Monday. This young fellow is 19 years old, and he had been looking for work, going from place to place. He hadn't eaten in a few days and actually got so dizzy that he fell. His friends picked him up, got him some supplemental food quickly, and then he somehow got into the SNAP program. But when I looked in the eyes of this young fellow, I didn't see somebody who didn't want to work. I saw a hardworking Minnesotan who wanted to make a contribution, but who had tough times and was down on his luck for a little while. He wanted to work, he is still looking for a job, but the food stamps got him in a position where he could look for a job.

I just want to share with you, Mr. Speaker and Congresswoman LEE, on Monday, my good friend BETTY MCCOL-

LUM and I were at the State legislature in St. Paul, Minnesota. BETTY represents St. Paul, I represent Minneapolis. We came together and we listened to some people who really know the firsthand experience. We talked to people from the faith community. Patricia Law of St. Paul Church of Christ. We talked to Marie Ellis of Catholic Charities, and Judith Tannenbaum of Maison. All three of them talked about how if we cut SNAP to the tune that is proposed in the farm bill—the charities that they run are already stretched to the limit—therefore it would be very difficult for them to try to pick up the slack that the government would drop if the government quit.

Patricia Lull of the St. Paul Council of Churches—I said Church of Christ, I made a mistake, it was Council of Churches—has a slogan: “No More Hungry Neighbors.” She talked about 18,200 people seeking assistance from food shelves in Minnesota every day, which was pretty upsetting.

Another thing that I'd like to share with the Speaker, too, is that there was a woman who spoke from Hennepin County; she's a health administrator, and her name is Jennifer DeCubellis. She talked about the negative health effects of reduced nutrition access caused by SNAP cuts. So she is trying to describe how so many people who end up in the ER or who have medical problems, their underlying problem is that they're food insecure or housing insecure.

She talked about a woman who was not taking her meds. And they said, well, why don't you take the meds? She said, well, they hurt my stomach. Well, why do the meds hurt your stomach? Well, have you eaten? No, I don't have any money for food. So she's supposed to be eating this food, eating regularly, and she's not. So she's not taking the meds because they hurt her stomach. Getting food literally helps her take her medication. I just thought to myself, look, what are we doing? Richest country in the history of the world can't take care of some people who happen to have some tough times?

The bottom line is most people on SNAP don't use the program forever—some do use it for a long time—but many only use it for about a year when they need it. And as I said, 41 percent are working. I personally don't mind, as an American taxpayer, helping seniors, children, and people with disabilities have a good, healthy nutritious meal.

So I have to abandon my friends now; I'm sorry to have to do that. But I am so proud that we're here tonight saying that it's not weakness; you're not some kind of a sucker if you have compassion for your fellow Americans who don't have enough food. You're not throwing away money. You're doing something that is absolutely necessary, and any compassionate society would have a way to help people who cannot eat.

It's simply not the case that our churches, our synagogues, our mosques

and other charities can pick up the slack if the government drops out of helping people who are food insecure.

So I'm going to then thank my good friend from California for carrying on this great tradition. We're going to stay there for the folks on SNAP tonight.

Ms. LEE of California. I want to thank our cochair of the Progressive Caucus, Congressman ELLISON, for, once again, his tremendous leadership, but also for that very powerful and very graphic statement, sharing the stories of people who are struggling just to survive. That's what this is really about. The majority of people on SNAP do not want to be on SNAP; they want to work. They want to take care of their families, and they want to live the American Dream.

Let me yield now to the gentlelady from Connecticut, Congresswoman DELAURO, a member of the Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Ag. I don't know of anyone who has fought the good fight on behalf of the poor, low-income individuals, middle-income individuals, the most vulnerable—our seniors—more than Congresswoman DELAURO. So I want to thank the gentlelady for really staying true to the cause and for being here tonight with us.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you so much. It's an honor to join with you. I know where your heart, your head and your courage lie with regard to this issue. And we applaud you for your efforts with regard to the one caucus around this place that says that our goal and our mission is to make sure that people who are poor today, let us help them move out of that being poor. Let us help them move into the middle class, because in fact they do want to work, they do want to take care of their families. They're not just statistics. They are people to be upheld and respected and not to be vilified in so many ways as they are there. So I congratulate you and your efforts.

I'm proud to be here with you tonight and with my colleague, Congressman ELLISON, and the Progressive Caucus for his comments and remarks. I see that we are also joined by our colleague, Mr. JOHNSON. I want to thank you for your efforts as well.

As you're talking about, what tonight is all about is highlighting severe immoral cuts that are made to anti-hunger and nutrition programs, particularly the food stamp program; And that is coming from the House of Representatives in the farm bill that passed out of committee.

Everybody knows millions of families are struggling in this economy. Across this country, nearly 15 percent of American households were food insecure in 2010. Nearly 50 million Americans—over 60 million children—are struggling with hunger right now. It is about children; it is about the disabled; it is about seniors. And this is a problem all across this land.

My State of Connecticut, in my district—Connecticut statistically is the

richest State in the Nation because we have Fairfield County, and some parts of the State are known as the Gold Coast, with very affluent people. But we have such pockets of hunger that, in my district, one out of seven is food insecure.

I'm tired of the commentary on food insecurity. What that means—and my colleague knows this, we've talked about this—it is about being hungry. These folks, one out of seven doesn't know where their next meal is coming from.

In Mississippi, 24.5 percent suffer food hardship, nearly one in four people. West Virginia and Kentucky, that drops to just over 22 percent, one in five. In Ohio, nearly 20 percent. California, just over 19 percent.

The estimates of Americans at risk of going hungry here in this land of plenty are appalling. And at times such as this, our key Federal food security programs become all the more important.

This is especially true of food stamps, our country's most important effort to deal with hunger here at home and to ensure that American families can put food on the table for their kids. Right now, food stamps are helping over 47 million Americans—nearly half of them children—to meet their basic food needs. They make a tremendous difference for the health and the well-being of families, as our colleague, Mr. ELLISON, pointed out with his examples.

Food stamps have been proven to improve low-income children's health, their development, reduced food insecurity, and have a continuing positive influence into adulthood.

You know, I listen to people that talk about waste, fraud, abuse. Food stamps always has one of the lowest error rates of any government program.

□ 1900

Go to the IRS, go to Defense, go to a crop insurance program, and you will find waste, fraud, and abuse.

Food stamps are good for the economy. Economists agree that food stamps have a powerful, positive impact on economic growth.

Last month, Bloomberg ran an article called, "Best Stimulus Package May Be Food Stamps," because they get resources into the hands of families who are going to spend those dollars right away.

Most importantly, food stamps are the right thing to do. Ninety-nine percent of food stamp recipients have incomes below the poverty line. It is the job of good government to help vulnerable families get back on their feet. In the words of Harry Truman:

Nothing is more important in our national life than the welfare of our children, and proper nourishment comes first in attaining this welfare.

This is something that everyone in Washington used to agree on. In the past, there's been a strong tradition of

bipartisanship on hunger and nutrition. From the left, leaders like George McGovern, and from the right, leaders like Bob Dole, came together. They made a difference for families who were in need.

Over the past 30 years, policies aimed at debt and deficit reduction to keep programs that help the most vulnerable among us to get by have always been protected on a bipartisan basis from deep cuts. But the farm bill coming out of the House right now seeks to destroy that tradition. In the name of deficit reduction, the bill slashes food stamps by more than \$20 billion, hurting millions of Americans in our economy.

By eliminating categorical eligibility, their bill would force up to 2 million low-income Americans to go hungry. Their bill kicks 210,000 low-income children from the free school lunch program. It changes the relationship between SNAP and LIHEAP to take benefits from more low-income Americans—mostly seniors and working families with kids.

Let's be clear: this has nothing to do with deficit reduction and everything to do with the ideological priorities of a House majority. Ever since the Speaker took the gavel, this majority has tried to slash through the most crucial threads of our American social safety net.

Their Ryan budget cut over \$130 billion from food stamps, mostly by converting it to an inadequate block grant. Last year, when the House Ag Committee had to identify \$33 billion in 10-year savings from the programs of their jurisdiction, they singled out food stamps for all of the cuts—not direct payments, not crop insurance—just food stamps for the entire cut.

This is terrible policy. It will cause hunger and more health problems. These cuts are lopsided and are a dereliction of our responsibility to the American people, and of our moral responsibility.

Let me quote the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. They said last year:

We must form a "circle of protection" around programs that serve the poor and the vulnerable in our Nation and throughout the world.

And as Catholic leaders wrote last month:

Congress should support access to adequate and nutritious food for those in need and oppose attempts to weaken or restructure these programs that would result in reduced benefits to hungry people.

The House farm bill does the opposite. It jeopardizes the growth and development of our children, it jeopardizes seniors, and it puts at risk those disabled Americans.

In my district yesterday, I went to the Cornerstone Christian Church in Milford, Connecticut, and the representatives there were the woman who volunteers in their food bank program, Reverend Stackhouse of the Church of the Redeemer, Lucy Nolan of End Hunger Connecticut, Nancy Carrington,

who heads up the Connecticut Food Bank, and a young woman whose name was Penny.

She had worked all of her adult life. She lost her job. She thought it was going to be easy to get another job and to be able to make her mortgage payments and all of the other financial obligations that she had. In the midst of this financial crisis, she and her husband separated, putting the burden of the family on her shoulders. She didn't know where to turn. She didn't know how she was going to put food on the table.

She went to the Connecticut food bank. They helped her to be able to access the food stamp program. That's where she is now—still looking for a job, still wanting to work. Her pride enables her to continue to look for that job. The courage of speaking before this group yesterday and the press, and to tell that story, took great courage—like so many others are telling that story, my colleagues tonight.

We do have an obligation. These are not statistics that we are talking about. These are flesh and blood Americans who are looking for a bridge. They don't want to be there forever. They want to be able to take care of themselves and their families.

It's a genius of the food stamp program to say in times of need: we're there and, yes, we rise in the participation. When it gets better economically, those numbers drop.

We have an obligation to those people—not to the statistics, but to those individuals who look to the Federal Government that says in a time of challenge: give me a little help, that's all I'm asking. I don't want everything. I know you don't have all those resources. Help me in this hour of need. That's what where our moral responsibility is.

Again, I say thank you to my colleagues for participating and for your steadfastness in dealing with this issue.

Ms. LEE of California. Let me thank the gentle lady for that very powerful—in many ways, very sad—statement. We shouldn't have to listen to you say this in the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world. These stories should not have to be told here, Congresswoman DELAURO.

Thank you also for reminding us—and I know that you are a person of tremendous faith, and there are many in this body who are believers who have a faith and who care about the least of these. However, when we look at this \$20 billion cut, you have to wonder where the people of faith are and how they understand this scripturally, I have to say. So thank you for raising this.

Ms. DELAURO. If I can make one more point, because in the committee—and the people shall be nameless—there was a lot of quoting of scripture when people voted for and passed a \$20 billion cut. I think it was one individual who said that in the

scripture it says: If you don't work, then you don't eat.

I went back to find out what kinds of subsidies from farm programs that the individual had access to. Quite frankly, it's in the millions of dollars. I'm delighted that this individual can take care of family, but he's doing it with the largesse and the kindness, if you will, of the Federal Government. That doesn't seem to bother the individual at all. But providing food for a child or a senior or a disabled individual is a bridge too far. We need to stop that and we need to call attention to it, and the people of this Nation need to know what is happening in this institution.

Ms. LEE of California. Absolutely. Thank you for that.

I just want to also remind us tonight that—well, first, I'm on the Budget Committee also. We had a debate about poverty. Both sides had something to say. Thank goodness at least we had a debate. But when it came to looking at the Ryan budget and the cuts that were enacted or that would be enacted if the Ryan budget passes, I can't for the life of me understand how anyone on the other side who wants to reduce poverty—as they said they do—could support the Ryan budget, because it cuts every single government program which lifts people out of poverty into the middle class and will actually put more people into poverty if the Ryan budget cuts are sustained.

□ 1910

Ms. DELAURO. I know my colleague Mr. JOHNSON is here to speak—and I think you understand this—but I think people need to know this. I want to take that crop insurance program for a moment—and I'm for crop insurance. I wish it covered people in my community, in my State.

My comment is, in the crop insurance program, 60 percent of those costs are picked up by the U.S. taxpayer. That doesn't include administrative costs. There is no income test, no wage threshold, no asset test, all of which apply to food stamp recipients. There are 26 individuals in this Nation who have received at a minimum \$1 million in a premium subsidy, and they don't have to follow conservation programs. They don't have to do anything but accept that premium subsidy, and we can't find out who they are because they are statutorily protected. Do you want to look at a program from which we could get money to deal with the deficit? Go there, and don't hurt poor kids, seniors and the disabled. Those folks in that program who are getting at least \$1 million are eating high on the hog. They are doing well.

So that's what we have to do, and that's what this country needs to know about. We are a good country. People have good values, and they will turn their backs on this effort as well.

Ms. LEE of California. Thank you for being with us tonight and for making it very clear.

Let me now yield a few minutes to my colleague from Georgia, Congress-

man HANK JOHNSON, who has been a tremendous leader on so many issues. He will talk about these bags that he brought here to the floor and about the food stamp challenge, which many of us have mounted and which I will speak to later.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Thank you. I am very happy to participate in this Special Order, especially with the esteemed women who are here—yourself, BARBARA LEE, and ROSA DELAURO, a person of great justice and passion who represents truth and righteousness and tries to do the right thing and fights for those who need a voice to fight for them.

I appreciate you, ROSA, for being here and for everything that you do.

BARBARA LEE—I've said it before—you are just a tremendous patriot, a wonderful person with a heart of gold, but with a fist of steel when it comes to what you believe in.

I deeply respect and honor both of those women.

Today, in a Judiciary Committee meeting in which we were engaged in the war on women—another abortion bill—I happened to notice that on the other side of the aisle there were no women on the panel. In fact, I discovered, to my horror, that there are no women on the Judiciary Committee, period, and here we are in the year 2013. On this side of the aisle, we've got some great women, like ROSA DELAURO from Connecticut, BARBARA LEE from California and so many others—NANCY PELOSI and DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I can just name them forever, and I just appreciate being able to serve with them.

I'll tell you that I'm not always out doing a lot of shopping, but I had to go shopping today because I decided to take what we call the food stamp challenge. It mandates that we go out and that we spend no more than \$31.50 for one-week's worth of food. I'm just coming back from the local Safeway. Maybe I shouldn't give that name out because I might have gotten a better deal at Publix—I don't know—but I went to Safeway, and here is my bill. It is for \$29.76. I went through the supermarket, trying to find a week's worth of food that could get me through.

Pardon me for my choice of food, but I had to go back to my standard Quaker Oats oatmeal. I'm trying to be healthy. I can use this for breakfast or for dinner, but I got these for breakfast, my Homestyle waffles. They already have butter in them, so I didn't have to buy the butter. I did have to come up, of course, with some sugar-free syrup. I got that. I was pleased to find Oscar Mayer bacon on sale—two for \$5 and, I think it was, 99 cents. I got these two of the Oscar Mayer bacon. I didn't mean to get the maple, I meant to get the regular. Anyway—boom—that was \$5, \$6. I bought some milk, and I did splurge on some tea. I'm sorry. I splurged on some tea, but I did get some hot dogs and topped them off with some romaine noodles. I used to

eat those a lot when I was in college, too. So I have 6 of those in there and 10 of these in here. Then to splurge I also bought some bananas.

That all ended up costing \$29.76. I actually had an over-ring because I bought two heads of broccoli. Do we call those "heads" of broccoli? But two things of broccoli, I bought those. Those ran me over, so I had to go through the indignity of standing there while the cashier called for an over-ring. They had to come over there and fix that and redo the whole thing with people in line behind me and everything, and with people trying to get in and out of the store. They would have looked at me even more funny if I'd had food stamps to make the purchase, and they would have wondered why was I eating Oscar Mayer bacon.

This is what I'm going to be eating for the next 7 days starting tomorrow. It's going to be a challenge. I certainly will not be eating three meals a day. I will eat in the morning, and then I will eat in the evening. So between this meat, these starches, that fruit—and this is a starch here, with no greens—I think they had greens at Safeway, but there are some places—they call them food deserts—in the central cities where there is no supermarket, where there are no fresh fruits, even if I'd had the money to buy them. Nonetheless, this is not the most healthy of diets, but it will keep the hunger pangs away, I believe, for a week. If I were a child who was living on this and going to school every day, I'm not sure how angry or depressed or how, really, ready to learn I would be.

This is reality, so I am looking forward to participating in this. I understand you've done it now for a number of years, BARBARA. This will be my first year. I can't say that I've been looking forward to it, but I have been getting ready for it.

□ 1920

Ms. LEE of California. Let me first thank the gentleman for that very powerful statement and also sharing with us what you were able to purchase. Also, much of what you purchased has a high sodium content and, as you said, very few fresh fruits and vegetables.

But what is just so tragic is that as Members of Congress, we don't live on this budget each and every day. There's an end in sight for us. But for millions of Americans, there is no end in sight. This is their existence.

What we're trying to do is to make sure that that is no more and that people have the right to eat healthy, nutritious foods without worrying about health consequences, without worrying about the \$20 billion which will cut substantially their ability to buy even the kinds of foods that are unhealthy.

So thank you very much for being here with us.

Let me now yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts, who serves on the Agriculture Committee, chairs our

Hunger Caucus and has been a tremendous and consistent champion on behalf of those who are hungry, not only here, but throughout the world, and also fights for food security. I just want to thank him for being with us tonight, and thank you for your leadership.

Congressman MCGOVERN has also taken the food stamp challenge many times and has really helped organize all of us here to be very focused on what is the real deal as it relates to the least of us.

Thank you again.

Mr. MCGOVERN. I want to thank my distinguished colleague from California for organizing this and for her leadership on this and so many other issues aimed at trying to eliminate poverty in this country. I also want to thank all my colleagues who have already spoken on this issue.

I want to come to the floor just to remind people that hunger is a real problem in the United States of America. We have close to 50 million of our fellow citizens who are hungry, and 17 million are kids. We are the richest, most prosperous Nation in the world, and we have close to 50 million people in this country who are hungry. I'm ashamed of that fact. We all should be ashamed of that fact. What is particularly maddening about this issue is that it is solvable. This is a solvable problem.

Hunger is a political condition. We have the food. We have the resources. We have the infrastructure. We have everything but the political will to end it.

Hunger is a problem that costs us dearly. People say to me, Oh, we can't spend any more money; we have a tough budget situation. I remind them that we can't afford not to. The cost of hunger in this country is astronomical.

We pay an incredible amount in terms of avoidable health care costs. People who don't eat on a regular basis, their immune systems are compromised and they end up spending more time in a hospital. Senior citizens who can't afford their prescription drugs and their food take their prescription drugs on an empty stomach and end up in hospitals. There's a cost to that. There is a human cost and there's a financial cost to it. Children who are hungry who go to school don't learn. Workers who are hungry and go to work lack in productivity. We pay for this.

This is solvable. It is solvable.

Now, I have come to this floor every week for the last 13 weeks with this sign, "End Hunger Now," and I have given a speech every week about what we need to do to end hunger, a different perspective on hunger. I have tried to raise awareness on this issue because there is not a single community in the United States of America, not a single congressional district that is hunger free.

One of the tools that we have to combat hunger is the SNAP program. It is

not the answer to everything. It is not a perfect program, but it is one of the tools that we utilize to help alleviate hunger in this country. And we are now considering a farm bill next week, which is stunning to me, because rather than being a bill that helps expand opportunities for our farmers and helps alleviate hunger, it will be a farm bill that makes hunger worse.

The House of Representatives is going to consider a bill that came out of the House Agriculture Committee that cuts SNAP by \$20.5 billion. Two million people will lose their benefits. Hundreds of thousands of kids who qualify right now for free breakfast and lunch at school because their parents are on SNAP will lose that benefit.

I've had people say to me, Well, you know, those people ought to go out and look for a job. The fact of the matter is that millions and millions and millions of people who are on SNAP right now work. They work full-time, but they earn so little they still qualify for this benefit.

We ought to have a debate in this Congress about ensuring that work pays a livable wage, that when people go to work and they work full-time, they ought not have to live in poverty. But that, unfortunately, is not the reality as we speak. The reality is that there are millions of people who are working and earn so little that they need this benefit to feed their kids and feed their families.

As we emerge from this difficult economic crisis, we need to make sure that this safety net is in place. We need to ensure that people have enough to eat. That shouldn't be a controversial issue.

To my Republican friends, I would say that this used to be a bipartisan issue. The great antihunger programs that our country has emerged as a result of bipartisan cooperation. In the 1970s, Senator Bob Dole of Kansas and Senator George McGovern of South Dakota worked together to help strengthen these programs to the point that in the 1970s we almost eliminated hunger in America. We made progress. We came close.

Then we undid all of this. We turned our backs on those who were struggling, and now we have close to 50 million people who are hungry in this country. That, to me, is a national scandal. And rather than putting forward a farm bill that makes hunger worse, we ought to be talking about a farm bill that helps solve this problem.

I've urged the White House to call a conference or a summit on food and nutrition to bring us all together, all the various agencies that have some role in combatting hunger: the charities, the food banks, the churches, the synagogues, the mosques, the doctors, the teachers, the nutritionists, the people who are involved in this issue one way or another. Let's bring us all together and actually come up with a plan to end this scourge. We can do this.

You're not going to solve a problem without a plan, and we do not have a

plan. But as we wait to develop that plan, let's not take away what is there right now to help keep people from being hungry to literally starving.

When you cut a program like this by \$20 billion—by the way, a program with one of the lowest error rates of any Federal program that we have. I wish I could find a missile program that the Pentagon is championing that has a lower error rate than the SNAP program. It would be phenomenal, quite frankly. It would save billions of dollars if the Pentagon ran their missile programs as efficiently as this program is run. Yet it has been demonized and it has been diminished. People have demagogued this program. All it does is provide people the ability to buy food; that's all it does. The fact that we would be taking away this safety net at this difficult time is something I don't think we should do.

To my Democratic colleagues who are saying that we ought to support a farm bill even though it has \$20 billion of cuts in it, we'll send it to conference and hopefully it will all get better, don't do that. Our priority, if it stands for anything—we have stood by and for those who are poor, those who are struggling, those who are vulnerable—let's not throw that away. Let's not trash our principles. This is not the bill that should be moving forward, not a bill that makes hunger worse.

I want to also call attention to the fact that I joined with Congresswoman LEE and others in taking the food stamp challenge today, and I just will remind you that this SNAP challenge that we took today means that we live on an average SNAP benefit, which is \$1.50 a meal and it is \$4.50 a day. I mean, how much does a Starbucks coffee cost? This is what people live on.

□ 1930

Critics will say this is meant as a supplement, not to be the entire food budget. Well, I'm going to tell you something: things are tough for a lot of people. This is their entire food budget. In fact, what they do is they utilize this modest benefit, and then they go to food banks and they go to their churches and they go to their charities and look for additional food because this doesn't provide enough.

And so those of us in Congress who are trying to call attention to the fact that this is an important program—and by the way, it's not an overly generous program. We are doing the SNAP challenge. Some say this is a gimmick, it's a stunt. Well, you know what? We're trying to call attention to a real problem in this country. And if you think it's a gimmick or a stunt, you take the challenge. You live on this for a week. You see how difficult it is. It's hard to be poor. It takes a lot of time to try to make ends meet, to try to put a grocery list together that will get you through the week. And we're doing it just for ourselves. Imagine doing it when you have kids. I'm a parent of a 15-year-old boy and an 11-year-old girl.

I couldn't imagine the anguish of wondering whether or not I could put food on the table to make sure they have enough to eat. This is the United States of America. We should be trying to lift people up, not put people down.

Let me just say finally, none of us here believe that this should be a permanent condition. In fact, what we need to do is have a conversation about how to extend these ladders of opportunity for people so they can climb out of poverty, so they won't need this, so they can be on their own, so they can have a job. That's why so many of us have been complaining about the fact that we have a lot of debates here on the floor, a lot of bills, but we don't seem to have many bills that deal with job creation. That's the answer. That's the answer. You want to get people off of SNAP, give them a job that pays a livable wage.

I'll just say in conclusion that I appreciate the opportunity to be able to highlight this issue. I'll tell you, I have spent an awful lot of time as cochair of the House Hunger Caucus meeting with people who are struggling in this country and meeting with families who have kids who are hungry. You meet a child who is hungry, it breaks your heart. You can't get it out of your mind. And that there are hungry children in this country—in this country—is something that should not be.

I would urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, let's come together and reject these cuts in the farm bill. Reject these cuts in SNAP, and let's try to figure out a way to restore those moneys so that people will not go without, and then let's have a farm bill that we can be proud of. If we cannot reverse the \$20.5 billion in cuts in SNAP, then there's no way we should support that farm bill. No way. Republicans and Democrats should join together and say no, we're not going to support a farm bill that makes hunger worse.

I appreciate this opportunity, and I look forward to working with the gentlewoman from California and others in trying to find ways to make sure that people in this country have enough to eat, and also make sure that we develop a plan to help people transition off of this assistance so they can be independent and productive like all of the people we know who are struggling want to be.

Ms. LEE of California. I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts very much for that very powerful and clear presentation, but also for what you do each and every day for the last 13 years. This is part of your life's work. So thank you very much for not only talking about why we need to not cut the \$20 billion, but also why we need to build these ladders of opportunity so that people can get a good-paying job and lift themselves out of poverty.

Congressman MCGOVERN mentioned the food stamp challenge that many of us are taking; Congressman JOHNSON; our Congressional Black Caucus chair,

MARCIA FUDGE; Congresswoman JAN SCHAKOWSKY; our Democratic Caucus vice chair, Mr. CROWLEY. Approximately 25 Members will be taking part in this food stamp challenge, in addition to who will speak next, the Congresswoman from the District of Columbia, Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, because we need to raise the level of awareness of what is taking place not only here in Washington, D.C., in this body, but in the District of Columbia where we all have to thank Congresswoman NORTON, who is our representative during the week. We need to make sure that we recommit ourselves to fighting hunger, fighting poverty, and to not voting for this agriculture bill if the \$20 billion cut remains.

So, Congresswoman NORTON, thank you very much, and thank you for allowing us to be at your grocery stores today and to work with people in your district to really see and understand what is going on here in the District of Columbia.

Ms. NORTON. I thank the gentlelady from California for her consistent, heartfelt, energetic leadership on this issue for many years. And I see the gentleman from Georgia is here. I am so pleased he brought down his stash for the week. I had to ask him, Did you really get those bananas? He budgeted so well that he was able to stay within the \$31.50 for the week.

Now we've done this before, and I can tell you, it's not pleasant if you're really adhering to this budget. But we had an effect before. When Members joined together and took the challenge, we were able not only to keep the cuts from occurring, but to raise the level for those on food stamps.

I was interested to hear the gentleman from Massachusetts talk about the low error rate, something like 3 percent. I just sat through a committee hearing this morning, and the discussion was about how much waste and fraud reported in a 2011 report about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. They reported that about 30 percent was attributed to waste and fraud. Here we have poor people in a program with the lowest error rate I've seen in a long time.

I want to thank all of the Members who visited at what I call our neighborhood Capitol Hill Safeway at 14th and D Streets, Southeast, where we had the help of employees who helped guide us toward the least expensive food.

What we're talking about here is the House outdoing the Senate. The Senate bill already cuts \$4 billion. The House wants to up that five times. How much damage can we do and sit up straight and feel that we are worthy to be in the Congress of the United States?

We succeeded because of the stimulus in raising the per meal amount from \$1.40 a day—isn't that an amazing number—to \$4.50 a day. When I was going down the aisle, one of the clerks said to me, Don't you want to get some water? I said, God, go to the spigot, please. I

hope people are not buying water on the food stamp challenge because you'll have to eat it. Bottled water is very expensive—and unnecessary.

We believe at least 20 million children will be affected, and 10 million of them are labeled in deep poverty. These people are going to be off the rolls altogether. The reason they are on food stamps at all is because in our wisdom, food stamps, SNAP, has become an entitlement. There are some on the other side who want to take that away from them. I don't know where poor people would be. TANF, for example, its rolls have not increased. So what people have at least been able to do is eat.

And let me tell you about eating. The calculation is that the monthly amount of food stamps will last you about 2½ weeks. If you're eating anywhere near what you should be on \$4.50 a day, it's going to last you, according to all the statistics, 2½ weeks. What do you think people do the rest of the month on a month's worth of food stamps that lasts 2½ weeks? They go to the churches or the food pantries. They get the rest of what they need from the pantries, which is why the charities' cupboards are bare. You go there, and even the food charities are begging for food because so many people are coming to the pantries because food stamps cannot sustain a family. These are the poorest people. So all we're trying to do is just try to raise the consciousness really right here in the House of Representatives.

□ 1940

If we got even where the Senate was, that would mean hundreds of thousands of people losing foods stamps that have no other sustenance.

What more can we do to people on food stamps?

It seems to me we have hit bottom, with a provision in the Senate bill that seeks to ban certain ex-convicts from receiving food stamps for life.

Now, wait a minute. I understand—they list certain kinds of violent crimes, and it's very easy to get everybody worked up about giving them any food. I mean, if this is what you want to do to them, why don't you just give them a life sentence and leave them in jail where they'll be fed three meals a day.

But this provision means that if you committed one of these crimes, and they do mean only murders, rapists and pedophiles, so these are not people for whom anybody will speak up. If you've committed one of those crimes, even if it was a single crime, even if it was decades ago, even if you've been doing well—but, of course, if you committed one of those crimes you're not doing well, perhaps, so you may need food stamps. Not only would you not be permitted food stamps, but the family allotment would be decreased by your portion.

What are we trying to do?

By the way, don't they say they have a lot of Christians on the other side of

the aisle, Christian conservatives? Where are they? Where are they?

Aren't these the people that Jesus would have reached out to and said, let me feed you because nobody else will?

I just don't think that when you hit people when they're down as low as they can get, you ought to be proud of yourselves as a Congress.

We even find, among low-income workers, if I could make just one point, most of them try to keep from getting on food stamps. And you have some States going out and saying, Instead of going hungry, these are low-income people who work on the pantries—I think you're entitled to SNAP.

We had people in the streets here in the District of Columbia, just last month, who work in these iconic buildings, Federal buildings, for retail, and some of these are great big retailers, like fast food who pay them the minimum wage with no benefits. Guess who pays?

Those who, in fact, have some knowledge, supplement their low incomes with food stamps. And guess where they get their health care? You and me, the taxpayers.

Why are we allowing people to pay people so little that they depend upon the taxpayers to make up the rest?

So my good friend from California, I say to you, thank you for taking your usual leadership here and again, particularly your leadership on the SNAP challenge.

Don't feel sorry for us. We're going to have plenty to eat before and after. It doesn't begin, I think, until the 13th, for a week. We ask only that you think deeply about those who we will represent on this SNAP challenge.

I yield, and thank the gentlelady from California.

Ms. LEE of California. Let me thank the gentlelady from the District of Columbia, first of all, for working day and night on behalf of the residents of the District of Columbia.

Secondly, for really laying out additional impacts and how this \$20 billion cut and what the bill will actually do in a very negative way. I mean, the whole, all of the issues that you raised, many people don't even know are in the bills. And so that's why we try to beat the drum a little bit down here on the floor, and you certainly have awakened America in terms of what some of the really critical issues are in this bill. So thank you again for your leadership and your friendship.

How many minutes do I have left, Mr. Speaker?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlelady has 3 minutes.

Ms. LEE of California. Let me just conclude, before I yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Now, I am a former food stamp recipient myself. Of course, I'm not proud of that, but I am. I didn't talk about it for a long time because of the stigma associated with being on public assistance and on food stamps. But I decided a couple of years ago, when we

started to see these tremendous cuts and assaults on these safety net programs, to really talk about my personal experience.

And I was going to college, raising two little boys who are phenomenal young men now raising their own families. But it was very difficult, very difficult. I would not be here if it were not for the lifeline that the American people extended to me when I was a single mother struggling to care for my kids.

No one wants to be on food stamps. I did not want to be on food stamps. Everyone wants a job. Everyone wants to take care of their kids and their family, but there are bumps in the road sometimes, and the economy hasn't turned around for a lot of people. And so that bridge over troubled waters, that needs to be there. You know, that needs to be there.

And so I hope that Democrats and Republicans reject these cuts. We need to stop sequestration. We need to start creating jobs and build these ladders of opportunity for people.

And I hope, and many of us hope, that the President will veto this bill if it gets off this floor with this \$20 billion cut because, first of all, it's morally wrong, it's fiscally irresponsible, it will hurt our economy, and we need to lift people, build these ladders of opportunity and lift the economy for all.

Let me now yield to the gentleman from Georgia for a concluding statement.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Thank you, BARBARA LEE. Thank you, ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, for what you bring to the table to this Congress. And on behalf of your constituents, one of whom is me, during the week, as I'm a D.C. resident. I mean, I'm a D.C. native; I had to move to Georgia before I could come to Congress.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Safe Climate Caucus, and as a member of the Armed Services Committee, I'd like to take a moment to discuss two major implications of climate change for the Department of Defense.

First, climate change will shape the operating environment, roles and missions that the Department undertakes. It may have significant geopolitical impacts around the world, contributing to greater competition for more limited and critical life-sustaining resources like food and water.

While the effects of climate change alone do not cause conflict, they may act as accelerants of instability or conflict in parts of the world.

Second, the Department will need to adjust to the impacts of climate change on its facilities and infrastructure.

With that, after pointing out that we're spending \$3 billion on an east coast missile defense system which is totally unnecessary, I will yield back.

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

Ms. LEE of California. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. SNAP works.

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

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

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, tonight's discussion is not about politics. It's not about partisanship. It's about principle. It's about an American ideal, an ideal so common, so ordinary that we don't think about it very much; yet this ideal is essential to a well-functioning, orderly, and just society. In fact, it should define the nature of the relationship between the government and her people.

Mr. Speaker, when a person uses right reason and sound judgment when they believe something is right or wrong, that is a sacred space. That is called conscience.

Conscience is inextricably intertwined with the inherent rights and dignity of all persons. It is, therefore, only just that governing authority have the highest level of sensitivity to upholding and protecting the person's free exercise of deeply held, reasoned beliefs.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read two emails that I received from constituents back home. Katie, from Nebraska, says this to me:

Please do everything in your power to ensure that our hospitals, service agencies, and universities are allowed to carry out their work unhindered by laws that go against their conscience. I do not want to see good agencies and businesses shut down because they were forced to choose between the law and their conscience.

Karen McGivney-Lecht wrote to me and said this:

As a woman's health practitioner and as a Catholic, I need the ability to stay within my faith boundaries. I would be unable to work if I was required to provide the services this HHS mandate has imposed.

□ 1950

Now, Mr. Speaker, what are they talking about? What are they referring to? Let's take a few moments and unpack the issue here. Let's review the multiple layers.

The Department of Health and Human Services proposed a rule, commonly known as the HHS mandate, which will take full effect this coming August. This mandate, authorized by the 2010 health care law known as ObamaCare, would require all health care plans to cover in full—and consequently, every American—to subsidize procedures and drugs that many Americans consider to be ethically divisive. Americans who cannot in good conscience comply with this mandate will now be subject to ruinous fines if they do not obey simply for exercising their First Amendment rights, exercising their religious freedom, exercising the deeper philosophical principle of the rights of conscience as rightly exercised by reasonable persons doing what they believe to be right, what they believe to be good, what they believe to be just.