

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.

Mr. Speaker, I simply find it difficult to understand how we can let this happen, how we got to this place in our country, how we can willfully cross a threshold that Republicans and Democrats of an earlier, wiser era sought scrupulously to avoid. For the first time in our history, Mr. Speaker, the new health care law provides the Secretary of Health and Human Services the discretionary authority to mandate the coverage of drugs and procedures such as abortion-producing drugs. Many Americans reasonably find these drugs and procedures controversial. In past times, they were considered to be electives. If a person or an organization didn't want to choose them, they didn't have to.

In 1993, Congress passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, a Federal law signed into law by President Clinton. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act ensures that Federal officials cannot reach into the private sphere to substantially burden the practice of religion. In view of the many philosophical and diverse religious perspectives in this country that all contribute to our vibrant civic culture, members of both parties, Mr. Speaker, worked to pass that important piece of legislation.

Now, however, we have the HHS mandate, which is clearly an affront to established law and precedent. Conscience protections in health care have always been championed by members of both parties since Senator Frank Church authored the widely popular Church Amendment in 1973 to protect objections of conscience to abortions and sterilization.

So, Mr. Speaker, what has changed? What has so dramatically changed in this body? We have lost our collective sense of respect for divergent views. We have lost our sense that the government must protect that sacred right of conscience and not coerce her citizens into doing something that they fundamentally believe is unjust or wrong.

While the HHS mandate is arguably a small component of the 2010 health care law, it does bring us face-to-face with a stark new reality here in Washington that we fervently hope will not become the new normal in America. We have recently heard of the discrimination against Americans by certain employees at the IRS, IRS employees targeting Americans because of their religious or philosophical or political leanings. The IRS is the very agency set to implement the new health care law.

Mr. Speaker, a good government must ensure that those in position of authority are committed to two principles: fairness and impartiality. These revelations about religious and political targeting have done much to undermine the public trust.

But, Mr. Speaker, the HHS mandate is also a form of discrimination. It primarily targets people in faith communities, the very people who have been the backstop of compassionate care for

the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized in our society today.

When the new health care law was under consideration, it was said that if you like your health care, you can keep it. Now, however, we are finding out that you may not be able to keep your health care plan. You may not be able to keep your doctor. You may not even be able to keep your own faith traditions, given this governmental threat.

Mr. Speaker, no American should be forced to choose between their conscience and their livelihood. No American should be forced to choose between their faith and their job. No American should be forced to choose between their deeply held, reasoned beliefs and the law. That's a false choice. It's un-American, and it's wrong.

I want to thank my colleagues who have joined me tonight to share other stories of Americans who are deeply concerned about the impact of this mandate upon them, but who also, I think, are going to discuss the very purpose of our government, which, at its core, should be to protect the dignity and the rights of every person, beginning with the fundamental right of the reasonable exercise of conscience. Mr. Speaker, this is not some theoretical debate. This is about the preservation of our way of life, the ability to work as we choose, the ability to serve as we see fit with what should be support from our government.

With that said, I'd like to now call upon and yield time to my good friend, JOE PITTS, who heads the Values Action Team, who has been a stalwart leader for years upon years now for basic protections for the most vulnerable and the calling forth of leadership in the whole arena of human rights. JOE PITTS is from Pennsylvania. He is a Vietnam War veteran. He flew 116 combat missions in service to our country.

JOE.

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) for his outstanding leadership on this issue that we're discussing tonight, the right of conscience. And I come tonight to the floor with alarm over how this administration is trampling on our First Amendment rights.

Freedom of assembly means that Americans can come together to petition the government, but the IRS has targeted conservative groups for extra scrutiny, throwing up roadblocks to their organization.

Freedom of the press means that journalists can work on stories without government interference, but the Justice Department subpoenaed multiple telephone numbers for the Associated Press and investigated a FOX News journalist as a "coconspirator."

Freedom of religion means that the government does not get to tell you to violate your beliefs, but ObamaCare is forcing even explicitly religious employers to provide services they have moral objections to.

Our freedoms are clearly under assault by government bureaucrats who claim that they know what is best for all Americans. Over 60 organizations around the country, nonprofits and businesses, are suing the Federal Government to protect their rights.

One of those businesses is located in my district, in Lancaster County, Conestoga Wood Specialties of East Earl, Pennsylvania. For nearly 40 years, this family-owned business has made high-quality doors and wood components for kitchen cabinets. They provide over 950 quality jobs in my district. The owners have provided good health insurance that comports with their Mennonite beliefs for their employees, but now they are being coerced into providing government-approved health care, required to pay for products that include abortion-inducing drugs and sterilization.

Anthony Hahn, President and CEO of Conestoga Wood Specialties Corporation, said this:

Being told that we must provide a health plan that includes a provision that violates the Christian beliefs of our family and the Christian values that our company was founded on is deeply troubling. Forcing Americans to surrender longstanding, deeply held principles in order to own and run a business is not merely troubling but unnecessary and unconstitutional.

And they've gone to court over this.

□ 2000

Americans should not have to sacrifice their religious rights when they enter the marketplace. ObamaCare would fine Conestoga Wood Specialties up to \$36,500 per employee per year—\$34 million a year for not providing government-approved insurance, but only about \$2 million for not providing any insurance at all. This is madness. Clearly, this law is out of control.

Conestoga and many others are fighting for their rights in court, but here in Congress, we too have an obligation to defend the Constitution.

The Founding Fathers established a Bill of Rights because they knew that the government would always be tempted to abuse its power. Democratic elections do not protect the rights of unpopular minorities. In fact, all too often an unbound democracy becomes a tyranny of the majority.

The bureaucrats at the HHS may feel that they know what is best for all Americans, but being an American means the freedom to decide on your own, to let your convictions guide your life. What kind of Nation will we be when the IRS decides who gets to assemble, when the Department of Justice decides who reports the news, and when HHS decides what religious beliefs are worthy of First Amendment protection?

I'm not a Catholic. I'm not a Mennonite. We don't share the same ideas about what is morally objectionable on everything, but I do not believe that my ideals should be forced on them. Under ObamaCare, we can't choose our

doctor; we can't choose our health insurance plan. Now we lose our First Amendment rights.

At one time Pennsylvania was perhaps the only place in the world where people could freely practice their religious beliefs without fear of persecution. In a world where people were killing each other over theology, William Penn established a safe harbor in our colony, and Penn's once radical idea became the foundation for our Nation's concept of religious freedom.

The actions of the HHS remind us that our rights are not guaranteed. We must stand up and protect them. We must continually demand that the government respect that which has been granted to us by God. And I'm proud to stand with my colleagues tonight in defense of religious freedom, to stand with my constituents at Conestoga Wood Specialties.

We should pass the Health Care Conscience Rights Act and make it clear that this House of Representatives will not stand by while minority religious beliefs are under attack. What a sad day for America when our fundamental rights like religious freedom and freedom of conscience are under attack by the heavy hand of government. We must pass this bill.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Congressman PITTS, for your forceful words and your leadership. We're very, very grateful.

I would now like to call upon my good friend, Dr. JOHN FLEMING from Louisiana. As a dedicated physician who cares deeply about the health care system in our country, I know you can provide us with extraordinary insights into the problems with the implementation of the new health care law. But I think it's important to point out that you are one of the lead cosponsors and a coauthor of the Health Care Conscience Rights Act, and we are very grateful for your leadership as well.

Dr. FLEMING.

Mr. FLEMING. I thank the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) for bringing us together this evening with a number of colleagues talking about an extremely important topic today, and that is health care conscience rights. You've heard some of the major points here, and I'm going to touch on more.

On August 1, 2013, the administration's coercive health care mandate will take effect. It will force religious organizations, American family businesses, universities, and countless others across the great country of ours to violate the deeply held moral and religious beliefs that we have. The HHS mandate is a serious affront to religious freedom and leaves American businesses, nonprofit religious organizations, and individuals with three terrible decisions.

First, they could violate their conscience and religious convictions and comply with the mandate, purchasing and providing items and services they find morally objectionable.

Second, they could resist the mandate, not complying with the Federal regulations, and face fines up to \$100 per employee, per day.

Or third, they could drop employee health coverage altogether—which defeats the purpose, the basic idea of ObamaCare to begin with—leaving employees to fend for themselves and still pay a Federal fine of \$2,000 per employee, per year, according to the business that employs that person.

These are not actually choices, but a top-down, burdensome Federal regulatory scheme that forces the American public to participate in a government-run health care plan that violates their values.

Who are we talking about? Who will be affected by the HHS mandate? Mr. Speaker, to date, 61 cases and over 200 plaintiffs have filed suit against the Federal Government to preserve their First Amendment right of freedom of religion. One of the nonprofit lawsuits was filed by Louisiana College, a private Baptist college in Pineville, Louisiana just outside of my district.

Offering degrees in art, music, science, nursing, social work and teaching, this central Louisiana school has over 70 programs of study, has a student enrollment of about 1,500 students, and a faculty/student ratio of 13-1.

The HHS mandate requires that Louisiana College provide employee health insurance covering abortion-inducing drugs and counseling on the use of such drugs. This, Mr. Speaker, is a violation of Louisiana College's belief that all life is sacred, including the life of the unborn.

Who else? Hobby Lobby is another example of a well-known business throughout the country—we have 11 stores in Louisiana—employing more than 2,000 people in 41 States. The business practice of Hobby Lobby mirrors their religious principles. Their hours of operation are family friendly, and they are closed on Sundays. Employee pay is important.

Well, what is the anecdote to this problem created by ObamaCare and the rules rolled out of this administration? I'm going to just quickly touch on them, and then yield back to my good friend from Nebraska.

Section 3 provides much needed protections to ensure that the Federal Government cannot force individuals, charities and businesses to buy plans for their employees that provide or facilitate coverage of items or services to which they have a deeply held moral or religious objection.

Section four provides much needed protections to ensure that any government agency that receives Federal funds cannot force pro-life health care entities to be complicit in abortion or discriminate against them because they are pro-life.

Section 5 of the Conscience Rights Act amends title II of the Public Health Service Act. It includes a private right of action for victims who

have been discriminated against. You see, at this time, Mr. Speaker, people who are discriminated against, or coerced or forced in some way by this mandate don't have access to courts. This opens up a private right of action so that those of us who may object through our conscience will have our day in court.

Just in conclusion I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that ObamaCare has provided many, many problems and really no solutions. But there are even unintended consequences, and that is forcing people of conscience to have to make that decision on whether to end providing certain care for their employees or for their—really to their patients—or suffer large fines, or just give up on health care coverage at all for their employees.

I think it's time that this country comes together and decides, let's make health care attractive and affordable and protect life, and protect those who want to protect life, and not have this top-down, bureaucratic, coercive system that's now in law that will require many of us to do many things against our conscience. That is simply un-American.

With that, I thank the gentleman for his time today.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Dr. FLEMING, thank you as well for your leadership. To know that you gave up a medical practice to enter into public service and stand here today defending this deep, essential American principle, the rights of conscience, and as it affects those who are most vulnerable in our society, is frankly deeply moving to me and I'm grateful for your leadership. Thank you so much.

I would now like to call upon my good friend, Congressman CHRIS SMITH from New Jersey. And if you don't mind me calling you the "Dean" of the tireless efforts on behalf of so many of us to fight for human rights and the poor and the marginalized around the world. Your tireless efforts have been an extraordinary example to me, and I'm very, very grateful not only for your mentorship, but for your friendship.

Congressman SMITH.

□ 2010

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. FORTENBERRY, thank you for your extraordinary leadership. This has been a very tough fight. You have been walking point, and doing it with great class and with great precision. I think your opening comments for this Special Order which you have sponsored just summed up the issue so eloquently. I want to thank you for your leadership. It is making a difference. And while we may not have success on the short-term, I do believe on the intermediate and long-term we will prevail over time, and I thank you for your leadership, Mr. FORTENBERRY.

Mr. Speaker, President Obama today is using the coercive power of the state to force tens of millions of people of

faith and people of conscience to violate a fundamental conviction or suffer a severe penalty. What Mr. Obama has done is unconscionable, unprecedented, and violates religious freedom. By coercing all insurance plans, including those offered by faith-based institutions, to pay for drugs and devices that are contrary to their deeply held beliefs, including subsidizing abortion drugs like Ella and Plan B, President Obama demonstrates a reckless disregard for conscience rights.

Everyone must comply, regardless of moral convictions or religious tenets, simply because his administration says so. Mr. Obama's means of coercing compliance—absolutely ruinous fines of \$100 per day per employee that total up to over \$36,000 per year per employee. Just people listening at home, our Members who may be listening to today's important Special Order, \$36,500 per employee per year.

When faith-based organizations refuse to comply, Obama's mandate will impose incalculable harm on millions of children educated in faith-based schools, as well as the poor, the sick, the disabled, and frail elderly who are served with such compassion and dignity by faith-based entities.

Even Notre Dame, which heaped praise and honors and an honorary degree on President Obama in 2009, will be crushed by this cruel mandate. Astonishingly, it was President Obama in his 2009 speech at Notre Dame University, who said:

Let's honor the conscience of those who disagree with abortion and draft a sensible conscience clause.

Mr. Speaker, another promise broken; more empty, misleading rhetoric from the President who has excelled at that.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is approximately 4,600 employees are covered under Notre Dame's self-insured health plan, which means that Notre Dame will face fines of over \$100 million a year when they refuse to comply with the Obama mandate.

If Mr. Obama's attack on conscience rights isn't reversed, faith-based employers will be discriminated against and fined, and employees who today benefit from health insurance plans provided by their faith-based employer will be dumped into government health exchanges. And even when they do that, the fines to faith-based organizations are also without precedent. If a faith-based entity scraps its own insurance coverage because of the Obama mandate, they are then fined \$2,000 per employee.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Obama's attack on conscience rights fits a dangerous emerging pattern. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops had a Federal grant to assist human trafficking victims under a law that I wrote, known as the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, and did an absolutely superb job, according to all professional reviews, assisting trafficking victims in this country. In 2011,

however, the USCCB, or the Conference of Catholic Bishops, was blatantly discriminated against and thrown out of the program simply because they would not refer for abortions. That was it. Throw it out of the program.

The Health Care Conscience Rights Act reasserts and restores conscience rights, Mr. Speaker, by making absolutely clear that no one can be compelled to subsidize certain so-called services in private insurance plans contrary to their religious beliefs or moral convictions.

Again, I want to thank Mr. FORTENBERRY. He had introduced the legislation in the last Congress and was the first individual in this House to come out of the blocks to recognize just how damaging the Barack Obama anticonscience initiative really is. We need to move on this. We need to protect those men and women of conscience, those of religious belief who will not bow and will not go in the direction that this administration is demanding.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Congressman SMITH, for your very powerful words. I think, before you leave, I should say this. We also value your leadership. For decades now you've stood in this House well, even when it wasn't the most popular thing to do—as it isn't now—to talk about that which is right and just, that which is higher and good, to, in a sense, provoke the conscience of this body to a more meaningful engagement. So I want to thank you again for your strong leadership.

Let's turn now to my good friend Dr. BILL CASSIDY, another physician in the House of Representatives, from Louisiana. Again, like I told Dr. JOHN FLEMING, I think it's important that everybody knows that you left a medical practice to enter into public service, and we're very, very grateful for the example you've provided, and your leadership as well. I know you have some broader concerns about the issue of conscience and religious freedom, so we look forward to hearing your comments.

Mr. CASSIDY. Thank you, Congressman FORTENBERRY.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of things. First, I associate myself with the remarks made by my colleagues. I think that there is a concern regarding our religious freedoms here in the United States.

But for just a moment, I want to draw the attention of those watching and the Speaker to an issue of Pastor Saeed Abedini. He is an American, originally from Iran, who is now incarcerated for 8 years—this is his sentence in Iran—for crimes, as they defined it, that happened 13 years ago. This is a question of religious freedom which involves an American citizen who happens now to be abroad.

Pastor Abedini is 33 years old, was born in Iran, and there converted from Islam to Christianity. Here, that would not be a big deal because we have reli-

gious freedom. Theoretically, so does Iran.

In his early twenties, he helped start house churches. It was legal to do so. At some point, he moved to the United States and married his wife, who I gather her family also is originally from Iran. They have two children and they live in Idaho.

He went back to Iran to work on a nonsectarian orphanage. He was arrested by the state police and incarcerated, at first they said for activities disruptive to the state. Now they apparently are attributing it to his work in house churches around the year 2000. But he has been incarcerated in prison and is tortured. He's been taken to the hospital on a couple of occasions. The physician recommended that he be admitted to a hospital. The Iranian Government will not allow it. He went to seek medical care on another occasion. The nurse refused to touch him saying that because he was a Christian, or if he had been Baha'i, either, she would not touch him.

So here we have a fellow, an American, who is being imprisoned for activities which happened 13 years ago in a country which is a signatory to the UN Declaration of Human Rights in which someone may have religious freedom.

Now, it is upon we, as Americans, if you're a person of faith, to pray for the Abedini family. If you're a person not necessarily of faith but just believe in human rights, this is something which should be incredibly important to you. If you're just a person who has compassion for a 33-year-old man whose wife and two children are here alone as he is being imprisoned and tortured for no other crime than attempting to start an orphanage for children who might not have another option, even that would offend someone who is of no faith whatsoever.

So what can we as Americans do? One, we have to draw attention to it. We have a resolution that has been submitted that calls upon the U.S. State Department to intervene on his behalf—and, in fairness, the State Department has attempted to do so in the past, but there is some feeling they could do more—and for the Iranian Government to free him.

So one, we have this resolution before Members of Congress. If you're watching this, ask your Member of Congress to sign on to this resolution. It has bipartisan support now.

□ 2020

Number two, contact our State Department and ask them to redouble their efforts to free Pastor Abedini.

Number three, include him and his family in your prayers. We can only imagine if our loved ones were abroad, in prison, being tortured, without access to health care, and what that would mean for both wife, children, and also parents.

Lastly, join us all in admiration for a man in his commitment to the people

whom he loves, who was willing to risk something that he knew might be a possibility as he was living out his faith, caring for those, treating those as he would have them treat him but, as an impulse of his faith, going to those who were otherwise without care.

So thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of Pastor Abedini, and I thank you for having this discussion of religious freedom here tonight.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Dr. CASSIDY, for your powerful words as well.

As you were speaking, I was reminded of the fact that this is America. We disagree with what the President and the Secretary of Health and Human Services have done with health care, particularly imposing this harsh mandate. We need the right type of health care reform, but one that is going to protect our liberties and not simply shift more unsustainable cost and spending to the government.

Those are the normal debates that we have, but we have that debate, and we can have it right here without fear of that type of retribution that so many people in other places have who are exercising their deeply held beliefs, their rights of conscience, their faith perspectives; but they do so under grave threat. This is still America.

Mr. CASSIDY. The United States has historically been a beacon of human rights to the rest of the world, and so it is no accident that a fellow comes to the United States seeking religious freedom.

I think the undertone of what others here have spoken is the sense that some of our commitment to religious freedom is under siege by forces of secularism. Now, you can be secular if you wish; but nonetheless, the First Amendment says that the right to practice religion shall not be infringed upon. So with all of these kinds of trimming at the margins, at the edges, of someone's ability to practice her faith or his faith, one, it affects us, but, two, it also affects our standing in the rest of the world in our ability to advocate for those who do not have the same freedom as we.

If others see our example as substituting religious freedom for something which is less so, how much less will our beacon be dimmed? That will have tragedy, not only for us, but also for them.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. That is an outstanding point to make. It's something, as I tried to state earlier, that we so take for granted—our rights of conscience as we exercise them through faith, through prudential judgment in our everyday lives. It has been embedded in our culture and, therefore, in our government until very recently, until this measure has come along and is coercing people unjustly into violating that sacred space, that right of conscience.

By the way, this is not just people of faith who are speaking out. Other persons of goodwill can see the funda-

mental principle here in that, if we erode that, we are eroding something that is essential to human dignity and the very flourishing of democratic ideals, themselves. So thank you for pointing that out.

The gentleman from Michigan, if you are ready to speak, I'd love to hear from you.

Congressman WALBERG is a good friend, who has been here a long time, again, championing these issues, standing up for what he believes to be right and just, and being a good partner in trying, as well, to exercise his rights of good conscience before this body about what is essential and good.

So thank you, Congressman WALBERG, for coming tonight.

Mr. WALBERG. I thank the gentleman from Nebraska. I thank you for your leadership, and I thank you for the opportunity to stand with principled legislators. We are not talking about parties here. We are talking about people who understand rights and responsibilities.

The First Amendment to our Constitution says so clearly that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. Tonight, we are talking about rights of conscience. Our First Amendment liberty affirms that for us. It affirms us for greater principles than just political or even governmental.

In approximately the year my father was born, 1903, Abraham Kuyper, a theologian—and I take great comfort in the fact that theologians sometimes aspire to political life in coming from the pastorate myself and pastoring for over a decade—this theologian who became the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, said:

When principles that run against your deepest convictions begin to win the day, then battle is your calling, and peace has become sin. You must at the price of dearest peace lay your convictions bare before friend and enemy with all the fire of your faith.

That's a powerful statement. It's a statement that, I'm sure, Mr. Kuyper would have said to his brethren in the Netherlands is not coming simply from my religious convictions but, rather, is coming from my conviction for freedom and the right given us by the Creator God. So he fought. Sadly, as we know the course in the Netherlands, they've gone away from the freedom of life, and we know the impact upon the unborn. We know the impact upon the infirm. We know the impact upon the elderly. We know the impact upon the frail, upon the disabled in the Netherlands. Their lives are cast off. Their lives are not as secure.

So here tonight, Mr. Speaker, we stand for rights of conscience that go way beyond just issues of medicine and issues of government. It goes to the core of life and to the sanctity of it and to the humanity of each and every individual.

We have talked about some people and about their convictions of things

like life, abortifacient, contraceptives, and people who are compassionate to businesses and compassionate in using their businesses for the good of people, like the Greens already referred to with Hobby Lobby, who allegedly have given over \$500 million to charities and who give to their employees and benefit them and see that as an outflow of their religious life as well;

Or we go over to St. Louis, where Chris and Paul Griesedieck, who run a 105-year-old business that they've carried on from their father and grandfather, with 150 employees who have taken stands for their religious beliefs, as well, and have very clearly stated that they will not abandon their beliefs in order to stay in business. The impact is upon all of their people;

Or we look at an 85-year-old gentleman by the name of Charles Sharpe, also from northeast Missouri, who has made millions in the insurance business, but who took that and founded Heartland Ministries in 1992, providing rehabilitation services to men and women who are battling drug and alcohol addiction, and employing 170 employees. Yet if this HHS mandate comes down on them, those employees will lose their jobs because of millions of dollars in fines.

I can go to businesses in my district like Eden Foods, which has challenged the insurance rule on religious grounds; or a garden center in Oakland County, Michigan doing the same—employing many, many employees and providing benefits—and is now being challenged with this HHS mandate. I could go on and on.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for us who understand what America is about to stand firmly with our convictions and to uphold liberties that go way beyond ourselves. Our Framers and Founders understood that. John Witherspoon said that a Republic once equally poised must either preserve its virtue or lose its liberty.

We are losing our liberty.

John Adams—and I close with this—the second President of the United States said that our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the United States are great people, and this government is a great government; but when the attack comes on what makes America America—its liberty and its freedom and its moral and traditional value heritage that is now being impinged upon to the point of violating rights of conscience—we must stand and stand firmly.

So I thank the gentleman from Nebraska for pulling us together so as to speak out clearly tonight; and I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that those who are listening and watching tonight on C-SPAN will speak out very strongly to their communities and their families, calling us back to decency, order, conviction—and a conscience that even God can honor.

□ 2030

Mr. FORTENBERRY. I thank the gentleman from Michigan for his thoughtful and powerful remarks. I particularly noted what you said, that the rights of conscience go way beyond the issues of health care. That was very well put. Thank you very much for your leadership on this issue, as well.

I want to turn now to Congressman DAN LIPINSKI and yield time to him.

As I said earlier in the beginning of this hour, this is not about politics and it's not about partisanship. It's about principle. Congressman LIPINSKI and I do not share the same party affiliation, but we share this principle. He has been one of the key lead cosponsors on this initiative, the Health Care Conscience Rights Act, and has stood, as well, side by side in helping to promote this effort to revive an understanding of this fundamentally American principle that transcends the philosophical differences we tend to find with the pushing and shoving that go around here.

So I'm very grateful, Congressman LIPINSKI, for your willingness to come tonight and speak with us.

Mr. LIPINSKI. Thank you, Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you for yielding and leading us here tonight. I'm glad to join you here from this side of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, religious freedom is our first freedom, as stated right there in the First Amendment. This is not just freedom to worship as we hear it defined now in many ways. It is not just freedom to worship in our own homes, in our churches, synagogues, mosques, temples. It is freedom to practice and live out religious faith here in America.

On June 21 through July 4, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is having a Fortnight for Freedom to pray, educate, and act for religious freedom. But this is not just a Catholic issue. This is an issue for all Americans. It's an American issue. Just as you said this is not just a Republican issue.

Freedom is what our country was founded on. We just recently commemorated Memorial Day for all of those who have died for our country and for freedom. Friday is Flag Day. Again, we'll be remembering what America is all about in our freedom. And on the Fourth of July, we celebrate the freedom that our country was born to serve and to live out and be a beacon for the rest of the world. We need to uphold that freedom, and the HHS mandate, amongst other efforts, other things that have been done by the Federal Government, unfortunately, in recent years has really run counter to freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I want Americans to understand what this is about. It's not about birth control or abortion, although we were told in the health care law, ObamaCare was not going to cover abortion, though we know the HHS mandate requires the abortion-induc-

ing drugs. But that's not what the core of this is about. It's about freedom. It's about taking away Americans' freedom, requiring them to participate in activities that violate their conscience.

Unfortunately, I think there's been a lot of misdirection on this, and I think it's important for all of us to focus back on what this is about. It's about freedom for all Americans to live their lives according to their conscience, whether or not they are practicing faith or not. It's to live according to their conscience.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just am very happy to join with my colleagues in helping to support, protect and call upon Americans to speak up, rise up and bring that message to Congress, to their Representatives, that freedom must be protected. We must do it now. We cannot continue to let freedom slip away. And I'm very happy to join my colleagues tonight.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Before you leave, Congressman LIPINSKI, let me first of all say thanks. I'm very deeply grateful to you for two things. One is your personal friendship. The second is the gift of your leadership on these essential American issues. I think most American people want to see what we just did: Republicans and Democrats standing right here and focusing on that which can be constructively achieved for the greater good. So for you providing that example of strong bipartisanship in this effort, I'm very grateful. Thank you so much.

Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time we have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOK). The gentleman has 12½ minutes remaining.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, now I'd like to turn to my new friend, Congressman MARK MEADOWS, from near Ashland, North Carolina. He was newly elected for this Congress. And I'm just going to say this—and I hope this doesn't embarrass you—I consider you a rising star. Your thoughtfulness, your immediate engagement on that which is most important around here, your willingness to look for good outcomes, to me, has been a great example.

So we are grateful for your willingness to come tonight, and I turn it over to you.

Mr. MEADOWS. I thank the gentleman from Nebraska, and I, too, would echo just the fact that we're friends. And I appreciate your leadership on this and the heart that it represents.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join with my colleagues in strong opposition to the Obama administration's attack on our fundamental religious freedoms that we have, our First Amendment rights that must be protected.

This HHS mandate that has been mentioned many times tonight is an unprecedented government overreach that forces charities and businesses to buy plans for their employees and provide coverage in areas that violate their deeply held religious beliefs.

We've already heard about Hobby Lobby and the fact that they're facing fines of some \$1.3 million a day just for believing and upholding those values that they hold dear. And I'd love to say that I wish that it was just with ObamaCare that we're having this attack, but it's not.

Throughout our Nation, we're seeing our religious liberties being attacked in a number of areas. In New York, the school board has been working there for two decades to block Bronx Household of Faith from meeting in a public building for their worship services on Sundays.

In Montana, we see that Canyon Ferry Road Baptist Church faced election law charges just for a volunteer passing out petitions to place a marriage amendment on a Montana ballot.

In Louisiana, we saw a Federal contractor order Calvary Baton Rouge Church to stop feeding people who were left homeless during Hurricane Katrina's aftermath just because the group offered voluntary prayer service and Bible studies.

These are painful examples, Mr. Speaker. But one that comes home to me—and I'll share this and close with this—in my home district, a 6-year-old writing a poem about her grandfather who served our country honorably put in there that he prayed to God for peace and he prayed to God for strength, and yet they wanted to strike the word "God" from that poem.

We have created a culture that, quite frankly, we cannot continue to support. We must stand up and stand against it. So tonight I join with so many of our colleagues, and those who are watching, I hope that you will understand the true point to which we've come that we must stand up and fight.

In the rotunda of this very building is a painting of the Mayflower where they had a particular person there, William Brewster, who had a Bible open. The foundation of our country was really about religious freedoms, and we have it there as a reminder of that. To me, that's got a special meaning because William Brewster, holding that Bible there for those freedoms that we must hold dear, is my 11th great grandfather. I'm a direct descendant of that. So today I am here joining with him and my colleagues to say that we must stand and we must fight back and make sure that we protect this freedom and not yield.

With that, I thank my friend and colleague.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to the Obama administration's attacks on our fundamental First Amendment right to religious freedom.

The HHS mandate is an unprecedented government overreach that forces charities and businesses to buy plans for their employees that provide coverage of items or services that violate their deeply-held religious convictions.

Individuals, non-profits, and businesses that fail to comply will face massive fines.

We're already seeing this happen with Hobby Lobby, facing fines of up to \$1.3 million



a day because of refusing on religious grounds to include abortion coverage in employee healthcare packages.

Organizations that do not comply with the mandate will face fines of up to \$2,000 per employee per day. Those who can't pay may have to make the incredibly difficult decision to drop insurance coverage for their employees. This administration has made it more costly to defend and protect our religious freedoms than it is to provide healthcare.

Americans should never be penalized like this simply for following their conscience.

Violations of religious liberty aren't just limited to Obamacare, however.

Throughout our nation, we are seeing an increase in attacks on our religious liberty:

In New York, the school board has been trying for nearly two decades to block Bronx Household of Faith from meeting in a public school building for worship services on Sundays.

In Montana, Canyon Ferry Road Baptist Church faced election law charges after a volunteer passed out petitions to place a marriage amendment on the Montana ballot.

In Louisiana, a federal contractor ordered Calvary Baton Rouge Church to stop feeding people left homeless by Hurricane Katrina because the group offered a voluntary prayer service and Bible study.

And the list continues.

These violations of religious freedom are becoming more frequent because our government is sanctioning this type of discrimination against people of faith.

Religious liberty does not simply mean allowing people to attend a worship service. It protects the fundamental right to—live all aspects of our lives in a way that is consistent with our religious beliefs.

Religious freedom, often referred to as our “first freedom,” is one of the bedrocks that make America such a tremendous nation. Our Founding Fathers knew a country could not flourish without defending this fundamental truth.

Thomas Jefferson emphasized the value of freedom of conscience when he stated that “no provision in our Constitution ought to be dearer to man than that which protects the rights of conscience against the enterprises of the civil authority.”

Throughout our history, Americans have been able to freely choose and live out their faith, abiding by conscience in their day-to-day lives.

Yet, through the mandate, this administration is now telling Christian business owners to check their faith at the door and comply.

And which agency will be tasked with ensuring that businesses comply with the mandate? None other than the IRS, which has already admitted to targeting organizations for their beliefs.

In the 11th District of North Carolina, my constituents continue to voice their concerns to me about these dangerous infringements on religious liberty. They want to ensure that our fundamental freedoms are protected, not trampled on by our government.

Our heritage, from the Mayflower until today, has been rooted in protecting our religious freedoms. [William Brewster]

This administration's decision to disregard our fundamental right to religious liberty cannot be ignored.

□ 2040

Mr. FORTENBERRY. What a powerful and beautiful story you shared with us. I had no idea about your family being one of the founding families of this country. And now 13 generations later, you stand here with the mantle of authority now on your shoulders directing the affairs of state. That has to be very gratifying and a proud moment for your entire family, but it is also proud for me to know because I consider us to be good friends. Thank you so much for your comments.

I now recognize my friend, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. HUELSKAMP) for a few thoughts on the subject. Thank you as well for your tireless and strong leadership on the fundamental principles of protecting that which is necessary for all of us to understand at the core, where our liberty comes from.

Mr. HUELSKAMP. Thank you, Congressman FORTENBERRY. It is a pleasure to be here. I will warn you, as I will warn those who are listening, I'm going to try to be frank. And obviously, short, candid and truthful. But I think it may be uncomfortable to hear what is happening.

Simply put, the HHS mandate is a religion tax. You heard me right. If you morally or ethically disagree with the abortion, drugs, contraception, sterilization, it doesn't matter, under the President's health care plan, you will pay for it for your employees, for your family, and for yourself even if you don't want it. If you dare to follow your conscience and actually practice your faith and refuse to participate, you will be fined. You will be taxed. You will be forced to give your hard-earned money to Washington, even if you morally disagree.

That, my fellow Americans, is a religion tax; a faith tax; a tax on conscience; a tax on our freedom of religion. It's a shocking attack on that first right in the First Amendment, the right to believe in and follow the God we choose. As of now, there have been 31 lawsuits by nonprofits filed over the HHS mandate, another 30 lawsuits filed by for profit. These include hospitals, businesses, charities, religious colleges, Catholic dioceses, and many others. Let me illustrate the impact, particularly with Catholic services.

One in six patients in America are treated in Catholic hospitals. Catholic Charities provides an estimated 334 orphanages, feeds millions of Americans each year, serves thousands of our homeless each year, and the mandate punishes these individuals for feeding the homeless, takes away help for the sick, starves the hungry, and punishes the entrepreneur. Since the initial announcement, the administration has issued multiple updates claiming to modify the mandate. These are simply deceitful smoke screens. And even if some accommodation did exist in the language, the First Amendment is to be protected, not accommodated.

It's kind of like accommodating our freedom of speech by saying you use

your freedom of speech on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, but Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, that's probably not permitted. We should ask ourselves: How can the beacon of freedom known as America become home to religious intolerance on such a massive scale?

Frankly, there is a war on religious liberty in this country, and there is no one to ride in defense. It is up to us. We must be ever-vigilant in defense of our God-given rights. We must be ever vigilant in safeguarding the protections in law for those rights. We must be ever-vigilant in standing for that first right of that First Amendment, religious liberty.

Thank you for your leadership, Congressman.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Congressman HUELSKAMP. I know you have to run. We are very grateful you were willing to share those powerful sentiments tonight.

I turn now to Congressman JIM JORDAN of Ohio, a former national championship wrestler in college, who now wrestles with some of the toughest issues right here on the House floor.

Mr. JORDAN. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and thank you for your leadership on this most fundamental, most basic of issues.

You think about the folks who started this place, this experiment in freedom we call America. In Europe they said you have to practice your faith a certain way. And they said, No, we don't, and we're willing to risk it all. We'll get on a boat and risk everything and practice our faith the way we think the good Lord wants us to. And they did. They risked everything to come here for that fundamental principle.

This experiment in freedom we call America, the greatest nation in history, was founded on that simple, yet basic and profound principle.

The document that started it all—it's probably been talked about, I haven't been here for the whole hour—but the document that started it all, the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.

The document that started this experiment in freedom started with this simple concept that there is a Creator, and that's where we derive our rights from. Not gifts from government, not grants from government, but gifts from the Creator. Gifts from God. And here's why this is so important: because this attack on this basic and most fundamental principle is not isolated.

Think about what we are witnessing in this country today regarding so many of your liberties. Start with the one we are talking about tonight, the most basic, your First Amendment right to practice your faith the way you think the good Lord wants you to. There is an attack on our First Amendment religious liberty rights. But there

is also a First Amendment attack on freedom of the press. We now know that what this Justice Department did relative to Mr. Rosen, First Amendment attack on freedom of the press. There is a violation, an attack on your First Amendment rights to free speech, political speech, as evidenced by the IRS issue. There are attacks on your Second Amendment rights. And as we just learned this past week, potentially your Fourth Amendment rights to be free from unreasonable search and seizure.

So this is critical because this is the issue that started it all, but it's also critical when viewed in context, when viewed in the overall attack on freedom, the overall attack on the Constitution, the overall attack on the Bill of Rights. And that's why I applaud the gentleman from Nebraska for his leadership, and as he well said, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI) on the other side of the aisle, who understands these basic principles and basic freedoms, and how central they are to the American experience and to what we call the United States of America.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you so much, Congressman JORDAN, for your thoughtful words and your powerful presentation. Thank you for your tireless leadership on this and so many other issues. Thank you for coming to-night.

I think it is most appropriate that the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK) gets to close the hour. DIANE BLACK is the primary author of the Health Care Conscience Rights Act. We have been proud to stand in partnership with you as you've taken the lead on this term, this Congress.

Mrs. BLACK. I thank you the gentleman from Nebraska for yielding. I'm getting a signal from Mr. Speaker that I have 1 minute left, so I'm going to reserve what I've written up, and just talk very briefly about what my colleagues have addressed up to this point in time.

The bill that we are talking about, the Health Care Conscience Rights bill, would simply take us back to where we were before a decision was made by Ms. Sebelius to change the way in which we have operated in this country now for over 235 years. All we're asking is to take us back to where our Founding Fathers had us from the beginning, as has just been talked about by Mr. JORDAN, about the founding principles of this country where people came here to be able to practice their deeply held beliefs without having government intrusion.

This is so important for the American people to understand, that this is not about the issues that sometimes are talked about from the other side about birth control. This is about religious freedom, and I thank the gentleman for leading this hour this evening. We will have many more conversations.

Once again, thank you for being a leader in this arena.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Congresswoman BLACK. We are so grateful for your leadership.

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

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 50 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 0300

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SESSIONS) at 3 a.m.

#### REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1960, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014

Mr. NUGENT, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 113-108) on the resolution (H. Res. 260) providing for further consideration of 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, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 1 minute a.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until today, Thursday, June 13, 2013, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

#### EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

1803. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Milk in the Northeast and Other Marketing Areas; Termination of Proceeding on Proposed Amendments to Tentative Marketing Agreements and Orders [Docket No.: AMS-DA-13-0016; AO-14-A74, et al.; DA-06-01] received May 28, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1804. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Cranberries Grown in States of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, and Long Island in the State of New York; Changing Reporting Requirements [Docket No.: AMS-FV-12-0002; FV12-929-1 FIR] received May 28, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1805. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — United States Standards for Grades of Almonds in the Shell [Doc. Number: AMS-FV-11-0046] received May 28, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1806. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Oranges, Grapefruit, Tangerines, and Tangelos Grown in Florida; Redistricting and Reapportionment of Grower Members, and Changing the Qualifications for Grower Membership on the Citrus Administrative Committee [Docket No.: AMS-FV-11-0076; FV11-905-1 FIR] received May 28, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1807. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Pears Grown in Oregon and Washington; Assessment Rate Decrease for Processed Pears [Doc. No.: AMS-FV-12-0031; FV12-927-2 FIR] received May 28, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1808. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Revision of Regulations Defining Bona Fide Cotton Spot Markets [Doc. #:AMS-CN-12-0024] (RIN: 0581-AD26) received May 28, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1809. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Onions Grown in South Texas; Increased Assessment Rate [Doc. No.: AMS-FV-12-0039; FV12-959-1 FIR] received May 28, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1810. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Pears Grown in Oregon and Washington; Modification of the Assessment Rate for Fresh Pears [Doc. No.: AMS-FV-12-0030; FV12-927-1 FIR] received May 28, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1811. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Domestic Dates Produced or Packed in Riverside County, California; Decreased Assessment Rate [Docket No.: AMS-FV-12-0035; FV12-987-1 FIR] received May 28, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1812. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Irish Potatoes Grown in Washington; Decreased Assessment Rate [Doc. No.: AMS-FV-13-0010; FV13-946-1 IR] received May 28, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1813. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Irish Potatoes Grown in Colorado; Modification of the Handling Regulation for Area No. 2 [Doc. No.: AMS-FV-12-0043; FV12-948-1 FIR] received May 28, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1814. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Oranges and Grapefruit Grown in Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas; Increased Assessments Rate [Doc. No.: AMS-FV-12-0038; FV12-906-1 FIR] received May 28, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.