

1791. As a lifelong defender of Second Amendment freedoms, I am committed to ensuring that any new proposals considered in Washington do not infringe upon the constitutionally guaranteed rights of law-abiding citizens.

In the wake of devastating tragedies, well-meaning people feel compelled to do something, and the government, likewise, to intercede. But good intentions don't often make good or constitutional laws, and they certainly are no match for those set on being lawless.

The Second Amendment reads:

A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.

If the text alone were not explicit, our Founding Fathers clarified the purpose of the Second Amendment. James Madison wrote, in *Federalist No. 46*, that Americans possess:

the advantage of being armed over the people of almost every other nation whose governments are afraid to trust the people with arms.

Even more applicable to our current situation is this excerpt referenced by Thomas Jefferson, which reads:

Laws that forbid the carrying of arms disarm only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes. Such laws make things worse for the assaulted and better for the assailants.

The rush to action in the wake of tragedies sadly heaps the price of criminal wrongdoing onto law-abiding, responsible gun owners. When such is the case, government flirts with construing the desire to exercise Second Amendment rights as suspect behavior, it deems some Second Amendment utilities superior to others, and it ignores the root causes of mass violence, focusing instead on the means by which violence is accomplished. Those mistakes must never be made. Federal proposals must be well-thought, data-driven, and constitutionally sound.

The right to keep and bear arms is not one for hunters and sportsmen alone. For centuries, it has been a right for every American citizen to arm themselves to defend their property and the people they hold dear. And it is a right that cannot be infringed.

MEDICAID EXPANSION

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

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I can't resist saying the Second Amendment right does not preclude background checks to protect the very people we represent.

Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court ruling last summer on the Affordable Care Act was a victory for all American families—and small businesses especially—by ensuring that our constituents have access to affordable, quality health insurance.

The ruling preserved the integrity of Medicaid partnerships between the

States and the Federal Government, giving Governors the option of accepting the Federal Government's generous offer to pay the cost for expanding coverage of low-income residents who might otherwise not have access to health insurance.

Though some of my Republican colleagues remain opposed to the act, I'm pleased to see Republican Governors, including those from Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, and now Governor Kasich in Ohio, putting policy ahead of politics to support this expansion of Medicaid. Those Governors have acknowledged that they were motivated not only by the desire to reduce the number of uninsured, but also by the compelling business case.

Medicaid expansion is part of the vision for a new continuum of coverage that will begin in 2014, when the major provisions from the Affordable Care Act take effect. This will fill the long-standing gap in Medicaid coverage for low-income adults by expanding eligibility for those earning up to 133 percent of the Federal poverty level.

As of 2011, there were 48 million non-elderly uninsured in America. As an incentive for States to expand coverage for those folks, the ACA commits the Federal Government to paying 100 percent of the additional costs of covering them, and after 2016, 90 percent thereafter.

I wrote the Republican Governor of my State and the General Assembly membership urging them to join us in extending this critical health care coverage. The Virginia General Assembly is currently divided on the matter, but I was encouraged last week by the announcement from our Republican Lieutenant Governor, who said:

There is no State better prepared to move forward with this reform and the coverage expansion of it than the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Like me, Lieutenant Governor Bolling understands the economic benefits for Virginia. Expanding Medicaid will help 300,000 Virginians get access to health care coverage who currently have none and invariably wind up accessing health care through the most expensive portal there is: the emergency room. The cost of that uncompensated care is, of course, borne today by hospitals and those who are insured through their premiums.

The Governor's Advisory Commission on Health Reform said expanding Medicaid, coupled with other reforms in the act, would reduce uncompensated care in Virginia by more than half. Under the Affordable Care Act, Virginia would receive more than \$9.2 billion in the first 5 years. A recent State analysis shows that during that same time period Virginia would actually save \$300 million by expanding coverage. And Virginia's costs for the first 10 years, now estimated at \$137 million, are considerably less than originally estimated and a great return on that investment.

Time is running out, and our residents cannot afford for States to miss

this opportunity. In fact, I believe they would be making such a historic mistake that I am proposing an additional incentive to help motivate those Governors who might not yet still be convinced.

This week I introduced the Medicaid Expansion Incentive Act. This simple bill adds a "use it or lose it" provision. If a State doesn't want to expand Medicaid coverage, then we will ship those dollars to other States who are willing to partner with us to help defray costs and expand their coverage.

□ 1040

Just so the residents of a particular State are fully aware of how their Governor's decision is affecting them, my bill will require HHS to publicize the list of States that are not partnering with us and giving up this opportunity and the amount of money their Governor has left on the table and the number of uninsured people who will thereby not be covered.

The Affordable Care Act is the law of the land, and residents of any State should not be penalized because of their Governor's ideological agenda. The choices we face are momentous. Will we move forward together to implement these historic reforms and reverse the unsustainable trajectory of spiraling prices, or will we let slip this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help those most in need, realize savings, and spur economic activity? I hope more Republican Governors, including my own, will follow the leader of their colleagues elsewhere and put their citizens' health ahead of partisan orthodoxy.

U VISA REFORM ACT OF 2013

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, in the year 2000, Congress created the U Visa program as a way to allow illegal immigrant crime victims a temporary—a temporary—legal status in order to assist law enforcement in the prosecution of their assailant, which has helped bring thousands of criminals to justice.

However, over time, the U Visa has become a pathway to citizenship for essentially everyone who applies. The rampant abuse of this program is detrimental to law-abiding individuals who seek to immigrate to our country through the proper legal channels.

We are a Nation of immigrants, and we are also a Nation built upon respect for the rule of law. Our heritage and our principles demand of us the courage to reform our broken immigration system so that those who follow the law and want to contribute to the betterment of our Nation will have the opportunity to do so.

That is why I have introduced the U Visa Reform Act of 2013 to stop abuses in the U Visa program. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this commonsense piece of legislation.

SEQUESTRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring note to the fact that for the fourth time in 5 years, President Obama is, once again, late in delivering his budget to Congress and the citizens of America.

Americans throughout this country tell me over and over again that our national debt is unacceptable. They tell me it is holding America back from achieving economic prosperity and robbing their children of the American Dream. They tell me it's time for Washington to pass a budget.

The President has turned a deaf ear to the pleas of these Americans. He has been asked to take this country's economy seriously. He chooses instead to spend his time in other countries, taking family vacations, and playing countless games of golf.

Hardworking taxpayers know that work must come before play, Mr. President. That is the practice of millions of taxpaying Americans who must foot the bill for Presidential vacations while they forfeit their own vacations due to the uncertainty in the economy.

While the President crisscrosses the world avoiding Americans' top priorities, back at home Americans are nervous. Every year that our country goes without a budget, the national debt skyrockets, the uncertainty for American businesses grows and, with that, unemployment goes up. Without a Federal budget, businessowners cannot plan. They cannot plan for the President's new regulations or his unforeseen tax increases; and, therefore, it is all the more difficult for them to expand their businesses and create jobs in America.

To add to the uncertainty, the President's proposed sequestration is set to take effect this March. Despite his promise—his promise—to the American people that it would never actually happen, the President has yet to take any steps to undo this harmful measure. He has shown absolute indifference to the millions of Americans whose livelihoods would be severely impacted by his sequestration.

House Republicans have twice passed legislation to replace the President's sequester with commonsense reforms that would reduce spending and preserve and strengthen our safety net for future generations and ensure our national defense.

This week, the House will not only renew our commitment to the American people to pass a budget, but it will be a responsible budget that will balance. It will be one that will aim to grow the economy, drive down unemployment, expand opportunity and prosperity for the private sector, and ensure that America maintains its leading role in the world as a strong national defender.

Americans can do this. We just need a President to put work before play.

FREEDOM LEADS TO PROSPERITY

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

Mr. BENTIVOLIO. Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak today. I have said it before, and I want to say it again: the job of a Member of Congress is to protect the rights of the people, not take them away.

I want to explain what I mean by that. Those rights are outlined in our Declaration of Independence: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These rights were not given to us by a King or developed after extensive debate by a Congress. They come from God. They exist in the same way that gravity exists. They are natural.

But too often what gets left out is why we must protect those rights and why those rights are still relevant today. The reason is simple, and it's as practical today as it was in 1776: we protect those rights because in America we know that freedom leads to prosperity. Our country was built by Forefathers who believed in, and defended, that idea.

Every generation that came after them has followed their lead, rising to tackle whatever challenge came before them in order to protect the freedom of this Nation. Every American generation has left the country a little better off than they found it and handed it to their sons and daughters with the hope that they would do the same.

Thinking both about those who came before us and those who will follow us long after we're gone is in the very DNA of our country. That's why our Constitution's preamble explicitly states that it doesn't secure liberty for just the founding generation but also for prosperity.

Generations don't simply disappear. Instead, like an aging photograph, they kind of fade away until they are all gone. Right now, one of America's greatest generations is doing just that. In World War II, hundreds of thousands of Americans risked their lives on battlefields half a world away while the rest of them worked and sacrificed at home to make sure our troops had everything they needed.

The reason they acted so valiantly was because they understood the truth to American exceptionalism: that freedom leads to prosperity. They knew it, and they fought for it because it had been passed down to them from their parents, who had received it from their parents and so on. To them it was something worth fighting for, it was worth making sacrifices for, and it was worth dying for. Not a day goes by when I don't think about their sacrifices and remember what they did for me and everyone else in this great country.

They deserve to be taken care of. That is why I urge my fellow Members of the House from both parties to join me in supporting the Full Faith and Credit Act. As we work to cure the gov-

ernment's addiction to debt, we must ensure that the Greatest Generation is protected. They have already made their sacrifices in the defense of our ideals. They have already passed down freedom to us and given us a country that is better off.

We cannot be the first generation to fail America. We must follow the path of our Founding Fathers by preserving the American Dream for our children and grandchildren.

One great idea to preserve our great Nation was developed by our Speaker, JOHN BOEHNER. In the days before the midterm elections of 2010, Speaker BOEHNER proposed "taking a different approach" regarding how Congress voted on budgets. He maintained that rather than having a "comprehensive budget" that encompasses all—or at least most of—government appropriations, the whole Congress should treat every budget for each Federal agency as an independent spending bill.

Speaker BOEHNER said:

Members shouldn't have to vote for big spending increases at the Labor Department in order to fund Health and Human Services. Members shouldn't have to vote for big increases at the Commerce Department just because they support NASA. Each Department and Agency should justify itself each year to the full House and Senate and be judged on its own.

That is the kind of leadership that Americans across this great land support. Those are the types of ideas that we need to enact in order to take on the challenges that are ahead. I urge my fellow Congressmen to appeal to the better angels of their nature as we spend the next few months talking about our government's addiction to debt. Let's solve this problem.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 49 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Loving God, You are compassionate and merciful. We give You thanks for giving us another day.

During these days, when the House itself continues to organize itself for the 113th Congress, we ask Your blessing upon the Members of this assembly,

There are many issues which press upon our Nation now, and more lie upon the legislative horizon. Pour