

vicious cycle of prejudice and fear. Nelson Mandela said it best:

People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.

You have to be carefully taught, Mr. Speaker. The teaching must begin in our hearts and with our children.

OBAMACARE

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, in May of 2012, the House Ways and Means Committee released a report that expounds upon one of the most problematic provisions included in ObamaCare, the mandate on employers with at least 50 full-time equivalent employees to offer “affordable” and government-approved health insurance plans to their workers beginning in 2014.

Employers with at least 50 full-time equivalent employees who do not offer government-approved coverage must pay \$2,000 in fines annually per employee. After 2014, the fine would be indexed to the average per capita premium for health insurance, as determined by the Health and Human Services Secretary.

Even if employers do offer government-approved health insurance coverage, they would still be fined if Health and Human Services deems the plan “unaffordable” and at least one full-time employee purchases a qualified health plan through an exchange and receives a taxpayer-funded subsidy for their coverage.

Seventy-one Fortune 100 companies that responded to the Ways and Means Committee survey included in the 2012 report estimate that they could save \$28.6 billion in 2014 by eliminating health insurance coverage for their 5.9 million employees and opting to pay the \$2,000 annual fine per employee. This would impact more than 10.2 million employees and dependents on employer-based plans. Under these estimates, from 2014 through 2023, the employers surveyed could save an estimated \$422.4 billion.

The employer mandate provides a perverse incentive for companies to drop their employees from health plans that are otherwise working and are embraced by the employees themselves. This is a stark contrast from the promises made by President Obama, suggesting “First of all, if you’ve got health insurance, you like your doctors, you like your plan, you can keep your doctor, you can keep your plan. Nobody is talking about taking that away from you.”

Mr. Speaker, as we are seeing, that is simply not true. But furthermore, the employer mandate will serve to drive up the costs of ObamaCare as more and more people become a part of the exchanges.

Even Comedy Central’s Jon Stewart, in an interview with Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius this past January, posed the question as to whether or not the employee mandate would cause employers to “dump” employees into the exchanges until it “becomes sort of a back door of government—not a take-over necessarily, but of a government responsibility for the health care, and then suddenly, obviously then, we’re Sweden.”

Mr. Speaker, this week the House will vote to legitimize the administration’s delay of the employer mandate for 1 year. While I support this delay, we must continue to focus efforts on repealing and replacing ObamaCare so that we can begin to reduce the escalating health care costs and the restrictions on access, the attacks on quality innovation in this country and the turnover of health care from a personal decision to the government.

DECREASING RATES OF FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE IN SNAP

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

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, 18 times this year I’ve come to this floor and talked about the need to end hunger now. Eighteen times I’ve defended our Nation’s anti-hunger programs, discussed the paradox of hunger and obesity, and talked about hunger among the elderly.

Over the past few weeks, this House has voted on two versions of a farm bill reauthorization. The first was defeated after the Republican leadership overreached, not only by cutting the linchpin of our anti-hunger programs, SNAP—formerly known as food stamps—but also by adding poison pill after poison pill amendment to the bill.

Last week, the Republican leadership responded to the stinging defeat of their farm bill by stripping out the entire nutrition title while, at the same time, expanding subsidies for highly profitable big agribusinesses. Talk about messed up priorities, Mr. Speaker. By the way, the nutrition title not only includes SNAP, it includes as well funding for food banks and senior anti-hunger programs.

Opponents of SNAP like to focus on the idea that SNAP is somehow fraudulent; not just that some SNAP money is being misspent, but that so much is being wasted that we need to drastically rein in the program, regardless of whether SNAP cuts increase hunger in America. We heard these claims time after time during consideration of the two farm bills.

Sadly, those who claim rampant fraud, waste, and abuse in SNAP don’t let facts get in the way of their arguments. That is because SNAP is among the most effective and efficient, if not the most effective and efficient, federally administered programs.

I serve on the House Agriculture Committee, and I took part in an extensive debate over SNAP during both the committee markup and on the House floor. Not one member, Democrat or Republican, on the House Agriculture Committee provided sourced, statistical information on fraud, waste, and abuse in the SNAP program.

On top of that, no hearings were held on the SNAP program at all. In fact, I challenged any member of the committee to find any Federal program that has a lower rate of fraud, waste, and abuse. The truth is no one could answer my challenge.

Mr. Speaker, according to both the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Office of the Inspector General at USDA, the fraud rates for SNAP are at all-time lows and are going down. On top of that, USDA continues to pursue instances of fraud, waste, and abuse and is prosecuting these cases.

Despite the rapid growth in SNAP participation, primarily due to the historic economic recession we are still recovering from, the error rate for SNAP is also at a record low, according to the latest data available. Specifically, 3 percent of all SNAP benefits represented overpayments, meaning they either went to ineligible households or went to eligible households but in excessive amounts. This means that more than 98 percent of SNAP benefits were issued to eligible households. The combined error rate—the total error rate that includes both under- and overpayments—reached an all-time low in 2011, falling to 3.8 percent.

These statistics show just how well SNAP is truly managed. But there’s even more data to consider. In July, the USDA’s Office of Inspector General issued a report on fraud investigations of USDA programs. It showed that fraud in SNAP is limited primarily to a few bad actors. It also showed cases of fraud are far greater in other USDA programs.

According to this report, 10 cases involving USDA programs were closed in the past 2 months, and only one of them involved fraud on the part of a SNAP recipient. That’s right, only 1 case in 10 had to do with an individual defrauding the SNAP program. In fact, half of those cases dealt with improper use of rural development funds. The remaining four cases all involved SNAP abuse by retailers, not recipients.

While this may seem like an innocuous statistic, it goes to the heart of what opponents claim: that SNAP beneficiaries—poor, hungry working Americans—are lazy and want to steal from the Federal Government. Nothing, and I mean nothing, could be further from the truth.

SNAP provides a lifeline to hungry Americans, whether they are 1, 10, 25, 50, 75 years old or older. In doing so, SNAP is likely the most effective and efficient program administered by the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, of course we can make SNAP better. We can make anything

better. We can make it more efficient. We can ensure that even more people get the food they need to prevent hunger in America. But we need to address hunger in a holistic and comprehensive way, including the role SNAP plays in preventing and treating hunger. This is why we need a White House Conference on Food and Nutrition if we are going to truly reduce hunger and improve nutrition in this country. We need a plan. We need to get this right. We need some urgency and some leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, attacking SNAP, and demonizing those who rely on it to make ends meet isn't just wrong, it's counterproductive. Arbitrarily cutting SNAP will only make hunger in America worse, and it certainly won't reduce the rates of fraud, waste, and abuse. The SNAP program works. While it can always be improved, we can't simply cut our way to a hunger-free society. We must work together if we are going to end hunger now.

IN HONOR OF ADMIRAL FRANK BENTON KELSO, II

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

Mr. DESJARLAIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the extraordinary life of Admiral Frank Benton Kelso, II, a great American and true son of Tennessee. On Sunday, June 23, Tennessee's Fourth Congressional District and our country lost this great American hero.

To describe Admiral Kelso as honorable, principled, and dedicated would be insufficient. His achievements and individual character are matched only by his patriotism and love of country.

Admiral Kelso's 79-year life included a gallant and decorated 42-year career in the United States Navy.

Admiral Kelso graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1956 and began his illustrious career in the Navy by joining the nuclear submarine program, where he would later command two nuclear submarines.

In 1986, the Admiral commanded the Atlantic Fleet, planning military actions against Libya that significantly curbed Muammar Qadhafi's terrorist activities.

In 1990, he earned the position of Chief of Naval Operations, the Navy's top uniformed officer. During this time, he successfully led naval operations in the Persian Gulf War.

In addition to his distinguished naval career, Admiral Kelso was a family man. He was happily married to Landess McCown Kelso for 56 years until she passed away last year. Together, they had four children and eight grandchildren.

He retired from the Navy in 1994, and in 2003 he returned to his hometown of Fayetteville, Tennessee, where he would spend the last 10 years of his life. These years were filled with love for

his family and friends and service to his community.

I believe that there is no greater example of commitment to one's country than the life of Admiral Frank Kelso. His legacy of integrity and courage truly exemplify the best of the United States Navy. To quote the celebrated song of our Navy, "Here's wishing you a happy voyage home."

GOVERNMENT FURLoughs

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, on July 1, the front page of The Washington Post had a headline which showed in many respects just, again, the disconnect between this town and the rest of the country. It said: "They said the sequester would be scary. Mostly they were wrong."

I would like those reporters to have joined me on July 3, 2 days later, when I went to the Groton Navy Base in southeastern Connecticut to talk to over 100 civilian DOD employees who were on the verge of being furloughed because of sequestration. Again, under sequester, 650,000 civilian DOD employees, for 1 day a week for the next 11 weeks, will be furloughed, or lose 20 percent of their paycheck, despite the fact that they contribute enormous value to the military readiness of this country.

Again, at that meeting, where I was joined by Captain Carl Lahti, who is the commander of the sub base, he talked about the fact that among the furloughed employees are crane operators, folks who install torpedoes, Tomahawk missiles, all the supplies to make sure that our attack sub fleet is ready to go at any given time. Again, losing them 1 day a week just pushes back the readiness of the submarine fleet.

I talked to Adam Puccino, who is the head of the Metal Trades Council and represents the maintenance crews on the base to make sure that the tip of the spear of America's Navy is ready to go. Again, losing those folks 1 day a week is going to slow down and retard the ability of that fleet to be ready.

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Rob Faulise, who is the head of the NAGE force, talked about the staff that provides critical services, whether it's health care, firefighter services, clerical work, to make sure that that subbase is ready to accomplish its mission.

In every case, they all confirm the fact that not only is this going to cause personal hardship, but it's also going to harm the military capability of that base.

I received a number of emails from folks who were there that day or whose coworkers told them about that meeting. Here is what some of them said.

Kimberly from Ledyard, Connecticut, said:

I am a Federal employee working on the Navy base in Groton. I am a GS-5 step 2, which means I make \$17 an hour and am paid biweekly. I am married with three children, ages 6, 4, and 1. My husband works part time, and is already capped at a salary range of \$16.54 an hour. It's already hard enough to make ends meet as it is, and now, with the furlough, I'm losing \$226.44 every pay period.

Robert from North Stonington:

As a member of DOD, specifically the Department of the Navy, working in Groton, I am now in the second week of furloughs. As a civilian employee for the past 39 years, I have never seen our government in such disarray. My command, supervisor of shipbuilding, performs extremely important jobs of government oversight of the design, construction and repair of our country's nuclear submarine fleet.

John from Groton:

Furloughs will immediately manifest themselves in the local economies around every U.S. military base in the form of 20 percent fewer goods, gas and groceries being bought and in 20 percent fewer taxes being paid into town and State coffers that are already at an all-time low.

Lastly, Aurela from Gales Ferry, Connecticut, said:

As a result of the civilian furloughs at the Navy branch health clinic, I believe our patients' access to care and continuity of quality care will be severely hampered. Our military and their dependents don't have the option to be sick or injured on a non-furlough day. Clinic staff has been trained to refer patients to urgent care facilities and to emergency rooms as a last resort, largely due to the sequester. Where is the wisdom of forcing the use of higher cost facilities in a fiscal crisis?

Thank you, Aurela, because it shows that, in fact, these furloughs don't really save anything structurally or long term for government. What is clearly needed is for Congress to respond to sequester based on what its original intention was. If you go to Phil Gramm, the granddaddy of sequestration—the Gramm-Rudman sequester act of 1985, which today sequester is verbatim based on—he stated in a speech in Washington not too long ago:

It was never the objective of Gramm-Rudman to trigger the sequester. The objective of Gramm-Rudman was to have the threat of the sequester force compromise and action.

Again, that's from the inventor of sequestration.

Seven times, CHRIS VAN HOLLEN and the House Democratic minority have tried to get the Rules Committee to allow a vote to be taken on a measure to turn off sequester, replacing it with smarter cuts and smarter revenue to achieve the goal of deficit reduction, but to do it without a chain saw that is disrupting the lives of those individuals whose stories I just described. In every single instance, the Rules Committee denied the ability of this House to vote on a commonsense measure to turn off sequester.

Folks, we are now 4½ months into sequester. Its impact extends even beyond the Department of Defense. In Head Start programs, kids are losing slots, and NIH research grants are being canceled. It is time for Congress to listen to Phil Gramm, to compromise, to act to turn off sequester,