

Postal Regulatory Commission for their opinions on the Postmaster General's statutory authority for this ill-advised action.

Mr. Speaker, Representative GRAVES and I have introduced a bipartisan resolution urging the Postal Service to preserve 6-day delivery. We would welcome our colleagues in joining us to highlight congressional intent that Saturday service is vital to our neighborhoods and small businesses and to the vitality of our communities. I urge my colleagues to take a closer look.

THE DRONES ARE COMING, PAGE II

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the domestic use of drones is on the way. There will be more eyes in the sky looking over America.

According to the FAA, by 2015, it will allow the use of drones nationwide, and by 2030, 30,000 drones will be cruising American skies—looking, observing, filming, and hovering over America. They will come whether we like it or not. We will not know where they are or what they're looking at or what their purpose is, whether it's permitted or not permitted, whether it's lawful or unlawful, and we really won't know who is flying those drones.

Sometimes drones are good. We can thank drones for helping us track terrorists overseas and for helping us catch outlaws on the border. Legitimate uses by government and private citizens do occur, but a nosy neighbor or a Big Brother government does not have the right to look into a window without legitimate cause or, in the case of government, probable cause.

Mr. Speaker, drones are easy to find. I learned from a simple Google search that you can buy a drone on eBay or at your local Radio Shack. It's very easy. And as technology changes, Congress has the responsibility to be proactive and to protect the Fourth Amendment right of all citizens. The Fourth Amendment states:

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated.

It doesn't take a constitutional law professor to see why legislation is needed to protect the rights of the American people. The right of a reasonable expectation of privacy is a constitutional right. Any form of snooping or spying, surveillance or eavesdropping goes against the rights that are outlined in the Constitution.

Today, I will reintroduce the Preserving American Privacy Act because it's time for Congress to be proactive in protecting the rights of civilians from the private use and government use of drones. This legislation balances individual constitutional rights with legitimate government activity and the private use of drones. We don't

have time to wait until 2030 when there are 30,000 drones in the sky.

This bill sets clear guidelines, protects individual privacy and informs peace officers so they will know what they can do and what they cannot do under the law. Nobody should be able to use drones for whatever purpose they want. This bill will make it clear for what purpose law enforcement and citizens and businesses can use drones.

There will be limits on the government use of drones so that the surveillance of individuals or their property is only permitted or conducted when there is a warrant. This applies to State, Federal, and local jurisdictions, but there are exceptions. Law enforcement could use a drone for fire and rescue, to monitor droughts and to assess flood damage or to chase a fleeing criminal. And of course, the exceptions, called exigent circumstances, which are already in our law, will apply.

This bill includes a clear statement so that it does not prevent the use of drones for border security. The bill also sets guidelines for the private use of drones.

The bottom line of the bill is simple: nobody should be spying on another unless they have the legal authority to do so. The decision should not be left up to unelected bureaucrats to decide the use of drones, so Congress has the obligation to set guidelines, to secure the right of privacy and to protect citizens from unlawful drone searches. Just because the government has the technology to look into somebody's yard doesn't give it the constitutional right to do so.

And that's just the way it is.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. BERA of California. Mr. Speaker, in a few short weeks, we face automatic across-the-board spending cuts. If allowed, they could not only stall our economic recovery; these cuts will immediately threaten the future of our children and grandchildren. If we allow sequestration to take place, we threaten to kick 70,000 of our children off of the Head Start program. If we allow sequestration to take place, 10,000 American teachers will lose their jobs. We threaten the very future of our children and grandchildren. This is irresponsible.

In the spirit of their future, the children from Mrs. Gibson's third-grade class at Foulks Ranch Elementary School in Elk Grove, California, wanted me to deliver a message to Congress. They are five simple tips: They want Congress to be responsible. They want Congress to be respectful. They want Congress to be kind. They want Congress to be accountable. Mr. Speaker, the third-graders from Mrs. Gibson's class want Congress to make good choices.

Allowing sequestration to take place is a bad choice. If the third-graders can figure it out, I certainly hope we in Congress can as well. Let's do what they advise. Let's be responsible and let's make good choices.

□ 1040

PUERTO RICO MEDICARE PART B EQUITY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. PIERLUISI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, today I'm introducing a modified version of bipartisan legislation I introduced last Congress. The bill would amend a provision in Federal law that applies only to Puerto Rico and that has harmed thousands of Medicare beneficiaries on the island. My legislation would eliminate this problem for future beneficiaries and provide appropriate financial relief to current beneficiaries who have been adversely affected. Senator SCHUMER is introducing a companion bill, and I want to thank him for his support on this issue.

Most individuals become eligible to enroll in Medicare part A, which covers inpatient hospital care, when they turn 65. In every State and territory except Puerto Rico, individuals enrolled in part A are automatically enrolled in part B, which covers doctors' services and outpatient hospital care and requires the payment of a monthly premium. Individuals can opt out of part B if they don't want it. In Puerto Rico, by contrast, individuals enrolled in part A are not automatically enrolled in part B but, rather, must opt in to receive this coverage.

The problem with the opt-in requirement is that the law requires individuals to elect part B coverage within a 7-month initial enrollment period or to pay a penalty to the Federal Government. The penalty is substantial—a 10 percent increase in the monthly part B premium for every year of delayed enrollment. It is also permanent, lasting as long as the individual has part B, which can be decades.

Over the years, the responsible Federal agencies have done a poor job informing beneficiaries in Puerto Rico about the opt-in requirement and the consequences of late enrollment. Therefore, many of my constituents fail to realize they lack Part B until they get sick and need to visit a doctor, by which point significant time may have elapsed. To illustrate the repercussions, consider the standard Medicare Part B monthly premium of \$105. An individual who enrolls 2 years late must pay a 20 percent surcharge—an additional \$21 per month. Over 1 year, that is \$252. Over 20 years, it is \$5,000.

The combination of the opt-in requirement and inadequate beneficiary education in Puerto Rico has led to consequences that are both severe and

predictable. Puerto Rico has the lowest part B participation rate in the country—81 percent compared to the national average of 92 percent. There are at least 130,000 island residents enrolled in part A but not part B. Without this coverage, beneficiaries have limited access to doctors' services and outpatient hospital care. If these individuals do eventually enroll in part B, as most will, the 7-month window will have closed and they will be required to pay a lifetime penalty.

Moreover, there are at least 53,000 seniors or disabled individuals in Puerto Rico who are already paying a lifetime penalty for enrolling late in part B. Each year, in fact, island residents pay a total of over \$7 million in late fees. This is profoundly unfair. Through no fault of their own, my constituents are required to forfeit money to the Federal Government they should be using to meet their basic needs and support their families.

On the administrative front, I have worked hard with Senator SCHUMER to ensure that the relevant Federal agencies improve the educational materials provided to Puerto Rico beneficiaries, and I am pleased they have taken positive steps in response to our demands. But the only true solution to this problem is legislative.

My bill would do three things:

First, it would amend Federal law so that, going forward, beneficiaries in Puerto Rico are treated like their counterparts in every other jurisdiction, automatically enrolled in part B with the option to opt out of coverage;

Second, to ease the burden on those who enrolled late in part B, usually with no understanding of the consequences of that choice, the bill would reduce the monthly penalty they are required to pay by 85 percent;

Finally, to address those beneficiaries who are enrolled in part A but not B and who will pay a late penalty whenever they do enroll, the bill would authorize a special period during which those individuals could enroll in part B and pay a monthly surcharge that is 85 percent less than the penalty they would be subject to under current law.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in both the House and the Senate to enact this much-needed bill into law.

I should also mention that I was impressed with the State of the Union delivered by President Obama last evening, and I particularly support his call for democracy in America. But I remind, respectfully, both the President and all Americans that Puerto Rico has a status that is undemocratic. There are 3.7 million American citizens living in Puerto Rico who lack the most basic voting rights in a democracy. They cannot vote for the President, and they do not have voting representation in Congress. They have rejected this status, and the least that this Congress should do is give Puerto Rico the choice of joining the Union as a State or be treated as a sovereign nation.

IT'S TIME TO GET TO WORK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. BONAMICI) for 5 minutes.

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, today is February 13, but it feels like Groundhog Day. Here we are, back again, facing the prospect of devastating cuts from sequestration.

Families in Oregon don't understand why Members of Congress can't seem to set aside their differences and get things done; and, frankly, neither do I. We don't want to see these devastating cuts go into effect. We don't want to see a government shutdown. We don't want to tell the children that they have to have even more students in their already-crowded classrooms or explain to senior citizens that the Meals on Wheels they rely on might not be delivered. We don't want to see cuts to food safety or air traffic control or maritime and border security.

We're in the home stretch, racing towards yet another deadline, but instead of sitting at the bargaining table, we're headed out for recess.

In Oregon alone, sequestration would kick more than 900 kids out of Head Start programs that make a difference in their school readiness. It would trigger a 9 percent cut in Federal funding to Oregon's public university system, slashing student aid and ongoing research and development. Law enforcement agencies throughout the country would lose the equivalent of 1,000 Federal agents, 1,300 prison officers, and more than 5,000 Border Patrol personnel. Small businesses across the Nation would lose more than \$540 million in loan guarantees.

Despite the talk of uncertainty, our economy really is poised to take off, but it can't do that if Congress decides to take off from work. It's sad but true: The biggest obstacle to economic growth tomorrow is congressional foot-dragging today.

We've been governing by crisis for too long. It's time to rally around common sense. It's time to take a seat at the bargaining table. And most of all, it's time to get back to work.

No sequestration deal, no recess.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Career and Technical Education Month. I'm proud to be joined by Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, who I know spoke earlier this morning. Mr. THOMPSON is my good friend and fellow cochair of the bipartisan Congressional Career and Technical Education Caucus.

CTE is an investment in the future of our economy, our workforce, and our country. From skills training in high schools to community colleges and pro-

fessional programs, CTE plays a critical role for workers of every age. And I'm so proud that President Obama called for more support for CTE in his State of the Union message last evening.

The most important step I believe we can take this year to support CTE is to fully reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. Currently, the Perkins Act is authorized at a level set in 2010, which doesn't reflect the reality of a modern economy where more workers are looking at high-skilled fields.

More and more employers need highly skilled workers. I hear too often from Rhode Island employers with job openings that they can't fill because they can't find the workers with the right skills to fill the jobs that they do have available. Meanwhile, our unemployment rate remains unacceptably high.

Closing the skills gap is one important step we can take to ensure that workers can fit and fill the needs of expanding industries, both today and in the future. After all, how can we expect to help individuals start a company or to relocate jobs from overseas if we don't have the workers with the right skills to do the jobs that would be and are available?

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to a continuing partnership with my good friend, G.T. THOMPSON from Pennsylvania, in the 113th Congress, and I strongly urge my colleagues to join the Career and Technical Education Caucus and to support the full reauthorization of the Perkins Act.

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 50 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

Archbishop Emeritus John Quinn, Diocese of San Francisco, San Francisco, California, offered the following prayer:

Lord, we give deep-felt thanks for the great providential blessing that makes us citizens of the United States of America.

The men and women of this House, in their service to our country, daily confront seemingly intractable public issues, a burden at times overwhelming; but You work even in the dark places of human history.