

best medical delivery because they're afraid the government is not going to pay. Who can blame them? Every year, the government threatens to cut the pay to our seniors' doctors 25 percent, and, every year, the government threatens to cut the pay to our hospitals that are taking care of our seniors. Every year, this goes on. It has to stop.

I hope the Speaker and the gentleman from Tennessee will agree that we have to address this seriously, honestly, with a view to two things: preserving the benefit for people who are in retirement and keeping the system going for every American. An American born today, February 14—a child born today—should have a system that he knows is going to be there, not bankrupt, but a system that's there when he reaches those golden years, and we can do it if we all work together.

I was hoping I'd hear more from the President. I didn't. The President is still not willing to come and talk about preserving Medicare, because, Mr. Speaker, you know that the trustees have said it goes bankrupt in 10 years. The current system will not be there for everyone retiring. The 10,000 people retiring today, February 14, enter Medicare. That system will not be there in 10 years. It will be bankrupt. So the current system doesn't even protect our current seniors, much less a baby born today.

□ 1640

We have to deal with it. Mr. Speaker, I urge the President to step up to the plate, be serious. Our colleagues on the other side of the Capitol, step up to the plate. This program is too important to let go bankrupt within 10 years.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. I thank the gentleman. He is absolutely spot on. One of the reasons that he ran for Congress and I ran for Congress is to preserve this great program for our seniors out there, and I am absolutely committed to do it.

Let me give a couple of facts before we end up. The actuary of the Medicare program—this is not me, this is the Medicare actuary—said that congressional action will be required to ensure that our seniors have continued access to care. In May 2012, he said it is reasonable to expect that Congress would find it necessary to legislatively override or otherwise modify the reductions in the future to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries continue to have access to Medicare services.

This is not some right-wing Republican, this is the Medicare actuary, and we're not even talking about it. We have heard nothing from the President about how we preserve this great program other than we just keep doing what we're doing. That's not an honest, fair assessment of where we stand today. The sooner we deal with it, the more likely we are to come to a less painful solution to this.

I do want to finish by saying that I appreciate the hour you've shown us,

Mr. Speaker. We will continue this very, very important discussion on Medicare in the future, and I yield back the balance of my time.

PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS MESSAGE

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

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my name is Congressman KEITH ELLISON, and I would like to open up by talking about the progressive message. The progressive message is the message articulated by the Progressive Caucus, and the Progressive Caucus is that organization within this body, within this Congress, that is here to unapologetically say that all Americans should have the right to go to the doctor and get basic health care in this richest country in the history of the world. All Americans should have civil and equal rights and be treated fairly based on whatever color, whatever their sexual preference might be, whatever nation they might be from.

We're the ones who say let's have comprehensive immigration reform with a path towards citizenship, and let's absolutely pass the DREAM Act. The Progressive Caucus is that caucus that boldly and unapologetically says Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are great programs; and we need to protect them not only for today's seniors but for tomorrow's seniors, too.

I would like to start out, Mr. Speaker, by talking a little bit, as I talk about the progressive message, starting out with just a few observations about the State of the Union speech. I personally thought the State of the Union speech was awesome. I thought President Obama was great, and I was really proud of President Obama as he delivered that State of the Union speech in this very Chamber.

This Chamber was full of dignitaries from all over the world—ambassadors, Senators, the United States Supreme Court. And in front of them, in front of the American people, President Obama specifically identified 24 Americans who joined Members of Congress as their guests. And these folks who President Obama identified were victims of gun violence. I was so proud to see President Obama specifically give these folks encouragement to keep on speaking out, continue to tell their story so that we can arrive at a place where the U.S. Congress will be on their side to bring forth sensible, sane gun violence prevention.

You know, President Obama's wife, our First Lady, Michelle Obama, had seated next to her her own guest, parents of young Hadiya Pendleton whose life was taken away from her. She was shot down in Chicago. But only a few weeks before, she had been performing for her country at the President's inauguration.

And so whether it was ordinary Members of Congress who just brought different people, or it was the President or the First Lady, the people who can speak most eloquently about the need for sane, sensible gun violence reform were here, Mr. Speaker. They were here and were present in this gallery so they could be a witness and a presence on the need.

And what did President Obama say? He said give us a vote. He said give us a vote. Now, I say to the Republican House majority: Why are you afraid of a vote? Let's have a vote. Let's count who is for sane, sensible gun violence prevention and who is not; who is for closing loopholes that allow people to escape background checks; and who's for filling up background checks and making sure that anybody who gets a firearm, an instrument that is dangerous by any account, at least we know that this person is sane and legally qualified to have one. Let's see. Let's have a vote. I don't think that anyone should be afraid of the vote, because if you are proud to say, no, we don't want any background checks, then stand up and say that. Be on Mr. LaPierre's side of the NRA. But if you believe we need to make sure that guns stay out of the wrong hands, that's a vote that the American people should have, and I was so proud that the President made that clear.

I personally think that the President was right in saying give us a vote when it comes to things like high-capacity magazines. You know, these high-capacity magazines, designed for the military, don't have any place on our streets. And the people who want to stand up and defend them, let them defend them. Let them defend them right here on the floor if they have the audacity to do so. And let us talk about millions of Americans, over the course of years, who have been tragically injured and hurt with bad gun policy.

Let us talk about the victims in Aurora who were shot by somebody with a high-capacity clip. Let us talk about people who were victims in Milwaukee. Let us give the message about the folks who were shot down in Tucson by somebody with a high-capacity clip.

The fact is that the President said give us a vote, and I agree 100 percent. We need a vote on these sane, sensible gun reforms.

I'm going to leave this topic now, Mr. Speaker; but I do want to just make mention of my own guest. My own guest was a young man named Sami Rahamin. Sami, 17 years old, a brilliant young man, but really just a regular teenager, he happened to be on a bus going to Madison, Wisconsin, when he saw a message come across his phone which said there was a shooting in what he knew was his neighborhood.

He texted back to his father and said: Dad, be careful because there's supposedly a shooting in the neighborhood. But the text never came back because one of the victims of that shooting was Sami's dad.

Ruvn Rahamin was an immigrant to the United States. He came to the United States in search of the American Dream, but he died the American nightmare because a person who is mentally unsound, mentally unstable, easy access to the most dangerous weapons came to a work site and shot down five people, including Ruvn who was an awesome guy, a wonderful constituent of mine. He's missed. But because of his son carrying on the legacy, he will never be forgotten because Sami is telling the story about how much we need sane, sensible gun prevention measures.

So enough about the gun issue. The State of the Union speech was awesome for another reason, which I definitely want to make note of, and that is the fact that he went right to the very heart of what I believe is the defining issue of our time, and that is income and wealth equality in our country. Our country, this is the land of opportunity. And we know that some people are rich and some people are middle class and some people are poor. We believe we're a country that can provide a ladder up for anybody who wants to work hard. And for those people who are too sick to work or too aged to work or too young to work, we believe in the social safety net to take care of them.

□ 1650

We believe in income and economic mobility in America. And yet the President put his finger right on it when he talked about how we've seen people making \$14,000 a year working full time; but because they are paid so little, they are still in poverty.

I was so proud the President made this point. It's a point that needs to be made. There are people working in restaurants, people who are cleaning up, people in our hospitals, people who are doing the really tough jobs. I'm talking about the jobs where you've got to take a shower after you get off work, not take a shower going to work, you've got to take one when you're done with your day's work because you've been working hard, you've been building things, you've been maybe cleaning up things, you've been lifting people, you've been doing the hard work. And many of these folks are scraping by on really low wages. The President clearly has a heart for these folks and wants to see them come up. And I was glad the President was able to do that.

Mr. Speaker, you should know that over the past 30 years income for the average American has stayed flat, while the richest 1 percent of Americans have seen their income more than triple. This has not happened by accident. It has been a set of policies put in place through the Tax Code, through trade policy, through the loss of manufacturing, and a number of things.

There's been a number of policies that have gotten us to this place, but there's been one philosophy, and the

philosophy is simply this: if we give a lot of money to the richest Americans, maybe they will take their excess wealth and put that into plant and equipment and hire people.

This is known as supply-side economics. We don't want to have any regulations on them. They can do what they want with the water, they can do what they want with the meat, they can do what they want with the air. No regulations or against regulations. We don't want to tax them. They don't have to pay for our roads, our bridges, our schools; they don't have to do anything like that. They get to keep all this money. And it's all under the assumption that they will take this money that they amass and put it into plant and equipment and hire people.

Well, this philosophy has proven to have failed; this philosophy has caused income inequality in America. And the President correctly said that we have got to do something to create more economic viability for the poor and middle class in America. I was so happy to see him do it.

Mr. Speaker, you should know, the President didn't say this, but it's absolutely true, that the wealth of the richest 1 percent is over 225 times larger than the average household, higher than it has ever been, higher than it has ever been.

Mr. Speaker, we look back at the Gilded Age and we think, oh, boy, wasn't income inequality bad way back then. Well, it's worse now. We've got to do something about it, and our President knows that. I am very pleased to see that. And the President, while he gave a message of economic hope and understanding to the working and middle classes of our country, the politician who gave the alternative, Mr. MARCO RUBIO, when he wasn't getting glasses of water in the middle of his speech, he just really articulated the same old thing: money for the rich, less for everybody else.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot continue to give tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires while cutting investments that the middle class relies on, while cutting programs that help local governments keep on police, keep on teachers, keep on people who fix our roads and firefighters. We cannot cut the Federal workforce, as is about to happen—I'll talk about sequester in a little while—and we cannot make these economic decisions and hope to have a strong economy.

We've got to invest in our roads, our bridges, our grids, our electrical power grids in transit to move people around quickly. We've got to make these investments. We've got to invest in research; we've got to invest in our schools. This is what's going to make America a strong country. This is what's going to put more people to work. More people paying taxes means we're going to have more taxes, and that will help us lower the deficit.

The Republicans have it all wrong. They think that by slashing the Fed-

eral Government, then that's going to make our economy better. All it's going to do is create a situation where you've got more people out of work, fewer people paying taxes, fewer people putting in tax revenue, and then the deficit will go up.

I'm going to talk about the sequester in a moment; but I just want to say, as I highlight a few things about the State of the Union speech, how important I thought the President's remarks were.

Let me turn for a moment—another thing about the State of the Union speech—Mr. Speaker, on the issue of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. First of all, I want to encourage people to not refer to these programs as entitlements. I don't even like doing it myself right now.

What they really are is social insurance. You know how insurance works. You pay a premium and then when you need it, you can use it. Well, you get 6 percent taken out of your paycheck every week or two weeks or a month or however often you get paid. You're paying into Social Security, you're paying into Medicare, you're paying into Medicaid.

The bottom line is these social insurance programs are not some giveaway; they're not welfare. They are important social insurance programs to provide income security for people when they are aged, when they are too ill to work and disabled, or when their parents die and they need support. That's what these programs are about.

I'm glad that we are here to talk about how we preserve these programs. The President mentioned it. He said he wanted to strengthen Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid for generations to come. I quite agree with this. He said:

But any reform should come through protecting these programs, not just cutting these programs to finance tax cuts for the wealthy.

I believe that we should not have any benefit cuts to these programs. We don't need to. There's plenty of places to cut, plenty of loopholes to close, and we can get money elsewhere. But I'm glad the President made mention of the program.

I also want to mention, Mr. Speaker, that one of the places we can find savings for social insurance programs is we need to allow Medicare part D to negotiate lower drug prices. Medicare part D is a prescription drug benefit that the Republicans negotiated and passed in 2003. This particular program put into law that there could be no negotiation of drug prices. This has made the program more expensive. About \$158 billion would be attainable as savings if we were allowed negotiation.

The President also said we're going to get out of Afghanistan. I think this is great. The President announced that we would bring 34,000 troops home from Afghanistan by this time next year. That's fantastic. My own son is a member of the U.S. Military. I'm very proud of that. I actually don't want to see

him deployed to Afghanistan. I want to see him in a place where he can defend this Nation, as he wants to do. I think that it's time for us to go home.

The President didn't say we're going to abandon Afghanistan. We will be there diplomatically, we will be there training their soldiers, but sovereignty means that you protect yourself. It's time for the Afghan people who want to be sovereign to take responsibility for their own security.

I want to turn now to the subject of immigration. I think right now, and I think the President made clear, that we may be at a point, and I pray that we are, where comprehensive immigration reform is within the reach of Congress to pass.

I'm proud to be joined by my good friend Congressman JARED POLIS of Colorado. This is an important issue to you, Congressman, and I want to yield to you to share your thoughts on immigration.

Mr. POLIS. I thank the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. Speaker, it's common sense to most Americans. We have upwards of 10, 12, 14 million people here illegally in this country. Many of them are members of our communities, many of their kids are Americans, go to school with their fellow Americans or on the football team or cheerleaders, are productive in every way. And yet every day our government through its current policies tears families apart; absolute heartbreaking tragedies where a mother is torn from her American daughter, placed in detention, frequently kicked out of this country at a cost to taxpayers of tens of thousands of dollars, all over a broken tailight.

□ 1700

Now it's important to educate people about the difference. We do have a group of people that are in detention that are called criminal aliens. These are people who are here illegally and committed crimes. It could be robbery. Maybe they're in a gang or dealing drugs. There's no disagreement among liberals and conservatives and people of all ilks that, of course, there needs to be detentions where appropriate and where there are criminal penalties in place and, of course, there should be expulsions from the country in that regard. In fact, many of us argue that by sweeping up many of the people whose only violation is a civil violation, who otherwise have been following our laws, in that sweep we are actually limiting our enforcement ability to go after real criminals who are causing harm in our community.

That happens in two ways. One, through the limited law enforcement resources. When we divert those resources to taking mothers away from daughters, fathers away from sons who are productive members of society, when we divert the resources to that, it means they're going off of some other beat. It means they're going off of keeping our streets safe. It means

they're going away from looking at white collar crime and other areas that need to be investigated in these fiscally restrained times with limited budgets.

The second reason is it builds an atmosphere of distrust in our immigrant communities. How much unreported crime occurs because, in many cases, the victims of those crimes could be spouses that are abused, it could be people that are robbed or ripped off by unscrupulous scam artists and are frequently afraid to report that crime because they are afraid that the very same agency that they're supposed to trust to report that crime to could in fact be in league with another government agency that wants to deport them. And that's the problem with 287(g) and some of the other information-sharing protocols.

For community policing to work, it's critical to have the trust and support of the community. And by the way, if these criminals go unprosecuted in our community and unpenalized for taking advantage of somebody, and that is not being reported, their next victim very well could be an American. Their next victim very well could be your family. It could be my family. And that's why we all have an interest in community policing, in law enforcement, as well as public health, to make sure that people are inoculated and treated early for diseases, regardless of their status.

Now the solution is not to have this large population here illegally. Whenever we're talking about this enforcement, it's tough. There's no right answer. The right answer is comprehensive immigration reform. Let's find a way where the people that we need here to have critical jobs in our economy, that have families, that are in our community, that have kids that are American and going to school and doing well every day, have a way and paperwork to show that they can be here.

Now that doesn't mean in comprehensive immigration reform that anybody gets citizenship. And I want to be clear about this, because frequently this false specter of somehow granting citizenship to 11 million people is raised. Comprehensive immigration reform in any version doesn't give citizenship to anybody. Not one person, not a thousand people, not a million people. Zero people. In fact, under all the versions that are being talked about of comprehensive immigration reform, anybody who's here illegally would have to get right with the law and would go to the back of the line with regard to applying for citizenship some day, if they're eligible. To be eligible, they'll have to follow the laws of our country for many years. They'll have to learn English. They'll have to take a test.

Yes, some day it's possible that some immigrants will become citizens. It's also possible and likely that many will choose never to. They might work here for a number of years and return to an-

other country. And that's fine. But it's critical that there is at least the ability to get right with the law. It's very frustrating when people say, Why don't they get in line today? Because it's a nonexistent line. Comprehensive immigration reform will create the line that people will then get into and create an immigration system that is in touch with reality in this country, in touch with a pro-growth agenda, in touch with an agenda that will make our country prosperous, that will conform our treatment of our neighbors to our values as Americans, the same values that extended a welcome to my ancestors and yours when they came to these shores and helped their, in my case, grandchildren and great grandchildren serve in this great body.

So, too, we need to assure that our values are represented in our immigration system. And whether one is on the left or the right, it is clear that today's disaster of an immigration system is not reflective of our value as Americans—our value as Americans not to tear families apart, our values as Americans to ensure that if you work hard and you play by the rules, you can get ahead in this country. You can succeed in this country. The value of encouraging civic participation is absolutely critical.

So this is a unique opportunity, a unique moment. It's a bipartisan approach, as it has to be. This is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. Immigration reform is an American issue, as it always has been a Nation of immigrants, a Nation of laws. And we can conform those two together so that we can fulfill our destiny in a way that honors the rule of law and honors the role of immigrants in creating our great country.

Mr. ELLISON. I do appreciate the gentleman from Colorado. Congressman POLIS, you have been on the mark on this thing ever since you stepped into this body, and there are literally I think millions of people who appreciate your advocacy. I just want to mention a few points and then, of course, invite you to dive back in.

The President does have a proposal on immigration reform. It's reasonable. It's a commonsense starting point. Republicans and Democrats need to find a way, as Congressman POLIS just said. But it is a clear path toward a legal status for thousands who are already in the U.S. working and paying taxes. It's a process for family reunification. It's a workable employment verification system with penalties for employers who knowingly hire people who are not in status. It is a reasonable enforcement.

But I just want to say this, and I want to invite Congressman POLIS to react. We've put about \$18 billion into border issues so far. One of the real things about comprehensive immigration reform is, we hear people talk about the border, the border, the border. Well, President Obama has done tons on the border—for some of us, too

much—but the border issue is not the problem. The real problem is the other part.

I yield to the gentleman from Colorado to see if you have any thoughts about this matter.

Mr. POLIS. Another thing that's important for Americans to understand about how 11 million people got here without paperwork and how this continues to occur is that more than half of the population that lives and works here illegally didn't sneak across a border. They came here legally. They came here as a tourist, they came with a visa. They stayed illegally and worked illegally. So, again, even if you had 100 percent security at the border—and, by the way, that's certainly a valid goal—but you're never going to have 100 percent. But even if you had 100 percent, you would still have a large flow of people to this country illegally because it's not that hard to get a tourism visa, to get a student visa, to get some other type of documentation for travel that allows you to be here for a month or 3 months and then to outstay that and work here illegally.

So no matter what you do on the border—and, by the way, I think absolutely as part of comprehensive immigration reform there will be more border security—but no matter what you do on the border, you don't address the issue without having a comprehensive approach that deals with those already here, that deals with the immigration laws going forward so we don't wind up in this same situation again in 10 or 20 years, to make sure that our immigration laws reflect the real needs of our country, the needs of the private sector, the needs of the workforce in terms of making sure we have enough people in the service industry. Whether it's to pick crops in the field, whether it's to staff our high-tech companies with programmers, we need to have an America-centric approach to immigration. And while border enforcement can certainly be a part of that, no matter how much you have, it doesn't even come close to addressing the issue of immigration in this country. And that's why, as the President indicated in his speech and in his call, as others from both sides of the aisle have indicated, it's critical for America to take on the issue of immigration reform and pass a comprehensive solution.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Congressman. I'm going to wrap up in about 5 minutes or so. But I just want to hit a few things that need to be touched on. One is that the Progressive Caucus is very concerned about this looming sequestration. Now folks out there this evening, Mr. Speaker, might think, sequestration, what is that? Is that like when you go on jury duty or something? No. Sequestration is what we're calling some really dramatic cuts to Federal spending that are coming up in about 2 weeks.

□ 1710

And now you're thinking, How did we end up here? Here is what happened.

In August 2011, the Republicans had taken the majority in that session, the first session of the 112th Congress, in January, and they started out with an agenda to dramatically reduce the size of government. They started out with something called Cut, Cap and Balance, and they wanted to cut all kinds of programs. They never wanted to touch defense, but they wanted to cut the Federal Government. I'm talking about Head Start, Women Infants, and Children nutrition, programs that help support State and local governments, for police, fire, all kinds of stuff like that, they wanted to cut. And they wanted to cut big-time. They wanted to cut Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

And so they came forward with this proposal. Now, they knew they couldn't get it past the Senate, but they said, Oh, the debt ceiling. The debt ceiling, we can use that as a lever to make the Democrats give us significant cuts to the Federal budget.

So what they did, in August 2011, they said that we're going to allow—we're not going to raise the debt ceiling. We're going to allow the Federal Government to default on previously acquired obligations of the United States—so not pay our bills that we already acquired and risk our triple A credit rating—if you do not impose dramatic cuts.

And so what the President did is said, Okay, we're going to give you some cuts up front and we'll set up something called the supercommittee. Three Democrats from the House, three Republicans from the House, three Republicans from the Senate, three Democrats from the Senate, we'll call that the supercommittee, and they are going to work out a compromise and give us an up-or-down vote on some more cuts. But if they don't, then we're going to have this thing called the sequester and there will be across-the-board cuts in a dramatic and really imposing way.

The sequester is what we're facing now because the supercommittee failed. Now, the supercommittee didn't just fail. What we didn't know is that when the Republicans, both House and Senate, appointed their members of the supercommittee, all of them had signed a promise to a man named Grover Norquist never to raise any taxes. And so what happened is that they got on this supercommittee and refused to negotiate. Democrats said, We'll do some cuts, but we need some revenue. We need to raise some taxes and close some loopholes.

Republicans said, No way, and Democrats said, Well, wait a minute. So you want it all cuts and no raising taxes. They said, That's right, we're not going to negotiate with you on this.

And so the supercommittee failed in its work. When it failed in its work, that meant that we were going to deal

with sequester, and that's where we are now.

Sequester is going to impose automatic, arbitrary cuts that could lay off, according to the Congressional Budget Office, up to about 750,000 people. There are going to be cuts in domestic spending and cuts to military spending. Some of us think that military cuts are warranted. Others of us are absolutely concerned about the people who are going to be affected by these domestic cuts.

Let me wrap up. I just want to say that I am concerned that several Republicans seem real cavalier about sequester, and you should look at the list. The Progressive Caucus' solution is to repeal sequester. What we would propose to do with our legislation is to say 50 percent cuts, 50 percent revenue. We already cut \$1.7 trillion in revenue, and then last New Year's Eve we got some money in the door through raising taxes and now we need to balance to 50-50. This is what we call the Balancing Act.

Our bill would bring it to balance by raising money through closing loopholes, carried interest, jets and yachts, stuff like that. Oh, yeah, you didn't know they could write off their jets and their yachts? Oh, yeah, they can. And then put about \$300 billion into jobs.

Let me wrap up by saying the Balancing Act, you can go online and look it up. It's a great program. We urge you to support it. In the last 1 second, if I may—I've promised my friend 20 minutes and I'm messing up right now.

On February 22, the Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in the Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder case. This threatens to take away serious voting rights. I'm going to be talking about this, because democracy must prevail. We have not reached the point where everybody has a fair vote in this country. I don't have the time to elaborate on it now, but please be aware that this Shelby County v. Holder is a critical issue. The Supreme Court is going to take it up on the 27th of February. We need to be aware of that if we want to believe that you ought to be able to cast a fair vote in America.

With that, I am going to yield to the gentleman from Colorado. Thank you very much, Congressman.

Mr. POLIS. I thank the gentleman from Minnesota.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman yield back his time?

Mr. POLIS. The gentleman from Minnesota yielded to me.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. POLIS. I would like to ask the Speaker how much time remains.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Minnesota has 25 minutes remaining.

Mr. POLIS. And the gentleman has yielded his time.

Mr. ELLISON. With the understanding that the gentleman will get the balance of the time remaining of

my hour, then I will yield the floor back.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman yield back his time?

Mr. ELLISON. I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his inquiry.

Mr. ELLISON. My inquiry is, if I yield back, does the gentleman from Colorado get the balance of the time I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Colorado may serve as the designee of the minority leader for the remainder of the hour.

Mr. ELLISON. And further inquiry, are there 25 minutes left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The minority hour has 24 minutes remaining.

Mr. ELLISON. In that case, I yield back the balance of my time.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS) is recognized for 24 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of passing comprehensive immigration reform as soon as possible.

CINDY SLOSSON

I have a story to share from a resident in my district, Cindy Slosson from Fort Collins, Colorado. Cindy wrote me that her daughter fell in love with a young man from Mexico when they were in high school. They had a dream about their future lives together, and part of that dream was of course helping him become an American citizen so he could go to college, find a job and support their family that they hoped to build together. They persisted tirelessly for 10 years, through everything that the American bureaucracy and Immigration Services threw at them, and today, finally, he's a citizen of the United States. He's pursuing his degree in aviation mechanics and wants to continue to go to school for an engineering degree.

Part of their dream is now a reality and they keep on building upon this dream to be contributing community members and leaders among their friends and family. Cindy writes that, unfortunately, some young people don't have the kind of support and focus and, frankly, patience that her children had.

Cindy writes:

Let's make their path a bit more attainable. I believe most everyone truly wants to do their best, so let's give them a chance to be their best in this country.

□ 1720

As Cindy writes, there are so many people that are caught up in indefinite waiting periods just to be reunited with their own family, people who give up hope and move from their family and friends and everybody they know

simply because they can't get through the unrealistic length of time it takes to navigate our legal system.

As part of comprehensive immigration reform, we need to have a system that reflects our values as Americans and one that's realistic for families to go through.

MONICA OLGUIN

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share a story from a constituent from my district, Monica Olguin from Boulder, Colorado. Now, her story is an interesting one because the U.S. came to her instead of her moving to the United States. Her family hails from the southwestern United States even before it was part of Mexico. Her family descended from Spanish colonial settlers in 1598 near Santa Fe, New Mexico. Over the following 300 years, they traveled north to Colorado to Conejos County, where the family has been for over 100 years.

Now, Monica writes:

Many of our best students today have been immigrant children.

Monica, herself, taught in our public schools for over 30 years.

Monica writes:

They enter our school system with great hopes and dreams and do not take education for granted. It isn't long, though, before they are able to express their fear of losing their place in this country, their fear of not belonging in their country of origin or their knowledge that there is no hope for success or dreams for their future in either their country of origin or in this country.

Monica shares the concerns of so many of us whose lives have touched those who live in this country every day in fear of the very government that should be there to protect them, in fear that it will detain them indefinitely, in fear that it will send them out of this country back to a country that they know no one in, that they might not have even been in since they were 3 years old or 8 years old or perhaps even to a country where the language that's spoken is not even a language that they're fluent in. That is the reality of our immigration system every day.

As Monica writes, it's critical that we replace our broken immigration system with one that works now. You're only a child once, and we need to make sure that our next generation of leaders has every opportunity to make our country greater.

PAUL EDWARD CONDON

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share a story from a constituent of mine in Lafayette, Colorado, Paul Edward Condon. Like so many Coloradans, Paul feels that we need to replace our broken immigration system with one that works for our country and make sure that we have a way to make sure that the people already here can get right with the law.

Paul writes that on his father's side he is descended from people who his daughter, Katherine, likes to say qualify her to be a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. On

his mother's side, he's descended from immigrants from Bohemia in the 1890s who homesteaded in Oregon. So, like many Americans, Paul is a child of both one side of the family with long roots in our country dating from before our country existed and another side of his family recent immigrants.

As Paul writes, perhaps with the full sense of understanding that comes from his personal story, Paul writes:

We are all sons and daughters of immigrants, including those descended from the peoples who were already here when my earliest immigrant ancestor arrived and descended from the people who also arrived unwillingly in this country. All immigrants, all mingled together. And, indeed, even Congresspersons are descended from immigrants. Congresspersons who wish to restrict immigration and reject immigrants are rejecting their own heritage. They should be ashamed.

I agree with Paul. We are all, in this country, descended from immigrants. And whether those immigrants arrived thousands of years ago, hundreds of years ago, decades ago, or last week, our future is intertwined with the very definition of America as an immigrant Nation, a Nation of laws, a Nation of immigrants.

Those two need to be reconciled. We need laws that reflect our values as Americans, our values as a Nation of immigrants; laws that are enforceable and in touch with reality rather than laws that tear families apart every day in this country and deny—deny people who have worked hard here and contributed to society the opportunity to fully partake in our great country and to someday become Americans themselves.

SEMAY DIBEKULU NELSON

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share a story from a constituent in Colorado from the Second Congressional District, Semay Dibekulu Nelson, from Boulder, Colorado, who shared a story with me about immigration, that speaks to the need to reform our immigration system today to ensure that everybody gets a chance to succeed in this country.

Semay writes:

As a first generation immigrant American having received political asylum under life-threatening conditions, I feel the pain of undocumented immigrants and their fear of being deported. I am honored to have received your message, and I would like to reflect on this important topic. I'm aware there's no time to waste while millions are being underpaid for an honest day's work while living in fear of detention and deportation. I hope our government brings this agonizing issue to a positive resolution. The time is over in which we can afford to ignore an issue that has led to this humanitarian catastrophe.

I agree with Semay. Hers is a firsthand story of many legal immigrants like Semay who have firsthand knowledge of the process of leaving everything they know and coming to a new country without friends and without family. How difficult is that? Yet, today, our government is active tearing families apart, at taxpayer expense