

Kansas, Emporia State is much recognized to this day for its outstanding teachers college. One-third of the degrees earned each year at Emporia State are graduate degrees—the high-est rate of any university in Kansas.

Today, I join more than 5,900 current students and 75,000 alumni in congratulating Emporia State University on their first 150 years, and I wish them the very best in the next 150 years.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT CHALLENGE

(Mr. SCOTT of Virginia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, our right to vote is the very foundation of our democracy. In passing the Voting Rights Act, Congress relied on an extensive record of discrimination in voting.

Section 5 is one of the act's most important provisions. It requires covered jurisdictions to submit planned changes in their election laws to Federal officials and judges for prior approval. The areas covered by section 5 were covered the old-fashioned way—they earned it—by implementing poll taxes, literacy tests, gerrymandered election districts, and other schemes.

If the Supreme Court invalidates section 5 in its upcoming decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, it would essentially allow jurisdictions with a history of discrimination to implement any discriminatory voter scheme and to then place the burden on the victims to raise the money to bring a lawsuit and to, meanwhile, suffer under the discriminatory scheme until the Court rules. Then, without section 5, those same jurisdictions could create another scheme and repeat the whole process.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when America has staked so much of its international reputation on the need to spread democracy around the world, we must ensure its vitality here at home and preserve section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on the motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Any record vote on the postponed question will be taken later.

CONDEMNING NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR TEST

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 65) condemning the Government of North Korea for its flagrant and repeated violations of multiple

United Nations Security Council resolutions, for its repeated provocations that threaten international peace and stability, and for its February 12, 2013, test of a nuclear device, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 65

Whereas, on February 12, 2013, North Korea exploded a nuclear device;

Whereas reports indicate that the nuclear test was apparently more powerful than North Korea's previous tests in 2006 and 2009;

Whereas North Korea's nuclear test, and its recent ballistic missile test, are violations of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1695 (2006), Resolution 1718 (2006), Resolution 1874 (2009), and Resolution 2087 (2013);

Whereas North Korea's ballistic missile program poses a threat to United States allies and interests in the Asia Pacific region;

Whereas North Korea's ballistic missile program has demonstrated an increasing ability to reach the United States, and could constitute a grave threat to the security of the American people;

Whereas North Korea has violated the July 27, 1953, Armistice Agreement that ended the Korean War, and has since committed unprovoked acts of war against South Korea by sinking the warship *Cheonan*, killing 46 of her crew, and by attacking civilian targets on the island of Yeongpyeong, killing four residents, among many other willful violations and outrages;

Whereas the Government of North Korea has been implicated repeatedly in the illicit laundering of monetary instruments, in international narcotics trafficking, and in the counterfeiting of United States currency and intellectual property;

Whereas North Korea has demonstrated a willingness and ability to proliferate its ballistic and nuclear technology to a variety of countries, including Iran and Syria, both United States designated state sponsors of terrorism;

Whereas the Government of North Korea commits gross human rights violations against the North Korean people, including maintaining a system of gulags that imprison thousands of citizens, and policies that have resulted in starvation deaths of over 2,000,000 people; and

Whereas the Government of North Korea has repeatedly violated its commitments to the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of its nuclear weapons program, including the Agreed Framework of 1994, the Joint Statement of September 19, 2005, and the agreement of February 13, 2007: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns the Government of North Korea for its flagrant and repeated violations of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions, for its repeated provocations that threaten international peace and stability, and for its February 12, 2013, test of a nuclear device;

(2) expresses solidarity with the people of North Korea who suffer severe oppression, denial of basic human rights and political liberties, and material deprivation;

(3) reaffirms the commitment of the United States to its alliances with Japan and South Korea, which are critical for the preservation of peace and stability in Northeast Asia and throughout the region;

(4) calls upon the People's Republic of China, North Korea's closest ally and trading partner, to pressure North Korean leaders to

curtail their provocative behavior, abandon and dismantle their nuclear and missile programs through the curtailing of vital economic support and trade to North Korea that support the Government of North Korea, and comply with all relevant international agreements and United Nations Security Council and International Atomic Energy Agency resolutions;

(5) calls on the People's Republic of China to take immediate actions to prevent the transshipment of illicit technology, military equipment, and dual-use items through its territory, waters, and airspace that could be used in North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs; and

(6) calls on the United States Government—

(A) to apply all available sanctions on North Korea, cooperate with United States allies and other countries to impose additional sanctions on North Korea, and secure a new United Nations Security Council resolution imposing stronger sanctions;

(B) to utilize aggressively the range of available legal authorities and resources to defend United States interests against North Korean illicit activities; and

(C) to support the President's commitment to strengthen the United States ballistic missile defense system to protect the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous materials on this resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

What I want to share with the body is that, on February 12 of 2013, North Korea successfully carried out a nuclear test—a test in flagrant violation of numerous international sanctions and of numerous agreements that North Korea has made in the past.

This test, which is the third time that North Korea has exploded a nuclear device, is a stark reminder that Kim Jong Un is determined to develop his nuclear arsenal while depriving North Koreans of their most basic human rights. When I say their “most basic human rights,” we had an opportunity to speak with the former propaganda minister of North Korea, who told us that 1.9 million North Koreans starved while this regime, in violating every agreement it had made with the international community, plowed forward with a plan to develop nuclear weapons.

North Korea has literally spent billions on its nuclear and its three-stage ICBM program, and that is all money that could have provided enough food to feed this country for years. If you've ever been in North Korea, you've seen

that the children there are malnourished. As a matter of fact, up to 50 percent of the children are so malnourished that it is estimated that it's going to affect their future development and their ability to really think conceptually because of the degree of deprivation there.

In the meantime, it also continues to build up its military. This week's test comes only 2 months after the launch of a North Korean intercontinental missile, leaving no doubt in my mind that decades of fruitless negotiations, frankly, have been a failure.

North Korea is a pariah state that has attacked its neighbors many times. Just last month, Ranking Member ELIOT ENGEL of New York and I had the opportunity to visit the wreckage of the South Korean naval vessel Cheonan, and there we saw the evidence where 46 South Korean sailors lost their lives in 2011—victim to a North Korean torpedo that was fired at that ship. I cannot imagine the anguish that this despicable act has caused for so many of those parents of those young sailors in South Korea.

□ 0920

The shared sacrifice that South Koreans and Americans have endured as a result of North Korean aggression is a sacred, inseparable bond between our two peoples. This resolution appropriately stands by South Korea and Japan, our allies in northeast Asia.

As North Korea continues to disregard international norms, it's important for this House to speak out, but we must do more. In the coming weeks, I will introduce legislation that targets North Korea's ability to access hard currency.

In my conversations with President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea and President-elect Park Geun-hye, I have always stressed the importance of targeted sanctions so that we can bring about change inside North Korea. When dictators cannot pay their generals, they cannot test nuclear weapons and launch missiles. This was an important lesson of the financial sanctions we put on Banco Delta Asia and other banks in the past that have dealt with the North Korean regimes; and, as a result of that imposition at the time, it brought to a halt the ability of the North Korean regime to pay its generals.

Mr. Speaker, America's policy on North Korea has been a bipartisan failure. We can no longer just hope that North Korea is going to give up its weapons in exchange for aid. It is time we come together to hold this regime responsible for all the pain and suffering that it has caused, and do so by imposing this access to hard currency restriction. I cannot envision a scenario where Kim Jong Un voluntarily gives up the one weapon that, frankly, keeps his dynasty in power.

Reports indicate that North Korea's nuclear program is getting more powerful and its missiles are flying further.

If North Korea is allowed to continue down this path, frankly, we all lose. The time to act is now.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of H. Res. 65, as amended. I would like to thank our chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. ROYCE, for his leadership in addressing the threat posed by North Korea. I'm proud to be the lead Democratic cosponsor of this resolution. I believe it's very important for the House to speak with a strong bipartisan voice in condemning North Korea's recent nuclear test.

This test was an unnecessary provocation that raises tensions in northeast Asia and poses a threat to the national security of the United States and our allies in the region. The test also violates numerous U.N. Security Council resolutions, and I urge the Security Council to promptly pass a new resolution with additional sanctions to punish the North Korean regime.

In particular, I call on China and Russia to work constructively with other members of the Security Council to show the world that the world is united in opposing North Korea's unacceptable behavior. I recently traveled to Asia with Chairman ROYCE, and this is one of the key issues we discussed with senior Chinese leaders. China must do more. They're the ones that can rein in North Korea. They must do so, and they must do so immediately.

The North Korean regime must understand that the development of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons will never make it a strong and prosperous nation. Instead of wasting millions of dollars on these weapons of mass destruction, it should focus on feeding its own impoverished people.

I have visited North Korea, the capital of North Korea, Pyongyang, on two occasions, and I can tell you that the North Korean regime would do better to help its own people, give them the things that they deserve, rather than spend its time and money on exploding nuclear devices in violation of what the international community believes. The new young dictator of North Korea, Kim Jong Un, must understand that the United States and our allies will not stand idly by and allow them to continuously violate what the international community thinks is acceptable.

I agree with Chairman ROYCE that for too long they have played this game. They have talked and talked and gone on and gone on and nothing has really been done, and they continue to violate international law. Unfortunately, Iran is playing the same game, and we cannot allow that to happen either—Iran getting a nuclear weapon.

So given the threat posed by North Korea, the United States must remain vigilant and further strengthen cooperation with our allies of South Korea and Japan. As the chairman

said, we were in South Korea just a few days ago and we saw the evidence of provocation, of North Korea torpedoing a ship from South Korea, killing 50-some-odd members of the military of South Korea in an unprovoked attack. This is an outlaw regime, and it really must be handled properly.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a moment and thank Mr. ENGEL for the forceful leadership that he gave us on this issue as we were meeting with the Governments of China and Japan and South Korea.

Mr. Speaker, I would now yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and our chairman emeritus, who has been very engaged on North Korea policy.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I thank our esteemed chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, as well as our ranking member, my good friend, Mr. ENGEL of New York.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, authored by Mr. ROYCE and Mr. ENGEL, condemning North Korea for its most recent nuclear test.

Kim Jong Un, like his father and his grandfather before him, continues to thumb his nose at the United States, at South Korea, and Japan—indeed, the international community as a whole—by flagrantly violating U.N. Security Council resolutions. Pyongyang continues to pursue its goals of nuclear armament while leaving its citizens malnourished, starving, and suffering from diseases.

Without an appropriate response, North Korea will continue to launch rockets, as it did this past December, will continue to conduct nuclear tests, and will continue to undermine U.S. national security interests, as well as threaten our allies in the region. It is clear that North Korea is not now, nor has it ever been, an honest broker and has never lived up to its international obligations.

The time for engagement has long since passed, Mr. Speaker. Kim Jong Un has made his priorities clear: to obtain a nuclear weapon and to support, finance, and equip rogue regimes such as Iran and Syria. Such support to these state sponsors of terrorism should be more than enough for us in the United States to redesignate North Korea on the terrorist list.

I introduced a bipartisan bill earlier this week, the North Korea Sanctions and Diplomatic Nonrecognition Act of 2013, that would do exactly that. This is a critical moment for our allies in Asia, and the United States must reaffirm our unwavering support to our allies, South Korea and Japan.

I urge my colleagues to join us in condemning North Korea for its repeated provocations and violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. ROYCE. I yield the gentlelady an additional minute.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I thank the gentleman for the time.

So, therefore, I call upon the administration to take appropriate action necessary and stand in solidarity with our South Korean and Japanese allies as they continue to live under the increasing threat of a nuclear North Korea.

I thank the chairman and the ranking member for their leadership on this issue, and our Foreign Affairs Committee will continue to pursue this terrible, vexing problem doggedly.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I just want to say that we can hear that Members on both sides of the aisle are speaking with one voice in unison, and I urge, again, the Congress to speak on a bipartisan basis to say that this is not acceptable and that we condemn in the strongest possible terms what North Korea has done.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. If I might yield, Mr. Speaker, 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific.

□ 0930

Mr. CHABOT. I'd like to add my voice to thanking the leadership, Chairman ROYCE, Ranking Member ENGEL, and former full chair, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, for their leadership on this very important issue.

I rise in strong support of this resolution condemning the actions of a pariah state and its dictatorial leader for brazenly violating international sanctions, multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions, and repeatedly threatening the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea's test of a nuclear bomb on February 12, following its test of a ballistic missile in December, was a clear indication that it is continuing its quest for the ability to threaten the United States, South Korea, and other neighbors in the region.

It has become evident that the current international sanctions are not working, but rather, emboldening Pyongyang to expand its arsenal and proliferate nuclear and ballistic technologies to dangerous allies in the Middle East.

This resolution is only the first step in an effort to cripple the North Korean regime's ability to carry on with its illicit nuclear activities. I look forward to working with Chairman ROYCE and my colleagues on additional legislation that puts in place much tougher and more effective sanctions to sever Kim Jong Un's ability to threaten the international community.

Mr. Speaker, the long-suffering people of North Korea are starving and being deprived of the most basic of human rights while their latest dictator squanders the nation's precious

resources and threatens his neighbors and the surrounding region. The civilized world must take notice and take action.

I thank the chairman for his leadership on this issue, and I urge support of the resolution.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to urge my colleagues to support this resolution condemning North Korea's nuclear test. This threat, I would point out, is not just a threat to Northeast Asia; it's a global threat that demands our attention.

North Korea has demonstrated a willingness—in the past they've demonstrated a clear ability to proliferate nuclear and missile technology. We think about their proliferation to countries, nuclear proliferation to Syria. We think about their nuclear technology and their missile technologies for proliferation to Iran.

We cannot wait for the next nuclear test, Mr. Speaker, or the news that North Korea has successfully miniaturized a nuclear weapon. We already saw the statement that this was a smaller nuclear weapon in the past. We saw the official KCNA news outlet for the North Korean regime make the statement that their target for their ICBM program was the United States.

Lastly, many of us remember the video that came out last week, that very odd video that shows a North Korean sleeping, dreaming about an ICBM attack. The ICBM is launched. It ends up following the curvature of the Earth and hitting New York City in this video with that very odd background music playing. But it just shows an attitude.

I think that we cannot stand idle and tell ourselves that further sanctions have no prospect of success, especially when we saw how effective, for that brief period of time where the Treasury Department was so concerned about the counterfeiting of \$100 bills that they actually forced deployment of those financial sanctions on those institutions which the North Koreans used in order to have access to hard currency.

We saw, at that time, the result and the protest from North Korea, and the result inside North Korea when there was not the money to pay the military or carry out the types of programs that they do in terms of their missile and nuclear testing.

So it's time to be honest with the American people that, frankly, our current North Korean policy is not working. It hasn't worked for a long time. Going forward, we need to move away from that failed North Korean policy to one with energy and creativity and focus. And I think we need to learn from what worked in the past until, unfortunately, those sanctions were lifted shortly after they were deployed because of the protests from North Korea.

So let's tackle North Korea's illicit activities, its missile and drug pro-

liferation, where, between that and its counterfeit currency program, that's how it gets close to 50 percent of its hard currency. This regime will do anything for money, obviously. As South Koreans will tell you, it's a gangster regime.

But let's interfere with those shipments. Let's disrupt the bank accounts that are used. Let's ramp up the radio broadcasts into the country, where there is evidence the information wall is cracking. Thirty-seven percent of those people that flee the regime today say they're listening to broadcasts or they're accessing information that is telling them about what's happening in the outside world and what's really going on in their own country. And that's the kind of information we have to get into this regime.

Let's help the refugees who are literally dying to escape the prison above the 38th parallel. Weakening the regime is the only way to make the Korean Peninsula secure. So we must come together and do whatever is necessary to deprive Kim Jong Un of his nuclear weapons.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 65 and I strongly condemn the most recent North Korea nuclear weapons test.

It is unacceptable that the North Korean regime continues to ignore repeated calls from the United Nations Security Council and the international community to halt its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Despite repeated overtures from the international community, the North Korean regime continues to blatantly ignore all attempts to create a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula.

By conducting this nuclear weapons test, the North Korean regime has decided to brazenly disregard the Agreed Framework of 1994, the Joint Statement of September 19, 2005, the Agreement of February 13, 2007, and four United Nations Security Council resolutions. On February 12, 2013 the United Nations Security Council met again and unanimously condemned the North Korean regimes most recent nuclear weapons test.

This most recent test threatens to destabilize the entirety of Northeast Asia and is a direct threat to U.S. national security. That is why I encourage President Obama and the international community to take swift action against this irresponsible and dangerous behavior. I support new and stronger sanctions against North Korea to show that we mean business. We cannot simply continue to expand previously passed sanctions—they are not working.

My heart goes out to the people of North Korea. On a daily basis, the North Korean people are subject to countless violations of their human rights including forced labor, starvation and wrongful imprisonment. Ignoring the plight of their own people, the North Korean regime would rather continue to isolate themselves, instead of reengage the international community to find meaningful and commonsense solutions. It is my hope that for the sake of their starving people, that the North Korean regime will halt any additional nuclear weapons tests.

Mr. Speaker, as the proud Representative of one of the largest Korean American populations in the country, many of whom fear for the safety of their friends and family abroad, I urge my colleagues to support this vital resolution. We must not stand idly by as North Korea continues to threaten U.S. national security and our friends and allies in the region.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, all of us condemn this reckless, provocative nuclear test by North Korea. North Korea's pursuit of a nuclear capability is destabilizing and not in the interest of the people of that nation, who suffer daily under one of the worst dictatorships the world has seen.

Yet even as we condemn this test and seek to prevent future ones, we must not make the mistake of believing—as this resolution asserts—that supporting more money for a ballistic missile defense system is the answer. America has wasted literally tens of billions of dollars since the 1980s in pursuit of a ballistic missile shield that is not technically feasible and is viewed as destabilizing by our international partners, especially Russia. While I support this resolution's condemnation of North Korea's test, I do not support its call for spending more money on a failed missile defense effort.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 65, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

ELIMINATION OF 2013 PAY ADJUSTMENT

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 66, I call up the bill (H.R. 273) to eliminate the 2013 statutory pay adjustment for Federal employees, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 66, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 273

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. ELIMINATION OF 2013 PAY ADJUSTMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 147 of the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (Public Law 111-242; 5 U.S.C. 5303 note), as amended by section 114(a) of the Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2013 (Public Law 112-175; 126 Stat. 1316), is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)(1), by striking the matter after “ending on” and before “shall be made” and inserting “December 31, 2013,”; and

(2) in subsection (c), by striking the matter after “ending on” and before “no senior executive” and inserting “December 31, 2013,”.

(b) ELIMINATION OF DELAYED ADJUSTMENT.—Section 114(b) of the Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2013 is repealed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 273 and to include extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Good-paying, full-time jobs should not be limited to those fortunate enough to work for the Federal Government.

At a time when hardworking American taxpayers are struggling to find work and keep their heads above water, the Federal Government offers its workforce sufficient and generous pay and job security. This is not to imply that they're overpaid. This is not to imply that they're overcompensated. That's a discussion for another day.

But certainly, at a time in which the American people saw their household income drop by \$4,000, that has not happened in the Federal workforce. Year after year, the Federal workforce has received step increases and other pay increases. And with the exception of a relatively limited pay freeze done under President Obama's executive order, they, in fact, have received consistent pay increases and their benefits have been maintained.

At this time, we are faced with sequestration. Sequestration for our men and women in uniform means aircraft do not fly, ships do not get maintained, and, yes, furloughs may very well happen. To avoid furloughs, to avoid arbitrarily cutting the most junior individuals or stripping away our military's ability to protect us, it is a small price to pay to, consistent with the President's previous pay freeze, to hold pay increases of Federal employees for one more year.

□ 0940

It is my sincere hope that, working together, we will both resolve the budget shortfalls and get America working again over the next year. But at a time when most—a great many—of the average Federal workers make more than their private sector counterparts, when a great many make more than \$100,000 a year, at a time in which Members of Congress, appropriately, have frozen their own pay year after year, it is a price that we have the authority—and we ask the Federal workforce to agree with us that in fact this is a year not to raise the pay of Federal

workers. Last year, we spent \$11 billion on non-merit pay increases for Federal workers. It's the right time to say no increases other than those specifically deemed by specific merits under statute are important.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle will not agree with this, I have no doubt. But let me say one thing. I know that Mr. CUMMINGS and I do agree that we have to find viable alternatives to stripping away the capability of our military to maintain our safety. We have to find viable alternatives to cutting the important work on medicines and other lifesaving Federal programs that in fact our seniors and all of our citizens rely on. We could do this today, or we could cut the National Institutes of Health. We could do this today, or we could park two or three of our aircraft carriers and lay off the crews. I don't think the other side has any question that a viable alternative to those kinds of across-the-board cuts are clearly important.

So I ask the minority to join with me today in realizing that this is not what we want to do. This is what we need to do if we're going to prevent arbitrary cuts that in fact will touch Americans, in many cases, in all the wrong ways.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to H.R. 273. Given the many critical challenges our Nation faces, I and many of my colleagues hope that the 113th Congress would bring a new era of shared purpose that would enable us to work together to grow the Nation's economy, create jobs, and invest in our country's future. There are only 5 legislative days, Mr. Speaker, left before the across-the-board cuts required by sequestration will take effect. Rather than seeking solutions to the urgent challenges we face, our Republican friends are wasting 2 days simply renewing their attacks on middle class, hardworking Federal employees.

H.R. 273 has one purpose: it would extend the current freeze on Federal employees' pay for a third consecutive year. Mr. Speaker, Federal workers—the same Federal workers who care for our veterans, the same ones that clean our offices, the same ones that find cures to devastating diseases at NIH, the same ones that secure our borders, the same ones that regulate our drug supply—have already contributed more than \$100 billion towards reducing the deficit and funding unemployment benefits for millions of American workers. No other group of Americans has contributed more to reducing the deficit. No other group has contributed more to ensuring our government remains strong. No other group has worked harder to ensure we're securing our Nation from threats. No other group has worked harder to provide the services on which our fellow citizens depend.

If H.R. 273 becomes law, the same middle class, hardworking workers