

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, on February 15, 2013, I was not present for rollcall vote 45. If I had been present for this vote, I would have voted "yea."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent in the House Chamber for one vote on February 13, 2013 and votes today. I would like the record to show that had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote 40, "nay" on rollcall votes 43 and 44, and "yea" on rollcall vote 45.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I was unfortunately unable to cast a vote on rollcall No. 44 and rollcall No. 45 on February 15, 2013. On rollcall No. 44 I would have voted "nay." H.R. 273 would extend the current pay freeze for federal workers by another nine months. Continued freezes, budget cuts to agencies, and ideological attacks on federal workers undermine the federal government's ability to recruit and hire a talented and high-skilled workforce while bringing us no closer to a responsible approach to deficit reduction. The men and women who have dedicated their careers to public service already have made sacrifices in pay and benefits totaling more than \$100 billion to help reduce our nation's debt. On rollcall No. 45, 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, I would have voted "yea."

MOMENT OF SILENCE IN MEMORY OF FORMER CONGRESSWOMAN CARDISS COLLINS

(Mr. RANGEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to acknowledge the life and the legacy of the late Congresswoman Cardiss Collins.

Congresswoman Collins was the first African American woman to represent a Midwestern district in this Congress. During her more than 20 years in service here, she boldly represented the Seventh Congressional District of Illinois after the untimely death of her husband, Congressman George Collins. She also led her peers with distinction as the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Now I ask, Mr. Speaker, for all of my colleagues to join me in a moment of silence to honor Congresswoman Cardiss Collins.

THE STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the President

stated, "with renewed confidence," the "state of our Union is stronger."

I know that the President would certainly like that to be the case, but I wonder: Is the confidence stronger for the more than 22 million unemployed and underemployed Americans and their family members who remain struggling to make ends meet?

Mr. Speaker, is the confidence of Americans renewed when they fill their gas tanks and oil tanks with fuel at record-high costs?

Mr. Speaker, is their confidence renewed when the most recent economic data show America's economy shrinking for the first time in 3½ years?

The challenges facing the Nation do require smart solutions, but unlike the President, I believe smart solutions mean smarter government, not bigger government. They mean a greater emphasis on promoting individual freedoms, lower taxes, and fewer regulations in order to grow jobs and opportunities for those struggling and searching for greater opportunity. They mean fewer restrictions on accessing energy under Federal lands, which can dramatically increase domestic supply and lower energy costs for all. These are among the solutions we need.

THE SAFE CLIMATE CAUCUS

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

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, today, 22 Members of the House have banded together to create a Safe Climate Caucus to end the conspiracy of silence in this House of Representatives about the dangers of climate change and the Republican denial of its existence and their rejection of the science.

We are committing to talk every single day on the House floor about the urgent need to address climate change. President Obama is leading the way. He says we must respond to climate change because to do otherwise would be to betray our children and future generations.

We are ready to get to work. We understand the threat facing our children, and we know our Nation has the know-how and the ingenuity to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, but to do so, we must act now.

TRUCKERS AGAINST TRAFFICKING

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Mike, a truck driver, pulled over at a rest stop. He noticed a young girl approaching multiple trucks. The girl, who was clearly under age, came up to his cab and offered him sex for money. She seemed scared, and he asked her a few questions. She told him that, if she did not bring in enough money for her

trafficker, the beatings by him would get worse.

Thank goodness she had the courage to call for help.

Mike understood the signs of human trafficking through an organization called Truckers Against Trafficking. He called the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, and authorities immediately arrived. The trafficker was arrested, put in jail, and the girl was rescued.

I commend Truckers Against Trafficking. It is critical for our citizens to be educated about sex trafficking so we can end this scourge. America cannot continue to be blissfully silent while modern-day slavery is occurring in our communities.

And that's just the way it is.

CLIMATE CHANGE

(Mrs. CAPPS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in addressing the immediate and increasing threat of climate change. States and localities are beginning to respond to this threat, but they can't do it alone. That's why I'm introducing two bills to help our communities prepare for the future impacts of climate change.

The first is the Coastal States Climate Change Planning Act. It provides funding to coastal States and communities so they can plan and implement climate change mitigation projects, such as seawalls, habitat buffer zones, and flood control systems. The second bill is the Water Infrastructure Resiliency and Sustainability Act, which provides funding for local water agencies. Water agencies are very concerned about the need to increase the resiliency of our aging water infrastructure systems because they're going to be impacted by climate change. These critical infrastructure projects will not only improve public health and safety, but they will also help our local economies grow by providing jobs.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to take action on climate change, so I hope we can work together to pass these and other commonsense measures to address such a critical issue.

STRENGTHENING BACKGROUND CHECKS ACT OF 2013

(Mr. FITZPATRICK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support the Strengthening Background Checks Act of 2013.

The tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School has rightfully focused our collective attention on the question of how we can best prevent senseless gun violence. An important tool in preventing gun violence is the National

Instant Criminal Background Check System, known as the NICS. We put in place this background check system to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people, but our background check system is failing.

For example, the NICS database of mentally ill individuals has fewer than 20 percent of the records that it should have. This is unacceptable. If you are a violent criminal, you should fail a background check. If you've been involuntarily committed to a mental institution, you should fail a background check. If you've been convicted of domestic abuse, you should fail a background check—no one argues with that—but if the information is not in the database, then these dangerous individuals will get their hands on guns, which could lead to devastating consequences.

Mr. Speaker, my bill will improve incentives for States to partner with the Federal Government, and it will maintain an accurate, accessible, and up-to-date NICS. This is a strong step in the right direction, and it has the support of voices on both sides of the gun debate.

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CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL

(Ms. MATSUI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, for far too long our country has ignored the blatant warning signals that climate change is real, and its effects are happening all around us, from droughts to wildfires to extreme flooding. The time to act is now. Numerous reports indicate that we are dangerously close to losing the window of opportunity in which we can meaningfully address climate change.

My district of Sacramento has already been working hard to implement commonsense policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By developing cutting-edge clean energy technology and creating energy retrofit programs, my constituents understand the urgent need to tackle this issue head-on.

Now is the time for Congress to follow their lead and show that we, too, are committed to mitigating and reversing the devastating effects of climate change. Failure to heed new warnings and take action will have drastic economic and environmental effects, not just for our generation, but for our children and grandchildren. The time to act is now.

INCREASING POLICE PRESENCE AT SCHOOLS

(Mr. MEADOWS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, the recent school massacres at Newtown, Connecticut, sent shock waves across

our country. And as a father, I grieved with the families that lost loved ones on that day, but as a legislator, I vowed that I would take action to prevent future tragedies.

According to a recent Gallup poll, 53 percent of Americans believe that increasing police presence at schools would be very effective in preventing future tragedies. After speaking with local law enforcement, superintendents, and principals in my district, I believe it is the best path forward. That is why I will be introducing the Protect America's Schools Act today.

This legislation would revitalize the Cops in Schools grant program, which has not been funded since fiscal year 2005, and fund it at \$30 million annually. The CIS program is specifically designed to assist local law enforcement agencies in the hiring of new officers.

And with a \$16.4 trillion debt, we must take action, but we must be fiscally responsible. The \$30 million to pay for this critical grant program would be offset by taking the unspent funds from the operations budget of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The Protect America's Schools Act is not the only answer, but it is a critical step forward to protect our Nation's children. Keeping our children safe is not only an area where both political parties can find common ground, but as lawmakers, we have a moral obligation to make sure that we do just that.

BROAD AND DEVASTATING EFFECT OF SEQUESTRATION

(Mr. PETERS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PETERS of California. Mr. Speaker, San Diego is the largest metropolitan area for military personnel and base operations. My district is home to seven military installations, and sequestration will have a broad and devastating effect on our military families and economy.

In total, defense spending is responsible for 25 percent of San Diego's GDP. That means 1 out of every \$4 generated in San Diego is achieved as a result of defense spending. The proposed cuts to the defense budget will cost San Diego more than 30,000 defense-related jobs, and the Navy will be forced to put a freeze on hiring civilians, many of whom are veterans.

With 11.5 percent of our community's veterans unemployed and a shocking 25 percent of veterans between 18 and 24 struggling to find employment, any further reduction in job opportunities for our Nation's heroes is unacceptable. We can neither threaten our military readiness with indiscriminate cuts nor can we fail the brave men and women of our Armed Forces and their families who have already sacrificed so much.

Please join with me in bringing an end to the partisan gridlock and finding solutions that do not put undue

burdens on those who risk their lives in defense of our freedom.

RECOGNIZING REVA BRITAN

(Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Reva Britan for her brilliant 25 years of service to the people of south Florida.

Reva began her career in 1988, after successfully raising five sons, and became a congressional staffer for former Congressman Larry Smith, then worked for former Congressman Peter Deutch, my predecessor, and for the last 8 years, she has been working with me in my district office. Her continuity of service and her depth of experience has benefited thousands of my constituents.

She is a much-loved staffer who brings her joy, her light, and her smile to the Pembroke Pines office every single day. Whether she's helping someone set up a tour or greeting constituents on the phone, she does it all with ease and elegant grace.

On behalf of the constituents of Florida's 23rd Congressional District, we thank Reva for her service and her dedication to our community, our office, and our country.

REJECT THE SEQUESTER

(Ms. LEE of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, in the State of the Union address this week, President Obama laid out a powerful vision for our Nation, one that will create jobs, tear down barriers to prosperity, and lift the most vulnerable out of poverty.

At the same time, the Republican-controlled House has yet to bring a bill to the floor to prevent the unconscionable budget sequester from slashing thousands of jobs and pushing poor and low-income individuals over the edge.

As the President said this week, we cannot grow the economy by shifting the cost of health care or college onto families that are already struggling, or by forcing our communities to lay off more teachers, more firefighters, and more police officers.

We must reject the sequester and reject proposals that would balance the budget on the backs of seniors, veterans, and low-income families. Everyone should have the opportunity to climb, strive, and reap the rewards of the American Dream. That is how we build our economy for all and create a better world for our children.

ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

(Mr. CLEAVER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1