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Diversified Interiors, Local 802 Musicians Health Fund, MCS Life Insurance Company†, The Buccaneer, CIGNA, Greater Metropolitan Hotel, Local 17 Hospitality Benefit Fund, GSC-ILA, The Allied Industries Health Fund, Harden Healthcare, Vernon Sheltered Workshop, Inc. Health and Welfare Plan #501, I.U.P.A.T., Sanderson Plumbing Products, Inc.

Transport Workers, United Federation of Teachers Welfare Fund, Aegis, Aetna, Allflex, Baptist Retirement, BCS Insurance, Cryogenic, Fowler Packing Co., Guy C. Lee Mfg., HealthPort, Jack in the Box, Maritime Association, Maverick County, Metropolitan D.C. Paving Industry Employees Health and Welfare Fund, PMPS-ILA, PS-ILA, QK/DRD (Denny's), Reliance Standard, Tri-Pak, United Agricultural Benefit Trust.

Mrs. BACHMANN. I thank the gentleman from Texas, Judge TED POE, because what we are fighting is to make ObamaCare equal for all Americans.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HOLDING). Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair and to refrain from engaging in personalities with regard to the President.

AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE ACT

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

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, we just heard a remarkable hour of problems that were so overblown as to be really not worthy of much discussion. But I think the American public really needs to understand what this last hour was all about. In fact, the Affordable Health Care Act is working. And it's actually working very, very well for millions upon millions of Americans.

I just want to read some facts and then move on to what is really going on here, which is an effort to try to leverage the necessity of funding the Federal Government, which is something we must do every year to provide the money to continue all of the work of the Federal Government. They're trying to use that as a lever to gain something that they've been unable to do in a Presidential election year.

The last Presidential election year, the issue of the Affordable Health Care Act was front and center, and the American people heard more than a year of debate about the Affordable Health Care Act, whether it was good or not so good, all the benefits and all of the problems that it might be. At the end, in November of last year, the American public decisively said that the Affordable Health Care Act and President Obama should continue. That was the decision by Americans.

In the House of Representatives we gained seats on the Democrat side, and

I think about 2 million more voted Democratic than they voted Republican. Although, because of the redistricting and the gerrymandering, the House remained in Republican hands.

Just understand what's going on here. What could not be achieved in the democratic process of an election is attempted to be achieved in two absolutely critical moments in the annual processing of the Federal Government.

The first moment, which comes up on October 1, is the necessity to provide money to carry on all of the tasks of the Federal Government—the Social Security Administration, the National Parks, and on and on. Nearly every aspect of the Federal Government has to be funded every year. That is a moment that is now being used as a lever to try to achieve what could not be achieved in an election. After all, America is a democracy. We make our decisions through the electoral process, not by trying to lever, using a critical moment, basically, the funding of the American Government.

Now two or 3 weeks beyond October 1 there will be yet another moment of critical importance, and that is the ability of the American Government to continue to pay its bills. It's called the debt limit. Until 2011, this was a routine process in which the Congress would continue to say, Okay, we will increase the debt limit so that we can pay our bills.

It was done during Democrat and Republican administrations routinely. There was always some discussion about the debt and the deficit, as it should be. In fact, the President, Mr. Obama, when he was in the Senate, railed against this issue of deficit. Now he's on the other side of that. That often happens.

But the fact of the matter is that in this process, these two moments of time are now being used as a lever to achieve in the legislative process what could not be achieved in the electoral process. So much for democracy.

Just a few facts about the Affordable Care Act, or ObamaCare, as it's become to be known.

Nearly 13 million Americans have benefited from over \$1.1 billion in rebates from insurance companies. I was the insurance commissioner in California in 8 years. And I knew then, as I know now, that the insurance companies were overcharging the public for their health insurance policies. However, I did not have any authority under California law to order rebates.

The Affordable Health Care Act sets up a system that requires the insurance companies to pay at least 80 percent of the premium dollar for medical services. If they don't, they have to do a rebate. It's the law that they want to repeal. That's \$1.1 billion.

Also, 105 million Americans, including 71 million Americans in private plans and 34 million seniors in Medicare, have received access to free preventative services. Do you want to hold down the cost of medical services? Do prevention.

The Affordable Health Care Act requires that every insurance policy, including Medicare, provide a free medical checkup every year. Guess what has happened? The cost curve has bent downward. Why? Because serious illnesses are either treated or delayed. Diabetes, strokes, and heart conditions are analyzed early and treated, reducing the cost of health care and, far more important, keeping people alive and healthy.

Moving on. Thirty million women are receiving free coverage for comprehensive women's preventative services, including a well-woman visit and diabetes screening. They want to repeal that: 30 million American women receiving free diagnostic care. They want to repeal it.

Seventeen million children with pre-existing health conditions can no longer be denied coverage. I was the insurance commissioner. I cannot tell you the numbers of times that I begged for a law that would require insurance companies to continue or to provide insurance for a newborn child that had a serious illness, time after time, in California. Insurance companies would insure the mother for the delivery. And the moment that child was delivered, the child had no coverage. Bankruptcies and lack of medical care ensued. Seventeen million children will be denied health care coverage if they are successful in repealing the Affordable Health Care Act. That's 17 million children.

Also, 6.6 million young adults to the age of 26 have taken advantage of the ObamaCare law, the Affordable Health Care Act, to stay on their parents' health insurance plan. Do you have a kid in college or a kid that's graduated from college that's 21 or 22? They can stay on your plan. Before the Affordable Care Act, before ObamaCare, they had very little opportunity to get insurance. They would have to go out and buy their own policy. They were able to stay on their parents' policy. That's 6.6 million young adults that will not be insured if they are successful in repealing the Affordable Health Care Act.

Also, 100 million Americans no longer have a lifetime exclusion. Previously, most health insurance policies in the United States set a limit on the amount of coverage that a person could have during their lifetime or in a given year. Now, 100 million Americans no longer have a lifetime exclusion, and 100 million Americans are able to get comprehensive coverage for the duration of their illness. They want to affect the well-being of 100 million Americans.

You've heard about the senior doughnut hole, the drug coverage. Written into the law in 2003, providing drug coverage for seniors—Medicare part D—was a doughnut hole. You got the first couple of thousand dollars covered. After that, 100 percent of the cost had to be paid by the seniors.

The Affordable Health Care Act is shrinking the doughnut hole every

year. And in another 2 or 3 years, that doughnut hole will be closed, providing an extraordinarily important benefit to seniors. I know this problem in my communities. Before the Affordable Health Care Act, before ObamaCare, seniors would reach that doughnut hole threshold and they could not afford to continue to buy their pharmaceutical products. So what did they do? Their blood pressure went up, their diabetes was not treated, and they became seriously ill.

They want to repeal the Affordable Health Care Act, and the doughnut hole will not be closed if they are successful.

Shall we continue on?

□ 1230

In California, on October 1, 4 million Californians for the first time will have access to an insurance exchange, a marketplace, a free marketplace—which we talk about all the time. But one does not exist in California until October 1, where the uninsured in California, including this Member of Congress, will be able to go to a rational marketplace that lists numerous health care policies, five different levels of coverage, all of them uniform, all of them priced, where 1 and 4 million other Californians can select the policy of our choice—not a government policy, but a private insurance company policy; a marketplace, a free market solution to the 40 million Americans that are not insured and the 4 million in California that are not insured today.

We rail back and forth, Democrats and Republicans alike, about the necessity of a free market. For the first time ever in this Nation, a free market, rational market system is established, not only in California, but in every State in this Union. And thirty-three State Governors have refused to set up a free market rational system called an exchange—called an exchange in which insurance companies will lay out their policies, lay out their price, lay out their coverages, exclusions and the rest; and the public will be able to have price information, quality information, and make a choice. That's what's called a free market. And they want to repeal it. So what are those people to do?

You know, 435 of us represent the people of America. I spent an hour listening to some 20 people who may, in their own mind, believe that they're representing their people. But I know, from my experience as insurance commissioner in California, that for the first time across this Nation, we have the opportunity to have a market system, a health insurance market system that is rational, that is sensible, in which prices are available, in which quality and multiple products are available—not a government-run health system, but rather a market system established by this government so that the people of this Nation can pick and choose which private policy they want.

If you're over 65, you can get your Medicare; and you will continue to get it with the additional benefits that are in the Affordable Care Act. If you're not yet 65 and you happen to have been unemployed at the age of 50, prior to the Affordable Care Act you were in the deepest of trouble. You were virtually uninsurable. Why? Because you were 50 years of age. You were entering that period when you were expensive; you were likely to get health issues. Insurance companies routinely discriminated against you. If you happen to be a woman, you were in even deeper trouble. Those days are gone—unless the Republican Party succeeds in repealing, delaying, and defunding the Affordable Care Act.

The American people have an opportunity today to get insurance—or they will on October 1. Exchanges will operate across the country, some run by States such as California and New York, where the Governor said this makes sense to the people in my State and we're going to do it. Others, like Texas and Montana, the Governor said, oh, we don't care about our people; therefore, the Federal Government is stepping in to set up exchanges.

Whatever you may have heard over this last hour about a government-run health care system, it is not true, except if you happen to be on Medicare. Medicare is a government-run health insurance program in which the delivery is not provided by the government, but provided by a multiplicity of health care providers. Individual doctors, groups of doctors, hospitals, big health care medical centers such as the University of California-San Francisco. Yes, Medicare is a government health insurance system; it is not a delivery system. There is one, however; it's called the U.S. military. Military hospitals and veterans hospitals, those are government delivery systems.

So whatever you may have heard about the government takeover of health care, not true unless you happen to be in the military, a veteran, or on Medicare. Even the Medicaid program is State run, not run by the Federal Government.

Oh, there are so many falsehoods. You could fill this entire room with the falsehoods that we've heard over the last months. But the reality is that the Affordable Health Care Act is good for America. It is reducing the inflation rate in health care. We've already seen the lowest inflation rate in the last 3 years, since the enactment of the Affordable Health Care Act, over the last 25 years.

So are we going to shut down government so that the opponents who failed in an election, who failed in Congress in 2010 to stop the Affordable Care Act, failed in the Presidential election, in Senate elections, are we going to shut down government so that they can leverage something that they could not achieve in an electoral process? I don't think so. I don't think the American Government will stand for it. I don't

think the American people will stand for it.

I wanted to talk about jobs. I wanted to talk about my district. I wanted to talk about the necessity of a farm bill so that there will be food on the table for the poor, so that there will be a program that the farmers in my district will know what they will face as they begin to plant their winter crops. That bill languishes because of this process that we're seeing.

I wanted to talk about a transportation bill that we must write and fund so that we can build the infrastructure, so that we can put people back to work. But, no, we're caught up here in this process.

There are things that we need to do in America, and here we are. Here we are. This is not good for America. The Affordable Health Care Act is good for Americans. And when we provide health insurance for every American, we will be a much more just society, and we will have a stronger economy. This road is out ahead of us.

I'm going to be joined by my colleagues. I yield to my colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WILSON).

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Thank you for sharing this hour with me, Representative GARAMENDI from California, my dear friend.

Mr. Speaker, who could be against making every American eligible for health care insurance? I can't even imagine. So I'm here today to help set the record straight about ObamaCare. I'm here to explain what ObamaCare means to the people in my community and the people around this Nation. And I'm here to explain the truth—the real truth—behind the health care reforms that are moving ahead on Tuesday, October 1, simply because Obama cares.

Mr. Speaker, this health reform is about making it easier and cheaper to get insurance if you don't have it. It's that simple.

Our President, Barack Obama, cares and is making health care easier to obtain. He cares and is making health care more affordable. President Barack Obama cares and is making health care more accessible.

Now, listen up: if you have Medicare, this does not apply to you. This has absolutely nothing to do with you. It will not affect your coverage. If you have Medicaid, this does not apply to you. If you have a job with health care coverage, this does not apply to you.

ObamaCare only applies if you do not currently have insurance. You will finally have the opportunity to gain protection for your body. You will finally find peace of mind. You no longer have to live in fear of being bankrupted by a health emergency. You no longer will have to let your health suffer by avoiding the doctor. You no longer will have to fear for your family going without care.

Mr. Speaker, there are very simple steps for getting started if you're insured. Because Obama cares, you can

get started with these simple directions. If you have access to the Internet, you can get started right away.

Beginning Tuesday, October 1, Healthcare.gov will give you all the information you need to sign up for this program. Once you're there, go to the tab that says "get insurance."

Mr. Speaker, this will take you to a page that will explain all the insurance marketplaces available to you. You will be able to compare all the plans available to you in your area.

Mr. Speaker, the Internet is the best way to sign up; but if you're not comfortable using a computer, ask a friend, or ask a young relative to help you survey the choices. Young people know all about computers. If you need additional help, you can also call 1-800-318-2596. People are available around the clock to offer assistance in more than 150 languages—and in Miami, that is very important. They can help you enroll by mail if you prefer.

Mr. Speaker, Obama cares so much that there will also be expert advisers called "navigators" in your community. You can find them at community health centers, at the mall, in drugstores, and in many places of worship. In some States, traditional insurance agents and brokers will be able to help. But remember this: if someone tries to charge you money for advice on how to sign up, say "no" because it is a scam. No one should be charged for assistance in signing up.

Mr. Speaker, Americans should take their time in completing the important task of choosing the right health insurance plan. I know sometimes it can take 2 hours to choose the right pair of shoes at the mall or 2 hours at the kitchen table to choose the right cable TV plan.

□ 1245

Be patient. Take your time in choosing the right plan to protect your body and your life. You won't regret it.

Mr. Speaker, Obama cares because health reform is not only about making insurance simple, but also making it affordable. Let me just give you a couple of examples:

A self-employed person with a spouse and two children and a household income of \$33,000 would more than likely not be able to afford insurance at all today, but starting Tuesday, October 1, this person would be able to get insurance for his entire family for an average of \$94 per month because of a government subsidy;

A single mother with three children and a household income of \$40,000 will now be able to insure herself and her children for an average of \$163 per month through ObamaCare.

Mr. Speaker, it's affordable and it's essential to be covered. Young people under 26 will be able to stay on their parents' plans. For those young people without the opportunity to join their parents' plans, it's especially important for you to get insurance.

If you're young, you're statistically more likely to end up in a car crash or

a motorcycle crash or to experiment with drugs or other risky behavior that lands you into trouble. You need insurance as much or more than anyone else. You have to pay to insure that car, you have to pay to insure that motorcycle, so make sure that you pay a very small portion of that first paycheck you earn to insure your precious body.

Mr. Speaker, no one said this would be easy. There will be challenges as the Federal Government implements the new insurance markets in 36 States in the weeks ahead. But progress is never easy. Nothing this important and ambitious is easy. There will be needed tweaking and needed corrections. But that was also the case in 1935 when we rolled out Social Security and in 1965 when we rolled out Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, we know that Obama cares because insurance companies can no longer deny 17 million children with preexisting conditions their health coverage. We know that Obama cares because 105 million Americans with life-threatening diseases like cancer no longer have to live in fear of maxing out on their lifetime dollar limits on their insurance coverage. We know that Obama cares because more than 3 million young people up to the age of 26 now have coverage because insurance companies can no longer remove them from their parents' plans.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are well on our way to a healthier, more financially secure Nation. We refuse, we utterly refuse, to allow anyone to damage, repeal, or turn back ObamaCare. It is the law of the land and it is here to stay. We will stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. We will speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves. We will do all this and more because President Barack Hussein Obama cares. He cares for the people of this Nation.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you very much, Ms. WILSON. Thank you for laying out the way in which the Affordable Care Act will benefit and how people can use that act, how they can access the exchanges and the benefits that are found in it.

I would like now to call on one of my colleagues from the Midwest, Mr. RYAN, if you would care to join us.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I thank the gentleman; I thank the lady.

This is, obviously, a very important issue for all of us around the country—in Ohio, especially. We have a very unique situation going on in Ohio. As I heard in the previous Special Order, I heard many members of the Tea Party Caucus come up here and talk about how bad the Affordable Care Act is, how it is going to end democracy as we know it, how the sky is going to fall, and it is troubling, I think, when you actually see what the benefits are.

Let me be the first to say as, I think, even those of us who voted for the health care reform, there's a long way to go. We've got a lot of work to do. These things aren't easy. This is a very

complicated situation, a very complicated program to try to cover all 313 million Americans, try to drive down health care costs, try to move towards more prevention and wellness—very big goals in the United States, goals that we can only really achieve if we work together.

So to have one side trying to destroy what is now law in the United States, confirmed by the Supreme Court, passed by the House, the Senate, and signed by the President, approved by the Supreme Court, now as we try to stand it up, we have people trying to inject into the process not a helpful hand, not trying to make it work better, but trying to destroy it, trying to add more uncertainty here in the United States Congress, even to the brink of wanting to shut down the government or default on the credit, the full faith and credit of the United States.

All the polls are saying 60 to 70 percent, maybe in the high 50s, most Americans say we do not want you to use shutting down the government or defaulting on our debt as a way to try to push back on ObamaCare or the Affordable Care Act.

So what I'm saying is we have millions and millions of people—here's what really gets me. People walk up on the other side of the aisle, God bless them, and they act like prior to 2008–2009 we had a health care system that took care of everybody. Everybody was fine with the current. No businesses were calling our offices saying: Man, this health care is destroying my business; I can't plan ahead. It's a 30 percent increase this year; it's 70 next year. We get one person sick in a small business of 20 or 30 people, we've got to go bankrupt.

People forget. Millions of Americans. Prior to this health care law, 1,700 families in my congressional district went bankrupt because of health care. So we are not even going to talk about that? Are we going to sweep that right under the rug, the kind of suffering that goes on in some of our communities? Are we going to drive around the problem and close our eyes?

Everyone says this is a giveaway. This is not a giveaway. This is about giving people who go to work every day, sometimes two or three jobs, have a sick kid, we are just going to ignore them because we've got this bumper sticker on the back of our truck that has four little slogans on it and, boy, we can't deviate from that because we will get primaries by a Tea Party candidate because we can't check every box along the way.

But, fine, let those 1,700 families go bankrupt. Let that kid with cancer and his parents who are at Akron Children's Hospital or some other children's hospital around the United States have to deal with the fact that they hit their lifetime cap because their child has cancer.

Now, give me a break. Because you've got to stick with that bumper

sticker, you can't deviate from the bumper sticker that says "less government," we want to go back to that great health care system that left 40 million people without any health care, that kept driving up prices for small businesses, small manufacturers in Ohio.

We can maintain what is great about the American health care system. I represent a district not far from the Cleveland Clinic. We understand in northeast Ohio how powerful it is, some aspects of our health care system, but there are failures in our health care system, and we are here as Members of the United States Congress to try to fix those holes in the system and try to help our fellow citizens that may be sick, maybe can't afford it, but go to work every day just as hard as everyone else.

I will say, before I kick it to my friend from New York, that I find it very interesting that we have some Governors in some of our States, Republican Governors in some of our States, conservative Republican Governors in some of our States, Tea Party Governors in some of our States, one in Ohio was the chair of the Budget Committee during the Gingrich revolution, Governor Casey, he makes the exact same arguments for expanding Medicaid in Ohio, which he is fighting for, along with Governor Brewer out in Arizona and some others. He makes the exact same arguments that it is immoral for us to have this level of sickness in our society with people not having access to health care, that it doesn't make any sense for us to wait for somebody to get so sick and then they dump themselves into an emergency room after weeks and weeks of sickness ending up there much sicker than they should be. He, as well as others, are making the argument that prevention is the way to go, wellness is the way to go. I commend these Governors, because it makes sense.

So sit down and work with us to help stand this up to create more competition, to make sure that these young children and their families don't have to go to bed every night—and this is the last one, now trying to take any help we are giving to congressional staffers, which is floating around here. I know it's a political hot button. But my goodness gracious, we get young people that want to come to Capitol Hill, live in one of the most expensive cities in the world, make peanuts because they are ambitious and want to get ahead, and we are going to say, You are on your own with your health care, too. What are we doing? What are we doing? This doesn't make any sense.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry you don't like President Obama. I'm sorry. I don't know what to say. But to come after health care reform where so many millions of people are going to benefit. In Ohio, we are saying 6 out of 10 of the people who are uninsured in Ohio can get health care for less than 100 bucks a month. What's wrong with that? What's wrong with that?

I yield to my friend.

Mr. TONKO. Thank you, Representative RYAN. Thank you for expressing the tone of harshness that has prevailed in this Chamber.

I don't know if I can remember when a law, a standing law in this country, was used as a reason to avoid paying our bills or keeping government running. I find it regrettable that we go after the law of the land, in this case the Affordable Care Act. They'll reference it as ObamaCare, and we will see how long that label stands when the program proves successful. It might be removed immediately.

But, nonetheless, the harshness here is driven after a season, season's worth of activity on the Affordable Care Act.

□ 1300

We have voted for it in both Houses of the Congress and with bipartisan support in the Senate. The President stood for reelection, and was reelected amidst immense arguments and debates about repeal and replace by the opposition, by the candidate for President of the other major party. So the people have spoken. Then, when they elected Members to the House of Representatives, the cumulative total of votes for the Members of this House was, in the majority, calling for Democrats. The people have stated they support this. As Senator MCCAIN indicated on the floor just this week, there are consequences to elections.

It's not sinking in—or perhaps it has, but they refuse to allow their behavior to end. It's putting themselves first as political forces rather than the people, rather than what's in the best interest of the people. I'm convinced that this is driven by the fear that this ObamaCare, as they call it, will be successful and that this is their last effort possible to end the opportunity to provide affordable, accessible, quality health care for all. We know it. We see it in our States. We see it in Ohio. We see it in California. We see it in Florida. We are joined by our friend from Texas, who just visited my district this week in Albany, New York, Representative CASTRO from Texas. We see it in our home States. People have a need out there.

In my case, I can cite some of the stats: 36,000 young people with pre-existing conditions will not be biased against in having insurance. Take it away, why don't you. Take it away, and then put us at risk of defaulting with our credit rating. Take it away. Be harsh. We look at the 12,000-plus seniors who are receiving discounts for their pharmaceutical needs. Take it away, why don't you.

It's unfair. It's un-American—immoral—to take it away, but we are going to use it as a pawn in a device here called "negotiating" on whether or not the government will continue to run or on whether we will keep the doors open and the lights or on whether or not we are going to pay our bills. Come on. Working families in this

country understand it. They roll up their sleeves. They play by the rules. They work hard. They expect to taste success. They pay their bills on time, and they expect their government to do likewise.

They don't expect us to put a roadblock in the way that says the law of the land—constitutionally tested in the highest Court of the land, in the Supreme Court, and that has been given the green light—we're going to put that in as a roadblock to stop progress because we know the October 1 starting date is quickly arriving. This is grossly unfair to the people of this country.

When I look at the 124,000 seniors who are receiving free preventative services, I'm not ready to give that up. Repeal is not an answer—improving is an answer, and I will work with you—but we don't use this vehicle as a reason to stop government from running or as a vehicle from stopping us from paying America's bills. It goes on and on. There are 6,200 young people who now qualify to stay on their parents' policies for their health care coverage. This is a vast improvement. This is allowing the tens of millions of people who have been uninsured—and the many who are underinsured—to finally have access, connection, to a system.

Aren't we in this business to respond to the needs of people? Are we in the business to take the facts, twist them, present them in a way that offers confusion, and only serve for political, partisan purposes?

I think we can do better than that in this Chamber. We are going to work, and we are going to get to that finish line. I am convinced, Representative GARAMENDI, that we are going to stand for justice, for what is fairness in our society. Health care is a right. We should see it as an American right—the moral compass points in that direction—and we ought not use it as a pawn in a political theater that allows for us to not have government funded or that allows for us not to pay our bills. Let's get on with business.

What's happening in this Chamber? Are we so insensitive to the needs of people? What could be more important than responding to the health care needs of the people of this great country? Let's stop the brinksmanship. Let's get it done. Let's get business done here.

I thank you for leading us in this discussion and for having served with our all of colleagues here.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you very much, Mr. TONKO.

In previous weeks, you and I and Mr. RYAN and Mr. CASTRO have had the pleasure of talking on this floor about putting people to work, about jobs, about creating the infrastructure, the education, the training that's necessary to move Americans, but this week, we find ourselves caught up in this leveraging of the necessity of funding government and of paying our bills—the debt limit—and using that as

a lever to destroy a very important law that provides real benefits to every American.

Mr. CASTRO, we thank you for joining us. We know that Texas was much discussed in the previous hour. I am sure that you have some thoughts about all of this, so please join us. Thank you very much.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Thank you, Congressman GARAMENDI, and thank you, Congressman TONKO and Congressman RYAN, for your very eloquent words in describing the situation that we face today.

I, like millions of Americans, hope that there will not be a government shutdown. I hope that we can get past the hostage politics that have prevailed over this place over the last few years. This is no way to run a government. Our Nation is the strongest nation on Earth, and we are the most exceptional nation on Earth. These wounds are self-inflicted ones.

I have said many times and have heard from my constituents that all of these fiscal fights, these self-inflicted wounds by Congress—when we get up to the limit where we are supposed to pass a budget or we are supposed to raise the debt ceiling limit—are causing the Nation high blood pressure. They are affecting the market in negative ways. The stock market is taking a hit. Our employment rates are taking a hit. In every way, this has been bad for the country.

I would also remind our Members of Congress and the American people about what happened the last time brinksmanship was tried. The last time this happened, the sequester resulted—a bad way to do business. I think people on both sides of the aisle would agree that the sequester did not turn out well for our Nation, but that's the same road we are headed down again. The Republicans are taking us down the same road that gave us the sequester—the Budget Control Act. Then the cuts that really were across the board were not targeted and have hurt the military, have hurt education, have hurt health care, and we are headed down the same road.

Congressman, the last time you and I spoke—I guess about a month ago here on the floor—I mentioned that, in politics, you are often asked whether you are a Republican or a Democrat. What is it that you stand for? I think, as Democrats, what we believe in are a few things that have made this Nation great.

The first is freedom, because we are a free people. That freedom has been hard fought. I come from San Antonio, Texas—Military City USA. The people of San Antonio and the people of Texas know the high price of freedom.

The second is democracy. We are a democratic Nation. Because we are free, we get to elect our leaders, and we get to kick them out of office when we no longer believe that they are representing our views and our values.

But much of the politics of today is really fought over the third principle

and value, which is opportunity. You see, what is special about this country and the reason that, for years and years, people from all over the world have wanted to come to America is that, as Americans, we have come together to build out what I call an “infrastructure of opportunity” that enables each of us to pursue our American dreams. I want to remind you of what I mean by that.

Just as there is an infrastructure of transportation—a system of streets and roads and highways that help all of us get to where we want to go on the road—in American society, we have built up together an infrastructure of opportunity that enables or at least helps each of us get to where we want to go in life, and that has to include certain things that are at risk when we get into hostage politics—great public schools and universities; a strong health care system so that, if you get sick, you don't become debilitated or die; and then an economy that's built around well-paying jobs so that people can support themselves and their family members. It's that second part that I mentioned—health care—that has been at issue in this debate.

I just want to close by saying this, that the junior Senator from Texas, a few days ago, talked about how he was speaking for 26 million Texans when he was threatening to shut down the government over the Affordable Care Act, which he derisively calls “ObamaCare.” He does not speak for 26 million Texans. The fact is that Texas has the highest percentage of people who have no health care coverage at all. There are a lot of families who are having to take their kids to the emergency rooms, who are getting letters from their insurance companies because they have hit their lifetime caps. They are getting letters of their being denied coverage because they have pre-existing conditions. The Affordable Care Act is going to change that. It's going to be a good thing for our State.

So I would just note that there are a lot of people in Texas who are excited about the Affordable Care Act and about the fact that they are going to have a chance to afford to have insurance, some of them for the first time in their lives. Even of those who have insurance, many of them will no longer have to worry about being denied because of preexisting conditions, worry about hitting a lifetime cap or about going bankrupt because of health care.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you very much, Mr. CASTRO, and thank you for pointing out that one junior Senator doesn't represent all of Texas. I know you represent the heart of Texas—that is, the people of Texas.

Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time I have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 9 minutes remaining.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Very good.

We are joined here now by our distinguished senior Member from the State of New Jersey.

Mr. PALLONE. I want to thank the gentleman from California and all of my colleagues who came to the floor in the aftermath of that hour from the GOP side of basically criticizing, on the Republican side, the health care reform—the Affordable Care Act, also known as ObamaCare.

Sometimes, when I listen to what the Republicans say about ObamaCare, I am shocked because I don't think they understand how many people are out there who have already benefited from it and who are really looking forward to October 1 because they can sign up for the first time for health insurance. Let me tell you that, in my own district, I have had so many inquiries from people who are uninsured or underinsured or who can't afford the health insurance they have now.

I just want to say that I agree with the gentleman from California in that this was basically resolved last November. It couldn't have been clearer that the President, for whom ObamaCare is now known, was out there in the Presidential election, saying that the Affordable Care Act was a great accomplishment on his part and that he was going to continue with it. Then you had Mitt Romney on the other side, saying that, if he were elected, he was going to repeal it. So my colleague from California is right—that was resolved in the election.

So why is it that our colleagues on the Republican side are trying to hold the health care reform hostage by saying that, if we don't repeal it or delay it or defund it or whatever—we've had so many votes on this, over 40 now—that they're going to shut the government down? One has nothing to do with the other.

I just want to talk about those three groups of people who will be the most positively impacted by ObamaCare beginning October 1.

First of all, we know we have about 40 million Americans who are uninsured. Many of them are from New Jersey. They don't have health insurance options right now. This is going to be the first time, on October 1, that they will actually have a rational, legitimate option to get health insurance, and they are waiting for October 1 to come around.

Secondly, we have just as many people—maybe 80 million people—who may have health insurance, but it's very skeletal. It doesn't provide much in the way of benefits, and they have to pay a lot of money out-of-pocket if they get sick or if they have to go to the hospital or whatever. Those people will also benefit because every health insurance policy that's offered under the health exchange, as the gentleman from California talked about, will be a good benefit package, at least as good as what we know as, say, Blue Cross-Blue Shield.

Then you have the third group of people who may have health insurance, but they're spending so much money in order to make sure that they have

health insurance that they can't pay for their rent or they can't pay for their mortgage or they can't put food on the table.

All of these people are going to benefit come October 1, when they can sign up for a good package and an affordable package. One of the main reasons it's affordable is that the Federal Government is helping pay the premium—is helping subsidize the premium—with tax credits but not with tax credits that you have to pay up front and then get a refund for when you file next April 15, but a tax credit like a subsidy that goes directly to pay for the premium.

We are already hearing—and I've said this to my colleagues in New Jersey—that the average health insurance policy is going to be about \$350 a month. Some people say, "Oh, \$350 a month," but that is incredibly affordable for a lot of people in New Jersey who are paying a lot more right now, and that's without the subsidy. With the subsidy, that can go down to \$100 a month depending upon your income.

So I can't stress enough how important this is, and for the Republicans to try to hold this hostage, no one on our side of the aisle is going to give up on the Affordable Care Act, because we know people need it. We are going to move forward, and, hopefully, they come to their senses and don't keep trying to shut this government down.

I want to commend the gentleman again. Thank you.

□ 1315

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. PALLONE, thank you so very much for your comments about New Jersey.

Mr. RYAN, I think we have maybe 2½ minutes left if you'd like to close, and I'll take the last 30 seconds and then we'll thank the public for their attention.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think the last couple of points I would like to make is that we have very conservative Republican Tea Party Governors saying, We want to expand Medicaid, and they make all of the same arguments that we made during the health care debate. Coming into an emergency room and getting your primary care does not make any sense; you get sicker and it costs more money. There is also a moral aspect that we've got millions and millions of people going bankrupt, children not getting treatment, hitting the ceiling when they have cancer or some other issue. Those problems have been fixed.

Folks here in the House of Representatives, they need to recognize just how extreme their position is. When Karl Rove and JOHN MCCAIN and some of these other folks are saying, You folks are really out on a limb here, you're not making a lot of sense, that's not TIM RYAN and Mr. GARAMENDI and Mr. PALLONE and others who they would call liberals. That's Karl Rove, Bush's brain, who is telling you you're way out on a limb on this one, and it

doesn't make any sense. I think that's important. You have Republican Tea Party Governors making the same argument about expanding Medicaid. Critical, critical, critical points.

Lastly, as we see the top 1 percent and the top one-tenth of 1 percent garnering almost a third of the wealth created from 2009 to 2012, we've got a problem in this country. If we can't step in and say at the very least we can give some of these folks some basic health care, then we have to ask ourselves what kind of country we really want to live in.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. RYAN and Mr. PALLONE, thank you so very much for joining us on this discussion about the Affordable Care Act and the way in which the Republican Party here in the House is using its repeal as a lever to really shut down government. It's not a good situation.

We normally spend our time here on the floor talking about jobs, infrastructure, how we can move this committee and this Nation forward. We hope to get back to that next week. We've got a critical vote coming in the next couple of days, or tomorrow or the next day, about the health care of America and more importantly about the way in which this government should operate.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

OBAMACARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I heard our President in a speech that I heard this morning say that in essence people who watch Fox News think ObamaCare is terrible, there are all kinds of problems. I sure hope that our President will start watching something besides CNN or MSNBC so he can find out that everything he's done is not made of gold, that people are hurting across America.

They heard him when the President promised that if you like your insurance, you'll get to keep it. He said it over and over and over and over: if you like your insurance, you can keep it. He made that speech across the Nation over and over and over.

He said that if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. It turns out that wasn't true. If you like your insurance, you're probably going to lose it or it's going to cost a whole lot more. That's what people are finding across the country.

So I appreciate my colleagues talking about and actually saying some of the same things about ObamaCare that they said 3½ years ago. The trouble is now that ObamaCare is upon us and people are being hurt. They've lost their insurance, and they've lost their doctor. They can't afford the extra thousands of dollars it is costing. I think it was PolitiFact that took a

shot at me for accurately saying it would cost people thousands of dollars if they were at 133 percent of the poverty level, that they'd have to buy the insurance or pay the extra income tax.

When you get down to it, even their article that criticized me pointed out at the end that still, with all of the government subsidies, it was still going to cost a few thousand dollars. That was the estimate. It's costing people money they don't have. They're getting less care, not more. And I don't have to just give opinion on that. We've got case after case, email after email from real Americans that have seen the harm it's done.

A young friend that I have tremendous respect for across the aisle pointed out, from his limited experience, that Congress has worked in a very partisan way the last few years. What he doesn't realize is that in the 4 years the Democrats controlled the House, they presided over the Congress that had more closed bills—that meant they didn't allow a single amendment. They ostracized nearly half of the country from being represented because they did not allow a single amendment to more bills than any other Congress in the history of our country. It was the most ruthless, partisan, overreaching Congress in the history of the country. It was unbelievable.

So it gets a little difficult to hear leaders who were in charge during the four most oppressive partisan years when it comes to having input from the other side tell us about responsibility and bipartisanship when they showed what they think when they were in charge. It was really quite mean.

We were told by our colleague earlier that Republicans gave us sequester. I encourage my friends across the aisle to go back and look at accurate history. It was the President who proposed sequester. I didn't think it was a good idea at all. That's no way to really legislate. We should have made the difficult choices and made the cuts. Then to hear comments that the Democrats believe freedom has made us great, I absolutely do, too. But freedom has a price. Freedom requires responsibility from Americans. It requires that everybody be involved, that everybody pay attention to what the government is doing.

So for those who have said for so long, I don't care what the government does as long as they stay out of my business, if that's your approach, the government does not and will not stay out of your business. It gets to where we are right now with ObamaCare. Every American's most private secrets about their own personal and private health will be kept by the Federal bureaucracy headquartered in Washington. The records may be kept elsewhere. I think the administration made a deal with GE. So GE and the Federal Government will have everyone's most personal secrets. It's a good thing they can keep a secret in the Federal Government so that nobody's