

amending of the Affordable Care Act, and I am proud that I was. But it was and remains sadly clear that one of the U.S. Virgin Islands and the other territories' biggest public health and health care challenges when it comes to Federal policies is benign neglect. Despite our efforts, still too many people, well intentioned, just don't acknowledge that, for example, across nearly every health indicator, from HIV/AIDS, cancer, heart disease and obesity prevalence, to rates of uninsurance and health care provider shortages, the U.S. Virgin Islands often are worse off than the national average.

So I, working in close collaboration with leadership and my territorial colleagues, the Black, Hispanic, Asian and Progressive Caucuses, worked tirelessly to ensure that the more than 4 million Americans who live in U.S. territories, as well as our collective health care systems, would enjoy the positive benefits of health care reform.

The great news is that we were in very large part successful. Today, Virgin Islanders and other persons in the territories are included in the consumer protections that make it illegal for a health plan to deny health coverage because of a preexisting disease or to rescind or deny coverage when someone gets sick and to impose lifetime dollar limits on essential benefits.

Today, U.S. Virgin Islanders can keep their children on their health plans until the child is 26 years of age. Because of The Affordable Care Act, today seniors in the U.S. Virgin Islands receive free annual wellness visits and free preventive care. They receive Medicare prescription drug rebate checks and meaningful help covering the cost of their prescription drugs. In the U.S. Virgin Islands because of the Affordable Care Act, our community health centers and community health workers are strengthened and better equipped to serve as medical homes.

But the devil is in the details. You see, the sad reality is that just because U.S. Virgin Islanders are included in the law and eligible for these great benefits does not mean that the law has been implemented in a manner that allows them all benefits or to fully experience the positive impact the Affordable Care Act was intended to have on every American.

The law gave the Governor in the U.S. Virgin Islands a choice between two options, and all the territories: one, to establish a health insurance exchange, either separately or in partnership with a State that was also setting up a State-based exchange; or, two, to use the funds that would have gone towards the exchange to expand our Medicaid program.

The Governor, based on advice of a task force and consultants, opted for option number two. And so amid all of the information that is being promulgated about the opening up of enrollment for the exchanges, wonderful news for many Americans, my constituents and those in the other terri-

tories feel very much left out and unfairly treated. To add insult to injury, there are no individual policies being written and the industry is blaming it, I think unfairly and not rightly, on the Affordable Care Act.

It is important to remember that because of the Affordable Care Act there is a very significant increase, though in the hundreds of millions of dollars, in funding for the Medicaid program and the Governor can establish a local poverty level that could significantly increase Medicaid eligibility. The robust increase in funding for Medicaid can allow for thousands of Virgin Islanders to be newly eligible for meaningful health insurance coverage under that program. Unfortunately, although the House passed a provision that would have changed the match, it did not make it through the Senate, so the match is set so high that it is difficult for us and the other territories to fully utilize the increased funding.

As a physician who practiced for more than 20 years before coming to Congress, I know what happens to someone's health and wellness, as well as personal finances, when they do not have health insurance coverage. It is catastrophic. That is why I requested meetings with Secretary Sebelius to explore how and whether the moneys that could have been used to establish a health insurance exchange can instead be used for making health care reform a reality for those who are uninsured but make too much to qualify for Medicaid.

So there is a small but distinct window of opportunity to work with the Secretary and our Governor to think outside the box, to identify meaningful and thoughtful solutions to the unique health care challenges facing the Americans in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Some will require legislation, and I ask for the support of my colleagues on that; but also please let us pass a clean CR to keep our government open and provide services to Americans wherever we live in this great country.

REOPENING OUR NATION'S MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SANFORD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANFORD. Mr. Speaker, I have been a runner all my life. I ran in high school and college, and it has always been my way of sort of clearing my head. Sometimes I clearly haven't run enough.

Over the years, during my roughly 20 years in and out of Washington, I have made it a tradition of running down the Mall, down to the Lincoln Memorial. I have been down at the Lincoln Memorial on those runs in the dead of night when there was not a soul down there. I have been down there at sunrise when there was nobody there. I have been there on a summer afternoon when it seemed like every tourist from

this country and every tourist from around this world was gathered there.

But yesterday I went for an evening run after votes, and I saw something I have never seen before, because as I ran down the Mall, I got to the World War II Memorial and it was chained up. Mind you, this is an open-air rock memorial dedicated to the sacrifice of so many soldiers there in World War II, an open-air rock memorial.

But I continued only with my run, and I got down to the Lincoln Memorial, and to my amazement that thing was chained up too. I was so agitated in seeing this that I turned to a tourist and I said, You got to be kidding me. Would you take a picture of that? And it was actually a family from Shanghai, China, here halfway around the world. They took the picture, and they emailed it to me last night and it is an amazing shot.

As you can see there, the Lincoln Memorial, two guards. Now, mind you, I have been there many times when nobody was there, no security guard, nobody. And yet in this instance you have chains around it, two police cars, simply to keep people out of one of the great memorials to freedom in our country.

It just strikes me that that is a picture of political gamesmanship and hostage taking, and I would say respectfully, Mr. President, you have gone too far on this one. At the time of the sequester, you ended school tours to the White House. Now, mind you, not since Jefferson's time and war has the people's House, the White House, been shut down for public tours. But you used that as a political tool to somehow gain advantage in the sequester that still exists so kids from 8th grade may take their one trip to Washington, D.C., and can't go to the White House because you think it will gain political favor. And I see the same thing going on with this.

So let's agree that we disagree. We agree that we as Republicans think we ought to be spending less. You and HARRY REID think we ought to be spending more. I think the Congressional Budget numbers are on our side. They say that in just 12 years we are only going to have enough money to pay for interest and entitlements and nothing else, and in that regard this is just a sneak preview of much more damaging things to come if we don't get our financial house in order.

But I would say it is okay to have disagreements, but it is not okay to hold, I guess, citizens hostage and try to maximize and inflict pain in their ability to do normal things, particularly when the House has offered four different bites at the apple in keeping the government open and particularly when just last night bills were sent to HARRY REID that would have kept government open, would have kept the Park Service open, would have kept groups like NIH open.

I think this is really important. Reagan once said there at the Brandenburg Gate to Mr. Gorbachev, tear down

this wall; and I would say to you Mr. President, take down the chains. Take down the walls to these open-air memorials to freedom. This is not the National Archives where things could be taken or stolen. These are open-air memorials. This is ridiculous political gamesmanship. I was Governor for eight years. I have been an executive. I know that you can do this, and I would ask that you do so.

I am going to go for my evening run, 5:30, 6 o'clock. I would invite every one of you all up there in the gallery to come join me at the Lincoln Memorial. I would ask listeners out there to join me at the Lincoln Memorial. I will talk to Representative PALAZZO from Mississippi and MICHELE BACHMANN and others who gathered there at the World War II Memorial. This has gotten out of control with regard to this degree of political gamesmanship by HARRY REID and by the President.

So I would just ask that you take another look at that picture, think about what it means, think about the sacrifice that has been made that is ultimately about what these memorials are founded on, and why can't we do something about it, Mr. President. I would ask you to do so.

I would invite folks for a 5:30 or 6 o'clock run down at the Lincoln Memorial.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair reminds Members that they are to direct their remarks to the Chair.

HONORING GEORGE ZENOVICH AND PETE MEHAS

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

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, we have seen a great deal of political posturing and speeches over the last several days. I think it is time that we get our priorities straight and pass a clean budget that reopens this government. I think the American public is, frankly, sick and tired of the blame game.

I also believe that many of my Republican friends are distracted with issues that are important, but are not central to the question of funding government. We can debate the issue of the Affordable Health Care Act, as we should, but it is not central to reopening government.

Today, I would like to talk to you about two public servants from my neck of the woods, the San Joaquin Valley, who put their community first and delivered results. Sadly, in the last week these two individuals have passed away and we say good-bye to them. But I want to use their examples as role models because I think their commitment to public service, to the people of the San Joaquin Valley in California and our Nation, is a good example. One was a Democrat and one was a Republican. Both were widely respected; and they never, ever let partisanship or ideology get in the way of solutions.

George Zenovich and Pete Mehas were the best our Valley had to offer,

especially on how they conducted their lives. Pete Mehas, from a Greek immigrant family, was a pillar of our education community in the Valley for almost 50 years. From the time he entered the classroom in 1963, he was bound for leadership and changed the lives of countless individuals. He realized the special challenges of students in our Valley and those throughout the State and he made their voices heard.

His passion was recognized by Governor George Deukmejian, who appointed him as his chief adviser relating to all matters involving education. Pete served also under Governor Pete Wilson and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and, ultimately, President George Bush when he was appointed to the advisory commission on educational excellence for all Americans.

Knowing that strong schools require strong communities, Pete wanted to see Fresno prosper and develop into a thriving business hub. From co-founding Leadership Fresno, to sitting on the Valley Business Conference Executive Board, to serving as the president of the Fresno County Athletic Hall of Fame where he was enshrined, Pete invested his time in the community and the city he loved. For 16 years he served as the superintendent of Fresno County Schools where he represented 34 school districts, 325 schools, and almost 200,000 students.

He was a loving husband, a proud father, and a distinguished alum of Fresno State. He was part of the 1961 Mercy Bowl team that was a national champion. So it is with a heavy heart that we say good-bye to this man who dedicated his life to making the future of others brighter.

Another individual whom he worked with and whom I worked with was also a pillar of our community and that was George Zenovich. George was a man who lived his life with purpose and a dedication to public service. Born in 1922 of a Slavic family, he was a product of our Valley. He served in the United States Army Air Force. He was student body president at Fresno State.

Later on he enrolled in law school after he married the love of his life, Kika. Upon completion of his degree, he quickly built a strong professional reputation and served in the California Assembly beginning in 1962. Later on he became the majority leader, before taking a seat in the California State Senate.

His impact as a senator was far-reaching, from creating the California Arts Council, to the California Housing Authority Finance Agency, to authorizing the first law in the United States that gave farm workers a chance at collective bargaining through the Agricultural Labor Relations Board. He was an advocate for those voices who sometimes got lost in the political banter.

In 1979, George was appointed by Governor Jerry Brown to be on the court of appeals. In 2008, Fresno's new Fifth

District Court of Appeals building was named after him, the George Zenovich Court of Appeals Building, for his lifetime practice of fair and sound jurisprudence. George was a shining example of what a public servant should be and never lost sight of those in the community he served.

Both of these people put their community first. I worked with both George and Pete for years, and they were not only my friends, but they were friends of the Valley they loved and the State they called home, California.

My colleagues, Mr. Speaker, I think it is time for all of us in this body to live up to the memory of these two shining examples, people who we have all worked with throughout our lives, and I think in the true tradition of public service these are the kind of individuals we ought to have as role models when fixing our Nation's budget and putting government back to work.

OPEN AMERICA'S PARKS AND MEMORIALS

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the House passed and sent to the Senate a bipartisan bill to keep our national parks open. Twenty-three Democrats joined the House Republicans to end the closure of these national treasures. They joined us to unlock the gates and to open the doors of these treasures, from Acadia to Zion. They joined with us to tear down the barriers that were erected to block access to our open D.C. memorials that my colleague from South Carolina just alluded to a moment ago. These memorials are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. So the Senate should act today to pass this bill and to send it to the President for his signature.

But it is disappointing to see statements from Senate Democrat leaders dismissing and even ridiculing these commonsense steps as "piecemeal." It is even more disappointing that the President has threatened a veto of this bill to keep the parks open.

Mr. Speaker, let's not forget that one week ago today the Senate Democrats, led by HARRY REID, and the entire Senate, unanimously approved a bill to keep the Federal Helium Reserve open and operating, and last night the President finally signed this bill to prevent a helium shutdown into law. Now, make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Senate unanimously passed it, and I am glad the President signed the law. It is important for our economy.

But the reason I bring this up is that the helium program is part of the Department of the Interior, the Department of the Interior that is responsible for our national parks. So one has to ask, why will the Senate pass and the President sign into law a bill to specifically prevent the closure of our Federal