

collapse and, frankly, the President's credibility collapses with it. People I think are looking for that better way, and we have it with the American Health Care Reform Act.

Again, I thank the gentleman from Indiana for his leadership, and I yield back.

Mr. MESSER. I certainly appreciate the gentleman from Louisiana and his leadership. I know you were quoted over the weekend on FOX News by George Will describing the tragic circumstances that most Americans see themselves in, those that have lost their health care plan. I would like you to expand on that just a little bit, if you don't mind.

Mr. SCALISE. Sure. One of the things we have heard so much from this administration about health care as they have referred to people's plans, good plans, they refer to many of them as "lousy" plans. I have been in hearings where we have had Obama administration officials, in fact the President himself goes around chastising people and saying, you might be losing your plan, but it probably wasn't that good of a plan anyway.

Who is it for some Washington politician to tell somebody, and in Covington, Louisiana, as a constituent of mine, Shaun, said, who is it for the President to say that Shaun's plan was lousy when Shaun liked his plan? The President's promise was not, "If Barack Obama likes what you have, you can keep it." The promise was, "If you like what you have, you can keep it." No Washington politician or bureaucrat or IRS agent should be able to take that away from you.

Yet, as that was happening and they are berating people saying, your plan wasn't that good, it was a lousy plan, I said it is kind of like a guy who burns down your house and then he shows up with an empty bucket of water and then he sits there and gives you a lecture on how bad and lousy your house was before the fire. All you want is your house back. You didn't want somebody to burn it down in the first place.

People just want their good health care. They sure don't want to be lectured by some bureaucrat or politician in Washington saying, hey, your plan really wasn't that good because I don't think it was that good; when, in fact, the person back home is saying, I thought it was good, it was good for my family, my doctor can go see my kids, and I want to continue that relationship with my doctor, and they are about to lose it. They are losing it with these Washington politicians who helped ram this bill through.

That is why I think, as the President's health care law collapses on all the weight of these unworkable mandates and taxes, we need to put up an alternative, and we have an alternative called a better way—the American Health Care Reform Act.

We want to help bail those people out with a real bucket of water and a real

relief sign that there is something that we are doing, not only to point out how bad the law is—they are seeing it play out every day—but also how we can actually fix the problems that are becoming even worse because of this law.

Mr. MESSER. Again, I thank the gentleman. Thank you for your leadership.

As we have talked about before, the American people needed health care reform before the disaster of ObamaCare rolled out. Obviously, we need it now more than ever given the failings of recent days. H.R. 3121, the American Health Care Reform Act, is an answer.

There are several principles upon which we should all be able to agree when it comes to genuine health care reform.

First, patients should not be denied health insurance because of preexisting conditions.

Second, any Federal policy changes must be designed to drive costs down, not up, as we have seen under the so-called Affordable Care Act.

Third, you should be able to keep your health care plan if you like it. I agree with former President Bill Clinton when he has said that, given that very clear promise that was made by President Obama on behalf of the Federal Government to the American people, we need to pass legislation—we have already passed a bill in the House—but we need to pass legislation that makes sure that promise is kept.

Fourth, we need commonsense medical liability reform that puts an end to the expensive system of defensive medicine that we have now.

Health care decisions should be left up to you and your doctor, not Washington bureaucrats.

The American Health Care Reform Act is centered on these five principles.

Frivolous lawsuits are driving up health care costs and forcing good doctors out of the medical field. The American Health Care Reform Act improves medical liability law. Frankly, Indiana has been a leader in this area because of leadership from former Governor "Doc" Bowen, a physician back in the 1960s. The Indiana medical malpractice reform approach would be a great Federal model, and its principles from that plan is a part of H.R. 3121, which we are talking about today.

We need improved medical liability law that allows doctors to continue practicing medicine without fear of excessive and unfair penalties.

I also would like to talk to you a little bit about the importance of medical savings accounts. Fellow Hoosier Pat Rooney is known as the "father of health savings accounts" from his work as the president and CEO of Golden Rule. They were established in 2003 while Pat Rooney was the chairman of the Golden Rule Insurance Company. Pat believed people should own their own health care.

Health savings accounts have proven to be a useful tool for individuals and families while navigating the health

care system. Our plan, H.R. 3121, expands health savings accounts and enhances their performance by increasing the cap on contributions and expanding the allowable uses of health savings account funds. This gives people more control over how they spend their health care dollars and allows them to invest pretax dollars toward their future health care needs.

Mr. Speaker, no one doubts that real reform is needed, but there are two distinct visions for the future of health care in our Nation.

The President's plan expands the Federal Government's role in health care, raises taxes, and imposes unfair and unworkable mandates on the American people. Our plan, H.R. 3121, the American Health Care Reform Act, puts people in charge of their own health care. It encourages competition to lower costs and expand coverage.

American families, businesses, and individuals deserve real solutions to the very serious problems that exist in health care in America today. The American Health Care Reform Act provides a path to true reform.

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

□ 1745

DEVASTATING TORNADO HITS ILLINOIS

(Mrs. BUSTOS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the devastating tornado that hit my region of Illinois this past Sunday.

The tornado, which has been classified as an EF-4, hit speeds of up to 190 miles per hour. The city of Pekin in my district was especially hard hit. More than 200 structures in this city of 35,000 people were damaged, and 75 homes were left uninhabitable. Many people lost not only their homes, but all their possessions.

To give just one personal story, Gary and Selena Cleer were in church on Sunday when the tornado hit. They took shelter with the rest of the congregation in the hallway. Finally, when they were able to drive safely back home, they didn't even recognize their house. Much of their roof was gone. Their garage had been torn away, and their battered car lay amid rubble.

Illinoisans are generous and compassionate people, as well as being resilient and hard working. I have no doubt we will recover from the storm, but this type of disaster could happen anywhere.

As we continue to debate the issues of the day, I call on all of us to keep in mind the people who have been hit hard by natural disasters. We owe it to them to be there for them in their time of need.

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE CREATES JOBS

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, thank you very much for this opportunity. At least once a week we come before the House to talk about jobs, that little four-letter word that is so important on everybody's mind—can I get a job, will I have a job, what does it take to get a job in America. We still have far too high unemployment, and we still have a great need to ensure that our jobs produce the kinds of wages and opportunities that Americans really want. They want to be able to buy a home, have a car, raise their families, provide the necessities, and see their kids get a great education and opportunity.

We have a long way to go. We have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go. One of the critical ways that America can and must build jobs is build the infrastructure, to make sure that those foundations of the economy will grow, upon which cities will be built, those things that allow us to prosper, the critical investments. In this case, the physical investments are the issue that we are going to talk about today.

We have an opportunity. Beginning tomorrow, a conference committee will be formed here in the Capitol made up of Senators, Republican and Democrat, and Members of the House of Representatives, both Republican and Democrat, sitting down together. Oh, yeah, together, actually at the same table, tomorrow morning, 9:30, to beginning a conference committee on the Water Resources Reform and Development Act, otherwise known as WRRDA. If you are around here long enough, you know what that means, but I guess the rest of the world really needs to know it is the Water Resources Reform and Development Act.

And so 13 million jobs, 13 million jobs in America depend upon how well that conference committee does its work. The House of Representatives a few weeks back put out its version of the bill. The Senate did several months ago. Senator BARBARA BOXER from the State of California, my colleague, will be chairing that committee. We have work to do. We have the task of making sure that 13 million American jobs that depend upon the Water Resources Reform and Development Act will be secure. It is a big one.

So what is involved in the Water Resources Reform and Development Act? Well, how about this: 99 percent of America's international trade travels through our ports and waterways. That is a big number. I suppose there is some 1 percent that travels on airplanes, and those are probably very high-ticket, high-priced items. But if you are talking about the great, al-

most the entire, majority of America's work, that goes through our ports and waterways. This is what the Water Resources Reform and Development Act is all about. It is about our ports, the great ports of America. It is about the waterways of America. It is about the locks and the dams on the rivers.

Let me put this up for just a second. This is an interesting map. I don't know if many Americans have really considered the map of the United States and the waters of the United States. Obviously, the coastline, we don't have Alaska on this map, but it should be there also. The great coasts, the east coast, the gulf coast, the Pacific coast, and of course on and around Alaska. That is not all. Each of these rivers also is a waterway upon which commerce flows; and tomorrow, with the conference committee for the WRRDA bill, we will be discussing how to make these rivers more attuned to the environment and to commerce.

On the great Mississippi River, the Missouri, the Ohio, and the Illinois Rivers and all the way up into Wisconsin, an enormous amount of America's commerce flows along those rivers. And joining me in just a moment will be Representative BILL ENYART from the State of Illinois, and he will be talking about some of these issues as they relate to that part of the world. But this great river system in the central part of America is a major highway. There are interstate roads, to be sure, and there are local and county roads, but most of them feed into this great system that moves up and down the Mississippi River. The Water Resources Reform and Development Act is all about that. It is all about that commerce on that great river and about whether the locks and the levees that are on that river are adequate to meet the needs of commerce and the needs of public protection.

For those of us on the west coast and the east coast and even into the gulf, it is about the ports. It is about the ports of America and whether those ports are adequate for the commerce that we need to have. So when you happen to go by a port and you see one of these tied up at the dock, you can think about the American economy and about 99 percent of the international trade that goes in and out of our ports. It is a big deal. It is a very, very big deal, and most of America's ports are antiquated. The shoals, that is the mud and sand at the bottom of the ports, have been accreted, that is, built up over the last several years; and it needs constant dredging. And so part of what we will be dealing with at the WRRDA conference committee is the dredging of the ports and quite possibly the shore side, what is going on there.

These are subjects that we will come to in the next few minutes as we talk more about how we can build jobs in America and simultaneously build the American economy by building the great infrastructure.

One more issue I want to put up here before I call on Mr. ENYART is this one.

You see all of these rivers here; they are critically important. They are critically important for commerce and trade and obviously water and agriculture and all the rest. But sometimes—virtually every year—they are also a major problem for America.

This happens to be a picture of a levee break on the Sacramento River system. I happen to represent 200 miles of the Sacramento River. This break is all too common across America; and so the Water Resources Reform and Development Act, which will be up tomorrow in the conference committee—it is not going to be finished but at least it will make some progress toward completion—will deal with the levees.

The Army Corps of Engineers is the responsible Federal agency for the maintenance of the rivers, for the waters of America, whether they are in the rivers or along the shore. They are responsible for the ports, that is, for the maintenance of the ports, not the ports themselves. And in my district, the Army Corps of Engineers plays a major role in public safety because it is their responsibility to make sure that these levees are adequate to the challenge of a flood. When those levees are not adequate, great damage is done across America. It is approximately \$22.3 billion of annual unspent American treasure that is still in the pockets of America and the governments of America when these levees work. When they fail, it is a huge expense—floods, flood damage, and the like.

I would like now to call on the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ENYART) to share with us his view of the necessity for the Water Resources Reform and Development Act and the way it protects and helps his district.

Mr. ENYART. I thank the gentleman from California for this time to speak about the importance of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act.

Mr. GARAMENDI was talking about the coast, the east coast and the west coast and the great coastlines of our Nation. I always like to tell folks out here that I represent the west coast of Illinois. I always get a strange look when I say that, and sometimes a chuckle. But I represent the westernmost counties of Illinois, the river counties, reaching from Alton, Illinois, just north of St. Louis, all the way to Cairo, the very southern tip of Illinois. That piece of Illinois encompasses the great maritime highway that is the economic backbone of our inland agriculture industry, indeed, all of our inland industries.

Just north of my district, the Illinois River, which transits from the Mississippi up to the Great Lakes, flows into the Mississippi. Directly across from my district, the Missouri River feeds into the Mississippi; and then as you go downstream, the Mississippi and the Ohio converge at the very southern tip at Cairo, Illinois.

So we understand in southern Illinois the importance of these river systems. We understand the importance of port