

human rights organization; and Mikalai Autukhovich, who sliced open his stomach in September to protest his poor treatment by prison guards. While the regime recently released three political activists—Zmitser Dashkevich, Aliaksandr Frantskevich, and Pavel Seviarynets—it continues to restrict their freedom of movement and activities.

The general human rights situation in Belarus also continues to deteriorate. Recent laws passed to regulate demonstrations and political information have greatly curtailed freedom of assembly, and independent journalists and political activists are under a constant threat of intimidation and arbitrary detention. In October, the regime made amendments to the Electoral Code designed to undermine the ability of opposition candidates to receive funding and compete in the 2014 local elections.

The EU voted in October to expand sanctions on the Lukashenko regime for an additional year citing the regime's failure to release or effectively rehabilitate political prisoners and its disregard for human rights or democratic principles in their decision making. The United States should continue to work with the European Union to remain consolidated, impose economic sanctions, and have a single plan of action regarding the promotion of dramatic processes in Belarus.

Tensions with Russia increased when the Lukashenko regime arrested Vladislav Baumgertner, a Russian citizen who is the head of a major Russian potash firm. The move was in retaliation for this firm dropping its joint venture with a local Belorussian potash firm, resulting in a steep drop in the commodity price and harming the Belarus economy. This began an ongoing "potash war" with Russia. Meanwhile, negotiations to put a Russian airbase in Belarus have proved controversial and allowed opposition parties an opening to criticize the regime and focus attention on national independence and sovereignty issues. The United States should continue to support Belorussian citizens as they fight to maintain their sovereignty.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the Eastern Partnership. On November 28 through 29, just coming up soon, the European Union will host the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania. The goal of the event is to promote closer ties between the EU and its eastern neighbors and, in particular, to further the progress on association agreements with Georgia, Moldova, and the Ukraine. The governments of these countries have worked for years to meet conditions for signing the agreements, and the summit is viewed as an historic step in European integration for these countries.

Russia has responded to the Eastern Partnership initiative by applying intense pressure on these countries to abandon EU engagement and join a Russian-led Eurasian union instead.

Russia has started erecting barbed wire fences on Georgian territory, prompting a stern rebuke from the EU condemning the action and calling for their removal. In Moldova, Russia has resorted to its tactics of banning Moldova wine imports and threatening to cut off gas during the winter months. Russia has banned dairy products from Lithuania and certain chocolate products from the Ukraine and threatened both countries with disruption or price hikes on gas supplies. The EU has warned Russia to stop these actions, and the U.S. should join in the condemnation of Russia's aggressive behavior towards the sovereignty of nations on its border.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this time for talking about these emerging democracies in eastern Europe, the threat that still continues, and the importance of the United States Government being involved in promoting democracy, freedom, and the rule of law.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT SUCCESS STORIES

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

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, we have been in this huge debate around the Affordable Care Act for quite a while now. One of the things that I cannot ever forget is the health care nightmare stories that I listened to before we passed the Affordable Care Act. As I see so many of my Republican colleagues gleefully celebrate the difficulties with the Web site or cancellations and then think that that is going to somehow help them in an election, I can't think about any election. All I can think about are people like the people whom I want to share with you right now.

Let me tell you about Marty Olson. Marty built a small business creating marble sinks and countertops. He poured everything he had into his business, and it flourished. He became a job creator, in the language of some people. I call him a "small business person." I call his customers "job creators."

Just a few years ago, he employed more than half a dozen employees. Recently, things changed drastically for him. Over the course of the last year, his 9-year-old daughter, Abby, was diagnosed with leukemia. She beat the odds and was in remission for 6 months until her cancer symptoms returned. She is now awaiting a bone marrow transplant. Mr. Olson spent time with his ailing daughter, and his business began to decrease.

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He is now the sole employee of the marble business. Three months ago, he suffered a detached artery and had heart surgery. He is still recuperating from his surgery and losing his insurance on January 1 due to a divorce. He began to search for affordable health

insurance, but most premium quotes were too much for him to afford. The implementation of the Affordable Care Act means he will not be denied insurance due to his preexisting heart condition. The health care exchange in Minnesota, mnsure.org, is allowing him to purchase a policy he can afford. Without the plans available on the Minnesota health care exchange, he likely would have to choose between health insurance or paying his other monthly bills.

When his business was growing, he often trained employees who increased his production, but sometimes lost that employee because he was unable to provide them with an adequate health care insurance plan. The small business exchange is there for him to use when his business grows again in the future.

Of course Marty is not by himself in this. Tracy Brock is another small business owner. She has presided over a small business for 21 years. She is able to earn enough to support herself and hire several part-time employees. However, her health insurance premiums have forced her to work six to seven days a week. Those high premiums, around \$650 a month, prevent her from taking time to enjoy life and get some well-deserved rest. Her insurance premiums were taking most of her marginal profits. The assets from her business disqualified her from receiving any assistance with her premiums.

Tracy had the misfortune of being a cancer patient. She also needs knee replacement surgery, and Ms. Brock's business has not been as profitable recently so she continues to work every day despite her health condition. She began researching mnsure.org, the health care exchange available in Minnesota, and she found health plans with better coverage at prices that she can afford. Some plans she found were only 50 percent of the cost of her current premium. The additional coverage will give her more options to treat her conditions, and the savings will allow her to work less and enjoy life more.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, we shouldn't look at difficulties in the implementation of the Affordable Care Act as a political opportunity. We should never take our eye off the fact that we have citizens who desperately need something way better than we had before we had the Affordable Care Act. I wish Republicans would say, You know what, it is there. It is passed. The Supreme Court has said it is constitutional, and we are going to do everything we can to make it work even if we would do it different, and we will offer constructive improvements, but we are not going to sit back and just try to wreck it with poison pill bills like the Upton bill last week, or with the 47 attempts to repeal it, or with the myriad of other tricks, sabotage, and devices that they have employed.

It is time to help Americans like Marty Olson, like Tracy Brock, and like millions of other people, including

one of my own interns, Abby Schanfield. Abby is an awesome young woman. She has had numerous surgeries since she was 10 months old. Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, Abby is able to stay on her parents' insurance until she is 26, and her parents were able to pay premiums and copays that have given her access to the health care that she needs.

So for that and for many other reasons, I urge support of the Affordable Care Act.

HONORING FIVE FORT BENNING SOLDIERS

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

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I come before you today to honor five soldiers, those attached to and those of the 75th Ranger Battalion, Fort Benning, Georgia.

Fort Benning is home to about 1,500 Rangers of the entire 75th Ranger Regiment. They are an elite group of soldier who perform specialized operations for the Army. Currently, the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, as well as Rangers of the Regimental Headquarters and the Regimental Special Troop Battalion, are deployed. I have a deep commitment to Fort Benning, and once these Rangers pass through Fort Benning, Georgia, they become part of the State's family.

On October 6, five of these brave Rangers were part of a mission gone wrong. Sergeant Patrick Hawkins, Private 1st Class Cody Patterson, 1st Lieutenant Jennifer Moreno, and Special Agent Joseph Peters were killed by an improvised explosive device while conducting combat operations in Kandahar province, Afghanistan, and Corporal Joshua Hargis was seriously injured.

These soldiers came to Fort Benning from across the Nation. They are sons and daughters and parents, spouses, loved by many. Their loss is felt across our Nation, and we thank them for paying the ultimate sacrifice.

As we mourn the loss of these four soldiers, I also want to give thanks for the life of Corporal Joshua Hargis. Corporal Hargis was injured on the same mission on October 6 and is pictured here beside me. This photo has been nicknamed "the salute seen around the world" because it shows the strong character of an American soldier.

After hours of surgery, Corporal Hargis' commander held a small ceremony in the hospital room to honor Corporal Hargis with the Purple Heart award. They thought he was unconscious. Doctors, nurses, and fellow Rangers crowded into the room to watch him receive his award. Despite his injuries, tubes, and intense pain, Corporal Hargis still saluted his commander when his Purple Heart was pinned on his hospital blanket. This act of determination despite pain em-

bodies all that is a Ranger. This is the heart of a warrior. This is America. We need not apologize to anyone for our strength and our greatness.

I want to thank these five brave Rangers, Sergeant Patrick Hawkins, Private 1st Class Cody Patterson, 1st Lieutenant Jennifer Moreno, Special Agent Joseph Peters, and Corporal Joshua Hargis, for their service and their sacrifice. Joan and I send our prayers to their families and to their friends.

God bless America, and God bless our troops.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT CANCELATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about the Affordable Care Act. The Affordable Care Act is working for many of my constituents on the central coast of California, like Danna in San Luis Obispo County, who tells me she will be saving 40 percent on her family's premiums. It is working for the Pacelas in Solvang, who tell me they now have better coverage while saving \$8,000 a year on their premiums. It is working for the thousands of families whose young adult children can continue on their parents' plans, and for everyone who has a preexisting condition who now cannot be turned down for coverage.

I know that this is not the case for all central coast residents, especially those who may have received cancellation notices this year, either because their insurer is only selling in the exchanges, or because the insurance companies have stopped offering plans in our area all together. Cancellation of these plans has caused real pain and confusion for our constituents in California who are faced with Covered California marketplace options that have different provider networks or different premium costs.

After hearing numerous stories from the families I represent, it is clear we must address this problem with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act so we can protect all California families and businesses. The President has offered an administrative fix to this issue to allow insurance companies to offer plans to those already enrolled for the next year, but States will be the final decisionmakers.

That is why I led a letter, with Congresswoman ZOE LOFGREN and 22 of our California colleagues, to Covered California's leadership asking them to implement this administrative fix without delay.

Covered California has led the way in bringing new, quality health care opportunities to millions of Californians. The Web site is working, and enrollment is steadily increasing. But with over 1 million Californians receiving cancellation notices of their current plans, we must and we will do more to

ensure that no one is left without the opportunity for affordable coverage. These families were told that if they liked their plan they can keep it, and that is a promise we must keep for them.

AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE RIGHT TO KNOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARRETT. Mr. Speaker, President Obama purports to protect and defend the idea of open government, but his staff seems to have missed the memo. You see, just 5 months ago, I asked Treasury Secretary Jack Lew about his personal knowledge of the IRS' reprehensible practice of targeting innocent Americans. I inquired of him three basic things, one of which was what was the Secretary's knowledge and what was his involvement with any of the various meetings with then-IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman and the White House. You see, back then a year ago, Jack Lew served as the chief of staff to the President while some of the most egregious, reprehensible behavior ever displayed by the IRS took place while Doug Shulman was the IRS Commissioner and while Doug Shulman reportedly attended meetings at the White House at various times. Unfortunately, rather than answer some of these basic and simple questions and putting to bed any and all appearance of impropriety by Jack Lew, Secretary Lew continues to ignore all of my questions.

The American people have the right to know. The American people have the right to know exactly what Secretary Lew knew and what he did. So I rise today to ask the American people to join with me and demand openness from this government, from this President, and from Secretary Jack Lew.

Secretary Lew, it is time to answer the questions of the American public.

MESSAGES AND MISSIONS YET UNDONE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak of messages and missions yet undone. This Congress, both House and Senate, was sent here on behalf of the American people to ensure that their voices and their needs are adhered to. They are not interested in the clanging of voices; they are interested in the rolling up of sleeves and making sure our government works. So I stand here in reflection of a very successful enrollment day in Houston, Texas, last Saturday, where people came and stood in line to be able to seek information and, yes, enroll because they have faith in this Nation.

As the Affordable Care Act goes along and fixes broken promises and