

Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, for as long as I have been in Congress, both parties and two successive administrations have danced around the issue of our infrastructure deficit. For all the attention to the various fiscal cliffs, the looming infrastructure deficit is every bit as critical.

For two centuries, infrastructure was a bipartisan issue, from Lincoln, with the transcontinental railroad, to Democrats and Republicans coming together to launch the interstate freeway system signed into law by President Eisenhower. Subsequent road, transit and water investments helped fuel our economy and tie the Nation together.

More recently, the failure to address long-term funding has also been bipartisan. The Bush administration ignored strong recommendations from their own private sector experts that they empanelled to give advice.

Although the Obama administration did request and employ some modest funding in the Recovery Act and has proposed an infrastructure bank and talked extensively and, I think, sincerely about the need for investment, what has been lacking has been a specific, concrete proposal from either party to address infrastructure financing in America.

While the political maneuvering has occurred here in Washington, the gap in the highway trust fund has been growing, and conditions of our roads, bridges, and transit systems have been deteriorating. This puts America at a competitive disadvantage, complicates the movement of goods and people, and contributes to congestion and pollution.

At the same time the needs grow, the resources are in significant decline. The gas tax has not been increased since the Clinton administration 20 years ago. The future prospects are even worse. Demands are increasing and deferred maintenance takes its toll while we watch the bottom fall out of the highway trust fund.

We have seen a slowdown in revenue due to the near collapse of the economy, a shift in driving patterns while people, especially young people, drive less, and, of course there is improved fuel efficiency. It is scheduled to further reduce gas consumption dramatically with improved mileage for conventional vehicles, to say nothing of hybrids, plug-in hybrids, and electric vehicles.

It is time for Congress to act. We have seen our partners at the State level increase transportation funding in 13 States, but they need Congress to act to maintain that partnership.

There is a large coalition that stands ready to support Congress. U.S. chamber, the national AFL-CIO, building trades, trucking industry, numerous associations of small and medium businesses, local chambers of commerce, local government, professional organizations, bicyclists, the coalition is

broad and persuasive requesting Congress to tax them.

Any resources would have a powerful effect on the economy. The relatively small amount in the Recovery Act for infrastructure created many jobs because there is a strong multiplier effect, about 36,000 jobs for each billion dollars invested. And these are family-wage jobs all across America that aren't going to be outsourced overseas.

In less than a year, the transportation bill expires, and absent congressional action, we face a precipitous drop in transportation funding next year and a reduction of 30 percent overall for the next decade.

It doesn't need to be this way. I am proposing we implement the three-step, 15-cent-per-gallon tax increase that was part of the Simpson-Bowles deficit reduction proposal. Communities and industry need certainty, especially for larger projects that are multistate and multiyear.

And this should be the last Federal gas tax increase. Over the next 10 years, we need to replace funding for transportation that is based on gallons of fuel consumed, which is going to be declining, with something more sustainable, a reasonable adjustment now and a permanent fix in the future, so we can stop this dance of avoidance.

We will find broad support for this form of user fee, which, historically, has been acceptable to Republicans as well, including Ronald Reagan, who increased the gas tax a nickel a gallon back when that was real money in 1982, and he established the mass transit trust fund account.

Let's address the infrastructure deficit, stabilizing transportation funding, and help revitalize and enhance America's all-too-slow economic recovery. The time is now.

AN ADMONITION AND A REDIRECTION

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

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today for an admonition and a redirection, somewhat of a philosophical conversation.

America started with a great, healthy reality of what government can do and what government cannot do. A government can't really control all of what is happening in every State from one central area. We begin at the very beginning with individual States, individual local government, individuals making decisions for their family.

Right now, we see in every poll, in every conversation, that every one of us has this great frustration that is rising among the American people. That frustration is not rising because the American vision, the American Dream, and the American spirit is failing. That frustration is rising somewhat because of what we are doing and because of this constant challenge that is occur-

ring nationwide to the concept of a representative republic, the constant asking of the question: Has this become too gridlocked? Has it become too partisan? Has it become too hard to be able to get things done?

Maybe we need to do it a different way. Quite frankly, the American people know in their hearts that they should be represented, they should be heard, justice should be done, trust should be here, common sense should prevail. The basic principle among so many people, that we should speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, that every American should be heard, it goes from the Book of Proverbs to the very foundation of our constitutional system now.

So what do we do about that?

Well, around the world we see it. We see the frustration of other people in other countries. We see it in Syria as they are split up in a civil war. We see it in Cairo, in the streets at yet another set of protests. We see in Thailand, the absolute corruption of their government breaking out in things. We see votes in the Parliament in the Ukraine right now as worldwide, continent by continent, there is constant frustration with their government and people rise up in the streets.

What do we do about it? How do we lead? We are the leaders in our country. So what do we do?

Here is my quick admonition to us:

Stop running down America and each other. We are different. We think different, we function different, our families function different, but we should still be able to honor each other.

We see each other's worst. We see on the social media sites and we see on the press reports and we see everything else. We know so much about each other that there is this sense that it is different now. But quite frankly, Americans have always been flawed people. But we are people that are gathered around our work, our faith, our community, and our family, and that has made us different.

We have got to stop demeaning a representative republic. This constant statement of "we are gridlocked and things aren't working" implies to people all over the country maybe this system of government that made us the most powerful economy, the most powerful military, the greatest bastion for freedom the world has ever known, maybe it doesn't work anymore.

The problem is not a representative republic. The problem is not our Constitution. The problem is we are trying to do something that is not that. We are shifting away from the way that we were founded into something that doesn't really exist.

Quite frankly, the partisan gridlock is not something new. The patron saint of Oklahoma is Will Rogers. You can take every joke he made about Congress in the 1920s and pull it up today and it is still funny because things haven't changed on that because, quite frankly, we think different. But that is

the nature of a country that is like ours.

We have all these voices from all over the country that should come together and that should work together; but they should find us with solutions, not getting into their life and taking things over. They need to see a government that is thinking for them, not trying to make them the servant. They see it.

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Why did we have to vote this week about lead in fire hydrants? Isn't that a no-brainer issue? The government has become so strong and so powerful in communities that communities are not sure if they can replace their fire hydrants anymore? Why is it that Americans can't get insurance anymore? Because they are waiting on a government Web site and they are worried about what is going to happen in a month because they are waiting in line for that.

Why is it that the education outcomes continue to decline when we increase Federal control year after year after year, and yet our outcomes continue to decline? Even this week, there is another international poll coming out for that.

Why is it getting harder and harder to start a company, find a job, pay your gas bill? Why is it tougher to fill up your car with gas or pay the bill for your cell phone?

It is because of increasing regulations, increasing fees, increasing control, and Americans continue to get frustrated because they know this is not what we were designed to be. We are doing too many things. We have got to get back to trusting the American people, our State leaders, our local leaders, and we have got to set the standard for what leadership looks like in America by our rhetoric and by our actions.

We can honor people and honor each other, even in our differences, but we have got to get back to doing this Nation's business the way that the American people in their hearts know it should be done, where their voices are heard, and where they get to make the decisions.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR LABOR CONDITIONS IN BANGLADESH

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

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, a year has passed since the 112 garment workers—mostly women—were killed in a factory in Bangladesh that produced clothing for brands like Walmart, Sears, and Kmart.

Earlier this year, I went to Bangladesh and met with women who leapt from the third and fourth floor windows of the factory to escape the fire. There is no good way to jump from

that height. The women who survived the fall were broken, crippled, and unable to support their children.

Since the Tazreen fire, several brands have stepped up with payments for survivors, and yet some of the companies that were presumably profiting quite nicely from production at the Tazreen factory have opted not to compensate a single victim.

Walmart is one of those. They have chosen not to compensate a single woman who died in the factory, was crippled in the factory, had lost their job in the factory all because of the fire in the unsafe factory.

The Tazreen factory was known as a deathtrap. Windows were barred, and the management locked the doors in the stairwells, leaving workers with no way to escape.

Walmart knew this factory was a deathtrap. The company had commissioned a series of audits in 2011. Their audits uncovered that Tazreen was an overcrowded factory without proper fire alarms or smoke detectors, that it lacked sufficient fire fighting equipment, with partially blocked exits and stairwells, and did not post adequate evacuation plans.

Because factory management failed to improve conditions, Walmart terminated the contracts with the factory. However, Tazreen factory workers continued to produce for Walmart, even though they terminated their contract.

According to documents found in the ashes, more than half of the factory's total production was dedicated to Walmart just 2 months before the collapse. So while Walmart left the factory because it was unsafe, over half of the production, according to the documents, was still for Walmart, knowing they were producing in an unsafe factory that claimed the lives of 112 women.

Walmart now claims that the Tazreen factory was an unauthorized subcontractor. Half of the work in the factory was there because supposedly Walmart, whose hallmark of efficiency is their supply chain, didn't know their subcontractor was placing these very significant orders in a factory that they abandoned and was also owned, overall, by another company that they were doing business with.

I think Walmart is trying to construct a process so that they can deny the responsibility for the deaths of the women, the responsibility to pay maybe a benefit to those families who were crushed by the loss of their breadwinner, their mother, their sister, their wife. It is time to accept that responsibility.

When Walmart terminated direct contracts at the factory, it never told the workers that it was leaving or why it was leaving.

At a recent public forum, Walmart said that its only responsibility was to notify the factory owner, but that is like notifying a criminal that you are aware of his crime while you keep his next potential victim in the dark.

Workers had no reason to suspect that Walmart walked away due to safety concerns because Walmart garments still dominated the production there. By quietly walking away and failing to tell anybody who could remedy the danger—workers, trade associations, and the government—Walmart left the Tazreen factory vulnerable to a fire that would engulf them. The Walmart actions were calibrated to evade responsibility, and they put those women at risk.

The pattern of evasion was repeated at Rana Plaza, where 1,132 workers—again, mostly women—were killed when the factory collapsed earlier this year. Walmart claims it did not permit production there, but evidence found in the rubble of that collapsed factory shows that Rana Plaza was producing jeans for Walmart less than a year before the collapse.

There is a theme here: when tragedies occur, Walmart claims production was not authorized as a way to disown responsibility. But every brand sourcing garments from Bangladesh knows that extensive subcontracting is part of the business model. That is how fast-fashion is produced.

You can cut your direct dealings with a specific factory, but there is a chance someone in your supply chain is going to subcontract right back to that factory. The ethics are not complicated.

The United Nations Principles on Business and Human Rights call upon multinationals to conduct due diligence through the many layers of their supply chains where the risks are the greatest to identify, mitigate, and prevent the problems.

Had Walmart done that, maybe 1,000 women would be alive today and not have had a factory collapse on them. Maybe 112 women would be alive today. Maybe those women who had to jump out of the third and fourth floor windows to survive the fire would not be crippled today, would be able to support their families, and live somewhat of a normal life.

Audits don't absolve companies of responsibility. If terminating a contract could lead to even greater harm, there is a special obligation, according to these recognized principles of the United Nations, to stay and remedy the problem. Brands have an obligation to both audit working conditions and to help remedy the risk of the most vulnerable in their supply chain.

Walmart, accept responsibility, and start doing business in a humane way.

WWW.HEALTHCARE.GOV WEB SITE CYBERSECURITY ISSUES

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

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, the Science, Space, and Technology Committee recently held a hearing on www.healthcare.gov cybersecurity threats. Our bipartisan expert witness