

country when it comes to their health care. That is what it is about.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman.

Governor Steve Beshear of Kentucky spoke to us this morning. Now, Kentucky is not the center of Democratic politics in America, as MITCH MCCONNELL would quickly observe. Thousands of people are signing up in Kentucky—thousands of people—successfully. Thousands of people are coming forward. About 70,000 people have already signed up in Kentucky. Thousands of people are coming forward in New York and California, all over this country, who are saying I want the assurance and coverage of health care.

What have they spent their time on? Trying to repeal health care. They have talked about repeal and replace. We haven't had much replace, but we have had a lot of repeal. And what does the majority leader refer to, Mr. Speaker? A 2009 bill. It is a bill from three Congresses ago that he is talking about, and all we have had on this is repeal. If they are concerned about health care, then there ought to be an alternative that the other side offers; but, frankly, Mr. Speaker, they have not done that.

I would be glad to move to another subject. I am sure we can go back to health care because the majority leader, notwithstanding his assertion that this is not about politics, I will tell him that the majority of the American people in poll after poll after poll says they don't want health care repeal. They want it fixed, and they want it to work right and the assurance that it is available to them, but they do not want it repealed.

Right now, even though they are upset, as we all are, as I am and as the President is, about the rollout and about the Web site not working as effectively as we would like, Americans right now, I will tell the majority leader, the majority in polls say they don't want it repealed. They want it fixed and they want to have it work. Very frankly, I think that is where they are. Not everybody. Not everybody, I understand that, and certainly not some factions of the Republican majority's party. They have made that very clear in statements on this floor. But my view is that we ought not to simply distract from some of the important things that need to be done.

I was interested in Senator CORNYN's response when he talked about the Iran deal, which 65 percent of the American public says was a worthwhile effort to make. We need to carefully review it, and we need to oversee it and make sure it works, and the majority leader and I have to work on that. But when Senator CORNYN said this was just a ruse—and I don't think he used the word "ruse," but just an effort to distract from health care, I think that sort of indicates the extraordinary focus that this issue has energized the Republican Party, Mr. Speaker, over the last 3 or 4 years.

Can I ask the majority leader about the budget conference, whether he has

any idea—he has talked about, on the schedule, the budget conference coming forward. Does he have any idea whether a budget conference agreement has been reached, number one; and number two, if an agreement is reached, will it manifest itself in the form of a budget conference report?

I am informed, maybe correctly or incorrectly, that there will never be a budget conference report. Does the gentleman know whether that is the case or not, and whether or not some agreement might be manifested by a bill and not by a conference report?

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman that the discussions that I have had with Chairman RYAN would lead me to some optimism that the two sides actually can come to an agreement. The agreement has not been made, so I don't want to say that there is a deal; but I am optimistic that, in fact, this time of year when the differences between the two sides have certainly been on display all year long, that perhaps we could agree that we need to reduce the deficit. We need to do something about the wasteful spending. And once again, I don't think the gentleman, nor I, thinks that the sequester is the best method to cut spending. It is indiscriminate. It cuts bad programs the same way as good programs, to put it simply. There are better ways.

Our side has always said, Mr. Speaker, that we have got to do something about the mandatory programs, the autopilot spending of the Federal Government that is disproportionately causing our deficit. I am hopeful that next week we can show the people of this country that we can produce something that is smarter than the way we are going about things now.

Obviously, a big concern to me is the national security and the defense of this country, as I know it is for the gentleman. And so again, I am hopeful that will be the case.

Now, the form that that agreement may or may not take I think right now is undetermined. I think it would be premature to even guess at that, and I would say to the gentleman that I know that he joins me in hoping that there is an agreement where we can maintain the trajectory in reducing spending and do it in a smarter way so we can get about the business of prioritizing the expenditure of taxpayer dollars here in this House.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for his comments. I will say that he and I, as he has articulated, do agree that the sequester is not good policy. As a matter of fact, Chairman HAL ROGERS, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, said it best when he said that the sequester cuts are ill-conceived and unrealistic and that he believes that the House action has indicated that that is the case. We have not done appropriation bills consistent with the sequester levels that as I understand were agreed at Williamsburg to be offered, but they haven't worked.

My own view, Mr. Speaker, of what is being discussed in the budget conference, some of the things that I have heard, strike me as being unbalanced, unfair, irresponsible, and unacceptable. Unless we have a balanced agreement, which in my view should replace the sequester because, as the majority leader indicates, it is not the rational way to go, as Mr. ROGERS indicates, it is not the rational way to go, and as every chairman of the appropriations subcommittees on the Republican side have said, it is not the way to go and ought to be replaced.

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I am hopeful that any agreement will, in fact, replace the sequester. I am hopeful, Mr. Majority Leader, as you well know, that we will get a big deal—not a little deal, not nibbling around the edges so that what occurs is we do this every 6 months and we never get to a stability that I know the majority leader and I believe would give confidence to our economy, to the business community, and to our people if we got a big deal. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be, at least at this point in time, in the discussion. I think that is unfortunate.

As I said, what I have heard so far seems to me to be unbalanced, unfair, irresponsible, and, from my perspective, unacceptable. So I am hopeful that the Budget Committee conference will revisit or at least come up with a product that is not yet being discussed, which will accomplish the objective of putting this country on a fiscally sustainable path for the long term, not just the short term.

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

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2013

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet on Monday next, when it shall convene at noon for morning-hour debate and 2 p.m. for legislative business.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SALMON). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

WATER FOR THE WORLD: TURN ON THE FAUCET

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, when you and I are thirsty, we walk 3 feet to the nearest faucet or grab a bottle of water out of the fridge; but that isn't so for thousands of people living around the world.

Each morning in Africa, women and young girls, like this girl in Tanzania, wake up and walk for miles just to collect water for their family. The walk can be dangerous because some wells

are controlled by violent thugs. These thugs often assault women and children in exchange for water. Often this water is dirty and leads to sickness and disease.

This is unimaginable for many Americans, but a reality for 780 million people on Earth who do not have access to clean water. We can fix this. That is why Congressman EARL BLUMENAUER and I have introduced the Water for the World Act. This bill uses existing taxpayer money to more effectively make clean water available to those who need it, such as digging wells in villages in Africa. According to the World Bank, for every dollar spent, at least \$4 is returned in saved health care costs and increased economic productivity.

We have it in our power to help people have clean water. It is something America can and should do. No one should be assaulted when they try to get water. It is 2013. It is time to turn on the faucet and make water universal for little girls like this.

And that's just the way it is.

OBAMACARE

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the President's claim that Americans can keep the plans they know and like, to me, always appeared somewhat misinformed, if not insincere.

First of all, the law was designed to completely restructure America's health care system. Some, if not millions, of Americans were bound to lose their plans.

Plain and simple, the law was designed to have a large majority of Americans give up their health care coverage, pay higher premiums, or face a tax increase. In fact, if millions of Americans did not lose their coverage, the health insurance exchanges would be full of high-risk consumers, without healthier populations subsidizing those plans.

The President's broken promises are concerning, especially for our States dealing with this growing mess.

"This bandage may provide temporary relief," stated the insurance commissioner in my home State of Pennsylvania in response to the President's cancellation fix. However, "Pennsylvania will continue to see additional cancellations, rate increases, and significant problems due to Affordable Care Act-driven changes in the insurance marketplace."

Mr. Speaker, the American people deserve better.

AFGHANISTAN

(Ms. LEE of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, as most of us joined family and friends

over Thanksgiving week last week, 2,500 Afghan elders voted on a security agreement that could potentially leave thousands of United States troops in Afghanistan for at least another decade.

If the Afghan people are having a say in continued American troops in that country, at the very least this Congress should also debate and vote on any such agreement.

The war in Afghanistan has just entered its 13th year, and the need to bring our troops home remains urgent. President Karzai has recently suggested that he sees no potential security benefit from an ongoing United States security mission. I couldn't agree more, and the American people have long understood that there is no military solution in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, especially at a time now when rising income inequality and harmful sequester cuts are hurting families and communities here at home, we need to get our priorities in order and stop spending good money after bad in Afghanistan.

We have known for years of the rampant waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan, including bags of cash from the CIA being handed over in suit cases and plastic bags to corrupt Afghan government officials.

Enough is enough.

We need to end the corruption and end this war.

A BAD DEAL

(Mr. PERRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, the President has offered Iran what he describes as a "very limited, temporary, reversible sanctions relief." In this case, limited means \$20 billion in sanctions relief.

What was the world promised for the \$20 billion gift to the Iranian regime? A promise that Iran would pause, not dismantle, its nuclear weapons program for 6 months while we betray our allies and compromise Israel's ability to defend itself.

Let me tell you what this deal is like. It is like going to an auto mechanic you can't trust to fix an oil leak on your car. The mechanic says it will take 6 months to fix the leak and charges you \$1,000 up front. When you come back 6 months later, you will find that not only is the leak not fixed, but your car was stripped down and sold for parts.

As we speak, Iranian centrifuges are continuing to spin, continuing to enrich uranium, and continuing to threaten the safety of the United States and our allies.

Whether it is at your local auto shop or at the nuclear negotiating table, the American people know when they are getting a bad deal.

US-31 RIBBON CUTTING

(Mr. ROKITA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROKITA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the opening of the Kokomo section of the new US-31 corridor.

Indiana is called the "crossroads of America," and for great reason. With numerous interstates and highways crisscrossing our State and intersecting in Indianapolis, our geographic position and transportation network have made logistics and manufacturing critical components of our economy in America.

With that in mind, last week I had the privilege of attending the ribbon cutting of the new US-31 Kokomo corridor.

When the final Hamilton County section opens to traffic in 2015, a total of 32 stoplights will have been removed from US-31 between Indianapolis and South Bend, saving drivers a half hour of travel time.

The Indiana Department of Transportation also deserves great credit for completing this project nearly 2 years ahead of schedule and, so far, 40 percent below the projected budget. Washington bureaucrats could learn a lot from that efficiency.

I commend and congratulate all of the individuals, elected officials, and business and community groups involved in bringing the Kokomo corridor US-31 from the drawing board to reality.

MONUMENTS MEN

(Ms. GRANGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest untold stories from World War II is a story of the brave men and women known as the Monuments Men.

This special military unit was tasked with helping to locate works of art confiscated by the Nazis and return them to their rightful owners. The Monuments Men, and women, were able to locate, preserve, and return almost 5 million cultural items, including many of the world's great works of art.

Today, there are only five surviving members, four men and one woman, of the Monuments Men. I believe the veterans who participated in these daring missions are certainly worthy and deserving of the recognition of Congress' highest expression of appreciation. That is why I am honored today to introduce legislation recognizing these heroes with a Congressional Gold Medal.

While we can never say thank you enough, I believe the Congressional Gold Medal is a worthy token of appreciation from a grateful Nation to Members of the Greatest Generation.