

□ 1030

For those people who would be impacted by that \$8 billion cut, it is about a \$90 cut per month in the benefit that they get. Every single person on the SNAP program received a cut. That cut that happened on November 1 for an average family of three would be about a \$30 cut. So you add the \$30 plus the \$90 that we are now talking about, that is now a \$120 cut per month for these families. That is a lot of money.

The fact of the matter is the SNAP benefit, as it stands, is not overly generous. In fact, I would say it is too stingy. It doesn't provide enough for people to be able to afford food, never mind nutritious food. A lot of the people who show up at our food banks and our food pantries are on the SNAP program. But to cut an average family of three's benefits by about \$120 per month is outrageous. We don't have to worry. No one in this Chamber has to worry about whether or not they can afford to put food on the table for their families. Why aren't we more concerned with the fact that there are so many people in this country who are food insecure and who are outright hungry? We need to do something about this.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard my colleagues say, Well, we are not really trying to cut people's benefits; all we are trying to do is reform the program. We are trying to combat a culture of dependency. When you cut this program that provides food to poor people, what you do is you don't deal with an issue of a culture of dependency. What you do is make their lives more miserable. The fact of the matter is the majority of people on SNAP are children, senior citizens, and disabled people. Of those who can work, a majority of them work. There are people who work full time and still are so poor they qualify for SNAP assistance.

And the response of this Congress is going to be to make their lives more miserable? I ask my colleagues who support these cuts, is that what you came here for, to make the lives of the most vulnerable in this country more miserable? Is that what you are here for? Is that the purpose of your service in the United States Congress? Give me a break. We need to solve these problems.

The fact of the matter is that increasing hunger in America costs us a great deal. Hungry kids don't learn in school. Senior citizens who can't afford their food and their medication and take their medication on an empty stomach end up in our emergency rooms. There is a cost to hunger. In fact, it is more expensive to tolerate the hunger in America than it is to solve the problem. We were elected to solve problems, to lift people up, and not put people down.

I would just finally close, Mr. Speaker, by saying I urge the White House to get more involved in this issue, to get involved in this fight. There are some things worth fighting for. Ending pov-

erty and ending hunger in America is worth fighting for.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to reject cuts in the SNAP program that will increase hunger in America.

COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, to kick off this year's annual Computer Science Education Week taking place from December 9 to December 15, I had the pleasure of visiting with students at Capital High School in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

We took part in the global Hour of Code campaign organized by Computing in the Core and code.org that offers introductory coding activities and tutorials.

I also engaged with students about the importance of computer science by hosting a panel of industry professionals to highlight how diverse and exciting a career in computer science can truly be.

It is conversations like these that can be useful in helping young people navigate toward careers in computer science and STEM. In today's world, a degree in computer science translates into high-paying, in-demand jobs.

At a time when people are struggling to find work in our recovering economy, the computer science industry is growing, and New Mexico is predicted to add 15,360 computing jobs by 2018.

It has become increasingly essential for students to learn the language of code, the same way that they learn reading, writing, and mathematics. If we are to remain economically competitive and have a highly skilled workforce, access to computer science curricula and coding instruction must be a priority.

However, nationwide, only one in 10 schools offers computer science, and there is a great lack of diversity in those that do. Just 4 percent of students enrolled are female and 3 percent are students of color. In New Mexico, only 57 students took the computer science AP exam in 2012. This is a result, in part, of the fact that New Mexico does not offer computer science teacher certifications for middle and high school teachers and is one of the 36 States that does not count computer science courses toward high school graduation requirements for math and science.

Computer science provides students with the 21st-century skills necessary for innovation by teaching design, logical reasoning, and problem-solving. Yet, too few students have access to this rigorous coursework. That is why I cosponsored H.R. 2536, the Computer Science Education Act, that will help ensure that more students have access to computer science education by making it a core academic subject and in-

cluding computer science teachers in professional development.

I urge my colleagues to join me in support of the Computer Science Education Week and Computer Science Education Act. It is critically important that every student have the opportunity to learn computer science at an early age.

When we show them that they have the power to create the next great app, not just use it, I believe we will capture their hearts and minds and foster the next generation of innovators.

IN MEMORY OF JOHN REDNOUR

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

Mr. ENYART. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the memory of one of my constituents, Mr. John Rednour of Du Quoin, Illinois.

John passed away on December 1, and I had the privilege of attending his funeral service last week. All of us came to honor a man who did so much for southern Illinois. John had many titles, and most of us knew him as the mayor of Du Quoin, a position he held for 24 years. He was a businessman, a banker, and an ironworker. He served for many years on the Illinois State Police Merit Board. But none of those titles do the man justice. He was one of the foremost civic leaders in Illinois, and he worked tirelessly to improve southern Illinois and to create opportunity and jobs for its people.

John was a self-made man who rose from humble beginnings, but never forgot where he came from. His passing is a loss to our region. Most of all, it is a loss for his family; and today I ask my colleagues to remember the Rednour family, especially John's wife of 61 years, Wanda, who was his true partner.

Southern Illinois is a better place because of John Rednour, and today I am proud to honor my friend's memory.

URGING UKRAINE TO SETTLE ITS INTERNAL DISAGREEMENTS PEACEFULLY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the political turmoil in Ukraine demands the world's attention.

It is now 5 p.m. in Kiev where protesters in Independence Square are regrouping after a night of violent clashes with Ukrainian security forces. As of now, the security forces have begun to pull back from the crackdown; and despite intimidation and threats of violence, the opposition has retained control of Euromaidan, the name given to Independence Square in a clear sign of solidarity with Europe.

The United States has sided unequivocally with those Ukrainians who are demonstrating for an independent Ukraine, for their rights to free assembly and free speech under provisions of

international law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Our Secretary of State has called upon the Government of Ukraine to respect the rights of all people and expressed the disgust of the United States with the use of force against peaceful protesters as unbefitting a democracy.

As Secretary Kerry noted, the right to free assembly is “a universal value, not just an American one.”

The House Ukrainian Caucus, which I cochair with Mr. LEVIN and Mr. GERALCH, has expressed its support for the rights of the Ukrainian people to exercise their rights to political speech and free assembly.

Yes, these are difficult, yet hopeful, times for Ukraine, which is trying to find its rightful place among the community of nations despite daunting domestic challenges. The country is gripped by uncertainty, which is exacerbating an already difficult economic situation.

The current crisis was triggered by the decision of the current political leadership to pursue free trade with Ukraine’s eastern neighbor, Russia, rather than neighbors to the west, the European Union.

Regardless of the political discord in Ukraine, this Congress should urge all parties to settle their internal disagreements peacefully and without violence.

Ukraine’s soils historically have been showered with the precious blood of their country men and women at a higher rate than most human beings could even imagine. The brilliantly recounted “Bloodlands,” written by Yale scholar Dr. Timothy Snyder, tells their story. Yes, though Ukraine’s very name means borderland, she too often has been a bloodland. May this not happen now.

Ukraine must adapt to embrace a world in which her own independence from interference surpasses any other priority. She should be free to engage all directions, east, west, south, and north, without fear of retaliation. She is a bridge to all nations, and therein will lie her prosperity.

As Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser to President Carter writes in today’s *Financial Times*:

Two decades of independence, of growing pride in rediscovering Ukrainian history, and of observing the country’s western neighbors economically benefiting from their European connections is creating a new mindset. That mindset is not embracing anti-Russianism, but it is asserting Ukraine’s own historic identity as culturally an authentic part of a larger Europe.

Mr. Brzezinski believes the current political change in Ukraine is part of an historically significant, yet inevitable, political transformation. He believes Ukraine and Russia, too, will eventually orient to the west. I have ultimate respect in his opinion and pray he is correct.

Those of us who love Ukraine have longed for the day when it is no longer a prisoner of geography, hemmed in between Germany and Russia, but a free

and willing member of the community of democratic nations.

Perhaps one day Ukraine will break free of the shackles of domination of the past. Perhaps one day Ukraine’s geographic location will be an asset, not a liability, a day when Ukraine looks both east and west and, in fact, in all four directions.

But as we can see from the images coming to us from Kiev, the road will not be smooth. We know the future lies with freedom and with democracy and with opportunity, not repression in isolation; but that is cold comfort in the streets of Ukraine today.

The United States Congress must stand forthrightly with the liberty-loving people of Ukraine during this difficult hour. At this time of testing, the people of Ukraine and the people of the United States should be inspired by the words of Ukraine’s most famous poet, Taras Shevchenko:

Then in your own house you will see true justice, strength and liberty. There is no other such Ukraine.”

[From the *Financial Times*, Dec. 10, 2013]

RUSSIA, LIKE UKRAINE, WILL BECOME A REAL DEMOCRACY

(By Zbigniew Brzezinski)

Come what may, the events in Ukraine are historically irreversible and geopolitically transformative. Sooner rather than later, Ukraine will be truly a part of democratic Europe; later rather than sooner, Russia will follow unless it isolates itself and becomes a semi-stagnant imperialistic relic.

The spontaneous outburst of distinctive Ukrainian patriotism—sparked by the mendacity of a corrupt and self-enriching leadership ready to seek Moscow’s protection—signals that commitment to national independence is becoming the dominant political reality. This is especially the case among the younger Ukrainians who no longer feel that they are linguistically or historically just a slightly deviant part of “Mother Russia”.

Yes, linguistic divisions persist and some parts of Ukraine still feel closer to Russia. But it is striking that even some of the most outspoken espousers of a European vocation have only recently embraced the Ukrainian language as their own. Two decades of independence, of growing pride in rediscovering Ukrainian history, and of observing the country’s western neighbours economically benefiting from their European connections is creating a new mindset. That mindset is not embracing anti-Russianism but it is asserting Ukraine’s own historic identity as culturally an authentic part of a larger Europe.

That is why, one way or another, Ukraine will unavoidably come closer to Europe. It is striking that even in neighbouring Belarus, ruled by the authoritarian Lukashenko regime, a similar western orientation is beginning to surface. Neither country is motivated by hostility towards Russia, but each senses that its independence as well as its cultural identity points increasingly in a westward direction.

In the next months some sort of a deal between the EU and Ukraine can still be contrived. To facilitate it, the EU must be more receptive to Kiev’s need for economic and financial support. Ukrainians have to realise that European taxpayers are not enchanted by the prospect of paying for the misdeeds and corruption of the current Kiev elite. Belt-tightening will be the necessary precondition for an agreement as well as a test

of Ukraine’s resolve in asserting its European aspirations. Kiev will also need to show that the outcome of elections is not determined by the imprisonment of political rivals.

The impact of this on Russia will be felt over the longer run. Moscow’s current geopolitical goal, shaped by President Vladimir Putin’s nostalgic obsession with the country’s imperial past, is to recreate in a new guise something akin to the old Russian empire or the more recent Soviet “union”.

Mr. Putin seems to harbour the naive notion that the leaders of the post-Soviet states will genuinely accept a subordinate role in a Kremlin-led entity. Some of the leaders do pay occasional lip service to that formula—but out of necessity, not conviction. All prefer independence: it is more pleasant to be presidents, prime ministers, generals, ambassadors and economic money-makers at home rather than to be the provincial equivalents thereof in a larger Russian empire. The historically proven fact is that national statehood, once attained, is infectious and almost impossible to undo except through massive external force.

Today’s Russia is in no position to assert a violent restoration of its old empire. It is too weak, too backward and too poor. Its demographic crisis makes matters worse. The fact that the newly independent Central Asian states favour increasingly comprehensive arrangements with China is another concern for Russia, reawakening long lingering territorial nightmares.

It is only a question of time before it becomes evident to Russia’s social elites that Mr. Putin’s heavy-handed efforts have very limited prospects of success. Sooner or later, he will no longer be president. And not long thereafter Russia—and especially its emerging new middle class—will conclude that the only path that makes sense is to become also a truly modern, democratic, and maybe even a leading European state.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o’clock and 43 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Gracious God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

You have blessed us with all good gifts, and with thankful hearts, we express our gratitude. You have created us with opportunities to serve other people in their need, to share together in respect and affection, and to be faithful in the responsibilities we have been given.

In this moment of prayer, please grant to the Members of this people’s House the gifts of wisdom and discernment that in their words and actions