

This National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, I urge my colleagues to take action and to join me, cosponsor H.R. 2101, the Federal Response to Eliminating Eating Disorders Act. We can and we must do better.

IT IS TIME FOR WASHINGTON TO QUIT WASTING MONEY

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

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, it is time for Washington to quit wasting money. A good place to start is to eliminate duplicative programs. Why should we pay twice for the same thing? We shouldn't.

Nonpartisan inspectors general found that management at Federal agencies wasted \$67 billion by failing to implement cost-cutting recommendations. This is unacceptable.

We must take action to eliminate duplicative and wasteful government programs such as the duplicative USDA catfish inspection scheme I fought to eliminate. This program has spent \$30 million of your money and hasn't inspected a single fish. This is just one example.

The people of this Nation deserve no less than a government that is transparent and wisely spends the hard-earned tax dollars of the people. I am proud to support legislation this week that addresses wasteful spending. It is time to rebuild trust with the American people and get government out of the way.

THE PEACE CORPS' 53RD ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Peace Corps Week and congratulate the Peace Corps for celebrating its 53rd anniversary this Saturday. The Peace Corps is doing great work around the world with 7,200 volunteers and trainees working on projects in 65 countries. Their work reaches every corner of the world.

However, none of this could be accomplished without the great volunteers. These volunteers come from all around our country, but from my home State in Minnesota and my district, we have got a pretty good track record of producing members. In fact, there are currently over 200 different Minnesotans volunteering in the Peace Corps, and 30 of those volunteers come from the Third District.

Last year, our State ranked seventh in producing these volunteers for the Peace Corps, and my district was actually one of the highest performing in the country.

Mr. Speaker, recently I had the chance to welcome, and also join, Acting Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet to come to Minnesota to participate in a

recruiting event. I can tell you that after 53 years, the desire to volunteer for the Peace Corps is as strong as ever.

I would like to commend all the Peace Corps volunteers, both past and present, for their service.

UAW NLRB ELECTION AT CHATTANOOGA VOLKSWAGEN PLANT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. POCAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. POCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Progressive Caucus. The Progressive Caucus wants to discuss with the American public issues that are important, that are timely, and that should be happening in this current Congress.

Tonight we are here to talk about a number of issues, one being the very important need to raise the minimum wage in this country.

Before we start that dialogue, we also want to talk about another issue that has happened just recently in this country and that has a little bit to do with my background growing up.

I grew up in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Kenosha, Wisconsin, was a company town. We had one very large employer, American Motors Company. We made Pacers and Gremlins and a bunch of cars that maybe were unique for their time and may be collectable now, but certainly stood out in history. But American Motors did something really amazing for the community I grew up in. We were able to grow up in a strong, middle class community. People had family-supporting wages. And the reason they had family-supporting wages is not only because of American Motors Company and later Renault and Chrysler, but also because of the United Auto workers Union, a union that worked very collaboratively with the companies that were there in Kenosha and made sure that not only did people get a good, fair wage to support their families, but also they worked hard and they made sure those companies were profitable and delivered a very good quality product for the American people.

So, that was my experience growing up. My neighbors, my family, my friends all wound up having someone in their family working with American Motors Company or a company that fed into that, and we had good wages and people had a good chance to grow up in a middle class environment.

Unfortunately, all too often we see these attacks across the country on unions making it harder and harder for people who work for a company to have a voice in their company. What happened just 2 weeks ago was there was a union election at a Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee. They had an election that was conducted by the National Labor Relations Board where

workers were deciding whether or not they were going to have a voice, collective voice in their workplace. They were deciding whether or not they were going to unionize and join the United Auto Workers.

There were two extraordinary things about this election: First, the company was neutral. The company had made the decision to stay out of the choice because, after all, this was a decision to be made by the workers. We have seen time and time again how employers can easily interfere with this choice by workers. After all, they write your paycheck; they can decide whether or not you get that promotion; they can fire you. So an employer can wield an immense and powerful influence over the workers who are trying to make a decision whether or not they want to unionize, and they can wield that power lawfully and sometimes they wield it unlawfully. In this case, the employer of Volkswagen said: You know what? This is the workers' decision. Let's leave it up to them.

That doesn't happen very often in this country. For that reason, the employer chose to embrace the notion that its employees had the freedom to choose. That happened in Chattanooga.

There is a second extraordinary thing that happened in this election, and that is, despite the fact that the employer was neutral, a free and fair election was still rendered impossible because of interference and threats from outside parties. What we saw here was unprecedented, and the shameful actions by outside parties interfered in a private decision by some 1,300 workers on whether or not they would organize for a better life.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Will the gentleman from Wisconsin yield?

Mr. POCAN. I yield, yes, absolutely, to Mr. MILLER from California.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for yielding. I want to join you in your remarks in expressing outrage about the situation in Chattanooga.

In this case, these outside parties included both well-funded interest groups and publicly elected figures dead set on stopping the workers from joining the union. It wasn't enough for these outside parties to say publicly that they did not like unions. It wasn't enough for them to say publicly to the auto-workers, hey, we know what is best for you and your family, vote against the union. It wasn't enough for them to say we don't want unions to get a toehold on the south. No. They were not going to let the workers decide for themselves. They were angry with Volkswagen, who was officially neutral. They were angry that Volkswagen had a long track record of successfully working with labor unions through joint work councils that innovate and reduce company costs. They were angry that a majority of the workers actually signed cards saying they wanted the UAW to represent them.

They were afraid of what would happen if the NLRB election process was actually on the level.

In the end, free and fair union elections became their biggest fear. Imagine that. In the end, a free and fair election became their biggest fear. So they decided they couldn't let that happen. If Volkswagen wouldn't scuttle this election, then these outside officials would. They laid in wait, and on the eve of the election, they then launched their assault: a barrage of untrue and inflammatory statements, the kind that we see from union busters all the time, the kind that are designed to coerce, to scare, to intimidate, to bully, and to bully, and to bully hard-working auto plant workers into rejecting the union.

One of these third parties, an elected official, went to the press on the first day of the voting, the first day the workers had a chance to vote, and he said that he had been "assured," if the workers vote against the union, Volkswagen would manufacture a new line of SUVs in Chattanooga. And lo and behold, what happened? This last-minute bombshell led to a press frenzy, banner headlines, a barrage of TV coverage, all reporting and repeating the threat that jobs in Chattanooga were now on the line with this vote. Never mind that the company denied it. Never mind that that elected official's claim wasn't true. As he said, he had been "assured," the junior Senator from Tennessee said.

Mr. POCAN. I thank my friend from California.

What you said is worth repeating. Volkswagen put out a formal denial of the claim, making clear that there was absolutely no link between the vote and the placement of the SUV facility in Chattanooga, yet this elected official went out and did it again. He moved to discredit the company, astonishingly suggesting that the company was using old talking points, suggesting that he had the company's new secret talking points.

What happened here wasn't someone just expressing their view. What happened here was someone communicating a promise of benefits if workers voted one way, backed up by some mystery assurance. What happened here was someone communicating a thinly veiled threat that jobs would be lost if the workers voted another way, again backed up by some mysterious assurance.

The National Labor Relations Act is our Nation's premiere worker rights law. Like many of our civil rights laws, many heroic Americans in the last couple of generations gave their lives to secure the right to freely associate, to take considerate action to improve their lot collectively, to bargain collectively for better wages and better job security, for health care, for fair wages, and for a safe workplace.

These workers were all brave, and they did not give in to thugs and battles. This National Labor Relations

Act outlaws bribes and threats in the midst of union elections. It does so for a reason. Those acts are not speech; they are more than speech. They render a free and fair election impossible.

In the case of UAW and Volkswagen in Chattanooga, since voting was already underway when the acts were committed, there was no opportunity to cure them. The votes were cast, and after 3 days the election was over. After an election, there are now three nonunionized Volkswagen plants in the world: one in Russia, one in China, and one in Chattanooga.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. On the last point the gentleman made, the reason these worker councils—why Volkswagen was neutral is that they had found these worker councils to help them lead this industry in innovation, to be one of the largest and most successful automobile companies in the world. And, in fact, they have used these worker councils in plants all around the world because that is the mechanism by which they have continued to be a leader and continued to have the growth that they have had and to have the products that they have had. And somehow—somehow—as you point out, in Russia and in China and now in Chattanooga, that motto is being rejected, not because Volkswagen rejected it, but because the election process was not allowed in China, it was not allowed in Russia, and was rigged and jimmied and obstructed by outside forces during that election in the United States.

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Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. I thank the gentleman for taking this time.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you.

While we definitely want to make sure we are talking about all the issues that are important to this country, and minimum wage is one that we want to also talk about tonight, we wanted to take this time just to highlight what happened, this travesty two weeks ago, and we hope that this will be cured.

Outside officials, regardless of their perspective, shouldn't be involved in the election, but we want to make sure we are highlighting what happened, because that election was not fair.

Thank you very much, gentleman from California, for all your many years of service on this.

At this point, we would like to also discuss tonight something that is very important. The Democrats, this week, took on what sometimes is considered a very unique measure in this House, it is called a discharge petition, because we have been fighting for over a year to try to raise the minimum wage in this country.

There is a bill introduced by the gentleman from California and Senator HARKIN from Iowa that would raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 within 3 years.

If we had kept up with inflation since 1968, the minimum wage right now would be something like \$10.60.

Instead, we are at \$7.25, and people can't get by. You certainly can't be in the middle class on that wage, and certainly it makes it hard to aspire to be in the middle class on that minimum wage.

We need to do everything we can to help lift that rising tide for everyone who gets that minimum wage because 16.5 million people will immediately get a pay increase, and another 8 million people will very likely get an increase because they are at that margin already and their wage will be lifted already.

These aren't numbers coming from the Democrats. These are numbers coming from the Congressional Budget Office, our nonpartisan entity that provides us facts and figures.

By giving the Nation a boost in the minimum wage, we help the economy, we help those who are in the middle class and aspiring to be in the middle class, and we can make this country a lot better for everyone trying to get by.

At this point I would like to yield to one of my colleagues from the State of Pennsylvania (Mr. CARTWRIGHT), one of my freshman colleagues who has also been the president of our freshman class.

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Thank you, Mr. POCAN.

I want to say, at the outset, that I was impressed with the colloquy that you had with our colleague from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER), and I wish to associate myself with those comments. They were very well-taken.

I, for one, and I know I speak on behalf of the entire Congressional Progressive Caucus, but I, for one, hope that the National Labor Relations Board revisits what happened in Chattanooga, because what we believe here in America is free and fair elections, and that includes labor union elections as well.

We are here to talk about raising the minimum wage, and it was only appropriate that Mr. MILLER from California was here with us this evening because he is one of the coauthors of H.R. 1010, the bill to raise the minimum wage to \$10.10, a modest proposal, I should add.

But let me attempt to address this House. I know that there are those who think that everything that could be said about raising the minimum wage has already been said, but allow me to address this House as if nothing had been said about raising the minimum wage in this country to \$10.10.

It is simply a matter of arithmetic. You know, if you just take what people were making at a minimum wage in the late 1960s in this country and put it on a cost index, a consumer price index, any kind of measure of inflation that has gone on since 1968, you see that, as my colleague and good friend from Wisconsin mentioned, it is well over \$10.10 an hour. It is something like \$10.60 an hour.

So this is indeed a modest proposal to turn the minimum wage up from the

mid-sevens to \$10.10 an hour, and there are good, solid reasons we have in this country for doing this.

My fellow Members of the House, you have to remember what life is like for people who are making \$7.25, \$7.50, \$7.75. People who are in that range are not bringing home enough money to make a living wage. They don't have enough money for the necessities of life.

People who are working full time—you have heard the expression “the working poor,” that is who we are talking about. These are the working poor.

Think about what our society has to do for the working poor. These are the people who have to take advantage of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the SNAP benefits. They used to be called food stamps.

These people don't make enough money, even though they work full time, to feed their families properly, so they resort to help from the SNAP program. Who pays for the SNAP program you might ask?

All of us do. U.S. taxpayers, John Q. Public pays for the SNAP program, so it is John Q. Public, not the employers of these people making the \$7 per hour, not the employers paying for that, it is John Q. Taxpayer picking up the difference.

It is the taxpayers paying for the SNAP benefits for the workers who, although they are working full time, their employers are not paying them enough so that they can feed their families, give them the very basic necessities.

What else?

These are people that live in section 8 housing, low-income housing. Everybody knows that, the projects. That is where they live, the people who make minimum wage right now and try to feed and clothe and shelter their families on minimum wage in this country.

So who pays the supplemental amount to keep the section 8 housing program going?

It is us. It is John Q. Public, John Q. Taxpayer. It is the American taxpayers picking up the difference because not enough is being paid to these workers so that they can sustain their families. But that is not all.

What about Head Start?

These are families that can't afford to send their kids to preschool because when they are making minimum wage, they can't pay the minimal fee to send your kid to preschool.

So where do they go?

They go to Head Start. Head Start, a federally funded program.

Who pays for that?

You already know the answer. You do. It is the American taxpayer. It is John Q. Public paying for Head Start because we have got working families that don't make enough even to send their little kids to preschool.

What is the point of all of this?

The point is that these employers paying the minimum wage to these

workers are paying so little that the American taxpayers have to step in and improve the lives of these people to such a basic level that they can feed them and clothe them and shelter them and give them the basic elemental education.

In other words, these employers are freeloaders. They are getting a free ride off of the American public because they are paying the minimum wage, which is in the sevens and it should be in the tens.

Listening to this debate, the owner of a small business might say, well, wait a minute. That means I have to lay people off because I only have so much money to pay my employees, so if you up the minimum wage to \$10.10, I don't have as much money to pay each person, so I have to lay somebody off so I can pay the remaining people the \$10.10 an hour.

That is a fallacy. It is a completely bogus argument, and let me tell you why: because that assumes that your business is a zero sum game. It is not.

To prove that, we need go back a century to a great American businessman, a self-made man, Henry Ford out of Dearborn, Michigan. What did he do?

He started one the greatest auto companies in the world. A central tenet of his business principles was that he was going to pay his workers a living wage, and he did.

They asked him, Mr. Ford, why are you paying your workers so much? You don't have to do this.

The answer is: I want my workers to be able to afford the things that I am building. If these people can't afford what I am building, then I don't have a market.

That is where the magic word comes in: customers. If you pay \$10.10 to your employees, it is not just your employees getting that increase in wages, it is everybody else's employees. Everybody in America, instead of making in the sevens, they get up to \$10.10, and all of a sudden they have a few more coins jingling in their pockets, and they might show up in your place of business.

You are making customers out of millions and millions and millions of Americans by paying them a working wage, a living wage, a wage that will enable them to become your customers.

So don't write off this argument, and don't fall for the same old argument that has been used, trotted out time and time again for why we shouldn't raise the minimum wage. If we here in America had believed and followed that argument, the minimum wage would still be \$2.25 instead of what it is now.

So think of the customers you will get. This is why raising the minimum wage just to what we would raise it to to account for inflation since 1968 makes sense.

Mr. POCAN. Would the gentleman from Pennsylvania yield to a question? Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Certainly.

Mr. POCAN. So what you just said, talking about the buying power, put-

ting that much money back into the economy, you know, I look at it this way. If you are someone who is making minimum wage and you get your wage increased to about \$10.10, that extra money is not going to go into a savings account for something in the future. You are probably going to be buying things right now. You are going to buy a sofa maybe.

The average CEO now makes 354 times what the average worker makes. Back in the late eighties it was about a 40-1 ratio. Now it is 354 times.

When we put money into an average low-wage worker, that money goes immediately into the economy. They can buy a sofa.

But when the gains that we have had in this country have gone, largely, to the top executives, the top 1 percent, the top 1 and 2 percent, how many sofas can you buy at that rate? How does that affect the economy?

Do you have any idea how many sofas you think you could buy if you are a CEO to try to keep up with and help stimulate the economy?

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. If stacked end to end, how far into space would those sofas reach is the question.

It is a great point, Mr. POCAN. Of course, you know the answer. The answer is this: when we put that extra money in the pockets of the people who are making the minimum wage in this country, they don't put that money in their brokerage accounts just to languish and not help others in the economy. They plug that money right back into the American economy, and it turns into growth and it turns into jobs.

That is what we were doing in 1968 when our economy was humming along and we were the pride of the free world. That is what we need to do again.

We need to think about stimulating our economy the old fashioned American way, by paying American workers a living wage.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you very much again, gentleman. I appreciate it.

I would also like to yield some time to another one of my colleagues, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. NOLAN). He is a freshman, but a returning freshman from the State of Minnesota, my neighboring State, from the great iron ranges of Minnesota.

Mr. NOLAN. I want to thank the gentleman from Wisconsin, and I want to associate myself with your remarks and those of the gentleman from California regarding what has happened at Volkswagen and the importance of the union movement in this country.

If anyone wants to know where the economic success of the middle class in this country has come from, you just need to follow the union movement. As the union movement grew and strengthened, so did the middle class and jobs and opportunities, and as we have seen the decline in recent years, we have seen a similar decline in income and jobs and opportunities.

If anyone thinks for one moment that elections don't have consequences,

they need to take a look at their history.

I come from the Iron Range. We have got a lot of mining and steelworkers up there. Back in 1948, if you will allow me to just do a little history here, and leading up to that, the steelworkers union proposed contracts that would allow them to negotiate pensions and health care benefits, and wouldn't you know, the NLRB, in 1947, said, no, you can't do that. That is not okay. That is off the table. That is not a subject for negotiation.

Guess what?

Not many people had pension benefits and health care at the time.

Well, it became a big issue in the 1948 election, and Harry Truman, as we all know, won the election.

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Well, guess what? He had the opportunity to appoint a number of people to the NLRB, and that issue was brought before the NLRB again. And guess what? This time, the NLRB ruled that, no, it is appropriate for unions to negotiate for pensions, to negotiate for health care benefits; and that is a result of an election contest and the union movement, coming together, was a genesis of a generation that had prosperity and opportunities—perhaps unparalleled—anywhere in the history of this country.

I have submitted, back when my generation entered into the employment market, if you were going to be a failure, you had to have a plan. There was just such an abundance of opportunities, and I am sometimes ashamed and embarrassed that my generation doesn't want to step up and do for this generation and the next generation what was done for us.

So I commend you for what you are doing here today, and I also want to associate myself with the remarks of the gentleman from Pennsylvania. We could go on, and we could add more to the litany of the things that are causing the rest of us to subsidize the businesses in this country.

And I know about business. I spent the last 32 years of my life in business. I am a business guy. It breaks my heart to see working men and women having to go to the food shelves to get food to feed their family.

So I rise here tonight to talk about the minimum wage just briefly. You know, we hear about all these millions of new jobs that have been created in recent years. One of my constituents said to me the other day: You know, it is a darn good thing we have created millions of new jobs because a guy needs two or three of them to make a living.

Well, that is, in fact, what is happening; and it is of small comfort to someone who is working these minimum wage jobs to know that, if they can put two or three of them together, they can provide for their family, make the rent payment, the mortgage payment, buy the groceries and clothing

for the kids; but you put in two or three jobs, there is no time left for the family.

A minimum wage increase is pro-family. It is pro-American. It is the foundation of what made this country the great country that it is.

Mr. Speaker, I hear all the time in my district, as I travel and stop at the cafes and the filling stations and the convenience stores, about these people that are working two and three jobs just to make ends meet, all because our minimum wage is simply not enough to take care of our families.

The lack of a decent and fair minimum wage is unfair to families. It is unfair to children. It is unfair to the elderly. It is unfair to the hardworking mothers and fathers, men and women in this country who go to work every day, providing the goods and services that we need so that we can continue on the path of the great Nation that we have been.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that we raise this minimum wage. Where I come from, morality and ethics dictated. If someone is willing to go to work every day and every week and every month to provide essential goods and services for the rest of us and this Nation, they are entitled to a wage that would allow them to live with a modicum of comfort and dignity. That is what this is all about.

So, Mr. Speaker, let us vote on this issue. You know what the outcome will be. We will increase the minimum wage if we are given an opportunity to vote on it here in this House. I know there are plenty of Republicans and Democrats who will vote to do that. Let's restore democracy to this institution.

Let's allow this matter to be brought before the House. Let's have a vote on it. Let's give America a pay raise now. It is desperately needed.

I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. POCAN) and Members of the House.

Mr. POCAN. Mr. NOLAN, I think what you are referring to is exactly what the Democrats are doing this week. We are initiating a discharge petition. We need to get 218 Members of this House to sign that to force a vote.

The House leadership has refused to let us have a vote on giving America a pay raise; and because of that, we are taking what is generally a pretty unusual motion—in other words, to discharge—to actually get enough people to sign and say: we want to vote on this, so we can pass it.

And I completely agree with you, Mr. NOLAN. If we put this on the floor, it will pass, unless the Republican leadership doesn't allow us to get this up here.

So I thank you for all of your efforts, not only just to get people to sign the discharge petition, but for all of the middle class families of Iron Range, Minnesota.

Mr. NOLAN. Thank you.

Mr. POCAN. One of the things that we have talked about tonight is the

value of why we want to increase the minimum wage, why it is going to put money into the economy right now. Again, this isn't the Democrats saying that. These are economic experts. These are some of the economists of the country.

The Economic Policy Institute has said that, if we raise the minimum wage, we would actually create 85,000 new jobs, in their calculation, within 3 years and put a \$22 billion boost to the economy; and that means \$500 million alone to the State of Wisconsin—\$500 million to my State and \$22 billion to the overall economy.

And what is more, you would lift 900,000 Americans out of poverty, according to the Congressional Budget Office. So we would lift people out of poverty, give people the ability to support their families and the ability to actually have a chance at living in the middle class.

Right now, on the minimum wage, your monthly gross salary is about \$1,250. Now, how many of you think you could live paying your rent or mortgage, paying for groceries, paying for your utilities, paying for gas or a bus or however it is you get around?

Think about the bills you have. Could you live on \$1,250 a month? And that is what the minimum wage is right now, less than the real value in current dollars that it was in 1968. It should be up to \$10.74, I believe, if we kept up with inflation.

There are a lot of myths out there. You are going to hear people on the other side of the aisle say: well, this is all for teenagers. Why are we going to lift the wage?

The average person who receives minimum wage is 35 years old. What percentage of the people earning minimum wage are teenagers? Twelve percent. Again, that is not the Democrats saying that. The Congressional Budget Office, the nonpartisan agency we go to for numbers, says that.

So if we raise the minimum wage, we will lift 900,000 people out of poverty, directly support 24.5 million workers, about two-thirds of those people directly with an increase in wage at the minimum wage level and another third who are at the \$10 level, who will also see a ripple effect of a boost in wages.

We will help the economy right now by putting that money into the economy in all the ways that were talked about tonight, and we know that this will not have a detrimental effect on the economy.

Now, some will say that it is going to cost jobs. I will tell you, in my State of Wisconsin, I spent 14 years in the legislature before I came to Congress; and every time we raised the minimum wage, there was an increase in jobs available. More people went into the workforce because we were actually offering a greater wage and people are given an incentive to get into the workforce.

There are studies that compare State by State, county by county, where one

had a minimum wage increase and one didn't; and there has been no ill effect in the county that did versus didn't, based on raising the minimum wage.

There are 600 economists, including seven Nobel economics prize winners, who agree that it will have no or negligible effect to the increase of jobs; but everyone agrees, it will help those people who are currently either living in poverty, working for minimum wage—two, three jobs to get by—or those who are just making above it and will see that ripple effect.

So there is no question, we need to give the workers of this country a pay raise. For all too long, we haven't done it. For all too long, we haven't kept up with inflation. You simply can't get by on roughly \$15,000 a year. That \$1,250 a month is impossible.

We are not talking about teenagers. We are talking about the average person being 35 years old, heads of households who are working one, two, maybe three part-time jobs just to get by.

So the Progressive Caucus is here tonight. And this is why we are talking not only about what happened at the union election in Chattanooga, but about raising the minimum wage.

The Democrats in this House have initiated a discharge petition to force a vote. Let us vote, Mr. Speaker. Let us vote on raising the minimum wage because if you let us vote, I know there are enough fair-minded Republicans that will join with the Democrats in this Chamber; and we will raise the minimum wage, but only if we are allowed to.

We are making every effort, and the Progressive Caucus will continue to do this. We were the ones who went and asked the President to raise it for people who get Federal contracts, and the President made that order. We are very happy the President did that.

But we are going to continue to push this in every way possible, so that people can live comfortably in the middle class and those who aspire to can get into the middle class.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I thank you for allowing the Progressive Caucus to have this time this evening, and I yield back the balance of my time.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BYRNE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS) for 30 minutes.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, we are here today as part of the New Democratic Coalition Immigration Task Force, which I am proud to cochair along with my colleagues, Representative GARCIA and Representative CASTRO.

I am here to discuss immigration reform and what the path forward is for an issue that over 70 percent of the American people agree, an issue that right now threatens the security of this country, that continues to cost taxpayers money; but with the passage

of a simple bill that already more than two-thirds of the Senate has supported would reduce our deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars, finally secure our border, restore the rule of law within our country, and ensure that, never again, will we have millions of people in this country here illegally.

More than a year ago, the New Democratic Coalition helped pave the way for immigration reform with the release of detailed principles on comprehensive immigration reform.

Our principles express support for commonsense reforms that reduce bureaucratic backlogs, reunite families, create jobs for Americans, and spur competitiveness.

In August, we issued a letter to Speaker JOHN BOEHNER, demanding that he introduce a comprehensive immigration reform bill; and if he failed to do so, we would introduce our own.

Well, no bill was forthcoming, so New Democratic Coalition members worked with a diverse group of colleagues on both sides of the aisle to introduce the House's only bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill, H.R. 15, last October.

Since then, we have met with countless stakeholders, from business owners to law enforcement to agriculture to the faith-based community, all who support moving the ball forward and support our bill, H.R. 15. Businesses, tech companies, faith leaders, and our voters are demanding action on fixing our broken immigration system.

Yet despite a level of consensus rarely seen in our country on an issue—and rarely seen in Washington on an issue—the loudest, most extreme voices on the other side of the aisle have thus far been successful in preventing this body from acting and solving a problem that the American people want solved.

One of my Republican colleagues even equated DREAMers—young de facto Americans who grew up in this country and know no other country and want nothing more than to pay taxes and contribute to make America better—one of my Republican colleagues compared DREAMers with drug mules, with disparaging remarks about the size of their calves; and he continues to refuse to apologize for his hateful comments.

These kinds of deplorable, intolerant remarks are dividing our country, but they should not divide this Chamber. They should not prevent a commonsense bill from coming forward.

House Republicans need to reject the offensive and unproductive rhetoric of some of their Members and finally show real leadership on immigration reform that a majority of Republican voters support.

The only floor vote that we have even had this entire legislative session on immigration was a vote to defund the Deferred Action program, to defund the docket program, a vote to deport DREAMers, to not allow DREAMers to get right with the law and get a provi-

sional renewable working permit. Sadly, that amendment passed the House.

We were able to stop it. It didn't happen. The docket program continues. We encourage President Obama to extend the docket program.

But just to show the American people where Congress is and what the Republicans have done, the only immigration bill that they have even voted on was to deport DREAMers. The House majority can't continue to sit by and allow extremists to define their party.

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Now, the release of immigration principles by the Republicans on reform was a very positive first step, and we encourage the Republicans to work with Democrats to construct a bill based on these principles, many of which we believe are consistent with those of the New Democratic Coalition and consistent with H.R. 15. We are happy to look at new ideas built on the principles that we can establish together and a commitment to fix our broken immigration system.

But, again, our patience can't last forever. If there is continued Republican failure to bring a bill forward, we will have no option but to take out a discharge petition on the only bipartisan bill that exists. If the Speaker won't lead, I hope that the membership of this body will lead, take the agenda into our own hands, and allow a vote that will pass, a bill that will then pass the Senate and be signed by the President.

We are joined by a cochair on the New Dem Immigration Task Force, a leader in the fight to reform our immigration system, the Representative from Texas (Mr. CASTRO.)

I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Thank you, Congressman POLIS, and thank you for your leadership on the issue of comprehensive immigration reform.

I am proud to join you and Congressman GARCIA of Florida as cochairs of the New Dem Coalition advocating for comprehensive immigration reform. As you mentioned, there are very compelling moral and economic reasons for the United States Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform in the year 2014.

We know, for example, that there are a handful of American industries, four or five or six major American industries, that literally would not exist the way they do and would not be nearly as productive as they are but for immigrant labor—both legal and undocumented immigrant labor. For example, we know that about 40 percent of the tech businesses that have been started in Silicon Valley have been started by foreign-born persons, by immigrants. We know, for example, that with respect to the agricultural industry, they self-report that 50 percent of their workers are undocumented, which probably means that 75 percent of their workers are undocumented.