

are being spent by the Federal agencies. The American people already see the government take far too much of their hard-earned paychecks, and they have a right to know how these dollars are being spent.

People across the country are struggling to find jobs and make ends meet. Now, imagine how frustrating it is for them to find out that some public officials are making extravagant salaries and receiving overly generous compensation packages, partially funded by the very dollars that they, the taxpayers, are sending to Washington.

What kind of message does that send? It makes the public lose faith in their elected officials, and it is morally wrong.

Reports in the Raleigh News and Observer indicate that in my home State of North Carolina, the executive director of the Raleigh Housing Authority is paid over \$280,000 annually and is also allowed to take up to 11 weeks of vacation and compensation time. The Raleigh Housing Authority is funded largely by Federal taxpayer dollars doled out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The practices at RHA certainly raise a red flag about how Federal dollars are being spent by local agencies. Last week, I requested a Federal audit of the RHA to make certain that they are adhering to the law. I also joined with Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, who is a longtime advocate for oversight of public housing authorities, to send a letter to HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan requesting more answers and documentation regarding the questionable salary and compensation practices at the Raleigh Housing Authority.

HUD needs to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent appropriately by the RHA and housing authorities across the country. HUD funds are intended for affordable housing for those in need, not for excessive compensation packages.

The RHA needs to justify their compensation and salary practices. The audit should publicize how the RHA has spent Federal money, how much is wasted, and what and how it can do to eliminate further wasteful spending while continuing to fulfill its mission.

Mr. Speaker, government transparency at RHA is not just important to my home State of North Carolina but to all of our government agencies. We are already spending Federal money at an unsustainable rate, and we need to eliminate areas where taxpayer dollars are being abused. If we do not ensure government transparency and cut wasteful spending, we will not only lose the faith of the American people completely, but our economy will continue to spiral downward.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

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

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, as we meet, 1.5 million Americans are out in the

cold, long-term unemployed, and added to that total 72,000 each week, an estimated, if we don't act, 3.6 million by the end of this year. Why is this? Partly because of myths, and I want to address them.

Myth one: the need for these benefits is over.

The truth, nearly 38 percent of the jobless are long-term unemployed, twice the rate when the emergency program started. The highest ever recorded before this recession was 26 percent of the unemployed were long-term.

Myth two: unemployment insurance creates dependency. As Senator RAND PAUL claimed, it is a "disservice."

The long-term unemployed in these eyes need to get off their duffs. It is this Congress that needs to get off its duff because the overwhelming research rebuts this notion. Indeed, unemployment insurance helps people look for work. People have said, we need gas money to go and look for a job. Recipients must actively look for work under the rules within their States. By the way, the average benefit is \$300 a week.

Myth three: jobs are there.

Get off your couch, it said, look. Wal-Mart came to D.C., had 600 jobs available; 23,000 people applied. A dairy in Hagerstown, Maryland, reopened; 36 jobs were available; 1,600 job applications. There are still 1 million fewer jobs today than when the recession began in 2007.

Myth four: North Carolina shows if you end unemployment insurance, the unemployment rate goes down because people go to work.

That is a myth. The unemployment rate in North Carolina went down primarily because people stopped looking for work. They gave up. This isn't America. It should not be North Carolina.

Myth 5: ninety-nine weeks is far too many.

Actually, the program hasn't had this emergency program 99 weeks for over 2 years. Last year, the longest was 73 weeks and only 3 States had that level. The average nationwide is 54 weeks. Now just one of four unemployed receive unemployment benefits at all, the lowest on record.

Myth six: you need to reduce the program as the unemployment rate goes down.

That is already done. We have four tiers, and already the amount of available benefits goes down in a State as the unemployment rate goes down.

The next myth: an extension must be offset.

This is an emergency program. None of the five UI extensions signed into law by President Bush—none of the five—was offset.

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People don't need it, is the next myth. In 2012—this is the Census Bureau information—this program lifted 2.5 million people out of poverty.

The next myth, what we need—and we hear this all the time—is economic growth, not unemployment insurance. Well, the GOP has stymied every key program to assist recovery, the infrastructure, whatever. The fact is that unemployment insurance helps economic growth. The CBO estimates 200,000 fewer jobs this year without an extension.

As we fight in this institution over issues of economic growth, let us not punish the long-term unemployed.

I was reading a statement by the president of the conservative think tank, American Enterprise Institute, an interview with him in October. And he said this:

One of the things, in my view, that we get wrong in the free enterprise movement is this war against the social safety net, which is just insane. The government social safety net for the truly indigent is one of the greatest achievements of our society. And we somehow want to zero out food stamps or something. It's nuts to want to be doing something like that. We have to declare peace on the safety net.

The Congress needs to act and the Republicans need to end their war on the long-term unemployed.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

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

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, we so often use the word "unemployment" that we lose an understanding of its deep social impact. When a person who is really trying very hard, cannot find good work, it causes much duress, not only to that person and to their family, but to society as a whole. Work is dignity. Good work unleashes the creative potential of the person. Unemployment or underemployment so often creates a spiraling effect on a person's well-being.

Part of our job as policymakers is to create and support the conditions for dynamic economic opportunity. Yet Washington continues to deal with the unemployment problem through political sound bites and simplistic solutions. These are not getting to the heart of the problem.

Across the country, many small businesses are not creating jobs. Part of the reason is the government itself. The burden of the health care law, for instance, and other regulations have dampened entrepreneurial spirit and created a great deal of uncertainty in the economy. This serious problem cannot simply be fixed by an extension of unemployment benefits.

If we want to be further forthright and honest about it, this problem is deeper than governmental solutions and business structure alone. It is a fracturing of our society. Many people have been left abandoned and have not had the gift of a formative community around them. They are alone. Mr. Speaker, all persons are made for community; and if someone is cast out into

the world and loses the little bit of security they have, well, the best we can do is say good-bye, good luck; here is a little check to tide you over; hope it gets better. No, Mr. Speaker, the deep problem is a social problem, the fragmentation of our culture.

Mr. Speaker, I also realize that in many places in America there are not the same economic conditions as where I live in Nebraska. We have abundant natural resources, a long tradition of stewardship of the land, and a strong agricultural and manufacturing economy. My State has also been very fiscally prudent, and that is the same way businesses are run and the same way families run their households.

This has contributed to vibrant economic conditions. In Lincoln, for instance, one company has more than 150 job openings. In Columbus, the manufacturing capital of Nebraska, the community has gone so far as to go to Michigan to try to find families with technical skills so they can move to our State.

Mr. Speaker, part of our policy deliberations here should be to try to understand this disconnect between persons who are trying, and have a real need for work, and the opportunities that are out there—yes, to demand accountability and responsibility, but also to forthrightly attack this problem of isolation in our culture. If we don't, we can just plod along and perhaps slowly get better as a country in the aggregate sense of the word, but much damage will be done to unrealized dreams and the potential of persons to find meaning with the creative gifts that they have been given.

Mr. Speaker, I will just end with this. In all fairness, I think we must do better. We must do better here. We must do better as a country than just emotional, political rhetoric, and find constructive solutions that are fair for all.

WAR ON POVERTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, when President Lyndon Johnson declared a war on poverty in his 1964 State of the Union address, the poverty rate in this, the richest country on Earth, was 19 percent. His Great Society legislation, a continuation of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and President Harry Truman's Fair Deal, launch a plethora of programs and priorities to serve and protect the neediest and the most vulnerable among us.

At the time, President Johnson cautioned that the war on poverty would be long and difficult. But by 1973, only 9 years later, the poverty rate had been brought down to 11 percent. We were definitely winning the war on poverty. Unfortunately, many politicians found success, creating myths about the poor and inventing phantoms like the so-called "welfare queen." They popular-

ized a narrative that the war on poverty was not worth fighting, but nothing could be further from the truth.

For example, Medicare and Medicaid, both war on poverty initiatives, have made a tremendous difference in the health and security of older Americans and all Americans of modest means. These two very successful anti-poverty programs, when they were initiated, the poverty rate among seniors was over 30 percent. Today, the poverty rate among seniors is under 10 percent. By what measure can one conclude that these two programs are failures?

In addition to Medicare and Medicaid, President Johnson signed into law the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. This law launched VISTA—Volunteers in Service to America—Head Start, TRIO, and a slew of other very successful community-action programs. TRIO did not fail. In fact, many Members of this body on both sides of the aisle would not be here today were it not for Upward Bound, Talent Search, and the Special Students Concerns programs.

Lest we forget, about 6 months after President Johnson launched the war on poverty, Congress responded to his call and passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and a year later the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965. These two vital laws created educational and employment opportunities for women and minorities that allowed many of us to fulfill our dreams and aspirations. In the communities many of us grew up in, many Americans were able to vote for the first time in their lives. There is no better way to wage a war on poverty than their freedom to choose and unfettered access to the franchise.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose 85th birthday we celebrate today, once famously said:

Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.

The record is pretty clear that, in recent years, the number one cause of bankruptcies to American families has been health care expenses. That is why I often call the Affordable Care Act, the civil rights act of the 21st century.

This groundbreaking new law is already having a positive difference. It is giving all American families the security of quality, affordable health care. We still have much work to do. Persistent poverty continues to be a serious challenge, and we in the Congressional Black Caucus are serious about meeting that challenge. Our 10-20-30 initiative targets communities of need for effective economic development through infrastructure investments that create jobs and lay foundations for long-term economic growth. The 10-20-30 approach, which this body authorized in the rural development section of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, proved highly successful.

This effective poverty-fighter should be expanded to other sections of the budget as we continue the long, and

often torturous, search of a more perfect Union.

NO FUNDING FOR UNESCO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, each year the United States taxpayers are on the hook for over \$7 billion in contributions to the United Nations.

While some of this money is given by the United States on a voluntary basis and goes toward funding some helpful agencies at the U.N., a large portion of these funds are compulsory payments over which we have no oversight. Without the ability to perform oversight and mandate transparency and accountability, we have seen entities within the United Nations drift far away from the ideals and objectives it was designed to achieve.

One need look no further than one of its main bodies, the Human Rights Council, where just this past November, the U.N. General Assembly selected China, Russia, and my native homeland of Cuba—where my family and I were forced to flee Castro's Communist regime, and where terrible human rights violations have been occurring for over half a century.

This is the same organization where a rogue regime like Iran, that had no less than six U.N. Security Councils resolutions against it for its illicit nuclear program, was actually selected to chair a disarmament conference. Only in the U.N. would this happen.

It is the same organization that spends a great deal of time and effort adopting resolutions against our friend and ally, the democratic Jewish State of Israel, ignoring the brutality of the Assad regime and the crimes that it commits against the Syrian people.

Perhaps nowhere is this agenda more prevalent at the U.N. than at UNESCO, where in 2011 that entity allowed a nonexistent state of Palestine into its anti-American and anti-Israel organization.

This move triggered decades-old law in the United States that prohibits us from funding any agency at the U.N. that admits Palestine or any other nonrecognized organization into its membership. By recognizing Palestine at UNESCO, that entity is attempting to grant the Palestinian Authority a de facto recognition as a state before it works out a peace settlement with Israel, and it actually undermines the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The powers that be at UNESCO knew what they were doing when they did this, and they knew that there would be repercussions; yet they chose to test our mettle and our willingness to do the right thing, to stand by our ally and to stick to our principles and to stick to our U.S. laws.

For a time it appeared as though they may have been right. The administration has made no secret of its desire to seek a waiver to this prohibition in order to turn the money spigot