

So, a couple of years later, I began working through the Congressional appropriations process to do just that.

In the Fall of 1990, I secured funding for the creation of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. I was able to obtain additional funds for the Smithsonian's Jazz program on three subsequent occasions. The result has been the solidification of a comprehensive Jazz program that involves preservation, education and performance. I chose to focus my efforts on the Smithsonian Institution because it serves as the nation's treasure chest. It is where all things American that are historic and valued are kept. I wanted Jazz to have an appropriate and permanent place at the Smithsonian. It has that now.

I want to express my special thanks to Dr. John Hasse, the Smithsonian's Curator of American Music, for his leadership and strong support for Jazz. I also want to congratulate him on establishing Jazz Appreciation Month (JAM). Today, is the kick-off of the 13th JAM, which has grown to become a global celebration of Jazz as America's classical music. I am pleased that John Coltrane, one of our nation's greatest musicians and composers, was selected to be the focus of the 2014 JAM poster and today's JAM activities. The "Acknowledgement" of his recording "A Love Supreme" 50 years ago in December 1964 is a prelude to honor John Coltrane. The fact that his original score of that iconic composition is a part of the Smithsonian's collections and is on display there today is much appreciated.

Jazz is now well over 100 years old. Scores of many remarkable compositions, artifacts, documents, and photographs are in private hands, at risk of getting damaged, lost, or being sold abroad. In addition, jazz education at the elementary and secondary school level is virtually impossible to find. As such, in order to ensure the continued prominence of Jazz as a part America's cultural heritage, I have just introduced H.R. 4280, the National Jazz Preservation, Education, and Promulgation Act of 2014. This legislation would enable the further implementation of the mandate established in H. Con. Res. 57. It will help our nation preserve its jazz heritage, educate our youth about this national treasure, and encourage the promulgation of jazz by fostering opportunities for jazz artists to create and share their music with the public here and abroad.

H.R. 4280 would authorize funding to establish a National Jazz Preservation Program at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. The Program would create oral and video histories of leading jazz artists, acquire, preserve and interpret artifacts, and conduct exhibitions and other educational activities that would enable generations of Americans to learn about and enjoy jazz. The Program would also work with local museums, educational institutions and community organizations to establish jazz collections and share artifacts between them.

In addition, the legislation promotes jazz education in several ways. It encourages the introduction of jazz to our youth by authorizing funding to establish a Jazz Artists in the Schools Program. This program should be modeled on the successful one previously operated by the National Endowment for the Arts. It also authorizes funding for the development of jazz education curriculum and materials and their dissemination to educators at

all levels. The bill authorizes funding for a Jazz Ambassadors Program. This program should be modeled on the historic one that the U.S. State Department launched back in 1956. That program sent noted American jazz musicians abroad to perform. My bill would enable young jazz musicians and jazz ensembles from secondary schools to be sent abroad on missions of goodwill, education, and cultural exchange.

Finally, HR 4280 promotes the promulgation of jazz by authorizing funding to support a nationwide series of performances by jazz artists. This would be done through the establishment of a Jazz Appreciation Program at the Smithsonian Institution. This program would work through the network of Smithsonian Affiliates to host jazz concerts. The Affiliates network includes more than 180 museums, educational and cultural organizations in more than 40 states, Puerto Rico and Panama.

I encourage all of you to take a look at and consider supporting H.R. 4280. I also encourage you to share a copy of it with others that have an interest in America's jazz music.

□ 1715

HOMEOWNER FLOOD INSURANCE AFFORDABILITY ACT

(Mr. ROONEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ROONEY. Mr. Speaker, I was happy to see the President sign H.R. 3370, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act. This bill is an important first step in addressing affordability in the national flood insurance program, but we have a long way to go to put solvency back into the system.

We are working hard not only through the appropriations process, but also with leadership and other Members in coastal districts whose constituents have been victims of the rate increases brought about by Biggert-Waters. H.R. 3370 has some great provisions, including: removal of the dreaded "sales trigger" that would have devastated the housing and real estate markets in Florida and other states. Perhaps most importantly, we were able to reassure FEMA of the importance of the affordability study.

Mr. Speaker, the next step is to find new ways to stabilize NFIP and make flood insurance more affordable for homeowners and small businesses. I will continue working with my colleagues in Florida and across the country to put some stability back in this important system.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS DISCUSSES FRACKING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Wisconsin (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 Congressional Progressive Caucus, and we are here today to talk about the issue of frac-

turing, also known as fracking, and the need to have more regulation on fracking to protect our environment, our groundwater, our air, and the families who live around the over half-million wells that are across the country, and also talk a little bit about global warming.

The Progressive Caucus has been at the forefront of talking about issues that are important to our environment. We have so much to do to stop the effects of global warming that are happening. Climate change is real. It is one of the greatest threats that we have to our country and to our planet. There are increasing CO₂ levels in our atmosphere, and if we continue to leave that unchecked, they carry very dire consequences for the future of the planet.

Rising sea levels, unpredictable and dangerous weather patterns, and drought are all examples of the consequences of failing to take action to address this threat. For generations, those who have come before us have held the ideal that they should leave their descendants with a better life. This is an integral part of our American story.

I joined the Safe Climate Caucus because I believe in leaving a safer environment for future generations of Americans. Stewardship of our environment, of the air we breathe and the water we drink, is essential to this commitment.

That is why I am here today to voice my support for commonsense legislation that will end unnecessary exemptions that protect the oil and gas industry from basic regulations and instead extend protections for our families and communities in all areas that effect global warming. But specifically tonight, we want to talk a little bit about fracturing.

I would like to first yield to a colleague, the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE), a great poet. I think we are going to be entertained and informed through that entertainment.

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time. This is just a little short ditty because I am very concerned as a person who lives in an inner city environment, I have become intensely aware of how environmental injustice affects the health and safety of our communities.

So I just wanted to talk a little bit about fracking this evening.

As we crack, under intense pressure, we force a fissure through the delicate veins of our unbound Earth and a black hole forms, poisoning the valley and streams of our spirit.

Man, don't you fear it? Wrecking the ecosystem and trekking recklessly over pristine black loam.

Man, don't you hear it? The harsh acid rain as it drains into the vital marsh of our existence.

Oh, but, of course, the coarse priority of wealth strips our Earth's fertility and reservoir of life. Fracked and cracked, lost, perhaps for all eternity.

Alas, it is true, there is none so blind as he who will not see.

Mr. POCAN. I thank Representative MOORE for that. Your poetry is always much appreciated not only on this floor, but also in our State of Wisconsin. Thank you for sharing today.

Before I get to fracking, I want to talk about one part of global warming that recently got a little attention back home but serves as a debate when we talk on the floor of Congress. When I spoke before on the floor of Congress about the need to address global warming, one of the things I said, and this is about 6 weeks ago, was that in Wisconsin, ice fishermen are already noticing fewer days they can be out on our ice-covered lakes.

Now, the conservative right in Wisconsin, they decided to have a field day. There was a shock jock in Milwaukee who decided to play up on this. He said, can you imagine in Wisconsin, where this winter we had days that were minus 22 degrees, real temperature, minus 40 and 50 degrees with wind chill, how can we possibly be talking about fewer days of ice coverage. Based on that cold experience, clearly there is no global warming. Now I know that is not a scientist's statement, that is a shock jock, but they went with it and let it roll.

Here is the reality. We are a planet that is warming. And that statement, despite the polar vortex that we experienced in Wisconsin and other parts of the country that gave us some really cold weather, that is exactly what we are talking about, these intense swings in the weather that can produce that.

What was so interesting was when the conservative movement went so hard to say clearly there is no global warming—they are all climate change deniers that were out doing this attack—they decided to approach a group called PolitiFact. Now PolitiFact often takes things that politicians say and decides where the truth is. Sometimes it is in a TV commercial, sometimes it is in a speech. Specifically, they were asked to address that statement that I made, which was, ice fishermen are already noticing fewer days they can be out on our ice-covered lakes.

Here is what they said. First of all, they rated that statement as true, and here is why. They said it is not just about this winter; it is about what has happened over all in winters in Wisconsin. There is a site called climatewisconsin.org that is done by a number of professors and other professionals in the field in Wisconsin. They have been tracking ice coverage on the lakes in Madison, Lake Mendota, and Lake Monona, going back 150 years. And you know what they found?

Overall, the average number of days of ice cover on the Madison lakes has decreased by around 29 to 35 days over the past 150 years.

Not my words; these are scientists with knowledge, people who work specifically in the field who are measuring our lakes. So when people talk about climate change and they want to deny

the facts, the science, that over 95 percent of scientists who work in this field clearly have said we have a climate that is changing because we have global warming because of human activity, well, this is just one example where a simple 1-minute speech on the floor talking about climate change became a shock jock's material for weeks to talk about why doesn't Congressman POCAN come home and see the weather.

Well, I get home every chance I can. Every single weekend, I am home in Wisconsin. When we are not here, I am in Wisconsin. Trust me, I would prefer to spend my time in the district talking to the people of the district that I represent. I get back there.

Yes, we had cold days. But to determine everything based on a few cold days, that is not science, that is just rhetoric. And that is exactly what PolitiFact found. That their charges were rhetoric, and we are seeing a serious climate change. And when you actually test 150 years of ice coverage in the State of Wisconsin, we now have 29 to 35 fewer days because of global warming.

So before we start talking about fracturing, I wanted to put that out there because it is all a part of why we are talking about this subject today.

At this point, I would yield to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON), the cochair of the Progressive Caucus.

Mr. ELLISON. I appreciate the gentleman for yielding. Congressman POCAN has been just a beacon, a voice for working Americans all over the country. Our States are next to each other, and we share a lot. I am honored to be here with you today.

We are going to talk about fracking, but I just want to set the stage for the conversation. You know, we are in the United States House of Representatives and we have had stagnant wages for 40 years, yet we can't see a way, a bill to raise the minimum wage on the House floor.

We see that unemployment insurance has been stalled since December 28, 2013. Mr. POCAN has made this point abundantly clear, and over 2 million people are now without that unemployment insurance support, and yet we still see no action on the House floor here.

We see our infrastructure crumbling across the United States. In Minnesota, we saw our I-35 bridge fall into the Mississippi River. We have seen water mains break and problems with grids, and yet we see no action here on the House floor.

We all thought we were going to get some action on immigration reform. In fact, even the Speaker, to his credit, said I have some principles out there, let's talk about how we move forward. The Senate already has moved forward. Yet no sooner than the Speaker said he had some principles he wanted to start working on did he come back and say he can't trust Obama so we can't have an immigration bill.

It is outrageous how little substantive work we have done on this floor of the House of Representatives: no to immigration reform; no to unemployment insurance; no to raising the minimum wage; and no to all these key things that Americans really, really need. What is the idea here? What is the idea when we won't do anything other than politically charged bills to sort of make a point? I mean, what is that all about?

Well, today we are going to talk a little bit about fracking, but I ask the question, Mr. Speaker: When are we going to get to some real work around here? We cannot be in this House of Representatives with a responsibility to discharge the duties of the American people, and we are completely unresponsive under this Republican leadership to what the American people want. People are unemployed. People need a raise. People need a better life, and we are not doing anything to help.

In fact, the only time we ever care about NEPA, which is environmental review, is if it is going to block monuments that the President may want to decide to establish. Every other time, it is a "job-killing regulation." It is total lingo, total rhetoric, and it is just really a shame. I am getting to the point, Mr. Speaker, and I want to yield back to the gentleman so we can begin talking about fracking, but it is really getting frustrating.

We know we are here with different political points of view. I am a proud, progressive liberal, absolutely. Just like Hubert H. Humphrey, LBJ, Martin Luther King, I admired them all, and I am not apologizing to anybody for being as progressive liberal as I am. But that doesn't stop me from talking to a conservative Republican as long as we are both trying to solve the problem. But they are not trying to solve anything.

I am happy to talk to Republicans with their conservative views. We will haggle it out, and we will meet somewhere in the middle. It will not be everything I want, and it will not do everything they want, but we will do something.

Where are we at? No immigration, nothing. Where are we at with UI, people are suffering, 2 million strong? Nowhere. Where are we at on raising the minimum wage, which has been sliding as inflation goes up, and we have lower minimum wage than we did since the 1950s when you adjust it for inflation? Nothing. We are just not meeting the needs of the American people.

We have tried to repeal ObamaCare—I even hate that phrasing—the Affordable Care Act, 53 times. This is an outrage.

We shut down the government for 16 days for the one purpose of stopping people getting access to health care, and yet it feels like we are in "Star Wars," Mr. Speaker.

I just had to share those views and just share my thoughts that it is time, high time, for us to get to work, to

stop this party of no business, to stop this obstructionism and bring our values, different though they are, to this debate and come up with something to meet the needs of the American people.

I thank the gentleman for letting me share my views on those matters.

□ 1730

Mr. POCAN. Thank you very much, Mr. ELLISON. I share your concern. I came to Congress as a new Member, thinking that we are going to get some important work done for the country.

I remember, in history class, I believe it was the Congress of 1948 that got so little done that they were dubbed the do-nothing Congress—well, because they did nothing, right? So they get the label. That do-nothing Congress passed 350 bills. That is it.

Our Congress last year passed 62 bills.

Mr. ELLISON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. POCAN. Absolutely.

Mr. ELLISON. If we were the do-nothing Congress of the 1940s, that would be more activity than we have right now. We are the do-nothing Congress. We are the do-nothing Congress. Our goal is to improve the lives of Americans. I would be surprised if it was even half of the 60 that we actually did pass.

It is hard to get a label, gentlemen, to what you would call worse than the do-nothing Congress. I don't know what the label would be to establish to us. It has been a highly unproductive Congress.

What was interesting, at the end of January, I got on the elevator with a Republican who I won't name, and I said: We have been here for two weeks again, and we haven't done anything.

The response I got is: Don't worry. It will get better in 3 or 4 years.

I don't know about you, gentleman, but I didn't come to Congress to wait 3 or 4 years. We have real work to do.

Mr. ELLISON. That's right.

Mr. POCAN. Whether it be the fact that we have discharge petitions now on rasing the minimum wage, so that people can be lifted out of poverty who are working hard every single day, playing by the rules, and just trying to get by; by extending unemployment benefits to the millions of people in the country who have lost those extended benefits—including a gentleman from Mount Horeb, Wisconsin, who was my guest right here in this Chamber for the State of the Union.

He was my guest. He had lost his benefits at the end of December. He was a steamfitter, worked hard all of his life, played by the rules, and because of not extending the emergency benefits, they are in dire financial straits.

His wife wrote me an email. This is how we found out about them. Their daughter wanted to bring a friend over for dinner, and they said: I don't know if we can afford another plate at the table.

They have their home up for sale because they don't want to be foreclosed

on. This is the reality of Congress not acting.

Today, we now have a discharge petition on immigration reform, something that will effect millions and millions of people across this country. This Congress is not acting.

What we are going to talk about in just a little bit are 5 bills that effect fracking—fracturing—to make sure that everyone can have cleaner air, cleaner water and that people can actually know what toxins are going in the ground when so many people live so close to these wells across the country.

There is more of an agenda that the Progressive Caucus is working on and that we are trying to put out there. Again, I think, gentlemen, we would be remiss if we didn't talk about, just very briefly, the Progressive Caucus' budget, the better-off budget, to make sure people are better actually investing in infrastructure, to actually invest in research and development, to actually invest in education, and to get people back to work now.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentleman would yield about the better-off budget?

All I want to say about the better-off budget is that it is going make Americans better off. That is what the better-off budget does.

The better-off budget topline 8.8 million jobs—8.8 million jobs—in 3 years. That is what we do by making infrastructures in education and infrastructure, putting people back to work, making sure that public employees, teachers, police officers, people like that, stay on the job. This is what the better-off budget does.

Now, the Republicans are going to come in here with a budget, and they are going to brag about how much deficit reduction it does. We have already been reducing the deficit significantly, by the way; but they are going to talk about what they have cut.

They are going say: oh, we cut food stamps, we cut Head Start, we cut medical research, we cut research on Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, and things like that. They are going to brag about how many people they have left behind.

I think that the real thing is that, as we invested 8.8 million jobs, our better-off budget actually has deficit reductions to a tune of about \$4 trillion in 10 years because, as people are working, they are paying taxes, and we are growing ourselves out of the debt and deficit picture.

That is why even some conservative groups have said that this is a good budget because we are being responsible about the debt, not because we are pointing straight at it, but because we are pointing straight at putting people back to work, people are working, people are paying taxes, and we are dealing with our fiscal picture. So the better-off budget is definitely worth people reading about. It is an awesome budget.

A few things I just want to mention about the better-off budget, and then

we can talk about it another time. We also require in our budget that the amount of money going to our spy agencies, our intelligence agencies, the topline be revealed, not the nuts and bolts and the guts of it, but just in these days of NSA spying and things like that, I think it is important to have budget accountability, so that people really know.

This is something that we hope people will really look at and feel that Congress is actually exercising its proper role in doing oversight with this.

The other thing is there was a huge fight over chained CPI. This is that form of CPI, this measure of inflation, which literally cut benefits for people who are older Americans, people who are on disability benefits, and people who are on survivor benefits. It cuts their benefit over time.

CPI-E, another measure of inflation that actually enhances retirement benefit because it really reflects the real cost associated with making a living in the United States, so we put CPI-E in our budget, which we believe is a far better measure of what is really going on in days of retirement insecurity brought about because of decisions of the Republican Caucus.

It is important that we really invest in making sure that we have some retirement security.

So those are just a few lines on the better-off budget, but I do want to thank you for raising it.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you, Mr. ELLISON, for all your leadership and your cochairing the Progressive Caucus.

One other thing that is in that budget, in addition to growing us out of the economic problems we have had in this country that we have slowly been rebounding out of, we also take away the subsidies to oil and gas companies, which save this country money that we can invest in creating jobs, but also deals directly with the issue at hand, which is the issue of fracking.

What is fracking? It is hydraulic fracturing, or it is called fracking. Is a process of drilling by injecting a fluid, which is a chemical water-sand mix, into the ground, at a very high pressure, in order to fracture shale rocks to release natural gas inside. That is the basic concept behind fracking. There are about a half a million active natural gas wells in the United States right now.

Here is what is involved in the process that I think people don't really realize: Every single gas well requires an average of 400 tanker trucks to carry water and supplies to the site. It takes 1 to 8 million gallons of water to complete each fracturing job.

To run all the active wells in the U.S., that would be 72 trillion—trillion with a t—trillion gallons of water and 360 billion gallons of chemicals that are used in this process. The water is brought in, it is mixed with sand in a chemical mix to create a fracturing fluid.

Now, one of the things I think that people don't realize is we don't know what is in that fracturing fluid because the companies say that it is proprietary. If they gave up that information, it is a secret sauce that they put together that allows them to do this; and if they disclose that, somehow, a competitor could find out what it is.

The problem is that also means you and I don't know what those toxic chemicals are. We have an idea, in some cases, what is used, but the exact mix, you don't know in any specific well.

So you have 40,000 gallons of chemicals used per fracturing, with up to 600 chemicals in any fracking fluid, which has known carcinogens and toxins. This fracking fluid has been pressure injected into the ground through a drilled pipeline about 10,000 feet deep.

The mixture reaches the end of the well, where the high pressure causes the nearby shale rock to crack, creating fissures where the natural gas can flow into the wells. Only about 30 or 50 percent of the fracturing fluid is ever recovered. The rest of the toxic mix is left in the ground, and it is not biodegradable.

Also, during this process, methane gas and toxic chemicals leach out of the system and contaminate our nearby groundwater. Methane concentrations are 17 times higher in drinking water wells near fracturing sites than normal wells.

You may remember—I believe *Time* magazine had it, and I have seen it on TV—where people in Pennsylvania, in some cases, near wells, have turned on their drinking water and a match and lit the drinking water on fire from what has been released into the groundwater from fracking wells.

This contaminated well water is then used for drinking water, like I explained, in these nearby communities, and there have been over a thousand documented cases of water contamination next to areas of gas drilling, as well as cases of sensory, respiratory, and neurological damage due to ingested contaminated water.

In the end, the hydraulic fracking produces about 300,000 barrels of natural gas a day, but the price is numerous environmental, safety, and health hazards that we have to deal with.

I yield time to Mr. ELLISON.

Mr. ELLISON. Certainly. I think it is really important for the gentleman to bring us to this conversation about fracking today. It is a lot of courage that you bring to this debate as well.

The interests that are really promoting fracking are powerful, wealthy, energy companies; and opposing them, you know, is something that, I believe, is something that not everybody would do. I think raising real questions about how this is affecting the health and the environment are critical.

I had the occasion of talking with a number of people in my office who came and told me really amazing stories about what their experiences with

fracking were. One gentleman actually told me a story about the lighting of the fire coming out of the faucet in the sink.

Another told me a story about how his cows drank the water that was contaminated with the fracking fluid, and those cows died. Another individual told me how, when they made complaints about it, there was just a lack of responsiveness.

These are folks who—before they came to my office, I didn't know them—but they wanted to talk to me about a problem of common concern, so I said: Sure. Share with me what you know.

What they shared with me caused me to do my own research. I was particularly disturbed by the fact that the process, particularly the fluid that is used, is not something that we can know. I think you are talking about injecting a fluid into the ground that is causing the natural gas to come up, and yet, it has proprietary protections.

Now, how can we safeguard the public interest if we don't even know what is in that stuff? If nothing in there is harmful, why don't they want to share what is in that stuff?

At the end of day, there are stories of regular citizens, cropping up all over this country, about dead farm animals, toxic drinking water, fire coming out of the water faucet, and all sorts of things. It has happened to people who thought that they could lead a good life, trying to farm, trying to live in rural America, and yet, the answers just are not coming for them.

I remain very concerned. I believe that we do have a public interest in knowing much more about this process. A few years ago, Mr. Speaker, we were sort of sold that natural gas would be the answer to get off petroleum, but what we didn't know is all the health hazards that were involved with trying to make that conversion.

It is absolutely essential that we, as the American people, get to the bottom of the health risks associated with all of the ingredients of fracking. These same folks who came to my office, Mr. Speaker, made complaints about skin irritation, nasal irritation, eye problems, chronic issues; they talk about farm animals and other sorts of issues that they have lost. It is just something that I think is crying out for real answers.

If Congress does not stand up and say, look, we have got to figure out what the environmental health impacts on fracking are on our citizens, then who is now going to?

Europe has already asked some tough questions about how fracking works. Europe has already said: Well, wait a minute. We need to know a little bit more about this.

In some places, the practice has been banned. I really believe that this is an appalling situation, calling out for answers, and it is our public duty to get those answers.

I appreciate the time to talk about my exposure, my discussions with peo-

ple who have experienced fracking firsthand.

I also need to mention one other thing that I forgot. One gentleman talked about the frequency of earthquakes near the fracking area. When he tried to figure out and when he asked questions about, well, is the fracking causing the earthquakes because, before you were fracking, there were no earthquakes, he really was stonewalled and didn't get any answers.

It makes sense—you are doing something to disrupt the ground, you are shooting a substance into the ground causing these sort of issues, like tremors in the Earth; and then this farmer who talked to me could not get any answers and could not get much responsiveness.

Again, this is something I remain concerned about and look forward to people Facebooking, Tweeting, and writing regular old emails and snail mails telling their stories about what they are going through, so that we can make a case. The true, real investigation needs to take place, and we can actually look out for the public interest.

□ 1745

Mr. POCAN. Thank you, Mr. ELLISON.

It is not just members of the Progressive Caucus, Democrats, or concerned citizens who live near these wells who are talking about this. There actually was a recent investigation that was done by The Weather Channel, the Center for Public Integrity, and InsideClimate News that found numerous violations on current sites.

At one, they found, for example, that the State of Texas, that they know “almost nothing” about the pollution that one of these shale drilling wells causes. They said that thousands of Texas oil and gas facilities are allowed to self-audit their emissions, meaning they don't have to report them to the State. They go on to talk about pollution complaints. They also said in another study in the U.K. and Pennsylvania that they looked at multiple data sets of wells in Pennsylvania to determine the rate of well failures, and they found that one-third of a data set of 3,500 wells were reported for environmental violations between 2008 and 2011.

So, while we have special exemptions in clean water and in clean air laws for this process, we are finding severe violations by groups like The Weather Channel—hardly someone who is biased—who actually look at these facilities. Then when you actually look at the list of chemicals, at some of the known 600 chemicals that go into these mixes, and when you look at the actual effects—the colors—that are on here, you have got chemicals that lead to skin, eye, and sensory organ problems, problems with respiratory, in gastrointestinal, in the brain and nervous systems, the immune systems, with the kidney, cardiovascular and blood, with carcinogens, mutagens, developmental,

reproductive, and endocrine disrupters. These are the types of effects that can happen from the chemicals that we are not even allowed to know that are happening.

I think one of the most telling parts of this is that 15.3 million people in this country live within a mile of one of these wells that have been drilled since the year 2000. That is more than the entire State of Michigan. These are people who live near a well who don't have the public information that they need to know for their families' safety.

Members of this caucus, the Progressive Caucus, have worked on five bills that have been kind of called the "frac pack," which address specific concerns that we have on the regulation of this. We are not saying that you are going to stop this completely, but we should know what we are doing, not proceed until you know what you are doing and make sure we provide the clean air, the clean water and the notification requirements so that we actually know what we are doing before we proceed. I would like to go over those bills if I could. I would like to just give you a little idea of some of the bills that are out there.

One bill by Representative DIANA DEGETTE, from the State of Colorado, is called the FRAC Act. That bill would close the so-called "Halliburton loophole." That loophole protects the special sauce recipe of chemicals that they use for this fracturing process. It also protects the companies that drill for natural gas from disclosing those chemicals involved in the fracking operations, which would normally be required by our clean water laws that we have at the Federal level. It has three major provisions:

One, it repeals the exemptions granted to oil, gas, and geothermal fracking operations under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Let's make sure our water is safe as the Safe Drinking Water Act says;

Second, it would make sure that all fracking operations would be required to disclose to the State as well as the public the fracking chemical cocktail intended for use prior to the commencement of any operations—not after your water is set on fire, not after your cows are sick, not after your family has problems, but prior to the use of those chemicals;

Finally, if a medical emergency should arise, any fracking operation would be required to disclose the exact chemical formula of any compounds utilized.

It is a pretty basic set of ideas that would make sure that you have at least information to know.

There are four other bills.

Another bill that is part of the frac pack is the BREATHE Act, introduced by Representative CARTWRIGHT from Pennsylvania and Representative POLIS from Colorado. It would close the loopholes of the Clean Air Act that currently exempt the oil and gas industry from essential protections from toxic

air pollution, as those studies have been proven from the wells they tested in Pennsylvania. The bill would also require that toxic emissions of multiple related smelt sources be aggregated to determine total emissions, just like other industries have to, so they are not exempted in other ways, and it makes sure, with all fracking operations that release pollutants, including benzene, that we have protections in these areas.

Another bill is the CLEANER Act, which has been introduced, again, by Representative CARTWRIGHT from Pennsylvania and Representative JARED HUFFMAN from California. This bill would specifically protect the environment and the public health by closing a loophole in the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, which currently prevents adequate, consistent regulation of harmful waste associated with oil and natural gas production and, particularly, with fracking, and it has a few other compounds specifically related to that.

The next bill is the FRESHER Act, introduced, again, by Representative CARTWRIGHT from Pennsylvania. This would close the loophole in the Clean Water Act, and it would require oil and gas producers to obtain the standard permits necessary for activities that increase storm water runoff and risk water pollution. Treat them like everybody else so that we know what is going on in the process. It also makes oil and gas companies play by the exact same rules that apply to other industries, and it conducts a basic study to further make sure that we understand what they are using.

The final bill that is part of the frac pack is a bill called the SHARED Act, introduced by JAN SCHAKOWSKY from the State of Illinois. This bill would provide further protection for public health by requiring water testing before fracking begins, and it would help document any drinking water contamination within a mile's radius of a site operation.

Now, none of these are crazy ideas, saying we are absolutely closing down every operation because we don't like it. It is saying let's make sure they follow the law like any other industry would follow the law when it comes to our clean water and our clean air and that we know what toxic compounds are being put into the groundwater since we know so much of it is left there, especially when you live nearby, like 15.3 million Americans do. Those are simple bills that we have put out there that we are hoping this body will take up, because it is important that we provide those safeguards for the people across the country.

Mr. ELLISON. I do appreciate the gentleman for going over all of those bills, which, I think, will bring about transparency, accountability, disclosure—all things that are just basic fairness issues.

In the United States, we pride ourselves on having due process and fair-

ness and accountability, and I think every one of those bills has a lot of merit and should be carefully considered because they will allow Americans to make decisions about whether this practice of hydraulic fracking is something that we need to just continue to let happen as it happens now.

There is an idea in economics, which is, if you make the money, you need to pay the cost, right? If you are going to internalize the profits, you should internalize the costs of what you are doing. If you are going to make a lemonade stand, then you should buy the lemons; you should get the water; you should put in whatever sweetener you have; you should clean up after yourself after you make the lemonade; and you should deal with problems that you cause in the sale of your lemonade. Yet, when it comes to fracking, the profits are absolutely internalized, but the cost is forced on everyone else.

How is that good, free market economics to say that we are going to keep the money we make by getting this natural gas but that we are not going to clean up after ourselves and that we are not going to tell everybody what we are doing even though it affects them?

I mean, there is just something very unfair about the way fracking is being done right now. So I think that this set of bills, the frac pack, and this Special Order are really important.

Again, I really urge people, Mr. Speaker, to let their voices be heard because we were told that this is the clean energy future—fracking, natural gas—that it is much cleaner than petroleum. It is. Natural gas is cleaner. It is still a fossil fuel, though, and there are still social and economic and environmental and health costs as a result of the way we get this natural gas.

Unfortunately, I do have to go to another meeting, but I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there are other ways to power our world. Let us have a real conversation about investing in renewable energy, in zero waste, in living in societies that have more transit options, that are more walkable so we use less, that we make our buildings much more fuel efficient.

One of the sad days in Washington was when President Ronald Reagan took down the solar panels that Jimmy Carter had put up on the White House. That was too bad. That was unfortunate that that decision was made. Think about if, in the seventies, we had been moving aggressively into renewables. Think about the world we would live in if we truly had recycling, composting, reuse. Right now, according to the scientists, we have put so much CO₂ up into the atmosphere that we are changing the climate. So who knows if the action that we take now will be enough. We had better take that action. We dare not avoid taking that action. I just think to myself that these things like fracking are not the only answer. Oil and gas exploration is not the only answer. There are other

things we can do to power our world, and I absolutely urge us to do it.

I just want to wrap up by saying, too, that, when we think about what we are going to use our tax dollars to subsidize, we are subsidizing the fossil fuel industry. BERNIE SANDERS and I worked on a bill called the End Polluter Welfare Act. We have documented up to about \$110 billion worth of subsidies to the oil and gas industry, which is six times the subsidy that goes to renewable energy sources—solar, wind. It is high time we started investing in the wind and in the Sun and in the wave technology and in other forms of technology that can help us power our world that don't have these ugly, costly, expensive externalities.

I would ask the gentleman to excuse me now, but thank you for hosting this very important Special Order on raising questions around fracking.

Mr. POCAN. Again, thank you, Representative ELLISON, for all of the work you do with the Progressive Caucus.

This was a Special Order hour tonight to talk about why we need to have safer practices around hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, in this country. For the 15.3 million people who live within a mile of the wells, for everyone who has to eventually suffer the effects of the environment and the health pollutants that are put out by this, there are bills that are introduced in this body that can make sure that we regulate this better, that can make sure they are not exempt from clean air and clean water protections, and that dis-close the toxins that are used so that we can make sure that this process is safer, healthier, and better for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to add as a reminder to everyone, which is also important, that March 31 is the deadline for signing up for the Affordable Care Act. There are extensions. If you have tried to do it and if you can't get it done, there is a little bit of an extension at this time, but you need to do it by March 31. I think we have got some of my colleagues who are going to be talking about that in just a little bit, but I would like to encourage everyone to take advantage of that while they have time in the remaining week.

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

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today, we are here to talk about the Affordable Care Act, about some of its milestones and the benefits to the people of the United States, also about some of the critiques that have come up over the last few years and in the last few months.

The Affordable Care Act has succeeded in doing a few things. The United States, for a long time, has been the wealthiest nation on Earth; however, millions and millions of Americans, despite our country's wealth, have been unable to get health care insurance. Many folks have suffered a very long time, either themselves or their family members, in not being able to see a doctor when they have needed to and in being kicked off of insurance because they have hit lifetime caps. College students have gone without insurance for years because they could no longer stay on their parents' plans.

There was, I know, a discussion earlier on the floor—I think during the lunch hour—and there was a question raised by one of the Republican Members. Essentially, his question was: What has the Affordable Care Act done?

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Well, there are several concrete things that it has done for the United States. The first is that 3 million students have been able to stay on their parents' insurance plans, where they otherwise would have been kicked off before. The average age where students were kicked off before was about 19. Under the Affordable Care Act, millions of college students can now stay on until the age of 26.

We know this number—5 million people, so far, and growing—have signed up for health care through the exchanges. Five million people. That is very significant. That number continues to grow, as some of the busiest days for the health care Web site and for the call-in number have been over the last few weeks.

Also, 4.4 million Americans have signed up for health care through Medicaid. They have been covered through Medicaid expansion.

We can talk about the fact that some States have decided not to expand Medicaid. So millions of these people, including in my home State of Texas, low-income Americans, most of these people going to work every day, working hard to support themselves and their family members who are still low-income Americans, but because the State governments have not expanded Medicaid in many States, they have not been able to get covered. So we are going to talk about that.

Another issue I want to talk a little bit about is something that is very significant for millions and millions of Americans, and that is mental health parity with physical health.

For years, we tried in State legislatures—I know I tried in Texas, as well

as people across the United States—to make sure that mental health issues are covered by insurance in the same way that you would cover a broken arm or broken leg or even cancer. Millions of Americans suffer from anxiety, depression, and a slew of mental health issues. Previously, they were unable to get covered.

So those are some of the issues that we are going to talk about this evening.

I now yield to my good friend Congressman, GENE GREEN from Texas.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. First of all, I thank my colleague from San Antonio. We are both Texans, and we know the problems. You served a lot of years in the State legislature. I did, too. Frankly, I think a lot of our problems could have been dealt with if Texas would have expanded Medicaid. We are actually giving back money to the Federal Government and not covering children and families in our community because of that.

Frankly, even with the problems with the rollout of the Affordable Care Act, I know some States have done a great job, like Kentucky and California. Some States haven't. But I would think that if Texas did their own exchange, we could be the ones making those decisions. I think particularly with the Medicaid expansion.

I appreciate you asking for the Special Order tonight because we are coming down up to the deadline of March 31. In fact, I have to do a commercial first.

A lot of us have done these events on how people can sign up for the Affordable Care Act. I have one that we are sponsoring this Saturday at the Harris County Department of Education building. It is at 6300 Irvington Boulevard in our district. I am partnering with some of your former colleagues: State Representative Armando Walle; State Representative Jessica Farrar; our relatively new State senator, Sylvia Garcia; and our city council member, Ed Gonzalez. We are doing that this Saturday from 9 to 1 so people can come in and sign up.

The success, though, is that the Web site was down for 2 months, but we have seen a huge number of people signing up—5 million as of last week. I hear on Monday of this week they had 1 million contacts, both by phone and to the Web site.

So there is a need out there for the Affordable Care Act. It is landmark health care reform.

I was on the subcommittee and the Committee of Energy and Commerce to help draft part of it. We did days and nights of drafting amendments. We had both bipartisan amendments adopted, including one on mental health that Congressman MURPHY from Pennsylvania and I had worked out to expand mental health coverage.

Of course, we live in a bicameral Congress and sometimes the Senate doesn't always do what we would like