

There was no objection.

WATERS OF THE UNITED STATES

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers has proposed under waterways of the United States rules that the EPA claims jurisdiction not just over nearly every navigable waterway, but virtually every body of water in the Nation, no matter how large or how small.

Using a creative interpretation of a 40-year-old law, the EPA argues that it holds jurisdiction over any activities that could conceivably impact not just navigable waters, but any waterway that eventually flows into a river, even a waterway or wetland, which is simply near a navigable waterway.

Furthermore, the EPA doesn't stop at claiming control over water. It also claims control over any activity that could impact those waters in any way. This rule drastically limits private property rights by inserting the Federal Government into local land use decisions.

The rule would also expand EPA's authority from rivers, bays, and wetlands into manmade waterways like storm drains, drain ditches, farm ponds—unconnected in any way to a waterway—and even puddles. That's right, puddles.

EPA's first draft of that rule specifically exempted puddles. Tellingly, the final draft does not exempt them anymore.

Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. It is time to put an end to the government overreach and defund these efforts in the appropriations process and ensure that only America's elected representative make the laws that govern the Nation.

VERA HOUSE'S WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

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

Mr. MAFFEI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, with what is left of my voice, to support Vera House's 20th annual White Ribbon campaign. For more than 35 years, Vera House has played a crucial role in combating domestic and sexual violence.

Located in the Syracuse area in my district, Vera House provides a safe shelter, counseling services, and other services for rape and sexual abuse victims and helps survivors rebuild their lives. It also provides life-saving prevention and education throughout central New York.

It is critically important that we continue to support Vera House's ongoing mission to end domestic abuse and sexual violence and to empower the victims to promote equality and respect in relationships.

The White Ribbon campaign encourages all members of the community to join those efforts and to demonstrate such support by wearing a white ribbon.

I urge my colleagues to support Vera House's White Ribbon Campaign to raise awareness of sexual and domestic violence.

□ 1415

COMMENDING CHICAGO ON INITIATING NEW POLICIES

(Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the mayor of the city of Chicago for initiation of a new set of policies designed to help facilitate the reentry of individuals with criminal records back into normal and productive life.

These policies include apprenticeship and job opportunities with the Chicago Transit Authority, city departments, and other municipal agencies, and—on a limited basis—the ability to access public housing as a place to live.

These are important initiatives for the reentry into community and for the citizens of Chicago. I commend Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

EXTENDING UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

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

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, several of us come together to talk about unemployment insurance.

The majority leader said to accept the Senate bill is to accept the status quo. That is simply not correct. No, it is not accepting the status quo; it is whether we will penalize over 2 million long-term unemployed looking for work who have lost their unemployment insurance because of the overall economic situation in this country that is getting better, but for them, not nearly good enough. So don't raise the issue of the status quo as a reason to penalize over 2 million Americans.

Mr. Speaker, 2 months ago, a number of us invited a number of unemployment workers to be our guests at the President's State of the Union Address. We wanted to give a voice to the over 2 million Americans who have had their unemployment benefits cut off.

When these jobseekers told their stories one by one, I thought to myself: This is America, these are folks who come from every walk of life, who have worked hard, very hard, and who have played by the rules in pursuit of the American dream; now, they have lost their jobs, through no fault of their own, and they are desperately seeking new employment.

You can understand their complete bewilderment when uninformed people call them lazy, and you can feel their utter disbelief that their government apparently has abandoned them.

My guest for the State of the Union Address was Josie Maisano from St. Clair Shores, Michigan. Josie proudly told us she had worked since she was a teenager, but now, at age 60, she could not find a job.

Her unemployment benefits were helping her to keep her head above water as she searched for work, but when her benefits were cut off, she fell behind on her mortgage payments, struggled to keep the power on, and worried about becoming homeless, worried about that every day.

Josie and over 2 million Americans just like her are desperately waiting to see if this Congress will finally act to help those seeking jobs, not saying we are ratifying the status quo, but as I said to the majority leader, not letting the status quo—which is changing a bit but not enough—let that status quo penalize her.

Indeed, the good news is that the Senate is expected to take that critical step on Monday by passing bipartisan legislation—bipartisan legislation—to retroactively extend the unemployment insurance program through May.

So the question is this: Whether this House will also act or will it leave town and leave America's jobseekers in the lurch?

If every Member of this Chamber will simply take a few minutes to talk with unemployed workers in their district, to people like Josie, I have no doubt we will do the right thing and act; but up to this point, action has been scant, while the excuses have been plentiful.

We have heard that an extension of unemployment benefits must be paid for, even though these emergency benefits have traditionally not been offset, but the Senate unemployment extension is fully paid for with bipartisan offsets, so end of excuse.

We have heard that any legislation extending unemployment benefits must also create jobs, but the CBO has estimated that continuing emergency unemployment benefits would create 200,000 jobs by raising consumer demand, so, again, end of excuse.

We have heard that extended unemployment benefits aren't needed any more because the economy has recovered. The economy certainly has improved from the depths of the Great Recession, but we continue to have near-record rates of long-term unemployment.

Indeed, the percentage of those long-term unemployed in this country are the largest in our records, and we have never cut off these benefits in the past with anything close to this level of long-term unemployment, so end of that excuse.

Again, we have heard that it is too late to help the unemployed because the Federal UI program has been expired for too long, but as the whip said,

the Secretary of Labor has sent a letter saying that it can be implemented.

Governors and State UI directors have said they stand ready, willing, and able to restore these critical benefits, as has been done after prior lapses in benefits, so let there be an end of that excuse.

So let's get past any excuses and focus on the facts. Anyone receiving an unemployment benefit must look for work, and they have ample reason to do so, given that the average unemployment benefit is only \$300 a week.

Even at that modest level—and I want to emphasize this—unemployment benefits have lifted 11 million Americans out of poverty since 2008, according to the Census Bureau.

The end of the Federal emergency unemployment program in December has left only one out of every four job-seekers receiving unemployment benefits, the lowest coverage in over 50 years.

The bipartisan Senate bill that will be voted on—we now expect Monday—would restore this vital lifeline to nearly 2.8 million Americans, including Josie Maisano, and 106,000 other job-seekers in my home State of Michigan.

Someone recently asked me if this issue is personal to me. It is. When you hear the unemployed tell their stories, when you see the anguish in their faces, and when you know how hard they are struggling to find work, it is impossible to not take it personally. America, these are our friends, our neighbors, our fellow Americans. How can we give them the cold shoulder?

This poster, 2.8 million Americans, these are the people whose livelihoods, whose lifelines are at stake here. I fervently hope that this institution will rise up to its greatest traditions, to respond to the needs of Americans out of work through no fault of their own, looking hard for work, unable to find it.

Often, people who are in their forties, fifties, and older find it difficult to find someone who will give them a fair shot. These are people like us, and they are everywhere. We need to act.

I now yield to a colleague and friend of mine, a member of our committee, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ).

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. LEVIN for yielding and for his leadership on that committee.

I rise to join Mr. LEVIN today in lending a voice to the 2.8 million American workers who are waiting for Congress to act and renew unemployment insurance benefits.

These people have been waiting 17 weeks for Congress to reinstate the benefits that help them stay afloat as they search for a job. Imagine having to decide between putting food on the table and having a roof over your head, but these are the decisions that millions of workers, including more than 514,000 in California alone, continue to face.

It is a hardship they have to face because my colleagues on the other side of the aisle refuse to extend unemployment insurance benefits.

Over the last several weeks, my office has heard from dozens of constituents who are struggling because of congressional inaction. In fact, I have had the opportunity to talk with some of them and hear their stories personally.

They come from all walks of life, from working class backgrounds to even educated professionals who hold master's and doctorate degrees, and they all share one thing in common, they want to work.

If I may, I would like to share one of their stories with you. One of my constituents wrote to me:

Linda, in the past, I benefited from unemployment insurance when I was between jobs. Part of my responsibility every time I went to pick up a check was to certify that I was actively searching for a job.

This motivated me to continue searching for a job because I knew that the small income from unemployment benefits allowed me to pay for my needs, such as copies of my resume, gasoline to travel to prospective work sites and interviews, and the phone calls I made to potential employers who were looking for employees.

Nowadays, it seems that the unemployed are being punished for being jobless through no fault of their own.

That is just one of the many letters my office has received, but all of them share the same message: they want my colleagues on other side of the aisle to know they are not lazy or unmotivated; they want to work.

As they continue to navigate the tough labor market, they need unemployment benefits to provide for their families and pay for the gas and phone bills that help them look for work and connect with potential employers.

Mr. Speaker, unemployment insurance is not a handout. Workers earned those benefits. They paid into the unemployment insurance program, so they would have a safety net when times got tough. Unfortunately, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle don't seem to agree, so perhaps an economic argument might sway them.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that an extension of unemployment insurance benefits would grow our GDP by 0.2 percent and add 200,000 jobs to our economy in this year alone.

That is because recipients are more likely to take the money they receive and spend it on essential goods and services. As a result, employers would hire more people to meet consumer demand for those goods and services. It is simple economics, Mr. Speaker.

My Republican colleagues say they care about creating jobs and growing our economy, but when an opportunity comes around to do exactly that, they refuse to act.

It has been 17 weeks since millions lost their unemployment insurance benefits, so what are they waiting for? Each week that we delay, 72,000 new unemployed Americans lose their benefits. That is one more household, one

more family that will have to decide whether they keep a roof over their head or food on their table.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of these Americans are part of the group of long-term unemployed. These are people who, despite their best attempts, have not been able to find work in over six months. The reality that these Americans face is abysmal.

Research by Princeton University shows that, in any given month, the long-term unemployed have only a one in 10 chance of finding work, and a big reason for this is because employers are more likely to discriminate against long-term unemployed, even if they have the same skills and experience as other applicants.

□ 1430

Mr. Speaker, these people are waiting for Congress to act.

I will share one more note from Ron in Pasadena, California, who says:

I just hope that our representatives are able to see beyond political polarities to the faces of those families to whom this issue does not merely exist as a statistic or a theory, but more genuinely as a question of survival.

Next week, the Senate is set to vote and pass an extension of unemployment insurance benefits. The measure would reinstate Federal unemployment benefits for the long-term unemployed and allow for retroactive payments to go out to more than 2 million Americans who lost their benefits in late December.

I hope that my colleagues here in the House summon the courage to act and follow the Senate's lead. It is time to stop disrespecting people who are working hard to try to find work.

Mr. Speaker, don't leave millions of millions behind. Give unemployment insurance the vote that it deserves.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her moving remarks. I hope the country is listening.

Now, another person who has devoted so much time as Ms. SÁNCHEZ has to this effort to bring to the attention of this country what this is really all about, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HORSFORD).

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

First, I would like to extend my appreciation to my colleague, my good friend, and the ranking member, Mr. LEVIN, for hosting this critically important Special Order hour on extending unemployment insurance benefits for over 2.2 million people who have been cut off since the end of last year. Thank you for your leadership and tenacity in making sure that this issue remains a priority here in this House. I commend you, sir, for your leadership.

The timing of this Special Order hour in this session is not coincidental. The Senate is well on their way towards passing a bipartisan bill to restore this critical financial lifeline that the people in this country depend on while they search for work.

I want to commend my Majority Leader, Senator HARRY REID, from the great State of Nevada, and the other great U.S. Senator from Nevada, DEAN HELLER, a Republican, who have worked in a bipartisan manner with Senator JACK REED to get to the point they are in the Senate.

I want to go further in recognizing Senator DEAN HELLER in calling Speaker BOEHNER just recently to ask him what it would take to bring up a clean vote on extending unemployment insurance benefits, because this is not a partisan issue—at least it shouldn't be. Helping 2 million Americans who rely on unemployment insurance as a bridge while they search for work is basic, fundamental, and should be supported by Members on both sides of the aisle, extending the Emergency Unemployment Compensation program through May and restoring the financial bridge to nearly 2.8 million Americans. These are our neighbors. They are people that we know.

Now, the Democratic Caucus in the House comes to the floor today with a unified voice to respectfully ask the Speaker of this House for a vote. We have heard the calls from our constituents, and they cannot wait another day for the Republican leadership to continue to play political games.

My colleague, Representative SÁNCHEZ, just said it has been 17 weeks since these unemployment insurance benefits have expired. For each week, that is \$300, on average, that family members who use this to pay the rent, to keep the utilities on, to put some gas in the car so that they can search for work have been lost.

So we come here today to talk about the lives that have been affected by this Congress' inaction at a time when the American people expect us to act. We are here to put the face to the numbers, because there are real people behind the 2.8 million Americans who are suffering, to give voice to those who are being ignored while they struggle to stay in their homes and to put food on their table for themselves and their family.

Now, I am from Nevada. In our State, we recently had our numbers released today, and fortunately the numbers are getting better. Now we are the third worst in unemployment. So that is good news, but it is still not good enough. Nevada, along with other States like Rhode Island, continue to face higher unemployment in the Nation, not because the people in our States don't want to work, but because the environment in our States hasn't recovered fast enough from the recession.

Now, in Nevada, we like boasting more about being the entertainment capital of the world and the fact that we have some of the most magnificent natural resources anywhere, but, unfortunately, the prolonged recession has hit our State and the people of Nevada to our core.

As I said, it is because, in large part, our economy was a growth economy.

For nearly 20 years, year over year, we had double-digit growth, and people were moving to the great State of Nevada to help us build and to grow.

But during the recession that changed, and so now over 100,000 Nevadans are unemployed and have been primarily from the construction, engineering, and architecture sectors of our economy. These aren't people who don't want to work. There is an environment that is not allowing them to go to work.

Now, if we pass the Senate bill, 31,500 Nevadans would see their unemployment benefits extended. It is not a lot of money. As I said, it is not enough to live off of, but for these families and the stories that they have told us, it can make all the difference between being on the brink and literally falling off.

Now, I want to share a couple of stories of constituents whom I have met over the last few weeks as we have tried to bring attention to this issue.

Before coming to Congress, I ran an employment and training agency that helped thousands of people get training to go to work in Las Vegas. I know what it takes to put people back to work. So I went and visited one of our workforce centers and met with a group of unemployed workers to hear directly what they are facing and what it has meant to lose their unemployment insurance. They told us that they didn't know where else to turn. And they surely, if Speaker BOEHNER could hear from them, they want him to know that they want to do right by our fellow citizens and return to work.

Now, among the Nevadans who have been cut off from unemployment insurance is Monty. He was laid off from his job on December 4, 2013, and he lost his benefits on December 28, 2013. When he called my office in February, his life had gone from bad to worse. Monty told my staff:

I've had to basically pawn everything of value that I own to try and stay in my apartment. That came to an end last week when I couldn't afford to stay there anymore and I was evicted. Right now, I am sleeping on rocks outside of a brick wall at night with a blanket to keep me warm, and during the daytime I go out and look for work.

Prior to losing unemployment benefits, I was able to pay my rent on a weekly basis, have bus fare to get around and look for jobs, and provide a little bit of food for myself and keep looking.

Monty hasn't given up because he is determined to get back on his feet. He has never been in this situation before and, Mr. Speaker, he is not a lazy person. When he was employed, he hadn't missed a day of work in 25 years. Now he just can't understand why Congress has turned its back on him. Unemployment benefits were providing him the opportunity to keep looking for work and to stay in his home so that he could have a bed to sleep in and a hot shower before he goes on work interviews.

Now, there was recently some good news for Monty. He recently signed up

for Medicaid because of the Affordable Care Act. It is a small victory for him, but his story of losing his home is the same as thousands of people around this Nation.

That is why I am proud to be a lead sponsor of the Stop Foreclosures Due to the Congressional Dysfunction Act introduced by Congressman MATT CARTWRIGHT from Pennsylvania. The legislation would impose a 6-month moratorium on foreclosures for individuals who have lost their unemployment insurance compensation due to the recent congressional inaction.

Until we do the right thing, Mr. Speaker, by extending unemployment insurance, we must do everything that we can to keep families with a roof over their heads. Congressman CARTWRIGHT and I have also sent a letter to Federal Housing Finance Agency Director Mel Watt requesting that he take action and use his regulatory authority to establish the 6-month moratorium if Congress fails to pass this important legislation.

Another constituent who I talked with recently is Elizabeth. Like my colleague Representative SÁNCHEZ said, many of these workers, or unemployed people who want to work, happen to be older Americans who feel that age has something to do with why they are not able to get back into the workforce. She lost her job with the Nevada Division of Insurance last year after suffering a stroke and two severe concussions. She has been searching every single day for work. She, like Monty, was uninsured until receiving coverage under the Affordable Care Act. Her unemployment benefits helped pay her premium and for the expense of medications that help prevent her seizures.

After losing her benefits, she had to cut down on taking her medication, now taking it every other day instead of daily, and now risks suffering another accident. Given her new condition, she made it her goal to become a caretaker and companion for senior citizens, which requires she attend classes and trainings. The unemployment benefits that she was receiving helped pay to put gas in her car to attend those classes. When she lost her benefits, she had to stop taking the classes, which was devastating, because this was part of her goal and the transition that she was trying to make to return to work.

But like many people, she had tough choices to make. She told us it wasn't a lot of money when she had a job, but now her family barely has enough to stay in their home and to pay their bills. Elizabeth wants to work. She told us: Do you think it is fun sitting around every day feeling like you are worthless, like you are nothing? She told us that most of all she wants to be able to get back to work to help provide for her neighbors, for those senior citizens that need that care and attention, for those who are worse off than she is.

One of the hardest parts of being in financial straits, for her, is not being

able to give to charity. That is true citizenship, Mr. Speaker, and House Republicans could learn a lot from Elizabeth.

These are the personal stories of those who have been hurt by Congress' failure to act. If Republicans don't want to extend unemployment insurance because it is the right thing to do for our fellow Americans, then maybe—then maybe—you will do it because it is the right thing to do for the economy.

Overall, failing to renew the Emergency Unemployment Compensation program will cost the economy 200,000 jobs this year, according to the Congressional Budget Office, including 3,000 jobs in my home State of Nevada. Failing to extend unemployment insurance has drained, already, nearly \$5 billion from our State economies, including \$70 million from Nevada's economy, at a time when economic growth is needed the most.

□ 1445

For every \$1 that is spent on unemployment insurance, it grows the economy by \$1.52. So, whichever way you look at it, there is no excuse for inaction.

When the Senate acts next week, the country's attention will turn to the House, and I am here with my colleagues today to urge the Speaker to listen to the Americans in this country who are desperately depending on us to act. At the end of next week, we will go into a work period for 2 weeks. During those 2 weeks, Americans will suffer if we don't act.

Mr. Speaker, we must be ready to act, and I urge my colleagues to do the right thing by extending unemployment insurance for the millions of Americans who need it now.

Again, I would like to thank the gentleman from Michigan and my other colleagues who have joined for this Special Order.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you so much for your eloquence. I hope this country is listening as well as your beloved State.

Now I yield to another friend of mine and, most importantly, to somebody whose life embodies caring for others, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS).

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. I want to thank the ranking member of the Ways and Means Committee. I am pleased to join with him and others of my colleagues as we come to the floor to call for the immediate passage of legislation in the House to concur with the Senate in the restoration of unemployment benefits to the more than 2.2 million Americans who have been cut off of extended unemployment insurance because our Republican colleagues continue to block an extension of the program.

Mr. Speaker, it is inconceivable to me that, as a government, as a nation, we would leave all of these individuals hanging, many of them since December 28 of last year, in 2013. Nationally,

nearly 72,000 people are losing unemployment insurance, on average, every week, adding to the 202 million people who have already lost their benefits. The Department of Labor estimated that the bipartisan Senate agreement to extend emergency unemployment insurance would benefit nearly 2.8 million people. That is a big part of America.

Long-term unemployment wrecks people's lives. It makes it almost impossible for them to ever catch up because they have gotten behind. They have lost what they had. They have been evicted from their homes. Their children have had to leave college. They just have not known which way to turn except to turn to their government, which they believe has their interests at heart and will do the right thing by and for them.

Illinois, my State—the home of Lincoln—is estimated to have lost \$296,763,435, just under \$300 million, in unemployment benefits during the first 3 months of the year. Any way you count it, that is a lot of money, and it takes that money away from and out of the economy. Those of us who understand a certain kind of economics know that, if you are not able to exchange goods and services, if people are not able to go to the store and get a bottle of milk or to stop at the service station and buy gasoline, there is no point in talking about economic recovery. So, not only is it in the best interests of those individuals who are in need of unemployment benefits, but it is also in the best interest of our Nation as a whole.

Mr. LEVIN, I want to commend you for the leadership that you have provided on this issue. I want to thank you for the tremendous leadership and for your understanding of the issues facing America.

I hope that, next week, when we return, that our colleagues will realize that we, too, can make a difference, that we can join with the Senate and pass unemployment insurance benefits for more than 2.8 million Americans.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank you for your eloquent remarks.

Mr. Speaker, how much time is left in our hour?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Michigan has 25 minutes remaining.

Mr. LEVIN. Before I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. NOLAN) for the remainder of my time, I just want to conclude in this way.

This is a bipartisan bill that is coming over from the Senate. This country has asked for bipartisanship. That bill embodies it. This country has asked for fiscal care. Traditionally, unemployment insurance has not been paid for. This bill is paid for on a bipartisan basis.

So what more is America asking for?

It is asking for people in this institution to step into the shoes of several million people who are hardworking, who have lost their jobs through no

fault of their own, who are looking for work, many of them never having been unemployed before. If there is a vote allowed in this institution, this bill will pass. There is only one obstacle to our doing what is right, and that is whether there will be a decision on the part of the leadership of this House to let us vote, and it won't be ourselves voting. It will be America voting. America wants a vote to help the several million and their families.

So I leave here, going out of Washington, hoping that when all of us return that we will have looked into the eyes of fellow and sister Americans out of work, that we will have reached out and will have listened to their stories, and that we will come back with a sense of urgency, with a sense of decency, and with a conscience. This issue should be on the consciences of every Member of this House.

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

THE RYAN BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. NOLAN) for the remainder of the hour.

Mr. NOLAN. Thank you, Mr. LEVIN, for this Special Order and for bringing to the attention of our colleagues and the country the importance of providing unemployment insurance for the millions of people who are struggling and who are in danger of losing their homes and the ability to feed their families.

As a businessman over the last 32 years, I would like to point out to these people who somehow like to characterize these people as scofflaws who don't want to work and remind them that you don't qualify for unemployment insurance unless you are a worker and have found yourself unemployed by virtue of circumstances you had no control over.

You are so right that this is the right thing to do. It is bipartisan, and there is a pay-for here. We should have the good judgment and the decency to extend the unemployment insurance for these people. So I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address another issue, and it is the fact that most of us here in the Congress grew up at a time when our leaders weren't afraid to invest in our country, to invest in human development, and because of them, education was affordable. Guess what? That is no longer true.

Now we are faced with a Ryan budget that cuts Pell grants for poor and needy kids who would like to get a postgraduate education.

Medicare. Nothing has ever done more to extend the lives of more people than Medicare. In a little over a generation, we went from a nation with a life expectancy of about 47 to over 77. What does the Ryan budget do with