

familiar in the San Diego region in recent years, but this won't be an ordinary year. So far, we have seen twice as many fires as usual, and the worst months are yet to come.

Many who have been forced to leave their homes speak of how, in those moments when they fear they might lose everything, they realize what is most important to them.

Now, it is time for Congress to remember what is important, the vital programs that Americans rely on in times of crisis.

With natural disasters worsening across the country, it is more important than ever to ensure that agencies like the Forest Service, the National Weather Service, and FEMA have the resources they need to keep Americans informed and safe.

This appropriations season, I urge my colleagues to come together, as I have watched San Diego County residents do, and prioritize these lifesaving services for all Americans.

□ 1215

THE \$4 BILLION INTEGRATED ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD PROJECT—HALTED

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

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, it was April 2009 when President Obama said that he was going to form an integrated electronic health record project to take the records between the DOD and Veterans Administration and, together, he said that it "would represent a huge step towards modernizing the way health care is delivered and benefits are administered for our Nation's veterans. It would cut through red tape and reduce the number of administrative mistakes."

Fast forward to February of 2013. The Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration announced that they were going to halt this program. It was a \$4 billion—not \$4 million, not \$40 million, not \$400 million—a \$4 billion project. Secretary Hagel, and I quote him: "I didn't think we knew what the hell we were doing."

So after all these years, \$4 billion later, they totally halted and abandoned this project that was going to improve the quality of health care for our veterans. It wasn't for a lack of money, but there was a lack of leadership and management and dedication.

Mr. Speaker, this cannot stand. We do need to do better for our veterans. This has got to be a national priority.

PREPARE FOR EXTREME WEATHER

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

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, for the first time ever, the threats posed

by extreme weather were added to the GAO's High Risk List, which lists the most pressing fiscal exposures our Federal Government faces. In the past 2 years alone, extreme weather events resulted in 109 Presidential major disaster declarations, 409 fatalities, and \$130 billion in economic losses to our Nation.

As somebody who firmly believes we must better prepare for extreme weather, protect government and private sector resources, and create a more resilient society, I have drafted legislation that utilizes these recommendations of the GAO. The PREPARE Act requires agencies to implement government-wide resiliency, preparedness, and risk management priorities; improves regional coordination; and disseminates best practices and actionable data. And possibly even more important is the cost of this legislation: \$0, while having the possibility of saving taxpayers billions.

BRAND USA

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

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support policies that will grow our economy.

The travel industry employs over 1 million Floridians. Recently, tourism to Florida has resulted in more than \$70 billion of revenue, and it has generated nearly \$900 billion nationally.

I recently introduced the Travel Promotion, Enhancement and Modernization Act, which would extend the activities of Brand USA, a public-private partnership that markets the U.S. as a tourism destination. This will continue to promote job growth in Florida.

Florida's trend, however, is not reflected nationwide, unfortunately. Sadly, over 800,000 Americans gave up looking for work in April alone. This should not be the new normal.

The House has passed over 40 jobs-related bills that will promote private sector growth. The Brand USA reauthorization is another jobs bill that will get America working again. I urge support to grow our economy.

EXTEND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

(Ms. LEE of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak out against the refusal to extend a critical lifeline for the unemployed. On December 28, the Republicans' failure to extend Emergency Unemployment Compensation left 1.3 million jobless Americans out in the cold. Since then, more than 332,000 Californians have lost their benefits, including over 8,000 people in Alameda County, where my district is located.

And I would like to remind my colleagues across the aisle that the long-

term unemployment rate is still at 35.3 percent, the highest it has been since World War II.

This Tea Party-controlled Congress has decided to turn their backs on these unemployed workers when their need is greatest. These workers paid into unemployment so that, in their time of need, it would be there.

This failure to act has already cost our economy nearly \$5 billion. This failure to act is mean-spirited, it is economically foolish, and it is morally wrong. Republicans won't support investments in job creation, infrastructure, or workforce training. They gut the safety net in the Ryan budget and won't extend unemployment benefits. My goodness, what in the world are people going to do? This is not the American way.

I urge us to take up this unemployment compensation bill; and let's pass it, and pass it right away.

HONORING ILLINOIS' WINNERS OF THE EARLY CAREER RESEARCH PROGRAM FUNDING

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

Mr. HULTGREN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the recipients of the Early Career Research Program grants. Only the best and brightest in the country are chosen, and I am pleased to say that five out of the 35 winners are from Illinois. Two of the winners were Fermi scientists from the 14th District of Illinois, and another is a joint appointee with the lab and Northwestern University.

Under this program, scientists will receive at least \$150,000 per year to aid them with their research efforts in the next 5 years. I am confident that the continued work of all of the talented winners will lead to breakthroughs we cannot even predict.

Innovative minds like those at Fermilab are essential for the continuing success of our country. We should continue supporting their essential work and help show the next generation that there is a future for them in science.

EXTEND EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE TODAY

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, it has now been more than 4 months since Congress let emergency unemployment insurance expire. In that time, more than 2.8 million job seekers, including 200,000 veterans, have lost the ability to provide for their families. Another 72,000 Americans are losing critical unemployment benefits every week.

Let's be clear: these are people actively looking for work who lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Both are requirements for receiving

unemployment insurance. But by failing to extend emergency insurance, we are creating a new disaster on top of the hardships already facing millions of American families, and we are damaging our economy.

During just the first week that emergency unemployment insurance expired, our economy took a \$400 million hit. Failure to extend that insurance could cost us 240,000 jobs this year due to lost buying power, exacerbating the difficulty for current job seekers and adding more to their ranks.

Mr. Speaker, this is not smart policy. It is coldhearted and shortsighted, and I urge my colleagues to join me in demanding a vote to extend emergency unemployment insurance today.

PRESIDENT OBAMA APPROVES "PRISON BREAK"

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

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, President Obama's lax immigration policies continue to put the lives of Americans at risk. Last year, administration officials released into our neighborhoods more than 36,000 criminal immigrants who had nearly 88,000 convictions. The crimes included hundreds of convictions for murder, rape, and kidnapping, and thousands of drug-related crimes. This would be considered the worst prison break in American history, except it was approved by the President and enabled by immigration officials.

The release of criminal and illegal immigrants into our communities already has killed or injured thousands of innocent Americans. The responsibility for this can only be laid at the doorstep of the White House.

If the President cannot be trusted to enforce current immigration laws, how can he be trusted to enforce future immigration laws?

OCEAN ACIDIFICATION

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

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss the threat of ocean acidification to my region and others. I live in the most glorious part of this world. As a dad, it is a joy to share the Pacific Northwest natural resources with my two little girls.

But those natural resources don't just contribute to our recreational experiences; they contribute to our economy, too. In Washington State alone, the shellfish industry contributes more than \$250 million to our economy and supports more than 3,200 jobs. Our coast depends on a strong fishing industry.

All of that is threatened by ocean acidification. Last week, in Tacoma, I listened to businesses, fishermen, and researchers detail how we are begin-

ning to see the effects of our changing ocean chemistry. It has impacted shellfish—we know that—but we have not yet begun to comprehend how ocean acidification disrupts our larger marine ecosystem.

That is why this week I am introducing the Ocean Acidification Innovation Act, which would encourage Federal agencies to better leverage existing Federal dollars by creating incentives for the private sector and researchers to strengthen our ability to research, monitor, and mitigate the impacts of ocean acidification.

Mr. Speaker, we need to act now. Our economy depends on it.

MEMORIAL DAY

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, Memorial Day is the day we set apart to honor those who have given the "last full measure of devotion" in service to our Nation. It is fitting that we quote Lincoln's Gettysburg Address to mark this day, because though Memorial Day was not federally recognized until 1967, its origins trace back to the Civil War, when observances of what was then called Decoration Day sprang up throughout the country.

This Nation has been blessed by periods when war is not a recent memory; and in those times, the significance of Memorial Day can get lost in the pleasures of early summer, travel, and family barbecues. But we should always set aside time to remember the sacrifices made to safeguard our Nation.

We are now well into our second decade of having troops continually in active theaters of combat, and many have experienced the loss of a loved one. Remember them in your thoughts and prayers, especially on Memorial Day.

THE VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, when our men and women in uniform take an oath to support and defend the Constitution, they enter into a contract with our government; and if they survive and return, they are veterans. Part of that contract entitles these veterans to quality health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Recently, it seems as though we are failing to uphold our part of this agreement. More than 8 million veterans seek medical care through the VA each year. Yet each year, we hear the same complaints of long wait times, canceled appointments, and concerns about the quality of care being administered.

One of the largest VA facilities in District 30 of Texas, which is my district, has major problems that are not

new and have been reported time and time again, year after year, with little change. This is simply unacceptable. We owe it to our veterans to provide timely and quality health care. Anything less should be met with great criticism and responded to with much-needed reform.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation will be judged by how we treat our veterans. Our veterans put their lives at risk every day while deployed. Their lives should not be at risk while seeking medical care here at home.

CONGRATULATING JESSE ZHANG

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

Mr. DAINES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Jesse Zhang, an eighth grader from Missoula, Montana, on winning the Montana State Geography Bee last month. This week, Jesse was one of 54 students from across the Nation to travel to Washington, D.C., to participate in the National Geographic Bee.

Jesse is a true example of the Montana work ethic. He studies geography for several hours each week and has a passion and commitment for learning that will continue to take him far in life.

Jesse, congratulations on this incredible achievement, and best of luck as you continue to pursue your goals. We appreciate your hard work. You make Montana proud.

□ 1230

THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN

(Ms. HANABUSA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Speaker, I have stood here at this podium many times speaking on the extension of unemployment insurance benefits for what is now about 2.8 million people, and the need for immigration reform, about 11 million undocumented workers, yet you have not acted. Both have very strong bipartisan support, yet you have not acted.

How about looking at this in a way that makes our country proud? That is to look at the concept of "through no fault of their own." We are a great country, and we are a compassionate nation. We understand "through no fault of their own."

Remember, Mr. Speaker, to qualify for unemployment benefits, you must be unemployed through no fault of your own. The DREAMers, those who were brought here to this country through no fault of their own, let's act for them, especially those with no benefits and no status through no fault of their own.