

SAFE CLIMATE CAUCUS

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

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, as we begin the second session of the 113th Congress, Americans all over this country are coming up with their New Year's resolutions for 2014. In Congress, I propose we make this the year we stop ignoring climate change.

Last year, CO₂ concentrations reached dangerous new heights in our atmosphere. We suffered through—and paid for—record-breaking extreme weather events, and we received dire new projections from international scientific organizations on the threats posed by climate change.

What did the Republican-led House do? It continued its anti-environment voting record, voting 109 times in 2013 to weaken environmental protections. This behavior is reckless and irresponsible.

Despite the gridlock in Congress, the Obama administration has been making progress. Under the President's leadership, the Nation has doubled the production of renewable energy like wind and solar, vehicles are more fuel efficient, and toxic air pollution for power plants has been cut dramatically.

Let's work with the President this year to build off of these successes so that, on December 31, we can look with pride that we finally took action on climate change.

OBAMACARE INCREASES HEALTHCARE SPENDING

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the White House claimed ObamaCare is partially responsible for helping to slow the growth rate in health care spending. Health care spending did grow at a record slow pace in 2012. Unfortunately, according to NPR:

The Federal officials who compiled the report disagree with the Obama administration about why.

That's right. The annual report from the actuaries for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services disagrees with the White House.

NPR disagrees as well:

One thing that did not lead to slower growth, according to the report's authors, was the Affordable Care Act.

"It's the recession, not ObamaCare, that is slowing health spending," writes the National Journal.

Mr. Speaker, hospital costs are increasing. Out-of-pocket costs continue to increase, and any reduction in the rate of growth isn't due to the Affordable Care Act.

A closer look at the numbers shows us that this law has made matters

worse. A closer look at the numbers tells us more about what the White House would rather not discuss. A closer look tells us that the American people deserve better.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

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

Ms. JACKSON-LEE. Mr. Speaker, right now, 1.3 million Americans are asking the question, why? Why is there a debate about my ability to pay for rent or mortgage or food or the necessities of taking care of my family? Why, having worked for many, many years, am I now being denied an unemployment insurance benefit that was utilized for the last 5 years and first voted on and brought forward by the Congress that supported President Bush in extending unemployment benefits?

Why is there not an understanding of what it is like to receive a letter in the mail to indicate that you will get no more benefits, even though you are actively looking for work and even though there are three people looking for every job? Why does this House of Representatives not understand that we can pass a 3-month emergency relief for these individuals and debate for the rest of the year how do we get a pay-for or an offset for funding it after 3 months?

Mr. Speaker, this is an emergency. People are on a lifeline, and we are killing it. It is time to pass unemployment insurance benefits now for the American people.

APPRECIATING JOHN CHAPLA

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, this weekend, the Armed Forces community lost a great friend and ally. Retired Army Lieutenant Colonel John Chapla was truly a Virginia gentleman of the Virginia Military Institute tradition. After serving our Nation in uniform for over 25 years, John continued his passion for public service as a professional staff member on the House Armed Services Committee, eventually becoming the lead staff member for the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

John possessed vast and remarkable wisdom of the military. He always sought to advocate for our brave men and women, their families, and our veterans. I had the privilege of working alongside him for 4 years as he coordinated the annual National Defense Authorization Act. Because of John's efforts, our wounded warriors, military families, and victims of sexual assault have substantial protections. There is no doubt that our country is a much safer place because of John Chapla's hard work and dedication.

My thoughts and prayers are with John's wife, Lee, his two daughters, and three granddaughters during this difficult time. He will be forever appreciated.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, 10 days ago, 1.3 million Americans lost their emergency extension of unemployment benefits.

Today, this afternoon at the White House, one of those individuals, Ms. Katherine Hackett from Moosup, Connecticut, shared her story with our country. She has two sons serving in the military. She was laid off through no fault of her own. She has been actively seeking employment, and yet she still needs help.

Yet this House left before Christmas without taking up an unemployment extension, which in every past recession, any unemployment rate above 5 percent required and resulted in automatic extensions. Yet this House went home.

Curt Edwards, from Norwich, Connecticut, who I spoke to yesterday, 20 years in the U.S. Army, Army Ranger, was laid off last April and is looking for work. His unemployment was cut off on December 28.

The majority leader issued his agenda for the month of January. There was not a word in that agenda about extending unemployment for 1.3 million Americans. Every economist tells us that's a mistake. These individuals need help. It is time for this House to focus on the immediate needs of the American people and extend unemployment insurance for 1.3 million Americans.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH

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

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. It is a perfect time to highlight the terrible reality of sex trafficking that is happening in our communities. It is also an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to take steps to combat this growing problem that now puts 300,000 children at risk in the United States—many of whom are 12- and 14-year-old girls.

I'm authoring several bipartisan bills to address sex trafficking. One gives law enforcement additional tools to turn the tide against sex trafficking and help the victims of these horrific crimes receive the support they need

and deserve. That's what these young girls are: victims. The second bill improves data systems that track missing children because better information will help us find better solutions.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to end sex trafficking, and there's bipartisan support for action.

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TRIBUTE TO OFFICER ROBERT DECKARD

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

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, I rise on this first day of our 2014 session to pay tribute to a husband, a father, a son, and a San Antonian.

Bobby Deckard was a San Antonio police officer who died on Friday, December 20. He had come in on his day off to substitute for a colleague. He was shot in the line of duty. He was only 31 years of age.

This past Saturday, San Antonio and its citizens came together to honor Bobby's life and bid him a final farewell. Thousands of people lined the streets, and thousands of police officers from throughout the country were present as police helicopters flew in formation above the burial service, in remembrance of someone who spent 7 years of his life helping the citizens of San Antonio.

During the ceremony, San Antonio Police Chief William McManus instructed police dispatchers to retire Bobby's badge number, 0582, and every officer throughout the city heard the retirement of that badge number.

In a November email, ironically, Bobby Deckard had aspired to join the honor guard, the honor guard that, in fact, escorted his flag-draped coffin. In an email to his supervisor, he wrote that was the highest position of honor inside the department. That tells us so much about him, so much about him even as we mourn his loss. He had a positive outlook and a great personality. His humor could win anybody over.

Mr. Speaker and Members, I ask that we all take a moment to remember Bobby Deckard, police officer from San Antonio, Texas, whose name will now be added to the National Law Enforcement Memorial, the only memorial in Washington that has never been completed.

SUPPORT FAIRNESS TO VETERANS ACT

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

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I introduced H.R. 2906, the Fairness to Veterans Act, because I believe if anyone deserves a leg up in America, it is those who have served on our behalf.

The Fairness to Veterans Act is straightforward. It says that if any

business receives a contracting preference, then a veteran-owned small business should receive that very same preference. I call this bill Fairness to Veterans because I believe it is only fair that if we are going to be singling out certain businesses to receive special consideration for government contracts, then that same benefit should be extended to veteran-owned small businesses.

More than 250,000 servicemembers are transitioning each year from military to civilian life; 2.4 million veterans own a small business of their own. Overall, one in four veterans say they want to start a business. This bipartisan bill makes sure that we are tapping into the most highly skilled workforce in history and utilizing their unique skills to get our economy moving again.

Mr. Speaker, whether my colleagues believe there should be contracting preferences or not is not at the heart of this legislation. The question here is: Do Members believe that veterans deserve to be on a level playing field with anyone when bidding for government contracts? I believe the answer to that question is a resounding "yes." I urge my colleagues to cosponsor H.R. 2906.

EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

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

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Speaker, it is cold outside, and for too many Americans who have been unemployed for too long because this Congress has failed to act, it is now a little bit harder for those Americans who are actively seeking work to get the emergency unemployment benefits that they need so that they can keep their homes warm for them and their families as they continue to seek employment.

For the 1.3 million Americans that we left behind by failing to extend emergency unemployment benefits before we left, this is the week when the check stops. This is the week when it becomes more difficult for them to keep a roof over their heads, to keep a warm environment for their families as they continue to seek employment.

Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation to move forward and make sure that those benefits are continued. It is the right thing to do. It is time for this Congress to act.

CONGRATULATING FLORIDA STATE SEMINOLES

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

Mr. SOUTHERLAND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate this year's BCS national champions, the Florida State Seminoles.

In one of the greatest championship games of the BCS era, head coach Jimbo Fisher and Heisman Trophy win-

ner Jameis Winston led the Seminoles to a thrilling, come-from-behind victory last night over the Auburn Tigers, to a 34-31 victory. With 1 minute and 11 seconds left, the Seminoles drove 80 yards to score the game-winning touchdown, thereby capping an undefeated season.

As the Representative of Florida's Second Congressional District, I could not be more proud. As the Bowl Championship Series comes to a close, the Florida State faithful can forever take pride in knowing that the last BCS title will forever reside in Tallahassee, Florida.

On behalf of the people of north and northwest Florida and Florida's Second Congressional District, I extend my congratulations to the coaches and players who helped us provide a wonderful year for the fans and such an exciting season.

Mr. UPTON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SOUTHERLAND. I yield to the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. UPTON. I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman have an additional 2 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair cannot entertain that request.

Mr. UPTON. In the gentleman's remaining time, I would just say congratulations to Florida State. We from Michigan would love to see a unanimous consent that perhaps the Seminoles could play the Spartans for a national championship, and see that occur in the next couple of months. But, congratulations. It was a great game. It kept us up watching it.

Mr. SOUTHERLAND. I thank the gentleman very much for those sentiments and that offer. We will contact the coaches and see what we can do.

Mr. UPTON. We will be ready.

Mr. SOUTHERLAND. Go Noles.

VISITING NORTH KOREA IS TERRIBLE IDEA

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, Dennis S. Rodman of NBA fame has announced that he and 10 or so other basketball players are going to North Korea, he said, to visit his friend, the notorious butcher and dictator, Kim Jong Un of North Korea.

Bringing American basketball to North Korea, a rogue state which has nuclear weapons, which starves its own people and imprisons them and throws them in jail, bringing American basketball there and sitting down with a dictator like Mr. Kim would be the equivalent of taking Adolf Hitler to lunch. This is really a terrible thing, a terrible idea, and it makes us gloss over the terrible suffering of the North Korean people and just ignore it and say, Well, we are going to play basketball and we are going to make this guy look legitimate.

In a rambling discussion today on one of the networks, Rodman said that