

or to seek other ways to get around this prohibition.

I am here today to voice my unconditional and unyielding opposition to this push, and I urge my colleagues to join me in removing that in the budget that will be before us soon and not allow the administration to yet again circumvent U.S. law and to throw away hundreds of millions of dollars of U.S. taxpayer money.

The administration is seeking to not only restore \$80 million in taxpayer funds to UNESCO for this fiscal year, but it is also seeking to pay nearly \$250 million more in arrears—dues—that we owed to UNESCO, an agency that has an anti-U.S. and an anti-Israel agenda.

If we restore funding to UNESCO, we are tacitly agreeing with their support for Abbas, the PA, the PLO, the non-existent state of Palestine, and the U.N. scheme to undermine the peace process by granting de facto recognition to a Palestinian state without it first coming to an agreement with Israel to resolve this long conflict.

A vote to restore any U.S. funding to UNESCO or to give the administration any waiver authority to circumvent the existing laws that prohibit U.S. funding to UNESCO would not only undermine our credibility and set a dangerous precedent; it would further embolden an already intransigent Abu Mazen and Palestinian Authority.

Why do I say “intransigent”? Because even as we sit here, Mr. Speaker, reports indicate that a major holdup in the peace negotiations between Secretary Kerry, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority is the refusal by Abbas and the PA to recognize Israel as the Jewish State of Israel. Is that the kind of member that we want to be associated with in UNESCO—one that doesn't even recognize the identity of another state? And not just another state, but our closest ally.

I know that UNESCO is riddled with rogue regimes amongst its ranks, including the likes of Cuba, where the callous, brutal, and murderous Castro regime has been repressing the rights of 11 million Cubans for over half a century; and Syria, where the tyrant Assad has caused the deaths of over 130,000 people and brought the Middle East to the very brink.

But if we restore U.S. funding to UNESCO, we are essentially saying that this is okay, and, oh, by the way, why not add one more in Abbas? There has been a recent spate of terrorist activity against Israel; and rather than act like a true leader that seeks peace and a partner in a negotiated peace settlement, Abbas was definitely silent when it came time to denounce these acts of terror.

The powers that be at UNESCO don't seem to mind this at all. But not us, Mr. Speaker. We are better than that. We aren't about to trade in our credibility and our principles as a country for a plaque and platitudes for this circumvention. We know that if we concede to UNESCO and restore any fund-

ing, we would be making a grave mistake, and also wasting hundreds of millions of our constituents' dollars on this anti-U.S. agenda.

I will continue to fight this push to restore funding to UNESCO in any way, and I will continue to rally my colleagues to join me in this fight.

STRONG START FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, study after study has shown us that investment in quality early education leads to better educational outcomes, stronger job earnings, and lower crime rates. Decades of research confirm that quality preschool helps prevent achievement gaps for low-income children, with long-term benefits for our Nation.

But we don't need research to confirm the importance of quality early childhood education. Ask any parent in America if it matters to them. The problem is that not enough children have access to it. That is why I have introduced the bipartisan bill, Strong Start for America's Children Act.

When Congressman HANNA, Senator HARKIN, and I introduced the bill in November, we were joined by the sheriff of Minneapolis, a top private-sector CEO, a retired Air Force General, a parent, and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. These leaders from so many segments of our country understand the need for greater Federal investment in high-quality preschool.

My legislation proposes an innovative Federal-State partnership to increase resources for local school districts and community-based programs that provide quality pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds. It also allows funding for educating 3-year-olds. It also allows States to spend some of the money on good quality infant and toddler care. The bill improves child care quality for infants and toddlers by supporting partnerships between child care and Early Head Start.

Millions of young children from low-income families lack access to high-quality preschool programs and child care services. They are on waiting lists because of limited public funding. This deepens achievement gaps and impedes the Nation's economic workforce success.

For example, Early Head Start has shown to be an effective, high-quality program; yet the sad truth is that only 3 percent of the eligible children have access to it. Additionally, one in six low-income families eligible for Federal child care services has access.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a Democratic issue nor a Republican issue. Babies, toddlers, and preschoolers don't know that political parties exist. In fact, we are seeing that Republican and Democratic Governors from all regions of

the country are pushing for more funding for early learning in their States. They want to be partners with the Federal Government.

State legislators from both parties in a wide range of States have led efforts to support quality preschool. Just recently, we received a letter signed by more than 500 State legislators from both parties in support of this issue.

I am also very proud of our partnership with the fellow Republican Members of the House, such as Mr. HANNA and Mr. GRIMM. We all know that the policy makes sense for America's future. We all know what is possible in our communities and in our Nation if kids are given a fair shot at success.

The public understands and believes in early childhood education. A bipartisan poll released in July found an overwhelming majority of Americans supports quality early childhood education and rate it a national priority, second to only increasing jobs and economic growth. Seven in 10 support the Federal plan to help States and local communities provide better early childhood education.

Members of Congress and other policymakers are also getting on board. The bipartisan budget agreement reached last month includes a reserve fund for early childhood education, child care, and voluntary home visitation. That is yet another acknowledgment by another bipartisan group of Members—in this case, budget leaders—that early childhood education should be a top priority for the Federal Government. That acknowledgment is clearly a step forward, but it isn't enough. Our next step must be the enactment of the Strong Start Act.

With the fiscal year 2014 spending deadline less than a week away, I understand that appropriators from both Houses are considering increased funding for preschool, as outlined in our bipartisan bill. I heartily encourage this course.

Despite the language used whenever we in Congress talk about budgets, funding early childhood education isn't spending. It is an investment, and it is an investment that is critical for our Nation's long-term economic strength.

From a better-educated workforce to a reduced need for social services, study after study has documented the enormous return on investment of early childhood education. We can save between \$7 and \$12 for every dollar invested. These are real savings resulting from less grade repetition, lower dropout rates, less spending on welfare and social services, more tax revenue, and lower incarceration rates.

As Sheriff Rich Stanek said when we launched the Strong Start for America's Children Act:

I'm the guy you pay later.

Let's stop spending on the back end what we should be investing in the beginning in a child's life.

For all of these reasons, our bill has the support of more than 60 national organizations representing pediatricians, law enforcement, religious

groups, labor unions, business and military leaders, people with disabilities, school principals, civil rights leaders, and literacy advocates. Now is the time to empower the next generation and guarantee a better future for our Nation.

HONORING RON MILLER

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

Mr. RIGELL. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to be here this morning and to share with you and our colleagues the story of an exceptional American, Ron Miller, who I am proud to say lives in Virginia's Second Congressional District, the district I have the privilege to serve and represent.

Ron is 46 years old. He had always planned to go back to school; but at age 33, his life was turned upside down. He was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, or ALS, a devastating neurodegenerative disease that progressively affects nerves in the brain and the spinal cord. It is a disease for which, at present, there is no cure.

Ron is paralyzed from the nose down; yet he used eye-gaze computer technology to complete his associate's degree in liberal arts, with honors, in a bold and courageous effort to bring attention to ALS.

They have a wonderful staff at the Lake Taylor transitional facility where Ron lives, and where the graduation ceremony took place; and I saw tears coming down several of the staff members' eyes as they watched Ron receive his degree. Actually, the president of Excelsior College made the effort to fly down to be with us that day.

I was deeply honored to be there and to have the privilege of sharing the commencement address, but it certainly wasn't my words that inspired everyone who was there. It was Ron's words that he shared through his computer.

He didn't talk about himself. He didn't talk about how difficult things are for him. He mainly thanked all of those in his life that made the degree possible. He talked about the importance of education and the importance of finding a cure for ALS.

I want to share just a small portion of what he shared that day. I watched his eyes as they guided the cursor on the screen to the "play" button. When he hit it with his eyes, it actually started the computer to speak. He put it this way:

I ask that you all bear with me as I stumble my way through this. At least I can blame the computer if I mispronounce anything.

That got a laugh there. He has got a great sense of humor.

He said:

Thank you for ensuring I started each class not as a disabled person, but as a differently abled person.

He thanked all the nurses and the nurses' aides there. He said:

You are my heroes. First of all, it takes a lot of work for me to look this good.

He has a great sense of humor.

He thanked his family and his friends for their love and support.

Speaking of life, he said:

It isn't always easy—but life never is. I just have a different set of challenges than most.

He left us with this quote by John Wooden:

Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.

Powerful words.

To me, Mr. Speaker, Ron's courage and his remarkable achievement represent the very best of the American spirit and the human spirit. It is a strong heart that chooses to be grateful for life's simple blessings, one that values the gift of friendship, one that embraces the pursuit of knowledge, and one that does not rest in a relentless pursuit to lessen human suffering, especially for those who will follow.

So I really count it as a high privilege to know Ron and to count him as a friend. He is fulfilling his mission to ensure that Americans are educated about the challenges that those with ALS face. He has also shown us what a person with ALS can accomplish.

He and many others who are heavily burdened with ALS, and their families, are calling attention to the need for improved access. We have a wonderful facility in Virginia Beach that is a tremendous asset for those who are afflicted with a disease that affects their physical mobility and that includes many of our wounded warriors.

□ 1030

It is JT's Grommet Island. It is right there on Virginia Beach, really the first on the east coast that allows people that are mobility impaired to get down and experience the joy of being on the water and the sun and the sand and just being outside.

There is a lot more work to be done, and I am so proud of our friends, Bruce Thompson and others. His son, Josh, is afflicted with ALS, and he led the effort to build that facility that I just mentioned there. It is called JT's Grommet Island, and it is named in honor of his son, Josh, who is struggling with this, and his family is as well.

I just want to close my comments today with great respect for those who are struggling with this disease and to share with you something that Ron has said about his struggle. It is an outlook on life that I found profound and inspirational, and I posted it in my home where I see it every day. He said this: "I may have ALS, but ALS does not have me."

So, Mr. Speaker, may Ron's remarkable achievement and the spirit that he exhibits in his life inspire all of us to join him in this worthy fight to find a cure for ALS.

THE 50-YEAR WAR ON POVERTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I am here to speak about unemployment insurance and the extension of it to my Republican colleagues. But there is no one over here to listen, so maybe they will listen to some renowned Republicans talk about what is really important.

How about Newt Gingrich, who recently said, "I think every Republican should embrace the Pope's core critique that you do not want to live on a planet with billionaires and people who do not have any food?"

Or how about John Feehery, a Republican strategist who said, "What does the Republican Party actually believe in? What is its purpose? Is it just to have unbridled capitalism without any moral core?"

Mr. Speaker, this 50-year war on poverty has faced setbacks under the leadership of both parties, but the GOP-led House seems to be actively engaged in a war on the war on poverty. Congress' inaction has cut off 1.3 million people from unemployment insurance after Christmas and, unless renewed, will cut benefits for another 1.9 million who are eligible in 2014.

Some of my colleagues across the aisle have claimed that this is just politics, that unemployment insurance was "intended to be a temporary solution to a very temporary crisis." Well, here's a news flash. We have been in this crisis since 2008. This is not temporary. This is long-term and it is chronic, and it has been caused by the greed of billionaires of the likes that we have seen on Wall Street. This is a personal nightmare for many of the constituents of my colleagues across the aisle. Some of their constituents have written to my office because they think their Representative is blind to how they are struggling.

Now, Margaret Heffernan is a renowned speaker, and she talks about mindless blindness. And in many respects, that is what I think we are engaged in here, mindless blindness. So here are some of the stories of those impacted by the loss of unemployment insurance who live in districts of my Republican colleagues, because maybe they will hear me and think about who is being hurt by playing politics.

Payne Springs, Texas, resident Linda Mrosko shared her story with me on my congressional Facebook page. Linda was 60 years old when her legal secretary job was eliminated. With more than 40 years of work experience under her belt—this is not someone sitting on a couch at home—40 years of experience as a paralegal secretary, she believed unemployment insurance would protect her if she lost her job. Even while caring for her 80-year-old mother with breast cancer, Linda continued to look for work but got very few interviews. Her 91-year-old father then fell ill and died, but Linda continued to look for work, even while in