

clean up and strengthen civilian police and the Attorney General's Office.

My trip to Honduras was both challenging and inspiring. I saw troubling problems of poverty and violence, heard painful stories about migrant abuses and disappearances, and saw major problems in the area of human rights and the protection of human rights defenders and activists.

But I also saw hope. I met with young people who dream of bright futures for themselves in Honduras, with student and youth leaders who are campaigning selflessly and courageously to build mechanisms to tackle corruption, and with LGBT activists, human rights defenders, and journalists who are standing up to threats. I saw community-led projects to combat violence and poverty that are making a real difference.

Mr. Speaker, last week our Nation was graced by the presence of Pope Francis. I was deeply moved by his call for us to welcome the stranger, to help the most vulnerable among us, and to work together for the common good. I believe each of those calls to action apply to the case of Honduras, both in how we respond to Honduras fleeing to the United States to find safe haven and a new life and how we help Hondurans respond to their own problems inside their country.

I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to working with my colleagues to help the Honduran people deal successfully with these challenges.

DKI APCSS 20TH ANNIVERSARY VIDEO MESSAGE

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

Mr. TAKAI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, located in Waikiki, Hawaii. I want to extend my congratulations to the Center on reaching this important milestone.

For the last 20 years, the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies has made significant strides in educating, connecting, and empowering security practitioners. I would like to thank the Center for their leadership. I am pleased to see the APCSS renamed as the Daniel K. Inouye Center, honoring the legacy of the late Senator who advocated strongly for peace and stability around the world.

As the United States shifts its focus to the Asia-Pacific region, the Daniel K. Inouye Center will be uniquely situated to play a critical role in driving our Nation's security policy.

The U.S. rebalance to Asia will rely heavily on Hawaii's location and relationship with our partner nations in the region.

I can think of no better venue than the Inouye Center for bringing together representatives from different countries to discuss joint cooperation on important issues.

As I have witnessed firsthand, the Center is focused on producing results. This will be crucial as we continue to move forward with the rebalance and begin to tackle some of the most pressing security-related issues.

Once again, I want to extend my congratulations on 20 years of service and my warmest thanks—mahalo—for the tremendous work being done there.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 8 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HARRIS) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Dear Lord, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

We come to You as a Nation in the midst of significant imminent transition, even as important disagreements on policy promise vigorous debate in the days and weeks to come. As people look for causes and solutions, the temptation is great to seek ideological position.

We ask that You might send Your spirit of peace and reconciliation; that instead of ascendancy over opponents, the Members of this people's House and all elected to represent our Nation might work together humbly, recognizing the best in each other's hopes, to bring stability and direction toward a strong future.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. KILDEE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

CYBER WEEK

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to ad-

dress the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, this week the House Armed Services Committee, led by Chairman MAC THORNBERRY, marks Cyber Week, a week that highlights the importance of cyber to our families and to our military. This week of hearings, with witnesses from private corporations and the Department of Defense, is a fitting start as we also recognize Cyber Security Awareness Month during October.

Recent cyber attacks, like the devastating attack on the Office of Personnel Management, have made it clear that cyber is the new domain of attacks on American families. Personal data, such as Social Security numbers, financial information, and security clearance documents, were stolen, putting the personal and financial security of our citizens at risk. The attack underscores the increased reports of cyber attacks against our military Web sites, government data, and businesses.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, with dedicated staff members like Pete Villano, Kevin Gates, and Nevada Schadler, I look forward to Cyber Week's focus to protect American families.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and may the President by his actions never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

GOP GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

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

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, almost unbelievably here we are just 2 days away from another GOP government shutdown. Republicans, who control both Houses of Congress, have yet to bring a budget agreement, just a couple of days before the government shuts down, that would keep government open. Democrats stand ready to negotiate, to talk, to come up with an agreement that can move this country forward, that can keep government open, at the very least.

We just can't afford another government shutdown. The last time this happened, it cost the economy billions of dollars and people lost their jobs. Shutting this government down, allowing the government to be shut down over a partisan ideological point, is reckless, and it ought to be avoided at all costs.

You don't have to look very far in the headlines to see that the Republican Conference is in some disarray. I understand that. The politics of that are just going to have to work themselves out.

Meanwhile, the business of the American people has to be attended to. We have got to get this country back to work. If we don't do that, we will not be doing the jobs that people sent us here to do.

THE CITY OF CARPINTERIA'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

(Mrs. CAPPS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the city of Carpinteria.

Incorporated on September 28, 1965, the city of Carpinteria is home to over 13,000 residents on the central coast of California. It is known as one of America's finest small towns, and Carpinteria has also been recognized as one of the American cities with the highest quality of life.

The city of Carpinteria is a leader in environmental stewardship, working to protect California's precious coastline. In fact, Carpinteria City Beach has been recognized as the world's safest beach. Their local economy has thrived with its vibrant cultural history, and this unique agricultural region is home to California's famed avocado festival.

I am proud to honor the city of Carpinteria on their 50th anniversary. It is a key treasure on the central coast.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, September 25, 2015.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on September 25, 2015 at 5:12 p.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 2082.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 3 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 7 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1500

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON) at 3 o'clock p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings

today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

PROTECTING AFFORDABLE COVERAGE FOR EMPLOYEES ACT

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1624) to amend title I of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to revise the definition of small employer, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1624

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Protecting Affordable Coverage for Employees Act".

SEC. 2. REVISION OF DEFINITION OF SMALL EMPLOYER UNDER HEALTH INSURANCE MARKET PROVISIONS.

(a) PPACA AMENDMENTS.—Section 1304(b) of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18024(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking "101" and inserting "51";

(2) in paragraph (2), by striking "100" and inserting "50"; and

(3) by amending paragraph (3) to read as follows:

"(3) STATE OPTION TO EXTEND DEFINITION OF SMALL EMPLOYER.—Notwithstanding paragraphs (1) and (2), nothing in this section shall prevent a State from applying this subsection by treating as a small employer, with respect to a calendar year and a plan year, an employer who employed an average of at least 1 but not more than 100 employees on business days during the preceding calendar year and who employs at least 1 employee on the first day of the plan year."

(b) PHSA AMENDMENTS.—Section 2791(e) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300gg-91(e)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2), by striking "101" and inserting "51";

(2) in paragraph (4), by striking "100" and inserting "50"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(7) STATE OPTION TO EXTEND DEFINITION OF SMALL EMPLOYER.—Notwithstanding paragraphs (2) and (4), nothing in this section shall prevent a State from applying this subsection by treating as a small employer, with respect to a calendar year and a plan year, an employer who employed an average of at least 1 but not more than 100 employees on business days during the preceding calendar year and who employs at least 1 employee on the first day of the plan year."

(c) DEPOSIT OF SAVINGS INTO MEDICARE IMPROVEMENT FUND.—Section 1898(b)(1) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395iii(b)(1)) is amended by striking "\$0" and inserting "\$205,000,000".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. Cárdenas) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may

have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous materials in the RECORD on H.R. 1624.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The bipartisan bill before us today is a much-needed fix for small-business owners and employees struggling to comply with the healthcare law. H.R. 1624 is a bill to amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and the Public Health Service Act to revise the definition of small employer. The bill would allow the States to continue defining the small group health insurance market as employers with 1 to 50 employees.

Section 1304 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act changed the Federal definition of the small group market to include employers with 1 to 100 employees. The States, however, have been allowed to continue defining the small group market as employers with 1 to 50 employees until January 1, 2016.

But beginning on or after January 1, 2016, plans sold or renewed for employers with 51 to 100 employees will be subject to the various small group health plan regulations established by PPACA. These more restrictive rating rules will increase health insurance premiums for these employers and reduce flexibility in benefit design.

The new requirements could also lead some employers with 51 to 100 employees to self-insure to avoid higher premiums. If that happens, this could result in adverse selection in the small group pool and higher premiums for employers with 1 to 50 employees.

Unless this current law is reversed, the disruption in the marketplace will be significant. For example, it is estimated that, under current law, more than 3 million employees will experience a double-digit percent increase in their healthcare premiums.

Ultimately, cost increases for small employers will change their choices regarding offering coverage, could change their business model, and will ultimately be felt by millions of workers.

Because the impact of current law will vary by State, defining the small group market should be left to the States, which is a policy envisioned in H.R. 1624.

I am pleased to say there is considerable support for this legislation in the House and the Senate.

The flexibility that would be given to States with immediate passage of H.R. 1624 would help ensure stable, small group health insurance markets that reflect the unique characteristics in each of the States.

If Congress passes H.R. 1624, premiums will be lower and allow millions of employees and employers to keep the plan they have and like. This is a