

America, in conjunction with the National Child and Adult Care Food Program Forum, hosted their annual fly-in. Over 1,200 hunger advocates from every State came to Washington, D.C., to meet with their local Members of Congress and to emphasize the importance of the Federal antihunger programs in alleviating food insecurity and poverty amongst our most vulnerable constituents.

These advocates delivered powerful messages to Members of Congress: as we consider the FY 2018 budget and appropriations legislation, and as we work to craft a 2018 farm bill, our antihunger safety net must stay intact. That means no block grants or structural changes to SNAP; no funding cuts to SNAP or any other antihunger programs.

These advocates, Mr. Speaker, also delivered paper plates to their Members of Congress containing powerful messages from constituents who rely on antihunger safety net programs.

I would urge all my colleagues to make sure they read these paper plates. These aren't statistics. These are real human beings. These are our constituents, our brothers and sisters.

I would like to read a few of the messages that were sent to me from people in my district.

This is from a client at the Northbridge Food Pantry in Massachusetts: "Without food assistance, I wouldn't have any other source of nourishment. I have many medical issues, and a proper diet is necessary."

This is from, again, another client from the Northbridge Food Pantry: "Food stamps are important to me and my family because I have lung cancer, and it is next to impossible to find a job, to buy food. My husband barely makes enough to pay the bills, that is not counting food."

Also, another client from the Northbridge Food Pantry: "Food stamps is important to me 'cause I don't make any money to support myself, let alone I'm disabled and I only make \$16 for SNAP. I need food to survive and to stay healthy."

This is from a client at Centro Las Americas in Worcester: "For me, they are very important, so that my children have good balance and nutrition."

Also, from Centro Las Americas in Worcester: "Well, for me, they fill a gap because I am a single father who has a child."

This is from a client at the Marie Anne Center in Worcester, Massachusetts: "I think SNAP is important because it helps, because it helps families."

This is from a client at the Amherst Survival Center: "It means there is food every night."

Also, from the Amherst Survival Center: "I thank God for the food pantry because most of my income goes toward bills. The food pantry really relieves the anxiety of not having enough to go around. Thank you."

Also, from the Amherst Survival Center: "I am in bad health. I can't

work. The food pantry really helps my family. Thanks to the food pantry. Thanks Survival Center."

Also, from the Amherst Survival Center: "It means there is food every night."

This is from Loaves and Fishes, a food pantry in Worcester, Massachusetts: "A person has to live."

Also, from Loaves and Fishes: "It is very important that I get the food stamps. Please don't take them away. They help me out a lot."

This is also from Loaves and Fishes: "SNAP helps supplement my disability from cancers, but my benefit level has been cut."

From the Marie Anne Center, a client writes: "It is important to keep food stamps because other poor families don't have money. And the food stamps help them. Also, I think you should keep SNAP because if you take it away, that's basically you saying that other people won't eat."

This is also from the Northbridge Food Pantry: "In my given situation, without the local food banks and SNAP, I would not be able to eat three meals per day."

From a client at Loaves and Fishes: "A person has to live."

Finally, this is from the Amherst Survival Center. A client writes: "Thank you, Amherst Survival Center. You are a saving grace."

Mr. Speaker, again, I urge my colleagues to understand that, in the United States of America, the richest country in the history of the world, we have close to 42 million Americans who are food insecure or hungry. They are our neighbors. They are counting on us in this Congress to do something, not to give them a cold shoulder.

I will, in all frankness, say to my colleagues that we are not doing nearly enough. Hunger is a political condition. We have the resources, we know what to do, but we don't have the political will.

So, rather than cutting these nutrition safety net programs, rather than threatening to block grant SNAP, cut SNAP, or cut other antihunger and nutrition programs, we ought to come together and support them. We ought to dedicate ourselves to ending hunger now. We have a moral obligation to do that.

I urge my colleagues to read the plates that were delivered to their offices and join with me in ending hunger now.

LET'S FIX, NOT FIGHT

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, last week, I had the opportunity to gather in Upper Senate Park with thousands of individuals from across the country to demand that Congress "Fix Not Fight" and work together to build a better, safer, and stronger nation.

The No Labels Problem Solvers Conference brought together thousands of citizens from across all 50 States to kick-start a year of action in creating a more united path forward for our country.

Proudly, I have been part of this movement from the beginning. As a member of the Problem Solvers Caucus, I hope we can all come to the table, find common ground, and focus on finding solutions.

Of course, there are some areas where we are never going to agree, and that is okay. Our differences should not divide us. Instead, we must exhibit good governance, good leadership, and serve our constituents in a manner that is worthy of the office we hold. After all, the only way that we will build a better America today and for all generations that follow us is if we come together now. Let's get to work.

SUPPORT STUDENT LOAN DEBT RELIEF FOR FARMERS

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the cornerstones of our rural communities: our American farmers.

These men and women are stewards of all of our land and provide the country with a safe and affordable food supply, but we need to do more to cultivate the next generation of farmers. They face tough odds by the very nature of the business, and there is a critical shortfall of skilled young and beginning farmers and ranchers.

That is why, together with Congressman JOE COURTNEY of Connecticut and Congressman JOHN FASO of New York, we introduced the Young Farmer Success Act. This legislation will provide incentives for those who would like to pursue a future in the agriculture industry by adding farmers to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, which currently offers loan payback assistance for professions such as government service, teaching, and nursing.

Under the program, eligible public service professionals who make 10 years of income-driven student loan payments can have the balance of their loans forgiven.

Farming is an expensive business to enter, in part because of skyrocketing land prices, and beginning farmers often see small profits or even losses in their first years of business.

In 2011, the National Young Farmers Coalition conducted a survey of 1,000 young farmers and found that 78 percent of respondents struggled with a lack of capital.

A 2014 followup survey of 700 young farmers with student loan debt found that the average burden of student loans was \$35,000, and that 53 percent of respondents are currently farming, but have a hard time making their student loan payments; while another 30 percent are interested in farming, but haven't pursued it as a career because their salary as a farmer wouldn't be enough to cover their student loan payments.

Mr. Speaker, food security is national security and it aids the long-

term sustainability of our country. Our rural communities are in crisis and declining. We should do everything in our power to recruit a new generation of farmers.

Did you know that the number of new farmers entering the field of agriculture has dropped by 20 percent and the average farmer age has now risen above 58 years old? We must encourage new farmers to enter this critical industry.

I urge my colleagues to support the bipartisan Young Farmer Success Act. The skyrocketing cost of higher education and the growing burden of student loan debt are presenting major obstacles for young ranchers. The burden of student loan debt can thwart their ability to purchase the farming operations they need to get started and drive them away from a career in agriculture altogether.

Let's pass this bill and help the men and women who put food on the table for American families throughout America. Our farmers feed, and we should give them every incentive to continue to do so. The American people deserve a safe, reliable, and sustainable food source. Our farmers provide that.

GOP ACA REPEAL

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I just came from the Energy and Commerce Committee. That committee, along with the Ways and Means Committee and the Education and the Workforce Committee, is seized of the responsibility to consider the harmful American Health Care Act being offered by the Republicans as a better way. It is anything but a better way.

Mr. Speaker, they don't want the American public to see what they are doing. They met all through the night. They have been meeting now for over 24 hours, without sleep, without rest, without reflection, and with no opportunity, Mr. Speaker, for the American people to see what is going on. In the dead of night, out of the sight of the public, they are hiding their bill and rushing to judgment.

Why? Because they know, as they have seen in town meeting after town meeting after town meeting—that is, of course, those Republicans who have had town meetings—that the American public is extraordinarily concerned and worried they are going to lose the health care that they receive through the Affordable Care Act.

They are concerned about the premiums and deductibles that they have to pay skyrocketing because of the Republican bill that is being proposed. They are concerned that Medicare and Medicaid are going to be decimated and the life of Medicare reduced in terms of its ability to pay the benefits promised.

Mr. Speaker, the President stood at that rostrum and said he had a

healthcare bill that was going to give healthcare coverage for everybody—not just some, but everybody—at less expense and greater quality. There is no such bill that the President has provided us with. If there is, and if he has such a bill, Mr. Speaker, I will support it, but it is certainly not the bill that the Ways and Means Committee ended its work on at 4:30 a.m. this morning.

The American people, Mr. Speaker, ought to be asking: What are you hiding? What is the rush? You have had 7 years to consider this bill. That is 7 years. We are meeting tomorrow, we are meeting next week, we are meeting the week after. It is not as if we are going on a summer break and we need to rush to judgment. It is not that we need to keep the American people out of consideration of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats in committee and on this floor are doing everything we can to slow down this process and to open the doors, open the windows, and keep the lights on so that the people who deserve to know how a Republican bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act will impact their lives and the lives of their family and their children.

□ 1030

Houses Republicans are marking up this bill without holding a single hearing—not one hearing—for a bill that gives \$600 billion in tax cuts and cuts hundreds of billions of dollars from health care. The tax cuts go to the wealthiest in America. Perhaps that is why there are no hearings. Perhaps that is why they didn't invite any witnesses. Perhaps that is why they are rushing to judgment before the Congressional Budget Office, which is nonpartisan and will give us an accurate estimate of its cost and who is going to be hurt—Mr. Speaker, apparently they don't want the American people to get those facts before their representatives have to make a decision.

I know they voted for repealing the Affordable Care Act almost 65 times here in this House. Democrats have voted against that because we believe the Affordable Care Act is working.

Is it working perfectly? No.

Do we need to join together and make it work better for the American people? Yes.

This bill will impact, Mr. Speaker, every single American family and business. If enacted, it will force Americans across the country to pay more for less coverage and fewer benefits. Shamefully, Republicans are hoping they can jam this bill through the House and Senate before Members have to go home and face their constituents in April. That is why we are having to rush, because they don't want their Members to go home in April and say: This is what we are considering, what do you think? Because they know. Because they have had hearings, town meetings. They haven't had any hearings on this bill, but they have had town meetings, and every American

has seen the reporting on that, angry Americans fearful that they are going to lose benefits absolutely critical to them and their families.

They continued marking up this bill through the night, using the very same tactics they claimed we were using when considering the Affordable Care Act. We had over 79 hearings not in the middle of the night, but during the day. We had over 181 witnesses. That is opposed to zero—zero—witnesses on this bill. Shame. It gives a lie to the representation of transparency and openness and accountability that our Speaker has said he would operate this House to ensure that those happened.

They used the same tactics that they claim, as I said, that we were considering. In fact, here is what Tom Price, who was then a member of the House of Representatives, now the Secretary of the Health and Human Services, said: "The negotiations are obviously being done in secret and the American people really just want to know what they are trying to hide."

He said that on January 6, 2010.

180 witnesses, 79 hearings, a year and a half or more of consideration, yet we have a bill that was introduced Monday night. Today is Thursday. Monday night it was introduced, and no hearings. Wednesday, deep into the night, and this morning this bill is being marked up.

KEVIN BRADY, the chairman of the Committee on Way and Means, who held a markup until 4:30 a.m., said this: "I think there is never a more critical time for the American public to weigh in on an important issue than on health care today and there is a lot about this bill we don't know."

He said that in a townhall August 10, 2009. Well, now he is chairman of the committee, and apparently he has decided that the American public doesn't need to know now. When we were in charge, he thought the public needed to know, and that is why we had those 79 hearings and 181 witnesses and townhalls, thousands of meetings and townhalls around the country on the Affordable Care Act. But Mr. BRADY apparently doesn't think that is applicable when he is in charge of the committee.

Then Speaker, now former Speaker John Boehner said this: "Can you say it was done openly, with transparency and accountability? Without backroom deals struck behind closed doors, hidden from the people? Hell, no, you can't."

But now the shoe is on the other foot, and my Republican colleagues are in charge. They are full speed ahead, and the doors are closed, the windows are shuttered, and the blinds are drawn.

The process we had in 2009 and 2010 to write and adopt the Affordable Care Act included, as I said, 79 hearings versus zero hearings on this bill. Zero. None. 181 witnesses that I have referred to. Zero witnesses, zero Americans included from the public in this process. We had a 2-year process that was open and recognized how consequential the