

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Mr. Speaker, over the last few months, we have seen a surge of hate-driven violence, vandalism, and threats against numerous communities. As a member of the Oversight Committee, I am calling for hearings to determine the root cause of this wave of hate crimes and how we can combat it.

While our government must show its commitment to answering these attacks, the American people already have. Desecrations of Jewish cemeteries were met with waves of volunteers assisting in their restoration. Mosque burnings were met with contributions from Americans of all faiths to help the rebuilding. And when two Indian men in Kansas were shot and one murdered, a Caucasian third man was wounded when he heroically sought to intervene.

These actions speak to the resilience of our people, the highest principles of our Nation, and why we are proud to be Americans. America is, indeed, an exceptional nation.

I hope Chairman CHAFFETZ will heed my call and hold hearings on this wave of hate-inspired attacks to help America remain exceptional.

□ 1215

IMPROVING VETERANS' ACCESS TO CARE

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

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the House this week is taking action to bring much-needed accountability and improvement to the VA.

Two and a half years ago, in the wake of the veterans waitlist scandal, Congress rightfully passed legislation giving the VA Secretary greater authority to fire senior managers responsible for those failures. I was glad to support the bill. In fact, the director of our own scandal-ridden central Alabama VA became the first fired under the new law.

But, Mr. Speaker, we all know that law did not go far enough. Responsibility for failures at the VA doesn't just lie with senior managers. We need to provide the VA Secretary increased authority to swiftly remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee for poor performance or misconduct. That is why I urge my colleagues to support the VA Accountability First Act.

The problems at the VA may have left the front page for now, but the problems are still very present. The work of improving veterans' access to care is far from over, and I will not stop until it is done.

WAR IS BEING DECLARED ON THE GREAT LAKES

(Mrs. DINGELL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because war is being declared on the Great Lakes. Those of us who live in the Great Lakes region recognize that the current times are anything but useful.

The Great Lakes account for 21 percent of the world's freshwater supply and are a major thoroughfare for transportation, commerce, trade, as well as recreation and tourism. Critical investments over the last decade have helped clean up and protect these waters, and that work is now in danger. Much is preventable and it must be stopped.

President Trump's budget released today virtually eliminates funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which will cause significant harm to our communities, to jobs, and to our way of life. This jeopardizes our ability to fight back against invasive species that threaten the region's biodiversity, including the Asian carp. It also impacts vital cleanup projects that ensure our water is safe to drink. And there are those who want to store nuclear waste in the Great Lakes as well. It is not a partisan issue; it is an American issue.

RESUSCITATE OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

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

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support resuscitating our healthcare system.

ObamaCare is being crushed under its own weight and the American Health Care Act will deliver a better way for health care. One of the greatest failures of ObamaCare is that it forces Americans into coverage that they do not want and that they cannot afford.

Our plan, instead, is designed to empower patients to access quality, affordable, and patient-centered health care. The American Health Care Act will put the free market back into health care, giving Americans the freedom of choice. Instead of Washington controlling the decisions of patients, we will empower them to make their own choices.

Americans deserve to have access to quality, affordable, and patient-centered health care, and this is how we intend to make this a reality. Remember, this is the first phase of this mission to rescue our country's health care, and I am committed to making sure that it is not the last.

Phase two is underway with administrative actions from our friend, Secretary of Health and Human Services, Dr. Tom Price. Leader McCARTHY has begun to lay out additional legislation that we could not include in reconciliation. We will waste no time on this and we will begin consideration next week.

The battle does not end with the American Health Care Act, but it is a crucial first step to a better tomorrow.

CBO ANALYSIS ESPECIALLY BAD NEWS FOR WOMEN

(Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, today the House Budget Committee passed the Republican healthcare plan.

We all know by now that the recent CBO analysis has some very bad news for millions of Americans, but it has some especially bad news for women. The GOP plan makes Planned Parenthood ineligible for any reimbursement from Medicaid or Medicare for one entire year. More than half of Planned Parenthood facilities are in rural or medically underserved areas. Even in my district in New York, women are lined up outside the building and down the block, often waiting for Planned Parenthood services.

Yet, the CBO says that if the GOP plan becomes law, more than 15 percent of low-income women in our country will be without any access to health care—no cancer screenings and no tests and treatments for STDs. Women's lives and well-being should have greater value than this, but they just don't seem to count in the cruel math of this merciless law.

PUT HEALTH CARE BACK IN THE HANDS OF AMERICANS

(Mr. RICE of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. RICE of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, 4 percent of the people of South Carolina have individual policies under ObamaCare. I submit to you that if you have a health insurance policy that pays nothing, with a deductible so high that you can't use it, regardless of the fact that statistics may say you are covered, you are not covered.

Sadly, that is what many of my constituents back home in South Carolina are dealing with under ObamaCare. I have statement after statement from folks in South Carolina that are being horribly damaged by this law. They are faced with rising premiums, high deductibles, and limited choice.

In my State, premiums went up nearly 30 percent last year. At one time, South Carolina had five different providers. Now there is only one, and they are threatening to pull out.

What happens then?

By now it is clear that this law is not helping South Carolinians the way it was intended. But what I also want to make clear is Republicans have a plan to fix it. Our plan does a blanket repeal of harmful ObamaCare taxes, like the individual and employer mandates. It preserves patient protections so people won't be denied for preexisting conditions. It gives individuals and families

better control of their health care by allowing them to spend their healthcare dollars as they see fit.

Simply put, our plan moves us from an unsustainable path to a sustainable one.

SKINNY BUDGET

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

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, this morning, President Trump has released the first budget proposal of his administration.

In reading through the budget proposal, I am reminded of what President Trump said in the summer when he was speaking to the African-American community in a rally in Philadelphia.

He said: What do you have to lose?

This is what we have to lose: eliminating the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant program, whose sole purpose is to combat poverty nationwide.

This is what we have to lose: cutting funding for Head Start and before- and after-school programs for our kids does not give them a chance to get ahead.

This is what we have to lose: stripping funding for Medicaid in your new healthcare law that provides critical services for our most vulnerable.

This is what we have to lose: all of those cuts do not give our seniors, our children, and our working families a chance to get ahead.

Our communities have too much to lose, Mr. President. Our communities need the opportunity to make crucial investments that make our neighborhoods stronger block by block.

WE MUST IMPROVE FOOD ACCESS

(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, a healthy diet for many Americans may have nothing to do with commitment, but, rather, accessibility.

Limited access to supermarkets and grocery stores with fresh nutritional food can be a challenge in both rural and urban communities. These are often called food deserts.

This is a particular concern for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which intends to provide nutrition to millions of Americans.

According to the USDA, to qualify as a low-access community, at least 500 people and/or at least 33 percent of the population must reside more than 1 mile from a supermarket or large grocery store. For rural areas, the distance is more than 10 miles.

It is difficult to eat healthy when the easiest store to get to primarily provides packaged and processed food. SNAP recipients may find a local mar-

ket convenient, but it often offers high-calorie foods with minimal nutritional value. These foods can often be a staple for families with limited resources.

It is my hope that we can increase access to fresh food for communities throughout the country. Our families deserve no less.

I look forward to working with the Agriculture Nutrition Subcommittee to continue to look at the SNAP program so that it serves those it is intended to serve.

JANUARY TRADE DEFICIT

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the Commerce Department just announced that America's trade deficit for January 2017 was \$48.5 billion, the largest monthly deficit since March 2012. That translates into more lost jobs in our country.

In the campaign, President Trump criticized our trade deals. He promised to do better for American workers. And now, nearly 2 months into his Presidency, what action has he taken to stop the erosion of this deficit and the jobs that go with them?

It continues to get worse.

What hope can he give to the hundreds and hundreds more steelworkers in Lorain, Ohio, who just received pink slips over the weekend due to the permanent closure of another steel line, due to Chinese imports and predatory trade practice?

It is going to put a lot of steelworkers back to work, President Trump said during the campaign and after as he revived the Keystone and Dakota Access pipelines. But his talk turned out to be empty and a pipe dream because the pipes have already been purchased from foreign sources.

Next month, China's President, Xi Jinping, will visit President Trump at Mar-a-Lago in Florida. President Trump talked tough on China throughout the campaign, but what will he do to reform Chinese trade practices that are resulting in these increasing trade deficits?

Mr. Speaker, I hope our President begins to keep the long list of campaign promises that he made to working people across this country, reverses these deficits, and starts increasing good jobs again.

LET'S FIX AMERICA'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

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

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Mr. Speaker, whatever possessed someone to think that a faceless, nameless bureaucrat in an ivory tower in Washington, D.C., who has never been to my district, who has never met with the people, think

they know more about what is good for the family and the children of my people than they do?

That was a question that was asked of me by a constituent this weekend.

What makes you think you know better what is best for my family and my children than I do?

He was referring to the Affordable Care Act.

He went on to tell me that he used to have an insurance policy that cost \$300 a month that he could use. Today, he is paying \$1,600 a month for something he cannot use and he doesn't want, but by the force of law, he is forced to have.

He went on to say: Will you please, please do something now to fix this problem?

Another person said: Are you going to be able to get to a reform to fix America's health care that you like?

My answer was no.

We are not going to get to something I like, but that is not the issue here. Why? Because America is not ready for what I want. That is true Federalism, that this place has nothing to do with health care.

We can't get there right now because we don't have the votes, but we can get to something we need. I call upon my brothers and sisters in the House: Let's fix America's healthcare system. We have the opportunity to do it now.

□ 1230

COMMEMORATING THE TRANSFER OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS FROM DENMARK TO THE UNITED STATES

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

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, later today, I intend to reintroduce a resolution commemorating the transfer of the U.S. Virgin Islands from Denmark to the United States. In that resolution, it discusses the 1733 slave revolt, the first slave revolt in the Western Hemisphere; the 1848 slave rebellion and emancipation, 17 years before the United States; and, of course, the 1917 transfer of ownership of the Virgin Islands from Denmark to the U.S.

We also discussed great Virgin Islanders, such as Alton Adams, Edward Blyden, Camille Pissarro, Judah Benjamin, and Roy Innis.

What does the transfer mean, and what have been the gains and benefits to the people of the Virgin Islands because of the purchase by the United States? The Americans were able to receive a pristine, geopolitically strategic location in the Caribbean with a people who are loyal to and proud of this country.

What has been given to the Virgin Islanders, a people willing and eager to take on the responsibilities of that citizenship but who, in fact, have moved from a system of serfdom, under Danish rule, to second-class, limited