

Mr. Speaker, I thank again Mr. O'HALLERAN for his leadership on this vital issue, and I look forward to continuing to work with him as we reauthorize CHIP, hopefully in the very near future. Again, we got to do this together.

Mr. O'HALLERAN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Rhode Island not only for his discussion today, but also for all his work on behalf of the children of America. I think that his record speaks for itself, and it is obvious that what we just heard came from his heart. So I thank the gentleman for his remarks.

I asked my fellow colleagues, when they start to work on this bill again—hopefully, they do it in a speedy fashion—that when they wake up in the morning, they think of what it means to have their child potentially without healthcare, what it means to have the unknown that we don't know if next month or the month later they will lose that coverage because Congress has failed to address the issue that they have all agreed on for 20 years. We have to and we must find a way to come to agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NORMAN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my good friend, Mr. HIGGINS from Louisiana.

THE PLIGHT OF THE CITIZENS OF LOUISIANA IMPACTED BY HURRICANE HARVEY

Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise unscripted to bring to the attention of the entire Nation the plight of the good citizens of Louisiana who were impacted by Hurricane Harvey last month. Beside me at this graph shows the rainfall, the water event of Hurricane Harvey as it impacted Texas and Louisiana.

□ 1830

As anyone can see, it was a tremendous water event, unprecedented rainfall, that overwhelmed any water management system. And, as anyone can see, the parishes of southwest Louisiana were impacted, as well as many counties in Texas, yet, as we discuss disaster relief, Louisiana is absent from our conversation. I point out, to all who would choose to witness, the State line of Louisiana, as defined by the Sabine River, and the impact of Hurricane Harvey.

Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Harvey did not recognize the artificial State boundaries that we have created as a Republic, nor should we as we provide disaster relief for our citizens. Just after Hurricane Harvey had impacted Texas and Louisiana, my office drafted

a letter to the executive branch to a President that I admire and respect, advising him of the impact, and begging his expedited approval of the disaster status once the formal request had been submitted by our Governor.

Sometime later, just 2 weeks ago, that formal request was submitted by the Governor of our State. Just after that submission, my office drafted and submitted a second letter requesting expedited approval of disaster status for these citizens of Louisiana, who were clearly just as impacted by this storm as many citizens in Texas.

Tomorrow, we shall send a third letter, this time signed by the entire Louisiana delegation. I ask that the Nation recognize the plight of the people I represent. The good and patriotic citizens of southwest Louisiana are suffering.

I respect and admire my President, I support him, I have supported him since day one, and I support him still. But it is important that we, as representatives of we the people, communicate clearly our intent and our service.

I beg that the leaders of the executive branch level would witness this clear evidence of the need for disaster declaration of the parishes of southwest Louisiana. And I beg that this message is received with the spirit with which it is delivered, which is respectful, yet in determined service of the citizens whom I have sworn to represent.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding these precious moments to me.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, we had some interesting days here, but, over the weekend, being back in Texas, I am hearing the cries from people all over east Texas. There is a small number that say: Hey, I am not making much, and I am getting a subsidy from the government, so I am okay on my healthcare, I am young, I have no health problems, and that is fine.

But over and over, there is a cry going out around America that says: We elected Republicans in the majority in the House and the majority in the Senate to help us with our healthcare—with really health insurance. Everybody can get healthcare. You can just go to the emergency room, whether you have money or not.

This is really more about health insurance. Some of us have not wanted health insurance to make our major decisions for us on our own healthcare. We haven't wanted the government to make major decisions on our healthcare, but both are making those decisions for people across the country today.

Unfortunately, there are people telling me they are paying \$8,000, \$10,000, \$12,000. I heard one for \$20,000 yesterday from Texas, \$20,000 for the family's insurance, and they have a \$12,000 deductible, and they can't afford either one. They expected help.

President Trump is not the Congress. He has pushed, shoved, cajoled, done

everything he could to try to get Congress moving in the House after a back and forth, wailing, gnashing of teeth. We got a bill. It wasn't perfect by any stretch. But at least it would have given people relief from high premiums, most Americans. Hopefully, Republicans won't misrepresent the truth, as some did.

Actually, we know some people just flat lied about ObamaCare. People who said, "If you like your insurance, you can keep it," they knew it was a lie. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. They knew that was a lie.

And now the people are suffering the consequences of trusting people in government who lied to them. They were deceived. But even with all the deception, most of the time it appeared that a clear majority of Americans did not want what was fraudulently called the Affordable Care Act. There was nothing affordable about it, unless you didn't have any healthcare problems at all.

People who are carrying the weight of the taxes in this country have needed help. They counted on us to provide legislative changes, repeal of ObamaCare, let's put a system in place where people can make their own healthcare decisions, and we sent the bill to the Senate, and I still believe we should have been demanding more of the Senate every day.

I know there are a lot of people who say: Well, Republicans can't lose the majority in the Senate because there are a bunch more Democrats whose seats are up this time instead of Republicans. Yes, we can lose the majority, even when there are more Democratic seats up for election.

That is what happens when people are sorely disappointed. Many stay home, and the wrong people will get elected when too many people stay home.

But the adage is, still true, democracy ensures people are governed no better than they deserve. So whether anybody liked or disliked President Obama as our President—and, by the way, for those who like to throw out the term "hater," I don't hate anybody, but I can certainly disapprove of conduct.

For 8 years, America deserved Barack Hussein Obama. Before that, whether you like him or not, I like him, America deserved George W. Bush. Before that, America deserved 8 years of William Clinton—I forgot his middle name. Before that, 4 years of George H. W. Bush. Before that, 8 years of Ronald Reagan. And I am very pleased that America deserved Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton last November.

It is interesting, though, being in hearings today and hear people clamoring that they demand action from this department, that department, it is taking too long, while, at that very moment, Democratic Senators at the other end of this building are doing everything they can to prevent confirmation of President Trump's appointees

to those departments so they can start getting things done.

It is amazing when one party like that can hold the ability, because of the filibuster rule, because of the requirement for 60 votes, apparently, they are able to hold up these appointees. To me, that is all the reason to go ahead and say: Do you know what, you are demanding action from people who you have not confirmed yet, so we are not going to let you play that game anymore. You have people saying, ‘Oh, my goodness, these departments aren’t getting decisions made, aren’t getting their work done,’ and all the while you are holding them back from being able to do it by not confirming the people who need to be doing that work.

The Senate ought to just say: We are not playing that game, we are not letting you play that game, we are going to call the game off, we are going to get serious about America’s problems, and we are going to confirm President Trump’s nominees with 51 votes, not just judges, we are going to confirm his nominees with 51 votes. We cannot tolerate people—really it is fraudulent activity to hold back the nominees from being confirmed and then vilify the administration for not getting the work done that those nominees who hadn’t been confirmed will have to do.

The Senate needs to respond. The Senate did not respond to the bill we sent to them. That was quite interesting. In my 12 years here, I have never seen a situation like that, Mr. Speaker, where some of us got calls from people in the Senate who don’t normally get calls, and that included people from the Tuesday Group, the Freedom Caucus, the Republican Study Committee, and the Republican leadership. They all were asking the same question: Okay, would you please promise us that if we pass this healthcare bill in the Senate that you will not take it up and pass it in the House? Because it is only if you guys promise us, the Republicans promise us, you won’t pass the bill that we have down here—apparently, it was so bad—that we will let it go to committee, or you will amend it, but you just promise us you won’t pass the bill if we pass it.

Well, as far as I know, everybody I talked to gave reassurance to the Senators who called them and said: No, we promise, we won’t pass your bill, it is terrible, we won’t, we can assure you.

Even with those assurances, just the effort to get something passed so that we can come together in a conference between House conferees and Senate conferees, just to come together for the chance—this bill that the Senate was taking up to have some skinny repeal, they called it, of ObamaCare, and at least some measure of change to the suffering that people are enduring right now, and they still couldn’t get 51 votes, which is all they needed under the reconciliation process.

Even when they were assured: We promise you, we won’t pass this bill,

you will get another chance to vote, just help the process, let’s get it to conference, so we can get some relief to the American people who are suffering, suffering so much that they would go so far as to give us the majority in the Senate after they have given us the majority in the House, and give us the White House as a Republican Party—credible.

But the American people are still suffering. And the budget apparently does not provide for ObamaCare to be repealed and replaced under reconciliation for the next 12 months. So unless the Senate feels enough heat from the American people—the Republicans that is—they are not going to do anything about ObamaCare that they promise to repeal and replace.

□ 1845

Apparently, it is going to have to get pretty hot in the kitchen down in the Senate to get people down there worked up enough to finally give the American people the relief that the Senate Republicans promised.

Now, I don’t like talking about this, despite what some may think. It is much nicer to get along and go along, but people are suffering because we haven’t kept our promise. The Senate couldn’t pass anything that would get the American people some relief from all the suffering from ObamaCare.

For those who are not aware, yes, there were bailouts for the monopoly insurance companies. Some made record profits, and yet they are still, under ObamaCare, the way it was written, supposed to get bailouts.

So it appears pretty clear the design of ObamaCare was to make it fail. Apparently, people at the top of some of these insurance companies have not been smart enough to figure out that they signed their own death warrants when they embraced ObamaCare, but it appears it was designed to make people angry at the greedy, allegedly corrupt health insurance companies.

I don’t think they are corrupt, but there sure was a lot of greed there between some of the pharmaceutical companies and the health insurance companies signing on. Some of them tried to say: Well, oh, but we needed to be at the table.

We are going: Not if you are on the menu you didn’t want to be at the table.

I am sure the executives that have their golden parachutes leave the health insurance companies after 5, 6, 7 years with their incomes.

The design was the health insurance companies make a fortune, people’s premiums kept going through the roof, deductibles kept going through the roof, bailouts were provided to insurance companies that had record profits, and then the design ultimately would be the American people getting so angry that they would lash out and say: Enough already. I never thought I would say this, but anything has got to be better than these insurance compa-

nies, the handful that are left, so let’s just let the government take care of everything.

Then we get a system that is twice as bad as the VA for all Americans, so all Americans can suffer fairly, equally, instead of getting what used to be some of the best healthcare ever in the history of the world.

We have another issue I want to touch on. Our Taxed Enough Already Caucus had a meeting yesterday and heard from Luke Rosiak, who has done more investigation on the IT scandal here on Capitol Hill, apparently done more investigation than anybody at the FBI. We keep hearing rumors that the FBI is reporting there is nothing to this, kind of like the Clinton scandal, the money that the Clinton Foundation got from the stockholders of Uranium One—she approves the sale of 20, 25 percent of America’s uranium production; it ends up going to the Russians—the email scandal, that obviously there were efforts to destroy and obfuscate evidence that was being sought, and Comey went out of his way to protect Ms. Clinton. There is just so much there that needs to be investigated.

The Attorney General apparently can’t investigate because of his own recusal. Mr. Rosenstein is sure not going to investigate it and thinks Mueller will do it.

Mueller is disqualified from doing it. Although he is such a problem, he will not disqualify himself. Comey is a material witness—should be—in the investigation.

As the Washingtonian reported back in 2013 in this long expose they did on glorifying Mr. Comey and Mr. Mueller’s relationship, that Comey knows that basically, in essence, if the world were on fire, the one person who would be there with him, protecting him, standing with him, would be Mr. Mueller. Mueller cannot investigate anything in which Comey is a witness. He can’t.

So what does he do? Comey goes and hires more lawyers. He has already had more lawyers than anybody I am aware of—ever. He is already exceeding the very general charge he got, going back years before he needed to. I mean, this is just incredible.

They were a problem 10 years ago. The Obama administration had 8 years to get into it. Mueller, as FBI Director, had plenty of time to get into it.

So there is only one thing we can be looking at, and that is a vendetta by Robert Mueller after some people. He is clearly disqualified. Comey is in it up to his eyeballs. We have got to have a special prosecutor that will look into the matters that should be investigated.

Then we have this issue on Capitol Hill. We need to know how compromised our computer system, our IT system on the Hill has been.

We had a guy named Imran Awan working on Capitol Hill, started working with Democrats’ computer systems

12 years or so ago. He was not even an American citizen at the time.

Apparently, if there has ever been a background check on Imran Awan, it certainly was not adequate, because in the Imran Awan family and cohorts, you have got bankruptcy; you have got massive indebtedness; there was money received by one of the team, \$100,000 or so, from a known consort with Hezbollah.

Then we find out yesterday—or I did; I had not heard of this before—that Imran Awan, for parts of the year, would not even be here in Washington. He would be in Pakistan servicing up to dozens of our Democratic colleagues' computer systems from Pakistan, making the maximum that somebody working on Capitol Hill could by working for different Members of Congress, and then you add the partial salaries together until you get around \$160,000.

We heard yesterday that as he would get one person up to \$160,000 working for different offices, then they would add another to the payroll and get them up to \$160,000. One of the group owed another individual \$100,000. So with no indication that that individual who was owed \$100,000 ever even came to Capitol Hill or did any work here, he got put on the House payroll and made a couple hundred thousand dollars in return for the hundred thousand that he had loaned to one of the Awan team.

It is just almost inconceivable that we would have someone working with some of the highest privileged material. It seems to me the courts made it clear the speech or debate privilege to protect constituent information, information that people provide to us as whistleblowers, that that is probably more constitutionally protected than the attorney-client privilege. It is that important.

Yet knowing there are countries, there are companies that would pay large amounts of money to know some Members of Congress' schedule, have access to all their emails, see what they are saying about different bills, what they want to do, that is some valuable stuff. And yet, in some years, we were told yesterday, that Imran Awan was servicing Capitol Hill computers from Pakistan.

Now, I don't know how secure the Pakistani internet systems are, but it is kind of hard to believe that the American interests would be as protected in Pakistan and the Capitol congressional computer system would be protected as it is going through the Pakistani internet to be serviced.

We also heard that Imran Awan, from some of the emails that WikiLeaks put out—we don't know if he worked for the Democratic National Committee when they were hacked, but we know there were emails where someone was saying: We need to get into the chairwoman's laptop. We need her password.

Oh, well, Imran Awan has all of her passwords, so check with him.

So we don't know the extent that he could have compromised things, with

all the indebtedness he had and the car dealership that he never reported. Anybody that makes over \$120,000 from Capitol Hill has to report any outside income. He never reported those things.

In fact, it appears to be a crime when he failed to even report that he had his wife on the payroll making money on Capitol Hill in those financial disclosures he filed.

We also know that he had some history of violence complaints. His stepmother complained of being kidnapped by him and forced to sign documents that would turn over money and property that Imran's father supposedly had coming.

We know that he has now been indicted simply on a bank fraud charge for lying in order to get a bank loan, the money from which was sent overseas.

We also learned that they were sending technological equipment over to Pakistan. They were fraudulently filling vouchers showing that \$800 iPads only cost under \$500 so they wouldn't have to be listed on inventory. That obviously makes things more easy to steal.

There were reports, in fact, by the person who rented his house when he and his wife appeared to flee—he was trying to flee when he was stopped at the airport. There were hard drives, all kinds of things.

We know that he and possibly some of those working—maybe they didn't work. We don't know. But \$6 million to \$7 million was paid to him and his family and his cohorts during the time they were working here, and yet he was downloading from Members of Congress' clouds or from their own servers all of their information into a spot where people who weren't authorized could access those Members of Congress' accounts.

This has got to be investigated more thoroughly than it has been.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1900

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SOTO) for 30 minutes.

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, it is Hispanic Heritage Month, and I want to take this time to honor some great heroes in my district of Hispanic descent, who range from reporters to civil rights heroes, to community organizers, to businessmen and women, and I am just proud to be here tonight to be able to do that.

HONORING DANIEL BARAJAS

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, the first gentleman I want to talk about is Daniel Barajas, the executive director of the Young American Dreamers.

Daniel Barajas was born in Winter Haven, Florida, to a family of migrant

workers. Growing up, he worked in the orange groves of Florida. There, he witnessed firsthand how farmworkers were exposed to dangerous pesticides while working for poverty wages. He also learned about the long-term effects of failed immigration policies, seeing his own father be deported during a local operation.

As a teenager, Daniel saw his friends join gangs to survive poverty and defend themselves against deeply rooted racism within their communities. He joined this path but was dubbed "Lucky" because he survived.

Barajas dropped out of school in the ninth grade but earned his GED in 2001. During an incarceration in 2009, he noticed that inmates had no access to books or to reading glasses. It was then that Daniel founded the Library of Hope to collect books and reading glasses to donate to inmates.

Daniel's younger sister, Maria Isabel, founded the Young American Dreamers, YAD, in 2010 to help local immigrant youth. Maria Isabel passed away in a car accident, tragically, in 2012, and to honor her legacy, Daniel joined YAD and was voted executive director in 2013.

Barajas also continues to fundraise for annual scholarships to local students and participates in philanthropic events in the community.

Daniel now speaks at high schools across Polk County, talks to students about his life, and shows them that one is not defined by their past, and that breaking down barriers is possible.

He also closely works with the Polk County Supervisor of Elections Office to help register voters, increase voter turnout, and distribute clemency applications to help felons restore their civil rights.

Daniel is an example of one who could turn their life around and benefit the community as a whole, and he works with the Mexican Consulate in Orlando to do community workshops to teach immigrant families of their constitutional rights.

Thank you, Daniel, for your contributions.

HONORING ERICKA GOMEZ-TEJEDA

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, next is Ericka Gomez-Tejeda with Vamos4PR, Florida chapter. She is the civic engagement coordinator at 32BJ SEIU.

Ericka Gomez-Tejeda came from Colombia to the United States with her mom when she was 8 years old. Moved by her lifelong commitment to her birth country, Ericka moved to Medellin, Colombia, in 2009 and began a master's in theology.

Upon her return to the U.S. 2 years later, she moved to Florida and was elected vice president of SEIU Local 1199 United Health Care Workers East for the Florida nursing home division, representing 11,000 nursing home workers in the State.

In 2014, under the leadership of 32BJ President Hector Figueroa, Ericka returned to the Local 32BJ as deputy director of the 12,000-member New York