

that doesn't make any sense if you talk to the people who are suffering today. I have heard from furloughed FBI agents, air traffic controllers, State Department officials, workers at TSA, the Department of Homeland Security, the Coast Guard, and even Customs and Border Patrol, and they all vehemently oppose the shutdown.

Madam Speaker, we all support effective border security, but keeping these people furloughed or making them work unpaid doesn't make us any safer.

But on the positive side, as the pain has gotten worse for our community, I have also seen something else, which is that communities are coming together to make sure that no one gets left behind. Business after business throughout the country and throughout northern Virginia are helping with free sandwiches, free meals, and free services.

Nonprofits are stepping up their efforts to meet the worsening conditions created by the shutdown, and government officials, furloughed and unfurloughed, are doing everything they can to pitch in and lighten the blow on their unpaid colleagues.

□ 1100

Yesterday, I was helping serve food to Federal employees at Chef Jose Andres' World Central Kitchen. There was a line around the block, and it was D.C. police officers on their lunch break who came to help serve.

By the way, Madam Speaker, I think I handed out more than 300 meals, and not a single person said: Open up the government. Give Trump his wall.

We are better than this. We are good, kind, and industrious. The American people don't deserve this shutdown.

It is axiomatic that we shouldn't negotiate with hostage takers, but the President has taken our government hostage. If we give him what he wants, he may well use this tactic again and again and again.

President Reagan said: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

We say: President Trump, tear down your wall—your unreasonable obsession with an obsolete, medieval, ineffective way to secure our borders—and open up our government.

NEED FOR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MALINOWSKI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Transportation Funding Fairness Act and to express my hope that, after we have come to our senses and reopened the government, this year Congress will come together to fund the bridges, tunnels, railroads, airports, and roads that we all understand America needs to prosper and grow.

In the first decade of the 20th century, commuters in New Jersey towns like Summit, Union, and Westfield

could hop on a steam-powered train, ride right up to a terminal on the dock in Jersey City, change seamlessly to a ferry, and be in Manhattan within 50 minutes to an hour, if there wasn't too much fog or ice on the Hudson River.

A hundred years of magical, technological progress later, and we have managed to shave that trip by maybe a few minutes, if the trains are running on time that day.

Decades of underinvestment in public infrastructure have taken its toll on American greatness. Anyone who has traveled the world and has seen the modern airports and seaports and fast rail networks that our competitors are building would understand that.

Just in the last 2 months, as we have not even been able to open our government, the Chinese Government has been busy approving over \$125 billion in new rail projects—\$125 billion.

No State suffers more from our lack of attention to infrastructure than New Jersey, where twice as many people use public transportation than the national average. To get to and from New York, 200,000 of us a day still depend on just two rail tracks across the Portal Bridge and through a Hudson River tunnel that our great-grandparents built in 1910 because they thought those 50-minute, turn-of-the-century commute times were unacceptable long.

When the Portal Bridge opens to let boats pass today, a worker with a hammer must sometimes lock it back into place while stranded commuters wait, and that Hudson River tunnel has just a few years of life left. If we fail to replace it in time, we will be dealing a crippling blow to the economy of our region and our country.

That is why it is so urgent and important that we get the Gateway Tunnel project built.

Madam Speaker, in New Jersey, when we say we want to build bridges, not walls, that is not just a metaphor. We mean it literally. The \$5.7 billion that would be wasted to wall off America from Mexico happens to be almost exactly the Federal share of building a new Hudson River tunnel that would keep Americans connected to each other and, ultimately, to the world.

These are the real choices that we face. Is there any doubt what the voters who sent us here would have us choose: building something that millions of people living in my State and neighboring States say they desperately need, or something people living on the border say they do not need? A symbol of national progress, or a symbol of national fear? Is there any question at all?

That is one reason why I am introducing this bipartisan bill today, which is meant to clear one of the artificial obstacles the Department of Transportation has placed in the path of the Gateway Tunnel.

The Department has argued that when States take advantage of Federal transportation loans to pay some of

their share of projects jointly funded by the Federal Government, like Gateway, those loans don't count as part of the State contribution to the project.

It makes no sense. State taxpayers, after all, are 100 percent obligated to pay back those loans. It is like saying that I am not actually paying for my house because I have taken out a mortgage.

Our bill makes crystal clear that States can use Federal loans to cover all or part of their share of these projects.

Speaking of taxpayers, Madam Speaker, I represent a State where we get only 74 cents back from Washington for every dollar we pay in taxes. That is the worst ratio in the country. The average American gets \$1.12 back for every dollar he or she pays, courtesy of the Federal deficit.

What we ask, with strong justification, is that Washington give a bit more back in the form of investment in the infrastructure that powers States like New Jersey and, in turn, enables us to power the American economy.

I hope we will make progress on that this year and that this bill will make the task a little bit easier.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

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

Ms. SCHRIER. Madam Speaker, yesterday marked 1 full month of this unnecessary government shutdown, and 800,000 Federal employees are set to miss their second paycheck later this week.

The shutdown is not only affecting those workers, but we are seeing ripple effects of agencies being closed or staff being downsized. Food banks are seeing massive increases, some almost twelve-fold, in demand from Federal employees, but also people who rely on help like Section 8 housing checks or SNAP benefits.

Here is some of what I am hearing. I heard from a constituent who is a career employee at the FAA that "it is frustrating that thousands of hard-working Federal employees have become innocent pawns in the current Washington standoff between Congress and the President over funding for border security. As an integral part of the Nation's air traffic control system, my focus has always been and will always be on safety."

He goes on: "My dedicated colleagues and I at the FAA work tirelessly in furtherance of the agency's mission of providing the safest, most efficient aerospace system in the world, despite some of us now doing so without pay."

I have also heard from a woman whose husband is a Federal agent at the FDA. "My question," she says, "is how are we going to make ends meet without a paycheck from my husband this Friday? We adopted our sweet son a year and a half ago, draining our savings account to do so. We currently do

not have savings to fall back on during this time.

“How are we supposed to pay our rent, our bills, keep food on the table for our family, or pay for an emergency should it arise? I do have a full-time job that will at least bring us some income during this shutdown, and I am sure we are luckier than most Federal-employed families, but I can assure you that our family is in true panic mode.

“We have been doing everything in our power to ensure our family would be able to purchase a home this summer. How do we explain to creditors that we don’t have the money to pay them right now without it affecting our credit?”

I have also heard from a constituent who is a furloughed Federal worker who is “forced to come to work every day without pay due to the partial government shutdown.

“Every day that goes by, the stress and anxiety about not having a paycheck and having to support my family, all the while having to incur the costs of going to work every day, mounts. To top this all off, as an ‘excepted,’ or an ‘exempt,’ employee, under current Federal law, I am not allowed to apply for nor can I receive unemployment compensation.”

I have also heard from a local business owner who contracts with Federal entities. He says: “My work has ground to a halt. I won’t be compensated for any downtime, and I will have to reduce my workforce. We don’t need a wall; we don’t need to waste money; and we don’t need symbolic racism. We need an open government that manages land, services, travel, and commerce. Please apply pressure to get the government open and our district’s Federal employees, contractors, and private-sector partners back to work.”

I have heard from a constituent who served 40 years in the Coast Guard, under many different administrations, who said: “Worst of all, it is negatively impacting the most junior members of our workforce. These are the people you will meet if you ever take your family out boating on Puget Sound or the navigable waters of this country and experience some form of distress. As a retiree, I will not be paid at the end of this month, a statement I once believed I would never have to say.”

I have heard from a social worker whose client left a domestic violence situation and recently received a letter about discontinuation of Section 8 housing benefits: “This family, without this support, will be homeless once again, let alone the emotional strain that this is causing. Please do what you can,” she says, “to prevent the stress on our most vulnerable.”

The shutdown must end now. Federal employees and their families should not be held hostage for a wasteful and ineffective wall. People who rely on assistance from the Federal Government are now caught in the fray.

The House now has voted nine times to reopen the government with bipar-

tisan bills that have similar language to what the Republican Senate passed in December, and we will introduce similar legislation today, giving Republicans in the Senate yet another opportunity to open the government.

I will not support reopening the government in exchange for the President’s wall. This hostage-taking strategy must not be a successful one, or we will see it again.

The wall, as he defines it, is a monument to racism and xenophobia, an environmental disaster, and a huge waste of hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Let’s be clear that what Mr. Trump offered as a “compromise” on Saturday doesn’t even undo the damage he alone has caused. That is no compromise; that is lip service.

Get the government open, and then we can have an informed, evidence-based discussion about the best way to protect our borders without holding the American people hostage.

HOSTAGE TAKING

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise once again as a proud American. I love my country. I love what it stands for, in terms of its great ideals. And, Madam Speaker, as a proud American, I rise today to address the question of hostage taking.

One of the principles that we employ in international diplomacy—and I am being a little bit euphemistic by saying “international diplomacy”—is that of not negotiating with hostage takers.

If you take one of our planes, hijack one of our planes, and you demand a ransom, we will not negotiate with you. Grab an American off the streets in some distant place, and we will not negotiate with you.

It doesn’t matter that you start out at \$50 million and then reduce your desire to have a ransom to \$10 million, maybe. We don’t negotiate with you. You are a hostage taker.

The United States of America, the greatest and richest country in the world, which can pay the price, refuses to negotiate with hostage takers.

Madam Speaker, this is bigger than the President. This is about whether or not we will allow any President to take hostages and demand a ransom that must be paid or else the hostages will continue to suffer. This is about whether we will allow any President to do this—not just a Republican President, any President.

It is un-American to take persons hostage within this country and demand a ransom when we wouldn’t allow it on the international stage.

I am a person who decided that it was appropriate to meet with the hostages, and I did. I met with the hostages who work with the IRS. I heard their clarion call for help, their appeal for some understanding.

When I met with them, it became very clear to me that there is pain be-

yond the pain of not having the check to pay the bills.

Some of these persons literally indicated that they were having some mental concerns that would have to be addressed because they played by the rules. They have come to work; they have done their jobs; and now they find themselves in this most tenuous position of being denied the wages they have earned.

□ 1115

There is something wrong when a President will hold people hostage to the extent that they have mental issues as a result of the hostage taking.

One of the things called to my attention was that they don’t believe that this all ends with them the moment they are allowed to go back to work and receive the wages that they have earned. They believe that they may have to have some additional counseling to help them through and to better cope with the experience that they never contemplated they would have as a result of being employed by the United States of America, the richest country in the world.

This is bigger than this President. It is about him, but it is bigger than him. It is about whether or not we will allow hostage taking within the country and yield to it, or will we demand that we do what we continue to say is our bedrock principle when it comes to negotiating with hostages on the international stage, and that is, you release our people; you let them go.

Mr. President, let our people go. You have become a modern-day pharaoh. You are holding people hostage, Mr. President. Don’t you see what you are doing to the fiber and fabric of this country? Don’t you see how you are ripping it apart? You are a modern-day pharaoh. Let our people go.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 11 o’clock and 16 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

God of wisdom and peace, thank You for giving us another day.