Mr. Speaker, as the proud Representative of one of the largest Korean American populations in the country, many of whom fear for the safety of their friends and family abroad, I urge my colleagues to support this vital resolution. We must not stand idly by as North Korea continues to threaten U.S. national security and our friends and allies in the region.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, all of us condemn this reckless, provocative nuclear test by North Korea. North Korea's pursuit of a nuclear capability is destabilizing and not in the interest of the people of that nation, who suffer daily under one of the worst dictatorships the world has seen.

Yet even as we condemn this test and seek to prevent future ones, we must not make the mistake of believing—as this resolution asserts—that supporting more money for a ballistic missile defense system is the answer. America has wasted literally tens of billions of dollars since the 1980s in pursuit of a ballistic missile shield that is not technically feasible and is viewed as destabilizing by our international partners, especially Russia. While I support this resolution's condemnation of North Korea's test, I do not support its call for spending more money on a failed missile defense effort.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 65, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

ELIMINATION OF 2013 PAY ADJUSTMENT

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 66, I call up the bill (H.R. 273) to eliminate the 2013 statutory pay adjustment for Federal employees, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 66, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 273

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

SECTION 1. ELIMINATION OF 2013 PAY ADJUSTMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 147 of the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (Public Law 111–242; 5 U.S.C. 5303 note), as amended by section 114(a) of the Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2013 (Public Law 112–175; 126 Stat. 1316), is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)(1), by striking the matter after ''ending on'' and before ''shall be made'' and inserting ''December 31, 2013,''; and

(2) in subsection (c), by striking the matter after ''ending on'' and before ''no senior executive'' and inserting ''December 31, 2013,''.

(b) ELIMINATION OF DELAYED ADJUSTMENT.—Section 114(b) of the Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2013 is repealed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 273 and to include extraneous material thereon.

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

There was no objection.

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

Good-paying, full-time jobs should not be limited to those fortunate enough to work for the Federal Government.

At a time when hardworking American taxpayers are struggling to find work and keep their heads above water, the Federal Government offers its workforce sufficient and generous pay and job security. This is not to imply that they're overpaid. This is not to imply that they're overcompensated. That's a discussion for another day.

But certainly, at a time in which the American people saw their household income drop by $4,000, that has not happened in the Federal workforce. Year after year, the Federal workforce has received step increases and other pay increases. And with the exception of a relatively limited pay freeze done under President Obama's executive order, they, in fact, have received consistent pay increases and their benefits have been maintained.

At this time, we are faced with sequestration. Sequestration for our men and women in uniform means aircraft do not fly, ships do not get maintained, and, yes, furloughs may very well happen. To avoid furloughs, to avoid arbitrarily cutting the most junior individuals or stripping away our military's ability to protect us, it is a small price to pay to, consistent with the President's previous pay freeze, to hold pay increases of Federal employees for one more year.

□ 0940

It is my sincere hope that, working together, we will both resolve the budget shortfalls and get America working again over the next year. But at a time when most—a great many—of the average Federal workers make more than their private sector counterparts, when a great many make more than $100,000 a year, at a time in which Members of Congress, appropriately, have frozen their own pay year after year, it is a price that we have the authority—and we ask the Federal workforce to agree with us that in fact this is a year not to raise the pay of Federal workers. Last year, we spent $11 billion on non-merit pay increases for Federal workers. It's the right time to say no increases other than those specifically deemed by specific merits under statute are important.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle will not agree with this, I have no doubt. But let me say one thing. I know that Mr. CUMMINGS and I do agree that we have to find viable alternatives to stripping away the capability of our military to maintain our safety. We have to find viable alternatives to cutting the important work on medicines and other lifesaving Federal programs that in fact our seniors and all of our citizens rely on. We could do this today, or we could cut the National Institutes of Health. We could do this today, or we could park two or three of our aircraft carriers and lay off the crews. I don't think the other side has any question that a viable alternative to those kinds of across-the-board cuts are clearly important.

So I ask the minority to join with me today in realizing that this is not what we want to do. This is what we need to do if we're going to prevent arbitrary cuts that in fact will touch Americans, in many cases, in all the wrong ways.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to H.R. 273. Given the many critical challenges our Nation faces, I and many of my colleagues hope that the 113th Congress would bring a new era of shared purpose that would enable us to work together to grow the Nation's economy, create jobs, and invest in our country's future. There are only 5 legislative days, Mr. Speaker, left before the across-the-board cuts required by sequestration will take effect. Rather than seeking solutions to the urgent challenges we face, our Republican friends are wasting 2 days simply renewing their attacks on middle class, hardworking Federal employees.

H.R. 273 has one purpose: it would extend the current freeze on Federal employees' pay for a third consecutive year. Mr. Speaker, Federal workers—the same Federal workers who care for our veterans, the same ones that clean our offices, the same ones that find cures to devastating diseases at NIH, the same ones that secure our borders, the same ones that regulate our drug supply—have already contributed more than $100 billion towards reducing the deficit and funding unemployment benefits for millions of American workers. No other group of Americans has contributed more to reducing the deficit. No other group has contributed more to ensuring our government remains strong. No other group has worked harder to ensure we're securing our Nation from threats. No other group has worked harder to provide the services on which our fellow citizens depend.

If H.R. 273 becomes law, the same middle class, hardworking workers

would be required to contribute another $11 billion towards deficit reduction, for a staggering total of nearly $115 billion. These are the same workers who have had their pay frozen for years. And these are the same workers who are now facing the very real threat of furloughs and layoffs if Congress fails to resolve sequestration by March 1. It's estimated that 1 million employees will suffer furlough days. The administration estimates that the arbitrary across-the-board budget cuts for Federal agencies that would be required under sequestration will result in the furlough of, again, a million employees.

We are at a tipping point in our Nation. The American people have reelected President Obama and voted in favor of policies that will support continued growth, create new and expanded job opportunities, and ensure the safety and health of our great Nation. However, here in the House, the voters are not being heard, and we continue to waste time considering measures that will only make our fellow Americans less financially secure, less secure in their health care, less secure in their children's education, and less secure in their jobs.

One of the arguments that we consistently hear is that we need certainty. People need to know exactly what is going to happen in their lives. We've heard that argument over and over and over again. Yet when it comes to Federal employees, we leave them in the lurch, not knowing how much the next paycheck will be. At the same time, House Republicans have refused to consider asking the richest among us to contribute a dime more. And that's one of the most painful things about this entire thing. A lot of times when I'm interviewing people to come to our staff, a lot of them tell me, Congressman, we don't mind not taking paychecks from the private sector because we want to do good for the public sector. And they say that they want to simply feed their souls. They want to do something significant. They want to affect broad groups of people. But yet this is what they get.

We could have spent today considering a proposal to eliminate tax breaks used by oil and gas companies and hedge fund managers. We could have spent today considering a limit to itemized deductions for the wealthiest Americans. Instead, House Republicans continue to return to the same hardworking middle class American workers over and over and over again.

The problem is that these repeated cuts will impair the ability of the government to carry out its mission and service to the American people. Social Security is located in my district, and I have seen and talked to our Social Security employees, as they are my neighbors. And they tell me that they have seen cut after cut with regard to employees. And now you've got people who once had three people doing a job, now there's one. And the cuts continue. They don't mind working, they don't mind sacrifices. But they said that if you're going to make us sacrifice, then let's have some equal sacrificing from people who can afford the cuts.

As President Obama has emphasized, ''our economy succeeds and our economy grows when everybody's getting a fair shot and everybody's getting a fair shake.'' I urge my colleagues to move beyond this partisan agenda of denigrating our Nation's public servants and join together to address the real issues Americans elected us to solve.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

The loyal opposition is entitled to their opinion but they're not entitled to their facts. Let's go through some facts.

The ranking member may not remember January 1. I know it was a long time ago—over a month. On January 1, with the President's blessing and insistence, we raised the taxes on the highest income producers and on family businesses by 5 percent on their ordinary income and by 5 percent on their capital gains. Capital gains would be a 33 percent increase, from 15 to 20 percent.

These were not small increases. These were huge. I didn't vote for them. My ranking member did. I didn't vote for them because in fact the President deliberately said, Oh, no, we're not going to touch anything else in taxes, except to stick it to the rich. And he did. And this body did. That was a decision. But I hope my ranking member will remember that a month ago and a few days we had a huge tax increase—of the President's choosing.

□ 0950

It had been offered up by Republicans to work together to find loopholes, but that was rejected in favor of a stick-it-to-the-rich tax increase that he chose.

There was $500 billion worth of revenue that would have been generated per year—$5 trillion over 10 years—if the President had been willing to go back to Bill Clinton-level taxes on all. He was not. So it is the height of hypocrisy to come in 30 days—actually, in about 1 day—and begin talking about the next round of tax increases on a relatively limited group of our population, the 1 percent or 3 percent, and in fact start reducing their ability to have working capital for new oil exploration, for new natural gas exploration, the things that the President, just a few days ago, standing in front of where you are today, lauded as great. We're becoming oil self-sufficient. We are natural gas self-sufficient. We are, in fact, able to move to cleaner fuels for our energy.

But let's break something else down. My opponent—and I keep saying opponent, he's my ranking member, but he is the loyal opposition here—he talks about $100 billion. I think we need to break it down. That's $100 billion over 10 years. It's not even $10 billion in the first year. His $100 billion of sacrifices, many of those sacrifices won't even occur because people aren't going to necessarily be here for all 10 years, because next year or the year after, this Congress might be able to increase pay to make up for what we have to hold back this year. We may have that good time and good employment and good ability to do that, and I would join with the Member to try to find that way.

But the fact is what actually is being asked to be given up by the typical Federal worker—the one that the President is calling such a huge sacrifice—is $274 per employee per year.

With that, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. ROSS), who has been a leader on this issue and who understands the hardworking men and women of the Federal workforce and why this is necessary.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your efforts and leadership on this particular issue.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when our country is more than $16 trillion in debt, I rise today in support of H.R. 273 and in support of my colleague from Florida's efforts to hold the Federal Government more accountable to taxpayers.

As a former chair of the Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, I held hearings about the discrepancies in compensation and benefits between Federal employees and private sector employees. And it's interesting to see what we found out. For example, the Congressional Budget Office found that the total compensation for Federal employees was 16 percent greater than that for the private sector employees. The CBO has also reported that Federal employee benefits were 48 percent more costly than the private sector employees' benefits.

As a former small business owner, I'm shocked to learn how serious these discrepancies truly are. In the private sector, I've had the responsibility to make a payroll, balance my budget, and reduce spending during difficult economic times. At a time when our children and our grandchildren are funding the Federal Government with a credit card, Members of Congress have a responsibility to make the tough choices and reduce spending. That is why, during my time as chairman, I oversaw 2 years of Federal pay freezes.

However, these Federal pay freezes were not my idea. In fact, it was a bipartisan idea. The President, in his Simpson-Bowles Commission on Fiscal Responsibility, recommended a 3-year pay freeze for Federal employees. As a proponent of the Simpson-Bowles plan, I am happy that the House will be following through today on this recommendation.

Our talented Federal workforce performs exceptional duties critical to the effective day-to-day operation and functioning of our government. However, the government must also examine every area of its budget during

these difficult economic times in order to become more accountable to taxpayers.

Just so we're clear, this legislation also freezes pay for Members of Congress—that's right, Members of Congress, including my own—for the remainder of the year. If we are asking families of the Federal workforce to bear some of this burden and to live within their means, so should we, as Members of Congress, do the same.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this bipartisan Bowles-Simpson recommendation and vote ''yes'' on the bill.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, the Republicans keep citing the Simpson-Bowles Commission in support of the bill. The Simpson-Bowles Commission was a comprehensive deficit-reduction proposal that called for shared sacrifice from all groups of Americans. I see only one group of Americans being asked to sacrifice in this bill, and that's Federal employees.

The studies conducted by the Congressional Budget Office, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Heritage Foundation rely upon U.S. Census Bureau's current population survey, which consists of self-reported data from surveys of households. This data is not as reliable as the data tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which is used by the President's Pay Agent to set the annual Federal pay adjustments.

I now yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlelady from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

Ms. NORTON. I thank my friend from Maryland for yielding.

In furtherance of a point he was making, you can cite different studies on this question, so let me cite the authoritative study, the Federal Salary Council, 2012, a finding that Federal employees were paid nearly 35 percent less than employees in similar occupations in the private sector. This study was compiled by experts in labor relations and pay policies, and it used data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Federal employees have not asked for a pass, but there is no way to justify singling them out as a solitary target alone, repeatedly picked out and picked on for cuts, apart from the rest of the Federal budget.

Three years of frozen pay is a punishing cut in pay. Yet our Federal workforce—although much smaller than it was 25 years ago—is so efficient that they are serving millions more here and abroad. Each of these hardworking civil servants, the best educated and most specialized public employees in the country, either themselves perform essential services the country cannot do without, or render vital support for these services.

The majority has graduated from demonizing Federal employees; they now want their pay. They don't have the support from the country to cut Federal pay, so for 3 years they have found a backdoor way to do exactly that with never-ending pay freezes.

Mr. Speaker, if enough was ever enough, enough freezes is enough this year.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I'd now like to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DESANTIS), a member of the committee and a newcomer, but not someone who hasn't watched this play out time and time again as people call $274 a catastrophe for the Federal workforce.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, we must change the way this government spends money. We have to be responsible with the money that the government makes our citizens send to Washington, D.C. Taxpayers deserve our best efforts to put our Nation on a sustainable fiscal path.

Now, this bill represents a small, but commonsense, measure that will save taxpayers $11 billion. It reverses the President's executive order at the end of last year which provides an automatic pay increase for nonmilitary Federal employees, the Vice President, and members of the President's Cabinet.

□ 1000

It also extends the freeze on pay for Members of Congress through the rest of the calendar year. This policy, as has been pointed out by some of my colleagues, implements one of the recommendations of the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles Commission. Many government employees do great work. Forestalling an automatic pay increase is not a reflection on their work, but simply recognizes our current fiscal reality and the fact that government salaries must bear some relationship to the private sector salaries that support them.

It should be stressed that this is a modest measure. This does not prevent pay increases based on promotion or longevity or bonuses for Federal employees from their agencies. Indeed, during the last 2 years when this freeze has been implemented, the average Federal salary increased by an average of $3,328, while the average private sector employee saw an increase of just $1,404—if she was even lucky enough to have a job at all.

I hope this body will make decisions in the coming weeks that will put the Federal Government on a path to a budget that will reach balance within the next 10 years. If we can get our fiscal situation stabilized, we can lay a foundation for robust economic growth and private sector job creation which will benefit employees of all stripes, government and private alike.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH).

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I want to get away from the abstract here about studies that talk about who's making what. I've got three VA facilities in my district: the Brockton VA Hospital, the Jamaica Plain Veterans Hospital and the West Roxbury Veterans Hospital. I spend a lot of time at the VA. Earlier this week, I had a chance to go through and talk to a lot of my VA folks: the nurses, the docs, the therapists, the nursing assistants, and the orderlies.

Right now, we are trying to deal with the traumatic brain injury and PTSD issue at the VA, which is increasingly pernicious. We've got a lot of folks who are doing a lot of tours in Iraq and Afghanistan coming home, four, five, six tours of duty, and they've got problems. So we're relying on our folks at the VA to take care of our sons and daughters who are coming home, and they're hurting.

Well, I just want to talk about one young woman who is a nursing assistant down in Brockton at the VA. She's a GS–3. That's who we're talking about. We're going to freeze her pay for the 3rd year in a row. And she is trying her hardest to take care of our veterans. She's a GS–3 under the system. She makes $27,322 a year. That's what that young woman makes. She's a nursing assistant. She's working in a psychiatric ward trying to take care of our sons and daughters who are coming home who need help, and we're freezing her pay by this bill. I'm talking about real people doing real work for brave Americans.

This is a disgrace. This is an absolute disgrace that we're doing this. I thought that maybe after the President's election and the new Congress coming in we'd get by this stuff. It is just disheartening to see this thing go on. This is the 3rd year in a row that this young lady's pay is going to be frozen. Not only that, but we don't have enough folks coming into the VA system because we're keeping the wages down. We can't compete with the private hospitals that are paying a lot more money. The docs at the private hospitals in my district, and I've got a bunch of them, the nurses and the therapists, they're all making a lot more money than the folks at the VA. And we're driving down the wages of these people and not taking care of them.

I don't want to point out the stuff about the pay for Congress. We ought to have our pay frozen. I have voted six times to freeze Congress' pay since I've been here in Congress, and we should do that. We shouldn't do it for a few months, like this bill does. We should freeze it right through the end of the Congress, because we should lead by example. I really believe that. We should freeze congressional pay.

I have a bill here that will do that right through the end of the Congress. I know it doesn't make some of my colleagues happy and their spouses happy, but I think it's something we ought to do. So let's get away from this stuff, beating up Federal employees. Let's try to do the right thing. It's an honorable thing, public service. We ought to

take care of our folks at the VA. Don't freeze their pay.

I ask my friends across the aisle to please join with me in voting against this measure.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I said earlier, and now I have to repeat it, the other side is entitled to their opinion but not their facts.

Mr. Speaker, that's the number. Almost half a million out of 2 million of our Federal workforce receive over $100,000, but the gentleman from Massachusetts chose to pick a GS–3. Okay, fine. This is an entry-level, unskilled position. But let's understand something. It still pays better than the minimum wage job that you're hoping to get in some cases, and it pays more than an awful lot of jobs out there. As a matter of fact, it pays about the average for somebody who has no special skills coming in. But we won't even debate that. We won't debate any of that.

Let's have the facts, the truth. That woman receives a step increase every year. She has gotten a pay increase every year, like the rest of most of the workforce. As a 3 level, she's getting a step increase. So to say that she didn't get a pay raise is just not true. If my colleague from Massachusetts were better informed, he would have said that himself rather than leaving that fact out of the pay raise that was achieved, because step increases occur even during pay freezes.

With that, I will yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS).

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chairman in bringing this forward and the comments that have been had.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this legislation because I believe the American people have had enough hypocrisy. This is not about Federal workers. This is about financial reality. This is what we've got to look at right now. What I have told my staff, and I have told many in our district too many times that we cannot let the emotion of the moment miss the honesty of the moment.

Last month, many Americans saw their own paychecks decrease as a result of a payroll tax increase. While average Americans were feeling the effects of this tax increase at home, the President was pushing through a pay raise for Federal employees and, yes, including Members of Congress.

There are hardworking men and women in my district who are struggling to make ends meet. They would love a raise, but, unlike the administration, they don't have the power to unilaterally take taxpayer dollars and increase their own paycheck. Instead, they have sacrificed, made cuts, and they've gotten rid of the extras in their daily lives and found ways to live within their means.

They have done these things using a process that the President could learn from. Families across the State of Georgia and across the Nation sit down and decide their priorities, and they make tough decisions on how to spend their money. I cannot support the government taking on more debt to give raises to Members of Congress and the Federal employees at this time.

I submitted an amendment on this to Rules Committee extending this pay freeze through the end of next year. I'm glad to see my friend from across the aisle from Massachusetts would agree with me on that, because I believe we need to resolve this issue and move forward with serious reforms to address our Nation's fiscal crisis. Just as millions of Americans have done for their entire lives, Washington needs to learn to make do.

America does not need pay raises for bureaucrats. They need real leadership. They need real reform and a real commitment to putting our country back on a path of prosperity. American taxpayers deserve no less.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, Mr. LYNCH mentioned a nurse taking care of veterans. I just want to say that it's not about somebody being unskilled. She's taking care of some folks who have served us and need skillful workers, and $27,000, I don't know whether anybody has looked at daycare here lately, but just daycare can cost you $27,000.

Mr. ISSA. Will the gentleman yield for a question?

Mr. CUMMINGS. I don't have much time, unless you're going to give me some time. If you give me some time, I'd be happy to yield. I've got a number of speakers.

Mr. ISSA. I'll wait.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I yield 2 minutes to my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY).

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Maryland for yielding.

I rise today in strong opposition to H.R. 273, a deeply flawed bill that punishes all Federal workers across the Nation by not even allowing them to have a half of a percent salary increase.

Once again, the majority is showing America that they do not care about the suffering of middle class Federal employees after they have already accepted a 2-year pay freeze and a freeze on retirees' cost-of-living adjustments.

□ 1010

Federal employees are intelligence analysts who defend America's borders; they are nurses and doctors who care for our veterans; they are scientists who conduct lifesaving research, which is producing remarkable results and generating new jobs across this country; and they provide countless other Federal services to all of our constituents.

It is wrong to intentionally target our Nation's best and brightest public servants by giving them good reason to quit their government job and move to the private sector.

My friends, the sad truth is that this bill is not really about deficit reduction. It is just the latest act in more bad political theater that does nothing to strengthen our economy.

My honorable colleague, Federal employees are my constituents and your constituents. They are hurting. We should not be wasting time on political nonsense like this.

I urge my friends on both sides of the aisle to put our country before our politics. Let's defeat this reckless and unfair bill, and then let's sit down together to force a reasonable compromise that will reduce the deficit, avoid the sequester, and restore economic security for middle class families.

Mr. ISSA. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, again the facts speak louder than the rhetoric. The .4 percent is less than a quarter of the exit rate in the Federal workforce of the private sector, one of the reasons people in the private sector are fighting to figure out how to get a job that pays better. This is our exit in the public sector.

They're not leaving because they weren't paid enough. There's no draconian cuts.

Mr. CLAY. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. ISSA. Not any more than your Member did.

The fact is this is the truth, and the facts speak louder. Only 22 percent of the Federal workforce believes that their pay is linked to performance. Of course the Federal workforce doesn't like not getting $274 more for the remainder of this year. Neither do I.

Mr. CLAY. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. ISSA. You'll have your time.

Mr. CLAY. I don't have time.

Mr. ISSA. The fact is we have a problem, and the problem is everyone wants to call a total of about $1 billion of not increases as somehow draconian.

The .4 percent, they're not leaving the workforce. That's the important thing.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to know how much time we have.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Maryland has 15½ minutes remaining.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY).

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Maryland.

The distinguished chairman of this committee says that we're entitled to our opinions, but not our own facts while he calls upon our friend from Florida, a former member of our committee, who cherry-picks from the Simpson-Bowles committee, the same committee that said we need a $4 trillion hit on the debt over the next 10 years and it has to be a balance between revenue and spending cuts. My friend from Florida and my friend from California fail to cite that fact. That's a fact.

The chairman just put up a sign talking about the exit rate in the Federal

workforce. What he doesn't tell you is that 47 percent of the existing Federal workforce is eligible for retirement over this next decade because of the baby boom demographic. How will we replace them, especially the higher-skilled set?

My friend from California, like me, came from the private sector before he came here. He was more successful than I. Very successful. I applaud him for that. But I would hope that in that success we don't lose sight of that GS–3 making $27,000 a year serving our veterans at a veterans hospital.

It's easy when we don't suffer low wages to perhaps lose perspective about the real need, even in our Federal workforce. And at the higher end, the more we disparage our Federal workforce, the more we make it less attractive. The more we treat them like a piggy bank, the less attractive that service will be.

We are a far, far distance from when John Kennedy called Americans to public service because he saw it, as did so many of that generation, as a noble calling.

We haven't just asked for a few hundred dollars from every Federal worker. We have attempted or succeeded in freezing their wages 3 years in a row. Another fact that my friend from California, the distinguished chairman of our committee, conveniently does not point out is that we have done more than that, and we've attempted to do more than that. We've funded the payroll tax cut with $15 billion of cuts for prospective Federal employees in the pension programs. We attempted for the first time ever—unheard of, no nexus—to fund transit in the transportation bill to the tune of $50 billion in cuts from existing pension programs, breaking an existing contract. That's a fact too. Maybe an inconvenient one.

Federal workers deserve the dignity of the work they provide. Federal workers need to be respected for serving our constituents. The losers in this debate won't just be them; it will be the people they serve.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to myself.

It is the minority's job to find facts that, in fact, we may not have said. I appreciate them doing that rather than flinging opinions and statements about people's intent.

Mr. ROSS stood here, though, and he told us facts. And he has a bill, a Simpson-Bowles-type bill that is comprehensive. He isn't just here picking facts. He picked apart Simpson-Bowles and put together a comprehensive savings bill that, in fact, was modeled after Simpson-Bowles. If he were here, I would have given him time to say just that, because he's a leader in our Congress.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I yield just 1 minute to myself.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, I hope that our Members before they vote on this bill will take a moment and talk to their own employees and find out why they're in Federal Government and why they really work for the government. That's all I want them to do. And I guarantee you nine out of 10 of them will say, because we love what we do, because we want to make a contribution.

With that, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF).

Mr. WOLF. I rise in opposition to the bill.

I saw the movie ''Zero Dark Thirty.'' In the movie, the woman, Maya, who is working for 10 years to find Osama bin Laden and the entire team, Maya's pay raise and pay has been frozen—and the team—for the last 10 years.

There's a scene in the movie—I don't want to ruin it if you haven't seen it—but seven CIA employees were killed in Khost, Afghanistan. I went to the memorial service in my congressional district in Langley where I watched the young kids. One little kid had a blazer on and khakis. I watched him come in. The team that replaced the team that was killed in Khost had a pay freeze for 3 years. The FBI agent who stopped that young boy from being killed down in Alabama and just ran up a Taliban terrorist up in California, pay raise? No. A freeze for 3 years.

Over the last 5 years, one ICE agent killed, one Secret Service agent killed, three ATF agents killed, one DEA agent killed, two U.S. Marshals killed, air traffic controllers that put the safety for my family and your family and our constituents as they fly through the sky, the NIH.

My family has been devastated by cancer. My father and mother died of cancer. Cancer has impacted my family. Dr. Collins mapped the human genome system that will save many of you and the lives of your sons and daughters because of basically following that system, working on liver cancer, prostate cancer, breast cancer, ovarian cancer, which my mom died of. You will drive people like that—Dr. Collins and his team will have been frozen for 3 years.

With regard to NASA, we just went through the 10th anniversary of the *Challenger* explosion. Those astronauts that sit on that rocket, those now and in the future, if you have NASA facilities in your district and they sit on that Soyuz rocket that goes up, they froze their pay for 3 years.

□ 1020

The firefighters out in the West who you'll call on and beg to come and fight when the storms come this summer—and they're coming—have been frozen. There's the Weather Service. For those of you from Florida and in the tornado area and in the hurricane area, the weathermen stay around the clock, working—frozen for 3 years. There was Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry and the people who worked with him, who are on the border where violent gangs come across the border—frozen for 3 years. There is the DEA and others.

There are the doctors out at Walter Reed. If you go out and visit Walter Reed or go visit your VA hospitals, the doctors and the nurses who are working with the wounded warriors, people who have lost their limbs in Afghanistan and Iraq—frozen for 3 years.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I yield the gentleman an additional 15 seconds.

Mr. WOLF. I recognize the good intentions of the gentleman in what they're trying to do. It's not justice and it's not fair. I urge a ''no'' vote for this bill.

Mr. ISSA. I yield myself just 1 minute.

I know the gentleman didn't mean to when he was talking about Maya, but he did say that her pay has been frozen for 10 years. I'm sure he meant 2 years and, if we enact this, a third year. Mr. WOLF is a dedicated servant of this country, but he did say a couple of things that I'd like to touch on.

First of all, when we talk about the men and women of Congress and when they say they do it for the right reasons—they do it because they care—we're doing it with 11.5 percent less money in the House on both sides of the aisle. So, in fact, in many cases, we're paying the same or less than we were paying before. We've made those cuts. The Federal workforce has not seen an 11.5 percent reduction in actual dollars spent, but our offices have made those cuts under the Speaker's leadership.

Lastly, I certainly believe when we talk about Walter Reed that we should include what the commander of Walter Reed told me on Monday of this week, and that was that he is now in the process of planning whom to let go.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. ISSA. I yield myself an additional 15 seconds.

He, in fact, is in a situation—a commander there, a two-star—of dealing with the possibility of furloughing for a 20 percent reduction. With the number he has been given, he cannot possibly maintain the same level of care for those men and women—those wounded warriors and those veterans. It will be devastating if we do not find ways to deal with alternatives.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has again expired.

Mr. ISSA. I yield myself an additional 10 seconds.

I was at Walter Reed. Walter Reed has a problem, and this is a small part of the solution. Every man and woman at Walter Reed would rather have a pay freeze than, in fact, see people disappear from their rolls and not be able to service the needs of those people.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. The gentleman talked about the employees on our committees taking a pay cut. That's true that they took a pay cut, and every single one of my employees who

took a 5 percent pay cut—and sometimes a little bit more—said one thing to me: We don't mind sacrificing. We will. This was from every single one of them. But they said: Others have sacrificed, too.

With that, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LOBIONDO).

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. CUMMINGS, thank you very much.

We all talk about our heroes in this country, and there are some real ones. There are 103 names at the CIA—we don't talk much about CIA officers, FBI officers, State Department officers—who gave their lives. Benghazi, still fresh in our minds, brought the country to its knees in horror, in agony, in mourning. There are State Department officers who lost their lives, and we have the audacity to tell them that we're going to deny them—I don't care if it's $1. At Camp Chapman, Afghanistan, six CIA officers and the chief of station were brutally murdered, and six were seriously injured.

I have the honor of being on the House Intelligence Committee. I've been to Camp Chapman. I've been to these forward operating bases. I've been to Africa. I've talked to these CIA officers who are putting their lives on the line every single minute of every day. They don't know when an attack is coming on them, and they don't know from which direction. Yet we're going to tell them that they should not get even a single dollar?

Shame. That's not what we should be about. That's never what we should be about.

If we can't put those who are protecting this country at the top of the list and understand, then shame on us. If we didn't understand this was in the bill, shame on us. If we did understand it was in the bill and if we did it anyhow, then even more shame on us. This is wrong and we should not do it.

Mr. ISSA. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The gentleman from New Jersey is right. He is right when he said that we, in fact, have to make these tough decisions. This isn't freezing the pay of our men and women in uniform, and perhaps we should scrutinize in detail as to the station chiefs and the others in harm's way their combat pay, their special hazard pay and so on. We held a hearing on Benghazi, and we were very aware that, in fact, they weren't paid enough to die for their country needlessly because we didn't do the right thing. I have no doubt about it.

I represent Camp Pendleton. The marines of Camp Pendleton—the First Marine Expeditionary Force—have deployed more than anybody. They have been in Iraq, they have been in Afghanistan, and they have been on those FOBs. In fact, we need to make sure we support them. That's the reason we're looking for alternatives to sequestration every day, and we would love to have people on the other side of the aisle.

So, when we talk about the men and women in harm's way, it's not, in fact, those in the towers helping to get our planes safely landed, and it's not the people inspecting our food. We have to make tough choices, and I join with anyone who wants to make tough choices on behalf of those in harm's way. Let's remember that we are talking here of the vast majority. These are Federal civil servants who, in fact, are paid pretty darned well, who are not leaving, and we are asking for a small sacrifice.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time both sides have.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Maryland has 6½ minutes. The gentleman from California has 9½ minutes.

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

My good friend, the chairman of our committee, has several times talked about loyal opposition. I am not the loyal opposition. I am someone who believes in what I'm talking about, and I'm not standing here opposing legislation just to be opposing it because I'm a Democrat.

We have to put a human face on all of this. I live in an area in Baltimore where a lot of these employees who are making $40,000, $45,000 or less take the early bus, and they are the ones who believe in what they do. The Social Security Administration is smack dab in the middle of my district.

I think about the people who make $100,000 or more, but we have to remember who those employees are. Many of them we see every day. These are employees who are highly skilled professionals, and I think Mr. WOLF and Mr. LOBIONDO talked about them. These are folks, such as doctors on staff at the Department of Veterans Affairs, who treat our wounded warriors. They're the lawyers at the Department of Justice and at the Securities and Exchange Commission, and we've heard their testimony before our committee. These are folks who deal with some very, very complex issues, and almost any law firm would be willing to pay them far more than what they are earning to work for the agencies for which they work. These are the folks who investigate and prosecute complex fraud and criminal cases. These are some of the most famous scientists in the world and air traffic controllers who help navigate our planes.

Just a few months ago, the ranking member and the chairman of the committee and I went to an awards ceremony at which Federal employees, who contribute so much to our society and who could earn far more than what they're earning, were getting awards for doing some very magnificent and awesome things.

□ 1030

I want to just spend some time on this one issue. It's not so much again that Federal employees don't mind sacrificing. They don't mind sacrificing. The question is will others sacrifice, too, those who are making far more money than they're making. But yet and still they're asked over and over and over again to pay more and more and more.

And so this is a very deep-felt situation with most of the people who have spoken—all of them. And as I listened to Mr. LOBIONDO and I listened to Mr. WOLF, what they were basically doing was making a case and reminding us that Federal employees go into the business of being our Federal employees because they want to make a difference.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ISSA. I yield myself 30 seconds.

Earlier there was a statement made about a nurse making $27,000. After checking, we discovered that's a nurse's assistant. I think it is important to understand that a nurse at the Veterans Administration would make a lot more. A nursing assistant is paid a modest salary, $27,000, plus probably another 10 or $11,000 in direct benefits. It's still more than the national average for somebody with that skill level. It is still a steady job, and it still would have had a step increase.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland, a fellow Marylander, Mr. HOYER.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, there is not time to debate in the time I have available how we determine Federal pay. I was a sponsor of the Federal Employee Pay Comparability Act which George Bush signed back in 1990. I know a little bit about this.

America is confronting a sequestration that will have a devastating impact on our economy, on every individual in America, and on international confidence in America's ability to manage itself. And what have we spent 2 days on? A quarter percent cap on cost-of-living adjustment for Federal employees. A quarter of a percent. Some of us in this body earn that in about 10 minutes. Not all of us, but some of us. Uh-huh.

Yet we fiddle while America faces a sequester burn. And sequester is Republican policy. July 19, 2011, Cut, Cap and Balance brought to this floor; 98 percent of Republicans, 229, voted for it. What was the fallback position? Sequester, an irrational policy that cuts across the board irrespective of the priority. And so what does the majority in this Congress do? It has now wasted 2 weeks on debate of nickel-diming the people we rely on to protect our domestic safety, our international security, our food and drugs, our health care, our borders.

I join in the remarks of my good friend, FRANK WOLF. He and I have been here 32 years. We have some understanding of what is proper and not

proper in terms of managing the government.

Now, the sponsor of this legislation has been here approximately 45 days—45 days—and he introduces a bill to cap, by a quarter of a percent, Federal employees. The animosity directed at our Federal employees is so great that we have now taken 2 weeks to try to diminish their pay and benefits—how sad—while the sequester looms 14 days from today, putting at risk, as I've said, America's economy, creation of American jobs, the sense of confidence in our country.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman.

And the perception around the world that America is a serious situation. How sad. How shameful.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time of the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) has expired.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I inquire as to how much time I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 9 minutes.

Mr. ISSA. I yield 2 minutes to the chairman of the Rules Committee, a person very knowledgeable of how this law that the President signed came to be passed.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chairman of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform yielding me this time this morning.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot being said about this deal that we're now engaged in, sequestration. But I believe, looking back, and I believed it at the time, that the people who engaged in the idea did this because they never really wanted to live up to it. They put forth an idea, the President of the United States, the White House, and our friends on the other side of the building, and some, I'm sure, on this side. They cut a deal to avoid the reality that the President of the United States was engaged in with us trying to resolve differences that we had about excessive spending.

The facts of the case are a deal was cut. This came directly out of the White House, and it was to avoid having to make a tough decision at the time. And I don't know this—I wasn't in the meetings—but I'm sure it was something that they thought would never happen. That's not serious. When the President of the United States offers a compromise that was his idea and it's signed into law, that's law, and that's what we're counting on and that's what the American people count on.

We in this body, Republicans, stood by a deal that was cut. Now, I don't like the deal, but this House twice, the House of Representatives has twice passed a plan that says we think there's a better way to do it. There's been nothing that's been countered by the White House or by the Senate. We've not been engaged. The President of the United States is engaged in spinning, by traveling on Air Force One around the country, the ideas that don't help us solve the problem but that make matters worse.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. ISSA. I yield an additional 15 seconds to the gentleman.

Mr. SESSIONS. I think what we did then was a tough decision, and I'm sorry to hear now that we're being blamed for accepting a compromise out of the White House. I know what's happening, and so do you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to close.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Texas was right. The President signed sequestration; the President asked for sequestration; the President negotiated sequestration; and the President has had from this body alternatives to sequestration repeatedly. The minority in this body has not offered viable alternatives to sequestration. The Democratic majority in the Senate has done nothing to block sequestration.

Mr. HOYER. Will my friend yield on that point?

Mr. ISSA. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. HOYER. Is the gentleman aware that 2 weeks ago and this week the majority has denied us the opportunity to offer an alternative?

Mr. ISSA. I'm not aware of that, but this is not a new bill. You've had alternatives in the past.

Mr. Speaker, I noticed that I was closing, and I do believe the other side is completely out of time; is that correct?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time of the gentleman from Maryland has expired.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I close, I think it is important that we take Mr. HOYER's very words.

First of all, he said ''Mr. President'' before ''Mr. Speaker,'' which got me to remind myself that the President is responsible for sequestration, something we're trying to avoid. The President has offered no viable alternative to sequestration. The President avoided $5 trillion worth of new revenue because he wanted to say he was only sticking it to the rich or, as Mr. HOYER would say, those people who earn more money in 10 minutes than this amount.

□ 1040

The thing that I want everyone to understand that the gentleman from Maryland said that is so right, this is only a quarter of a percent. He's right, this is a very small amount. It's $1 billion total over the Federal workforce for the remainder of this fiscal year. And over the last 2 years, this is how much the increase has been: $3,328 or about $1,500, $1,600 a year is how much the Federal workforce has got in a pay increase while they were under a freeze.

The reason it's only a quarter of a percent when you see about a 5 percent increase in the last 2 years in actual compensation is the Federal workforce system, Mr. Speaker, includes basically automatic step increases for the vast majority of employees, meaning so many people who talked about how this was being devastating are forgetting the fact that while the American worker got little or no pay increase, the American family saw a reduction in their actual revenue, the Federal workforce enjoyed 2½ percent increases while under a freeze. And, yes, Mr. Speaker, they will get another 2½ percent increase this year even though we forego this one-quarter percent automatic pay increase.

That's the amazing thing that can only happen here in Washington is people can come and talk about devastation, great sacrifice, a willingness to sacrifice, but not so much. Well, in fact, every year that dedicated employee, the GS–3 there as a nurse assistant, she got this kind of an increase year after year after year, even during a pay freeze.

We're not here to talk today about the dedicated men and women both in and out of uniform, but we have. And I want to commend all of those men and women who serve our country. But I want to commend them while saying that this is a small sacrifice. As Mr. HOYER said, as the whip, the Democratic whip, a representative of the party of the President, this third-year pay freeze called for initially by the President, in fact, is not an absence of increases—the increases are significant to anyone listening in America. These are real increases they're getting while we're foregoing in this bill a quarter of a percent.

So I want to thank the Democratic whip. He made it very, very clear that, in fact, this is miniscule. To him, $1 billion, $11 billion over 10 years, is not enough to even spend 2 days of the Congress on. And perhaps he's right; perhaps we should have done much more. Perhaps this small amount, this incredibly small amount, $274 on an average employee for the remainder of this fiscal year, is too little to pick up.

But if it's too little to bother with, isn't it also too little to have so much opposition to? The fact is, and the facts are stubborn, this is a small reduction in what would otherwise be a significant increase that they're going to get anyway.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I urge my colleagues to vote for this, I remind them that we have asked for this time and time again, that the President has not seen fit to keep up his own request, the President has not, in fact, been aware or willing to deal with the rest of the increases. He takes credit for what you would call a small quarter percent reduction and calls it a freeze.

Well, the Federal workforce received a good compensation. The fact is when you go from $69,000 for a typical or median income of Federal workers, to $72,000 during the period of a pay freeze, it reminds me of a can of soda—that when you freeze it, it doesn't

change, but the can ruptures because it has swelled.

We have increased the actual compensation, of payroll compensation, to the Federal workforce by an average of $3,300 during a time in which the American people are told there's a freeze. And we will increase their pay an average of about $1,600 during this freeze if it becomes law.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is small, as the whip said. It is so small that I call on the members of the loyal opposition to be the kind of Democratic Party that understands that this is so small that they certainly should vote for it. It is not a great sacrifice; it is a very small sacrifice. Every Federal worker eligible for step increases will see compensation increases, an average of $1,600 this year, when we're only foregoing $274.

At a time like this the President and Congress must face reality.

We cannot keep spending money that we do not have.

H.R. 273 stops an $11 billion expense for non-merit based raises that has no business moving forward.

The economy is struggling, hard-working taxpayers are suffering—it is fundamentally wrong to reward government workers while everyone else is trying to make ends meet.

The idea of giving raises to government workers at a time like this highlights how out-of-touch Washington has become with the rest of the country.

The truth is government pay and classification systems, many designed in the 1940s, lack the flexibility needed to keep pace with the current work environment and demands.

That is why the President's top pay advisors continue to point to the need for reform.

The numbers don't lie. Once people get a government job, they rarely leave it.

The private sector quit rate is 4½ times higher than that of the federal sector.

Moving fully to a merit-based pay system would give agencies needed flexibility to use appropriated funds to better compensate our hardest working federal employees and attract those with critical skills.

The responsible conversation we should be having is about pay reform, not across-the-board raises with no measure of performance.

Simpson Bowles recommended a three year pay freeze.

Anyone who claims to be serious about reducing the debt and reigning in Washington's out-of-control spending could not in good conscience support this $11 billion spending measure.

With that, I urge support for this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this short-sighted, unnecessary, and ill-conceived bill. H.R. 273 imposes yet another pay freeze on federal employees, many of whom have not seen a cost of living adjustment in over two years. The men and women who have dedicated their careers to public service—the majority of whom earn middle-class wages—have already made sacrifices in pay and benefits totaling more than $100 billion to help reduce our Nation's debt.

Federal employees in several sectors already earn less than their private-sector counterparts. These are the men and women who care for our veterans, keep our airplanes flying and ensure our food is safe to eat. They work in every Congressional district, from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta to the Department of Veterans Affairs in Providence. In fact, 85 percent of federal employees live outside of the Washington, DC, area, with 18,000 located in my home state of Rhode Island.

Not only does this bill prevent hard-working federal employees from receiving a modest pay adjustment in an attempt to keep pace with the rising cost of living, it sends the unfortunate message to bright young people that they will not be valued if they choose a career in public service. At this time of national crisis, when we are facing so many challenges, we should be encouraging the brightest minds in the country to help solve these problems.

I support and have cosponsored the bill introduced by Mr. CUMMINGS and Mr. CONNOLLY to extend the pay freeze for members of Congress. But just because I do not believe this body deserves a pay raise does not mean we must also punish the talented men and women who have dedicated their careers to supporting the United States of America.

It's time to get serious about moving this country forward. We only have five legislative days left until automatic budget cuts go into effect, costing us a projected 750,000 jobs this year alone and threatening to plunge our economy back into a recession. Instead of dealing with the looming sequester, House Republicans have us voting on a bill that has no chance of passing the Senate, and then sending us home for a week-long recess.

I have already co-signed a letter urging Speaker BOEHNER to keep members in Washington until we have averted the impending across-the-board spending cuts and put our budget on a fiscally sustainable path. I repeat that message again today: Mr. Speaker, it is time to stop with these phony messaging bills and get to work.

I urge my colleagues to join me in rejecting this unnecessary bill and bringing up legislation that will actually address our immediate fiscal problems. Our constituents are counting on us to act, and we must not let them down.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, it is extraordinarily frustrating for me that we have spent all week avoiding opportunities to make progress on areas on which we agree to avoid or minimize the effects of the sequester meat axe and instead singled out, again, our federal employees.

Suffice it to say, making them a repeated target is unfair, unproductive, and avoids the hard decisions we should be tackling.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose H.R. 273. This legislation is wrong-headed, unnecessarily antagonistic to federal workers, and it creates consequences which will be felt much longer than the 0.5 percent pay raise due to Federal employees starting in April.

There are multiple problems with this legislation—here are a few that anyone can understand:

First, federal employees have contributed their fair share to reduce our deficit and debt. Through the pay freeze and increased contributions to their pensions, they have cut $103 billion over ten years—that is roughly $50,000 per employee. The 0.5 percent increase in their pay that they have been given after two years of stagnant wages only costs $11 billion over ten years. That is not what is driving our nation's National debt.

Second, federal employees have not only seen their wages stagnate, they have also seen their compensation—their wages and benefits—go down, even as the private sector has seen wage growth of 3.3 percent and compensation growth of 4.1 percent.

Third, the proposed savings H.R. 273 promises are likely to never be realized. The best federal employees will leave for greener passages, and the most qualified candidates will seek opportunities elsewhere. The deficit reduction this bill promises will require increased training in the short term and may lead to a less efficient, and therefore more expensive Federal government for decades to come.

I oppose this bill, H.R. 273, because our country simply cannot afford to drive our best federal employees out of our country's service.

Instead, I have cosponsored and I urge the passage of a bill offered by Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia, which freezes Members of Congress' pay at current levels. I do not want a pay raise; I do not need a pay raise. However, our federal employees have paid far more than their fair share and do not deserve this additional unnecessary and punitive treatment from this Congress. I urge my colleagues to oppose the bill.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 273, a bill that would extend the pay freeze on federal employees' salaries for the third consecutive year. By bringing H.R. 273 to the floor for a vote, House Republicans have once again singled out federal employees and their families as they look to place the burden of reducing the deficit squarely on the backs of middle class families.

Like their private-sector counterparts, federal employees are subject to the same economic trends as any other worker in America. Federal employees have families just as their counterparts in the private sector, and have the same responsibilities to provide for them. With federal employees currently under a pay freeze for the past two years, it would be unfair to ask for continued sacrifice from only this select group of middle-income workers.

Federal employees have already contributed $103 billion toward reducing our deficit through a series of pay freezes and reductions in benefits. The critical role of federal employees is often overlooked, and demanding further cuts to pay and benefits will diminish our ability to deliver on this government's promise to protect the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I am not opposed to reining in wasteful government spending. However, I am opposed to continually placing an undue burden on federal workers to make up for wasteful spending in other areas of the federal budget. If we are serious about addressing our budget deficits, this Congress should focus more on passing a comprehensive budget that reflects shared sacrifices by all Americans.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this latest attack on federal workers.

H.R. 273 is not a responsible approach to deficit reduction.

Federal employees have already been asked to make significant sacrifices to help reduce our debt. So far, they have contributed $103 billion toward deficit reduction through pay freezes and changes to retirement benefits. And, we have yet to take into account the prospect of furloughs and layoffs should the ill-advised, across the board cuts mandated by the Budget Control Act take effect in March.

H.R. 273 would freeze federal employees' salaries for the third consecutive year, forcing federal workers to forego an additional $15 billion in pay over the next decade even though study after study has shown that federal employees actually earn less than their private sector counterparts when factors such as skill and education level are taken into account.

H.R. 273 is not a serious attempt to address the budget deficit. The $15 billion it would raise represents barely a fraction of projected deficits over the next decade. True deficit reduction will need to be balanced and sacrifice will need to be shared.

H.R. 273 is also shortsighted policy.

The federal government should not be an employer of last resort. Our citizens depend on our ability to recruit the most qualified individuals to treat our wounded veterans, inspect our food, oversee nuclear power plants, protect us from terrorism, and provide a broad range of other critical services. H.R. 273 is yet another attempt by the Republican Majority to find a scapegoat for the deficit that shields the wealthiest individuals and corporations from making any kind of contribution. While this legislation would do virtually nothing to improve our budget outlook, it would force more economic harm on our dedicated federal workers and have a devastating long-term effect on the quality of government services and operations.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this legislation.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 273, a bill that would prevent the President's pay hike for federal workers and Members of Congress.

H.R. 273 is a good bill that deserves our support. In a time of historic budget difficulty, the bill rightly seeks to limit federal spending on the government workforce. The bill also recognizes what the American People know to be true: too many private sector employees remain without work during this protracted period of high unemployment. I will vote in support of H.R. 273 later today.

While this legislation is a step in the right direction, we should go further to prevent excessive spending by also suspending the automatic step increases that federal employees will continue to receive even if H.R. 273 is enacted into law.

I have been disappointed that over the past two years of the President's so-called ''freeze'' on federal pay, federal employees have continued to receive step increases. According to the Office of Personnel Management, these increases have resulted in a median pay increase of approximately $3,164 per federal employee—all during the so-called pay freeze.

These step increases are not based on merit, and there are serious flaws with this system. For example, all employees in the Government Service pay plan who completed their ''waiting period'' received a three percent raise in pay during this period.

Mr. Speaker, do private sector workers receive a three percent salary increase for simply completing a ''waiting period?''

No, of course not.

During this time, salaries in the private sector only increased by $1,404, less than half of what federal salaries gained on average, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

If the President is going to say he is freezing pay, he must do exactly that—freeze pay. Anything less is a budget gimmick that creates only the illusion of savings.

Last Congress I worked to stop budget loopholes like this in a bill I introduced, the Honest Budget Act. Working with the Senate, I aimed to enact changes that would bring more honesty and transparency to budgeting process. I authored an amendment to H.R. 273 based on the provisions of the Honest Budget Act, but unfortunately this chamber is not able to consider it today under the closed procedural rule for H.R. 273. I intend to continue to pursue the issue later this year.

Since I've been in Congress, we have fought to reduce excessive spending to get our nation's deficits under control. We've enjoyed successes, but we have also seen firsthand the tricks of trade—gimmicks used to distort the truth and hide new spending. Soon I will be re–introducing the Honest Budget Act in the 113th Congress, and I ask my colleagues to join me in this fight for honesty and accountability in the budget.

A budget is a plan for the future and a financial report to the stockholders of the company—in this case, the American people. I am convinced that we can do better in the future.

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 273 because it once forces middle class workers to bear the burden of Congress's inability to come together and solve our fiscal woes.

This bill would result in a freeze on federal civilian employee pay for a third consecutive year by repealing the modest 0.5 percent increase scheduled to take effect next month. This miniscule raise would be their first since 2010, despite the fact that inflation has increased by 5.3 percent in that same time period.

These federal employees are hard–working people who deserve to be treated fairly for all they give in service to our constituents. They are the hotshot crews that fight our wildfires every summer. They are seismologists who will warn us about an approaching tsunami. They are the inspectors who ensure the safety of our food supply. They are the air traffic controllers who keep use safe when we fly. They are the VA doctors and nurses who treat our war veterans. And they are the officers who protect our borders, our airports, and our nuclear facilities.

At the same time, this bill asks nothing of the companies whose government contracts may award hundreds of thousands of dollars in salary per employee. And despite the protests of the bill's supporters, it does nothing to freeze pay for Members of Congress—that pay freeze, which I support, is already in effect.

This bill is just another political game that does nothing to meaningfully reduce spending or get our debt under control. I have said it before and I'll say it again: We've been governing by crisis for far too long. It's time to rally around common sense. It's time to take a seat at the bargaining table. This bill will not get us there, and it's time we all stop pretending that it will. I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing H.R. 273.

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, today I had to make the difficult decision of voting for a pay raise for myself or against continuing a pay freeze for federal workers. I voted for H.R. 273 because although I believe it is unfair to balance the budget on the backs of hard working middle-class families, I could not accept a pay raise for myself. I recognize the critical contributions federal employees make every day to the health and well-being of our country and I thank them for their service. I am honored to serve the people of California's 36th Congressional District and I will continue to work to do the right thing for my district and to ensure that the American dream is attainable for everyone.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 66, the previous question is ordered on the bill.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PROVIDING FOR AN ADJOURNMENT OR RECESS OF THE TWO HOUSES

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I send to the desk a privileged concurrent resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the concurrent resolution, as follows:

H. CON. RES. 15

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That when the House adjourns on any legislative day from Friday, February 15, 2013, through Thursday, February 21, 2013, on a motion offered pursuant to this concurrent resolution by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand adjourned until 2 p.m. on Monday, February 25, 2013, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 2 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first; and that when the Senate recesses or adjourns on Friday, February 15, 2013, on a motion offered pursuant to this concurrent resolution by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand recessed or adjourned until noon on Monday, February 25, 2013, or such other time on that day as may be specified in the motion to recess or adjourn, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 2 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first.

SEC. 2. The Speaker of the House and the Majority Leader of the Senate, or their respective designees, acting jointly after consultation with the Minority Leader of the House and the Minority Leader of the Senate, shall notify the Members of the House and the Senate, respectively, to reassemble at such place and time as they may designate if, in their opinion, the public interest shall warrant it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the concurrent resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, this 15-