

extorted as much as \$80 million from American aid contractors in just the last year. Taliban insurgents insist on getting a cut before projects are built in areas under their control, and then they turn around and use these funds to fight coalition forces. Further reports out of Pakistan indicate that billions of dollars in military aid from the U.S. was diverted to nonmilitary purposes over the course of the last 6 years.

This region must not become a haven for worldwide terrorism. Supporting our troops means that we must do everything in our power to root out this corruption and stop our tax dollars from being diverted to our enemies or misused by our allies.

#### ADVANCED APPROPRIATIONS FOR VETERANS

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

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, we in Congress will be able to make a real difference for the military veterans who have served our country so honorably this week.

From my first day in office, our local veterans groups in south Florida made it clear that one of their top priorities was securing advanced appropriations for the Veterans Administration. These dedicated servicemembers thought it was wrong that the VA, which provides health care and so many other critical services to our heroes, was subjected to the whims of an annual congressional budgeting process.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more. The needs of our veterans are too important to be bogged down and held up in this process. Putting advanced appropriations in place allows the VA to plan ahead, improve service delivery, and make smart, fiscally responsible budget decisions.

At long last this House will vote today on the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009. This bill puts advanced appropriations in place, responding to the top priority of our veterans' organizations.

I strongly urge my colleagues to speak out with one voice as Democrats and Republicans alike to support our veterans and pass this legislation.

#### COMMENDING THE HOPKINS POLICE DEPARTMENT

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

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Hopkins Police Department for being awarded the 2009 Civil Rights Award by the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

By involving themselves in the Joint Community Policing Project, the Hop-

kins Police Department has enhanced communication and understanding between the law enforcement community and the multicultural residents of Hopkins. The department is setting a very strong example of leadership on this project through truly connecting with the community whom they protect.

I recently met with over a dozen police chiefs as part of my law enforcement advisory committee, and I continue to be very, very impressed with the level of service and dedication shown by our law enforcement community.

Congratulations again to the Hopkins Police Department for receiving this recognition and also for working hard for the community that they protect.

#### HEALTH CARE AND THE PUBLIC OPTION

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, last week the distinguished minority leader, Mr. BOEHNER, told the national media that he had not yet met the first average American who was for the public option in our health care reform package.

Well, I would like to introduce him to the woman who introduced herself to me yesterday morning in the Louisville airport. Her name was Margaret. She was in her late 50s. And the job that she had had with a restaurant ended when the restaurant closed a couple months ago. They had been paying her full insurance premium of \$700 a month. But now, because she has a preexisting condition, as do most people in her age category, she could not get any insurance in the private market and had to rely on the State insurance pool, where she now pays over \$1,000 a month for her coverage.

She asked me to introduce not just Mr. BOEHNER but all my colleagues that she is in favor of a public option, and she is dramatically and enthusiastically in support of our health care reform effort.

So for Mr. BOEHNER, if he wants to come to Louisville, I'd be happy to introduce him to Margaret. He can probably find somebody in southern Ohio who is in support of a public option, because there are thousands and thousands of people like Margaret who need our help.

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#### BAD PROCESS LEADS TO BAD POLICY

(Mr. LEE of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LEE of New York. Millions of Americans are frustrated with the lack of transparency and the Federal Government, and rightfully so. I was dismayed earlier this year when the cap-

and-trade national energy tax and the enormous stimulus spending bill were rushed to the House floor just a few hours before Congress would vote on these massive pieces of legislation. There was simply no way for the public, the press, or Members of Congress to know exactly what was in these bills before they were required to vote on them. Bad process leads to bad policy.

Taxpayers deserve the ability to weigh in on these complicated pieces of legislation, and the leaders of Congress have denied the American public the right to full transparency in this process.

Along with more than 180 of my colleagues, Republican and Democrat, I have signed on to a discharge petition to force the Democratic House leadership to make legislation available for public viewing at least 72 hours before a scheduled vote. This commonsense rule will allow western New Yorkers and Americans everywhere the ability to know what Congress is voting on and ensure a transparent legislative process.

#### CREDIT RATING

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

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, more than one in 10 of fellow Californians is out of work. This is due in part to decisions made 3,000 miles away by analysts at America's credit rating agencies ranking funds at AIG and Lehman Brothers as AA or AAA one day, only to have these companies bankrupt the next.

Last week at the Financial Services Committee hearing, I asked the executives of the rating agencies why they kept Lehman Brothers so highly rated when there were plenty of warning signs they were in trouble. The answer I got was astounding. They kept Lehman highly rated because they assumed the government would bail it out. I then asked how many of these analysts who base these decisions on assumptions rather than evidence lost their jobs. Again, the answer was unfathomable: none, not one.

Mr. Speaker, I did not come down to the floor this morning to seek retribution, but rather some common sense. This situation underscores the urgent need to enact strong financial regulatory reform and specifically make the rating agencies accountable for their decisions.

When the decisions of a few in a Manhattan skyscraper affect the livelihoods of hardworking Americans all across our country, there must be accountability.

#### INDECISION IS A RECIPE FOR FAILURE

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the country is at war in Afghanistan. Now