WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, the Department of the Interior issued an announcement yesterday that perfectly illustrates the irrationality of our current approach to water issues.

California's precipitation this season has gone off the charts. Statewide, snow water content is 198 percent of normal. The all-important northern Sierra snowpack is 174 percent of normal. This is not only a wet year, it is one of the wettest years on record.

Yet yesterday, we have this announcement from the Department of the Interior that despite a nearly unprecedented abundance of water, the Bureau of Reclamation will only guarantee delivery of 45 percent of the central valley of California's contracted water supply south of the Delta. This is the same percentage they received last year that had barely average rainfall.

This is of crucial importance to the entire Nation since the central valley of California is one of the largest producers of our Nation's food supply. California produces half of the U.S. grown fruits and nuts and vegetables on the Nation's grocery shelves, and the prices you pay are directly affected by the California harvest.

The deliberate decision by this administration in 2009 and 2010 to divert hundreds of billions of gallons of water away from the central valley destroyed a quarter million acres of the most productive farmland in America, it threw tens of thousands of families into unemployment, and it affected grocery prices across the country.

At the time the administration blamed a mild drought but never explained why a drought justified their decision to pour 200 billion gallons of water that we did have directly into the Pacific Ocean. In a rational world, a drought means that you are more careful not to waste the water that you have.

Of course, the real reason for this irrational policy is that they were indulging the environmental left's pet cause, a 3-inch minnow called the Delta Smelt. Diverting precious water to the Delta Smelt habitat was considered more important than producing the food that feeds the country and preserving the jobs that produce the food.

But that issue is now moot. This year we have nearly twice the normal water supply at this point in the season, and yet the Department of the Interior will allow less than half of the normal water deliveries to California's central valley agriculture south of the Delta.

The difference comes to 1.1 million acre-feet of water.

Now, consider this. Since December 1, the Central Valley Project has released 1.4 million acre-feet more water into the Pacific Ocean than they did just last year. Let me repeat that. At the same time this administration is denying California central valley agriculture 1.1 million acre-feet of their rightfully contracted water during one of the wettest years on record, it is dumping 1.4 million acre-feet of additional water into the Pacific Ocean. Mr. Speaker, this is insane.

Coleridge's lament, ''Water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink,'' appears to have become the policy of this administration.

□ 1900

The American people did not invest billions of dollars into Federal water projects so that water can be dumped into the ocean to please environmental extremists. This policy may have been cheered by the previous Congress, but it won't be tolerated by the new majority, nor by the American people.

There was a time when the principal objective of Federal water policy was to assure an abundance of water to support a growing population and a flourishing economy. But in recent years, a radical and retrograde ideology took root in our public policy that abandoned abundance as the object of our water policy and replaced it with the government rationing of government-created shortages. I cannot imagine a more disturbing example of this ideology at work than the announcement yesterday by the Department of the Interior. Even faced with a super-abundance of water, they are determined to create and then to ration water shortages. The American people expect better and they deserve better.

They deserve a government dedicated to restoring jobs, and prosperity, and abundance, all of which is well within our reach if we will simply reverse the folly that was on full display with yesterday's announcement. Ironically, this announcement came on the same day that the President ordered his agencies to identify regulatory policies that are harming the economy. Mr. Speaker, it appears the Department of the Interior missed that memo.

CONFRONTING REALITIES WITH CHINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, at the outset let me stress the importance of managing our complex relationship with China in a manner that honors the transcendent principles that define America's national purpose and our identity.

Tonight, President Obama, perhaps as we speak, and President Hu Jintao will toast one another just blocks from here at the White House at an official State dinner. While appropriate for heads of State, we must remember that untold thousands in China continue to suffer horrific tortures for exercising their right to self-expression. Beijing's ruthless treatment of democracy activists and their families, Internet freedom advocates, religious minorities, and women and families victimized by a callous policy of coerced abortion and forced sterilization must continue to make us uncomfortable even as dinner is served.

Nobel Prize winner Liu Xiaobo, whose photo is right here, languishes in prison right now as his wife and family members remain under house arrest. And how many more people suffer in silence, people who have disappeared into the vast network of gulags that no human being, much less any animal, should ever have to see or experience?

Mr. Speaker, we must continue to press these points to remain deserving of our own identity as a Nation founded on freedom of religion, a Nation that embraces freedom of speech and justice, and free and fair commerce as worthy foundations for prosperity in future generations. Our China policy should reflect these transcendent and universal principles.

On the economic front, nearly $2 trillion of debt and a bilateral trade deficit approaching $300 billion also impose weighty concerns. We must challenge China to abandon its embrace of unbridled mercantilism, which manifests itself in massive subsidies and other trade-distorting practices that contribute to this staggering imbalance. China must know that global responsibility and accountability are inseparable.

We must, Mr. Speaker, also look ourselves in the eye and order our own fiscal affairs, revise stagnant manufacturing industries, refurbish our industrial base, and take responsibility for our economic future. We need to look closely at our willingness to place profit over principle, and to point the finger of blame at China while perpetuating our own economic dysfunction.

With regard to the future of civilization itself, China is modernizing its nuclear arsenal. China is giving cover to North Korea's nuclear program. China trades with Iran. And China has controversial plans to break with international precedent and build nuclear reactors in Pakistan. Just last week, in a show of its ever expanding projection of power, China tested a new Stealth fighter aircraft. What kind of world are our children and our allies in the Pacific standing to inherit? Neither the United States nor China can afford to allow six decades of peace and security to slip through our fingers.

Mr. Speaker, do I want a good relationship with China? Yes, absolutely. But we have a responsibility to work together to shape our complex relationship with that country, to seek meaningful progress on the tough issues, to acknowledge the positive elements of China's extraordinary culture and past civilization. However, we must do so without shrinking from challenging outright affronts to our principles and whitewashing threats to international security.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PENCE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE REPEAL OF HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the time for this Special Order of 1 hour to discuss the repeal of health care. And this legislation which passed today is the triumph of the Republican victory in the elections. And the Republicans ran on a campaign platform of repealing ObamaCare, as it was called and vilified, and today accomplished that goal.

ObamaCare became a vilification of health care, really a caricature of what was in the bill. It became a million different bad things to a million different people. But the moment the campaign is over and the partisan political points have been put on the board, each of us who has been elected, Republican or Democrat, has the responsibility to use our office to make pragmatic progress for the American people.

And the purpose of our Special Order tonight is to explain in concrete detail what the American people lost and will lose if the repeal is ultimately successful. We have a number of my colleagues here to join us. And to start it off for us is one of the senior members of the Energy and Commerce Committee, a leader in health care reform and elements of the health care reform that have broad bipartisan support, Representative ESHOO from California. I yield her such time as she may consume.

Ms. ESHOO. I thank my colleague for organizing this evening. And I rise to talk to whomever is tuned in this evening to tell some stories. I think stories are really what relate more than anything else to what is going on in the lives of our constituents and the American people.

I want to take people back several years. It was 1996. I was a fairly new member of the Energy and Commerce Committee. And after having had meetings in my district with people in the disabled community, I learned something that I didn't know, and I shared it with many other Members of Congress. They were not aware of it. I don't think the general public was aware of it. And it was the following. And that is that buried in the fine print of insurance policies, in this case health insurance policies, was a cap on lifetime limits of benefits.

Now, that doesn't sound too menacing to begin with. But just think if any one of us, God forbid, were in a horrible automobile accident. We have seen what has happened to our colleague in Tucson, and the bills that are attendant to that kind of high-end of health care.

□ 1910

Certainly people in the disabled community understood this very well. So the more I probed, the more I learned.

Meanwhile, the actor, wonderful, optimistic and superb actor, Christopher Reeve, had endured a terrible, terrible accident as an equestrian. I think everyone remembers that; and they remember the courageous battle that he waged, not only for more research to be invested in our country, but the hope that stem cell research held. But he also understood this whole issue of limits in an insurance policy on total benefits that would be paid for by the insurance company.

And so it was at that time, 1996, that I introduced legislation to lift the lifetime limit on the caps, on the ceiling in health insurance policies. That effort has been going on since 1996. In 2010, the Democrats saw fit to place that legislation into the health reform bill that has become law.

So today, the law of the land right now, January 19, 2011, at 7:10 p.m. eastern standard time, no one has a limit on their benefits in their life insurance policies. So if someone is in a terrible accident, that won't be held against them. If someone has a chronic illness, a chronic illness with cancer, with whatever one might name, that will not be held against them.

I tell this story because we have heard some tall tales, some tall tales about what the health care legislation, now the law, contained. More than anything else, what the legislation is about is addressing what happens to people in their day-to-day lives, the stories that our constituents have told us.

I want to tell you another story. This is from Elaine from the town of Los Altos, California, in my district. This is what she wrote to me: ''This is the first time I have ever written to any government representative on any topic in my 50 years of existence.'' Elaine was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2006. It's a disease that we are all, all too familiar with. One in eight women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime.

Elaine wrote: ''Normally, when I feel that a service provider is price gouging or in any way treating me unfairly, I take my business elsewhere. This is what I did with my auto insurance, and this is how market forces are supposed to work.''

But Elaine couldn't do that because so few insurers would even take her. Most of them would not go near her.

The health insurance market, in my view, in so many of my constituents' view, has really failed our country.

We believe in markets. We believe in strong markets. We believe in competitive markets, but we don't believe that a market should be part of crushing human beings in terms of the rules that they write.

Elaine saw her rates increase by 94 percent over a 13-month period.

Let me repeat this: Elaine saw her rates increase by 94 percent over a 13-month period.

What Member of Congress can endure this?

And I have to say that those that have fought the hardest against this bill, now the law, are taking their health care coverage from the government as a government employee.

Now, I am proud to be part of my government. I will never run away from that. I am proud of what I do. I am proud of my profession. I always want to be uplifting to it. But I don't think that there is room for hypocrisy in this. These are great needs. Yes, Members of Congress have insurance coverage. And the way that we designed the bill was so that the American people could get what we have, to get what we have.

Look and listen to what Elaine is saying. Elaine's gross income increased only 4 percent as her insurance rates increased by 94 percent over a 13-month period. I don't think that this is sustainable, not for any working person in this country, not for any community and certainly not for our Nation and our national economy.

Health care represents a major sector of our national economy, and if we don't do something, as we did, about the rising, spiraling costs and the effect that it has on families and individuals, it will really tear them apart and bring them to their knees financially. So I am very proud of the vote that I cast on behalf of my constituents.

Was the bill complicated? Absolutely. For those that say it was a long bill, they have voted for plenty of trade bills around here, and the trade bills are 4,000 pages. I wonder if they have read that.

But this one, this one lands in the middle of a family so that they don't have the panic at night or the cap on the benefits if they are in a terrible accident, like Christopher Reeve, God rest his soul, or Elaine, in my district, that told her story to me.

Elaine's health is not a commodity that can be bought or sold on the open market. She doesn't have the option to go without health insurance if prices get too high. For Elaine, this is an issue of life or death.

So today I found it to be a rather sad day that any Member of Congress would stand on this floor and, with a sense of glee, say we are going to repeal the progress that America made.

For the first time in the history of our country, the Congress passed comprehensive health reform for every single American. That, to me, is a great source of pride. I think it is to Elaine; and I think if Christopher Reeve were here, he would say ''bravo'' as well.

So thank you to my colleague, Mr. WELCH, to all of my colleagues that care so much about this that have