REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 658, FAA REAUTHORIZATION AND REFORM ACT OF 2011

Mr. WEBSTER (during the Special Order of Mr. GARAMENDI), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 112–46) on the resolution (H. Res. 189) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 658) to amend title 49, United States Code, to authorize appropriations for the Federal Aviation Administration for fiscal years 2011 through 2014, to streamline programs, create efficiencies, reduce waste, and improve aviation safety and capacity, to provide stable funding for the national aviation system, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT LIBYA?

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

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, always an honor to come to this floor in these hallowed Halls and address the issues of the day.

My colleague from across the aisle was discussing jobs. That is so important to most Americans, and there is one way we could do a great deal toward immediately putting Americans back to work, and that would be if we started utilizing more of our own energy resources, which is what this Nation has been so blessed with. When you consider all of the natural resources that are natural energy sources—coal, natural gas, oil, we do have wind, places where solar works—but all of the carbon-based energy resources that are so valuable around the world, the ones for which we keep paying trillions of dollars to other nations that could be utilized here in the United States and could be utilized to create jobs right here at home, it does not make sense to keep sending hundreds of billions and trillions of dollars to countries that don't like us. We're doing that through the purchase of energy.

I've listened to all the explanations about why we've gone into Libya that have been made in the press. Those press conferences, all kinds of releases by this administration, and you still come back to trying to figure out why Libya was so much more important than Tunisia or so many of the others, Iran.

I mean, the people of Iran have attempted rebellions against madman Ahmadinejad, and this administration didn't seem to lend a helping hand, and that's a nation whose leader has sworn to see that the United States, Ahmadinejad said, will soon no longer be a Nation. As Ahmadinejad had said, we'll soon be able to experience a world without the United States and Zionism. So he says he's going to eliminate the United States; we're going to eliminate Israel. That ought to cause concern.

Have we lifted anything other than trying to prevent people from buying goods from Iran? Not really. Oh, yes, and those sanctions are going to work, and probably in another 15, 20 years they've got a real chance of working. The trouble is, in 15 or 20 years—and, actually, the possibility exists in a whole lot less than 5—if we continue to persist in sanctions and nothing more with Iran, they will get nuclear weapons, and then they will give us a choice: either remove the sanctions or count on a nuclear blast coming in your country. That's why we have to prevent them from getting nuclear weapons. But we use them, and they will certainly threaten to use them so that they can get what they want. In fact, they may get more by threatening the use once they have them than they would to actually use them.

But Ahmadinejad has made clear in a number of settings he expects the 12th Imam, the Mahdi, to be coming, and he believes he can hasten the return of the Mahdi, have a global caliphate where all of us fall on our knees supposedly or die. Well, we could prevent that, could have stopped it long before now, but we haven't.

So what makes Libya so special? It's really interesting, and it's hard to put our finger on it. Libya does produce oil. China, I understand, may be the biggest purchaser of Libyan oil but not the United States. So why should we go rushing to spend hundreds of millions or billions of dollars in Libya? Europe, England are big customers of Libyan oil. So why would we be running to help Europe and England with their Libyan oil? Well, the President's made clear, it's because they asked us to. You know, we've got a number—and Secretary Clinton has also said, she's made the rounds of the news programs, the Arab States asked us to, the U.N. asked us to, Europe and England's asked us to, so why would we ever need to come to Congress.

It's been made very clear, you know. The public has heard those comments. You don't have to come to Congress when the U.N. has said that's something that needs to be done.

It's interesting, though, I don't recall any of the Cabinet members or the President raising their right hand and taking an oath to defend the United Nations. I was thinking their oath had to do with our Constitution and our country.

And it's also been made clear that Libya was not a threat to our national security, not a threat to our vital interests; yet we're willing to put our treasure and our American lives on the line for something that's not in our vital interests. That does not make sense.

□ 1850

But then again, as you continue to piece together the Obama doctrine—we get it, that apparently intervening, risking American lives, and spending American treasure that this administration didn't earn but they are taking away from taxpayers and then borrowing from others, that's okay if it kind of feels like it ought to be something we do, you know?

If it feels like we ought to go to Libya and risk American lives and spend all that American treasure, then let's go because, after all, people asked us to do that. Why would we not go when people around the world ask us to do that? Could it possibly be that a reason for not doing it is because an oath was taken to this country—not to the U.N., not to the Chinese or the European constitutions or the European Union, but to this country? This is where the oath was taken. These are the people in America for whom and to whom the oath was made.

But then we look at energy again and we look at spending treasure; and as more people are finding out, in the last couple of years this administration has said, You know what, we're shutting down drilling on the gulf coast. We're not just going to stop the one company that had around 800 safety violations while others had one or two during the same period because, see, that's British Petroleum.

And British Petroleum, as we found out, was poised to come public and be the administration and the Democratic Party's one big energy company that rode in on a white horse and said, we support the cap-and-trade bill. We're going to make money like crazy for BP on the side trading in carbon. These stupid Americans. They don't get it. It's a transfer of wealth like nothing anybody has ever seen before. The American people lose. Companies like BP and General Electric, they'll all win big. But the American people lose.

They wouldn't go after BP. It took so long to go after them. And when you know that BP was going to be their big energy company to embrace and endorse the cap-and-trade bill, then it makes a lot more sense as to why it took the administration so long to respond. Then of course we will recall the President sat down with the BP exec and said, Okay, let's tell the American public that you are going to put up $20 billion. They did. Well, that saved some feelings, but there was never $20 billion put up.

So isn't it amazing. We don't know what all was discussed. We don't know what all quid pro quo was promised for BP coming in and offering large sums of money. Obviously, there were a lot of people on the coast that were devastated and continue to be devastated who were not compensated by any money from BP. But nonetheless, it took the heat off of BP for a while.

So perhaps the administration thought that after having the moratorium and putting tens of thousands of

families out of work, putting tens of thousands of families onto unemployment insurance, devastating tens of thousands of families, perhaps the administration thought that nobody would notice that the first permit that was extended after this moratorium, to hurt the Southern States—it actually hurt the whole country—but the first permit, I believe, went to Noble Energy Company.

But the major investor was a company called British Petroleum. Now, was that a quid pro quo? Okay, BP, we are not going to be able to take you out into the Rose Garden, have you announce that you support the cap-and-trade bill because, you know, you are just not well thought of right now. It wouldn't work right now. But there will be pie in the sky by and by if you will just play along with us for a while. Who knows what conversation occurred there.

But isn't it interesting that BP was the largest investor in the company that got the first permit after the drilling moratorium.

Now, understand, there haven't just been a glut of permits come rushing forward. There are still tens of thousands of families that were made destitute by this administration because they chose to punish the entire South and even the country, rather than allowing energy jobs to go forward in the gulf coast area.

So imagine the surprise of some of those destitute folks that have just been traumatized by this administration when they find out that our President has just been down in South America, telling the Brazilians that we think so much of their drilling that we're going to loan them $2 billion to drill off their coast and that, when they strike this oil off their coast, the President tells them, We're going to be your best customer.

Why couldn't we be our own best customer? Why couldn't we be drilling off our own coast? Why couldn't we be drilling in ANWR? Why couldn't we be drilling in the North Slope area where there's no drilling allowed yet? We would be our own best customer. We would create millions of jobs not just in the oil industry but all kinds of jobs if the President were not wanting to punish this area.

I mean, it's as if we're wanting to punish free enterprise. Actually, we've had a very cold winter where I live. Yet the EPA, under this administration, doesn't care, and they don't care that the new regulations they are coming out with would not have maybe one-billionth of 1 percent effect on the CO_2 level in the atmosphere.

Yet as a result of this administration and their war against jobs—the war on jobs—you've got the EPA out there trying to put people out of business, keeping people from hiring, when the truth is, when those jobs leave here, they go to South America. They go to China, India, different places. Then they pollute a minimum of four times more than the pollution in this country from the same industry because we do a good job of policing industries.

When the economy is going well, that is when you have the best chance of really cleaning the environment because when an economy is struggling—and China knows about a struggling economy, trying to employ people, keep them from getting upset and revolting. When an economy is struggling, people don't care so much about the environment. They are more interested in just feeding themselves, having a roof over their heads, and surviving. So if you want to help the environment, if that is the true purpose, then what you do is allow the economy to thrive.

This President has had a war on jobs, and that continues—oh, I'm sorry. I should qualify that—a war on jobs in America. Because obviously we're helping create jobs in Brazil. We're helping the Democratic largest contributor, Mr. Soros, with his single largest investment for drilling down in South America or Brazil. So the Democrats' largest investor is going to make a tremendous amount of money because we're loaning $2 billion to pay him for his investment down there to do the drilling that we won't allow in this country.

Why is it that our global President is more interested in creating jobs in Brazil than in the United States? I guess, whenever we find out that reason, it may help us understand why we expend American treasure and risk American lives in a country that is of no vital interest to this country.

It is interesting. When you look at the history of Muammar Qadhafi, this is not a nice man. This is not a man that should have avoided prison and perhaps even capital punishment, depending on the charges, the evidence, and proving the charges.

□ 1900

Yet you have to look at what will replace Qadhafi when he's gone.

Now, first we hear from the administration, no, there's no al Qaeda there rebelling, and then we find out, yes, there is. They're involved. The Muslim Brotherhood is involved in the rebellion in Egypt.

Now, Mubarak was a dictator. We're not big fans of dictatorship in this country. But when you have to look at the national vital interest here and you have a man who is in charge in Egypt who is not a threat to the United States and was living as best one could with the status quo next to Israel and yet there is an effort to throw Mubarak out of office and any kind of decent intel would indicate you've got the Muslim Brotherhood that in all likelihood will replace Mubarak, then why did we call for Mubarak to leave and allow himself to be replaced by a group that wants us all to bow the knee in one giant global caliphate to religion when some of us believe in our own, my case, Christian beliefs, heart and soul, which I had hoped to get through this life without having to die for?

But there are people who are trying to take over Egypt who we've given great encouragement to. There are people in Libya that are wanting to take over that country and its powerful military who would like us to either convert from Christianity or to lose our heads. Why would we be helping them? That's a difficult question. So if it weren't so serious, it would be an amusing game to try to figure out what this administration is attempting to do.

What is the Obama doctrine? When it comes to the budget, the President gave a wonderful speech. He read it impeccably well, about how we have got to cut spending. He gave that speech right before he released his budget. And that budget was projecting around a $3.75 trillion expenditure when we were only going to take in around $2.1 trillion. So he gave a speech about cutting spending, and he's been doing that the last 2 years, and it turns out the first year we had a $1 trillion deficit. The next year we had more than that. And this year the President's proposed a budget and spending that will be a $1.65 trillion deficit. That makes no sense. Why would you give speeches saying you're going to cut spending, and yet every year it goes up and up dramatically? That doesn't make sense.

Yet we know the results of the election in November indicated very clearly the American people want the spending cut. We can't continue to live in a country that is running up trillion dollar deficits. People will quit buying our bonds. We're dangerously close to having our bonds downgraded, our rating lowered, and if that happens, interest rates go up. And if the interest rates go up like that, that will give fodder to those who are demanding that something besides the dollar be used to buy oil. I mean, it could put this country in a terrible financial spiral downward from which it might be impossible to pull out.

I was in a plane once when I was told the baffles were taken out. It was aerobatically qualified, and I was being allowed to sit in the copilot's seat. It was a crop dusting plane, and it was kind of fun flying the plane with the joystick.

I said through the radio system in the plane to the pilot, This thing is aerobatic qualified, isn't it? You know, we could do loops and go in and out of spins. And he said, It would be, but we removed the baffles from inside the wings where the gasoline for the fuel is stored; so if we go into a spin, then the fuel all runs to one end of one wing and we go into a spin we can't get out of, and we'll crash and both of us die.

Well, that's kind of where we're heading with this thing. If we don't get the spending under control, one thing leads to another and we're in big trouble. And it's got to stop.

At the same time, we're supposed to be helping Americans with better

health care. If you liked your insurance, you were going to keep it. Yet we found out that absolutely was not true. If you liked your doctor, you can keep him. We found out that absolutely was not true. It's a bad bill.

Then when you find out that the prior Congress not only passed that 2,800-page bill with all kinds of things in it, including a new President's commissioned officer corps and noncommissioned officer corps, do we really need that, I wondered, when I had read that in the bill.

But then when you find out we're being sent to Libya and going to use our treasure and our American lives there, maybe there's intention to so deplete the military that we're going to need that Presidential reserve officers commissioned corps and noncommissioned corps that the President can call up on a moment's notice involuntarily, according to the ObamaCare bill.

But the trouble is there's already been $105 billion appropriated. It's like writing postdated checks that are due to be cashed each year into the future. Well, you're really not supposed to do that. That's not appropriate.

This isn't like Social Security where it is controlled by formulas and it's in automatic motion. This was just an appropriation. It's not mandatory. It could be repealed; but, to do so, it actually has to be rescinded.

My friend STEVE KING has got a bill that would prohibit any money that's currently been appropriated through the present from being utilized for the purposes; in other words, it ties the hands of the administration from using any of the money already appropriated for the purposes of implementing this ObamaCare program.

DENNY REHBERG has an amendment that was voted in that also has some effect in that regard.

JACK KINGSTON is an appropriator and has come up with an idea that a couple of us have joined forces with him, and I think we've got around 22 cosponsors, and that's growing constantly. But it is an approach that I would hope would attract Democrats in both the Senate and the House because it is an important principle. And I would certainly hope that it would attract Democrats in the House because it, in effect, says we're not going to do postdated checks for something besides Social Security, those type of things that were controlled by formulas. We're going to cancel the postdated checks.

Now, it should be attractive to my friends in the minority now because, someday, they may be back in the majority. If and when that happens, they surely would not want the Republican majority to have passed a decade worth of spending bills, not for Social Security, not for mandatory spending, but a decade worth of spending with postdated checks, say you can't ever stop this.

So the principle that the Kingston bill would stand on is that these type of things must be taken up annually. So we're going to cancel all the postdated checks that were going to be cashed in the future. And if the Democratic Representatives get back in the majority, some will say it's not a good idea, because if they get back in the majority, they can just appropriate that money. Well, of course they can.

□ 1910

They can pass a whole different health care bill if they get back in the majority. That's the way it works. When you are in the majority, you can pass things.

So it would not be unfair to just say we are canceling all those postdated checks, we are canceling $105 billion worth of spending; and, if you get back in the majority, it is up to you what you appropriate. But as long as we are in the majority, we are not spending that money.

That allows us to keep our promise. It allows people on both sides of the aisle to say we are standing on principle and on procedure that the majority should rule in the legislature, and not a minority that years ago was a majority. That's a better way to do it.

So there have been those questions. Some have said, why make it so complicated? In the new bill that we have proposed today and filed today, it would effectively end the $105.5 billion in the funding that was in Obamacare by turning them into an authorization without the appropriation. That means not this or any future administration would be able to spend the money without first coming to Congress and getting a majority here in both the House and the Senate to approve it.

Now, there are those that say, well, you know, there are a few good things in that Obamacare bill. Well, my gosh, when you have a 2,800-page bill, there surely ought to be something in there that is decent. And there were a few good things. But why not make those a 25-page bill instead of a 2,800 page bill? Why create all these hundreds of new agencies, the hundreds of thousands of pages of regulations, all those things that come from this massive government overload? Why not just do away with all of those things?

That is what we should do, and then start, as Senator Obama had said we should do when he said repeatedly we ought to have negotiations on a health care bill. We ought to have hearings, we ought to have negotiations that are public. Have them on C–SPAN if C–SPAN will carry it. Let everyone see who is in it for themselves and who is in it for the American people. I think the American people, even without seeing the negotiations on Obamacare, got the message who was for the American people, and that is why the House changed hands.

So we hope that in the next few days there will be more and more people get on board, because this is an important principle: A minority, even though they once were a majority, should not be able to bind future Congresses on things that are not mandatory through formulas like Social Security.

Now, with regard to Libya, there were some interesting quotes from the President's speech. He had pointed out that Qadhafi had denied his people freedom, exploited their wealth, murdered opponents at home and abroad, and terrorized innocent people. This had been going on for years. It certainly had been going on all the time that President Obama has been in office. It was going on when he was a Senator, and he had never called on these kind of things before.

But he goes on. Just two paragraphs down, he says, ''Joining with other Nations at the United Nations Security Council, we broadened our sanctions, imposed an arms embargo, and enabled Qadhafi and those around him to be held accountable for their crimes.''

Now, I'm familiar with holding people accountable for their crimes. As a former judge and as a former prosecutor, I have done that, held people accountable for their crimes. I don't see what this administration has done to make Qadhafi accountable for his crimes. In fact, there was discussion in the news today that this administration is floating the idea of some type of amnesty if Qadhafi will just leave. So that statement in his speech may be like the one, if you like your health insurance, you will be able to keep it. It sounds good, but it has no basis in fact.

The President said, ''Military jets and helicopter gunships were unleashed upon people who had no means to defend themselves against assault from the air.'' My understanding is that has happened in Burma, Pakistan, possibly in Syria. There are a lot of other countries it has happened in where we haven't gone against the administration in that country. So that was a little puzzling.

The President said, ''So 9 days ago, after consulting the bipartisan leadership in Congress, I authorized military action to stop the killing and enforce U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973.'' But the fact is, we have been told repeatedly that this administration had the support of the U.N., to whom the President did not take an oath to defend and did not have the consent of the governed in this country—not the governed and not the governed's legally elected representatives.

Now, the President said in his speech, ''We hit Qadhafi's troops.'' Well, I would think, with the President's broad education, he would understand if an infidel, or an infidel country like we are considered, kills Muslims, then we are worthy of death under what they consider the law. So if the President is right and we haven't just shot rockets and taken out certain type of military hardware, we have actually killed Muslims in Libya, then we have not made ourselves a bunch of friends. In fact, that may be one of the reasons we see the President's image being

stomped on and burned and destroyed in effigy in Libya and foreign countries.

The President said, ''I said that America's role would be limited. We would not put ground troops into Libya; that we would focus our unique capabilities on the front end of the operation, and we would transfer responsibility to our allies and partners.'' In other words, we are turning over command, but our U.S. military is doing the lion's share of the fighting. And so we keep hearing that in the news. This administration is turning over the lion's share of the effort when actually they are turning over the leadership.

My office made an official request yesterday of the administration to know what percentage of the military of NATO is U.S. military, and we were given the figure 65 percent. So it doesn't come as a great comfort to many of us that we are turning over this great responsibility that we have led as helpers in Libya to NATO when we are 65 percent of NATO. That is one of those things that sounds good. Kind of like, if you like your insurance, you can keep it. But it really doesn't have much basis in fact for comfort.

The President said in his speech, ''NATO has taken command of the enforcement of the arms embargo and no-fly zone.'' Yet, it is confusing, because those speaking for the administration here in Washington seem to indicate that we have not yet turned over command.

He says, ''Going forward, the lead in enforcing the no-fly zone and protecting civilians on the ground will transition to our allies and our partners.'' I guess that means NATO, which we are 65 percent of.

I know I look stupid sometimes, but, I mean, I can get that. If we are turning it over to a group that is 65 percent us, we really haven't turned it over. Unless we want to say, ''Yeah, but we are not leading anymore. We are putting our military under the command of foreigners who have never taken an oath to support and defend the Constitution of this country.''

□ 1920

How do you feel good about that? Well, it is hard for some of us to feel good about it.

The President says Libya will remain dangerous. The question is, dangerous to whom? We saw that after the invasion of Iraq, that Qadhafi threw up his hands and said, Hey, we will give up nukes, we will give up pursuing anything. We don't want you to invade our country, so we want to work with you. We saw a similar attitude after President Reagan dropped a bomb down his chimney.

So we know that, as long as Qadhafi knows we have a strong President who will go after him if he does anything to us, then we have nothing to fear. But we also know from his history that if he is not controlled, if we do not have a strong President who is willing to go after and punish those who are attempting to destroy us, then maybe he is dangerous. Maybe that is what the President was talking about in his speech.

Anyway, the President said we also have the ability to stop Qadhafi's forces in their tracks without putting American troops on the ground. But, here again, it didn't have the support of the American people; it didn't have the support of Congress.

It brings back to mind, when George W. Bush was President, he enjoyed playing golf. He still does apparently. I never played with him, but I understand he is a good athlete. But once troops were committed to harm's way, President George W. Bush said it didn't feel right for him to be out on a golf course while troops he committed to harm's way were in danger, so he gave up playing golf for the rest of his administration.

Yet the current administration has a President at the top who not only doesn't feel any qualms about playing golf while we have troops committed that he committed to harm's way, he will also play golf and pause long enough to commit more troops to harm's way.

The President said the democratic impulses that are dawning across the region would be eclipsed by the darkest form of dictatorship. That is, unfortunately, what the majority of Americans are concerned about happening here in America if we get away from the legislative process and forcing bills through that are not supported by the American public and forcing American commitments in places that America does not support and spending beyond anything a drunken sailor would have ever spent. We are afraid of what is happening in this country. We are afraid of what is happening to our economy.

The President said it is also what the Libyan opposition asked us to do. Well, then we find out the Libyan opposition is composed of, at least numerous members are part of al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood; and apparently al Qaeda and Muslim Brotherhood representatives had not asked us to intervene militarily in Egypt or Tunisia or Syria. Maybe that is the difference, I don't know. But it is disconcerting.

The fact is, when you look at the oath we took, our allegiance is to this country. It is not to the United Nations; it is not to other countries. It is to this Nation. So a serious look at Libya and the problems there might deserve some intervention. But first we have to ask the question, is whoever will replace Qadhafi more of a danger to this country than Qadhafi? If the answer is possibly yes, then we should not be sending American treasure and American lives to help intervene on behalf of people who would like to see this Nation destroyed. That ought to be pretty commonsense.

One other factor is Israel. We have a true friend in Israel in the Middle East. But, unfortunately, our friends have seen the way we have treated our best friend in the Middle East, Israel. We vote against them at times, like we did last May. We snub them in public ways people hear about. Israel's enemies hear about how we snubbed Israel. And Israel's enemies know when there is a crack and especially, whether it is there or not, a perceived distance between Israel and their greatest ally that used to be us. Then it is time to move. That is when the flotilla came last May, is after we voted against Israel. That is when a lot of these actions began taking place. People who want to see Israel gone seem to be in the middle of revolting in a number of countries around the Middle East and Africa.

We have got to come back to what is best for the United States, and it should be very clear. With the common interests and beliefs that the people of Israel have in the value of life and the value of equality of people and the equality of women, those ought to be our friends. Those ought to be people who, when under attack, tell us we are next.

In this case, it is not a hard deduction to get to, because the people have said we want to eliminate Israel, the little Satan, and then the United States, the big Satan. So Israel is a great investment as a defense partner, because if they go, if they go down, we are certainly next, and also I happen to believe that, in blessing Israel, we can be blessed.

Before I conclude my time here tonight, it is so important to take a look historically at things that have been said in the past history of this Nation, that have been said in this building in official settings, that have been said by those who have led the way, carried a torch to light our way down the years. One such man was the Chaplain of the Senate, Peter Marshall.

I was given this book in the last couple of weeks, two or three weeks, ''Sermons and Prayers of Peter Marshall,'' while he was Chaplain of the United States Senate. I would just like to read a prayer that Peter Marshall gave in the Senate for the historical value and insight of this brilliant man, a dedicated Christian.

He said: Our father, we are beginning to understand at last that the things that are wrong with our world are the sum total of all the things that are wrong with us as individuals. Thou has made us after Thine image, and our hearts can find no rest until they rest in Thee.

We are too Christian, really, to enjoy sinning and too fond of sinning to really enjoy Christianity. Most of us know perfectly well what we ought to do. Our trouble is that we do not want to do it. Thy help is our only help. Make us want to do what is right, and give us the ability to do it.

In the name of Christ, our Lord. Amen.

A prayer by Peter Marshall.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON) is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I recently have given several Special Order speeches about my view of the Constitution and making my argument for why I think it should be amended to include certain basic rights that the American people currently lack, such as the right to a high-quality education, the right to health care, and equal rights for women.

□ 1930

I believe these rights should be given to the American people as a matter of moral and social justice. However, even more than that, I believe that there's a strong economic case for why these rights should be granted by this Congress. If we guarantee the right to an education of equal high quality to every American, and give the Congress the power to implement that right by appropriate legislation, then, Mr. Speaker, we will set off a true race to the top as States, cities, and the Federal Government are compelled to meet under the standard.

The nature of the problem: in 50 States there are 95,000 schools. There are 15,000 school districts; 3,141 counties; 19,000 municipal governments, and 30,000 incorporated cities. In all of that government there are 60 million children who are being asked to be the very best that they can be.

With my amendment, that means more teachers and teachers' aides and tutors for our kids. It means the construction companies and roofers and architects will be engaged to build new schools and improve old ones. It means technology companies benefit as computers and laptops are purchased; and, yes, iPads, Kindles, and Nooks replace textbooks.

I realize that there will be a cost to all of this, but I believe that if we can find the resources for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and military action in Libya, then we can find the resources to educate our children and the American people. Most importantly, for 308 million Americans, we can't afford not to.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to put my proposal tonight in some historical context, if I can. I want to suggest that through the course of human history, law is actually going somewhere. I want to suggest that at points in time from the earliest civilizations, progress has been made incrementally towards freedom, towards justice, and towards human rights.

I want to put our own Constitution and the Bill of Rights into the context at vital points in time. These documents are not the end all and the be all of democracy and freedom. No, Mr. Speaker. The very ability to amend our Constitution suggests that the Founders of our country see things the way I do—that the document they crafted was a landmark in human history, but not a perfect, final draft.

So, tonight, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a walk through history to talk a little bit about where law and human rights have been, where they are, and where they're going. A couple of themes are going to emerge that as history shows that law is heading in a certain direction, we're going to see an action by a majority in this Congress heading in the opposite direction of human law through human history.

Like all civilizations, the roots of democracy and human rights lie in what is known as the Middle East—the Mesopotamian Empire. Although those early civilizations were decidedly not democratic and not inclusive of human rights, the evolution of law as we know it started there. Around 2350 B.C., Before Christ, Mesopotamia was ruled by Urukagina's Code, the oldest known set of laws. They are referenced in documents from the period as the consolidation of ''ordinances'' that claimed that kings were appointed by the gods, and affirmed the rights of citizens to know why certain actions were being punished.

Some 300 years later, around 2050 B.C., Ur-Nammu's Code was the earliest known written law. Only a handful of articles can be deciphered, but evidence suggests an advanced legal system with specialized judges, testimony under oath, and the ability for judges to assess damages to be paid to victims by the guilty party.

In 1850 B.C., we saw the first known legal decision involving murder of a temple employee by three other men. Nine witnesses testified against them, and three were sentenced to death. In 1700 B.C., Hammurabi's Code was carved into rock columns in Babylon. The underlying principle was ''an eye for an eye.'' Some 282 clauses regulated an array of obligations, professions, and rights, including commerce, slavery, marriage, theft, and debts. Punishment by modern standards was barbaric, including cutting off hands or fingers as a punishment for theft.

In 1300 B.C., the Jewish Torah and the Christian Old Testament say that the Ten Commandments were received by Moses directly from God. Contained in the book of Exodus, those Commandments became the basis of modern laws against murder, adultery, and stealing. Around 1280 B.C., in India, rules passed down orally through generations were formally written down as the Laws of Manu. They were the basis of India's caste system, and punishment was used sparingly and only as a last resort. Interestingly, members of the higher castes were punished more severely than those in the lower castes.

In 621 B.C., Draco's Law was written for the Athenians. The punishment was so severe—often death—that we derived the word ''Draconian'' from it. However, Draco's Law introduced the concept that the state, not private parties or vigilantes, had the exclusive role in trying and punishing a person for a crime. Shortly after Draco's Law, the Spartan King Lycurgus give his oral law to the world. Lycurgus' Law held that women had a duty to have children. But if the children were deformed, they would be killed. Those who lived became wards of Sparta at age 7 when they began preparation for military duty.

In 550 B.C., Solon, an Athenian statesman and lawmaker, redefined and refined Draco's Law by ''democratizing'' it, making it more accessible to the citizens of Athens. Around the same time, in 536 B.C., China created the Book of Punishments, which limited the ways in which somebody could be punished after being convicted of a very serious crime, but still allowed for tattooing, manipulation, the amputation of feet, and death as legal punishments.

In 450 B.C., the Twelve Tables in Rome were created. These formed the basis of all modern law. Under these laws, a system of public justice was developed whereby injured parties could seek compensation from guilty defendants. The lower classes—the plebes—were given greater protection from abuses by the ruling classes—the patricians—especially with regard to debts. The Twelve Tables also prohibited marriages between classes, severely punished death, and gave fathers the right of life or death over their sons. The Tables survived for nearly a thousand years until they were destroyed by the invading Gauls in 390 A.D.

One hundred years later, in 350 B.C., the first Chinese Imperial Code of Law, the Code of Li k'vei, dealt with the issues of theft, robbery, arrest, and other general subjects. It served as a model for the Chinese T'ang Code, which came about a thousand years later. In 339 B.C., the trial of Socrates played a role in the development of law. Accused of corrupting the minds of youth with his logic and of not believing in the gods, Socrates was a scapegoat for the loss of the Peloponnesian Wars. He was sentenced to death by a vote of 361–140, but his trial advanced the idea of the role of ''conscience'' in legal proceedings. Socrates was afforded the opportunity to speak to the jury and engage them in a dialogue. And, instead, he chose to give the jury a speech, criticizing them for their lack of sensitivity.

While it may not be contemplated as part of the traditional legal history, the life of Jesus Christ informs my personal understanding of the law. Under Jesus' law, pure motives, a mature love and grace unmerited, as well as nominal justice, good behavior, and honorable ends became important. Jesus was not replacing Moses' Law, but was seen as fulfilling and perfecting it. In the Book of Matthew, Jesus says, ''Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you, until heaven and