

If we interpreted the document in a static and literal way, we would find ourselves in a country we didn't recognize.

Constitutional fundamentalism makes difficult choices look easy by papering over the ambiguities of the document and ignoring the complexities of our history.

I would much rather acknowledge the ambiguities and debate and discuss and argue about the complexities. I think it's significant that when we amend the Constitution, we don't redact the superseded parts. Leaving them in serves as an anecdote to collective amnesia about our past mistakes; it undermines efforts to sanitize our troubled history, as many in power throughout the world often do with their own history.

I close with the words of Thomas Jefferson: "Some men look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence and deem them like the ark of the covenant, too sacred to be touched. Let us follow no such examples, nor weakly believe that one generation is not as capable of taking care of itself, and ordering its own affairs."

Thank you.

ALABAMA IMPACTED BY THE APRIL 27, 2011, STORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Mrs. ROBY) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, last week my home State of Alabama faced the worst natural disaster in the history of the State. My immediate thoughts go out to the families impacted by the storm, as well as my thanks to the men and women on the ground assisting in recovery efforts. As of May 1, the Alabama Emergency Management Agency has confirmed 250 fatalities in Alabama from the April 27 storm.

Although the Second Congressional District dodged the full force of the storm, Elmore County sustained significant damage and, tragically, the loss of six lives. My thoughts and prayers go out to all of those who lost loved ones.

Since the storm, I have had the opportunity to tour the affected areas in my district and meet with the hardworking men and women working on recovery efforts.

Working quickly with Governor Bentley and the Alabama delegation, we requested shortly after the storm for the President to sign a major disaster declaration, which I am grateful that he immediately did.

Over the next coming months, I will continue to work with the Governor, the Alabama delegation, and the administration to ensure that critical resources and assistance is getting to those impacted by this horrific disaster.

Once again, the citizens of Alabama are in my thoughts and my prayers for them to get through such a difficult time.

□ 1010

MISPLACED PRIORITIES OF THE TEA PARTY REPUBLICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by joining my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in praising President Obama and our military and our intelligence teams for their extraordinary work in the culmination of the killing of Osama bin Laden. His death is a very positive step for U.S. counterterrorism efforts. Bin Laden's death will not erase the pain he caused by his evil acts, nor does it mean that Americans are not still the targets of others bent on doing us harm, but hopefully his elimination will offer some comfort to the grieving families all over the world who have suffered at his hand and will diminish the capacity of his network to do us harm.

Mr. Speaker, while Americans are expressing their appreciation over the death of bin Laden, they remain deeply anxious about our economy. They are suffering from high unemployment and high gas prices and they expect and need relief. That is why Americans must be really scratching their heads in disbelief over the choices being made here in the House of Representatives.

While Americans remain focused on jobs and the economy, the tea party Republican majority has voted to end Medicare and to cut taxes for the richest Americans and the largest oil companies. And this week they will vote to make it harder for students and low-income workers across the country to have access to health care by bringing up two bills to end the funding for new school-based health care centers and for State-based exchanges where workers and small business employees who cannot get insurance through their jobs will be able to look for health care benefits.

Mr. Speaker, they are also bringing up a third bill, a sweeping measure that would, in effect, make abortion inaccessible to most women, despite the fact that the Supreme Court has ruled that women in the United States of America have a constitutional right to receive an abortion if they so choose.

With sky-high gas prices and continued high unemployment, the Republicans must wake up in the morning and think the most important thing to do today is to take away health care from kids and hardworking Americans and trample on women's rights.

Really? Time out, America. Time out.

This Congress, under the control of the tea party, is making the wrong choices for our economy and for our future. They have accomplished nothing for the American people in more than 3 months that they have been in charge. No bill to help create jobs. Not one. In-

stead, what have they done? They voted to end Medicare. That is right. They voted to end Medicare and shift the cost of health care of current and future seniors onto seniors themselves, in some cases adding nearly \$7,000 more in costs per senior starting in the year 2022. They voted to reduce nursing home care for seniors and for the disabled. And they voted to make prescription drugs for senior citizens more expensive.

To make it all worse, at the same time they voted to end Medicare, they voted to cut taxes for millionaires and billionaires and give tax breaks to the largest oil companies and to extend tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas and in fact pay no taxes to the American people, no sense of patriotism for the benefit these companies receive by being American corporations. They chose to give them additional tax breaks, even though they pay no taxes under current law.

Their choices are clear—dangerously clear. End Medicare and make seniors pay more for health care, but give giant oil companies and the wealthiest in our country more tax breaks.

One of the bills that they will bring up this week will eliminate the ability of Americans without insurance, including small business employees, to shop and to compare health plans in the State-based exchanges. They have determined to pursue policies to harm working families in order to cater to their insurance industry friends and radical right-wing supporters. They don't believe that every American should have access to affordable health coverage.

Health exchanges are one of the most popular and important provisions of the health care law. They are vital for families and small businesses to be able to have access to affordable health care. These exchanges are market based, they foster competition, they reduce costs, and they provide access to health insurance for millions of Americans.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, Americans must scratch their heads every day and wonder why the priorities of the tea party Republicans are not consistent with the needs of their families, their children, their job opportunities, their small businesses' vitality. They must wonder every day: Why can't this Congress start serving the American public?

JUSTICE DELAYED BECAME JUSTICE SERVED

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, Osama bin Laden is dead. Justice delayed became justice served. And I stand to pay a debt of honor and a debt of gratitude to all of those who brought us to this day.

The first time most Americans heard Osama bin Laden's name was perhaps from that podium. Just more than a

week after September 11, we gathered here. President George W. Bush spoke that name into history. And every day since, it has been clear to freedom-loving people across this planet that we had to reach this day to answer for the tragic and brutal events visited upon our country on September 11.

I rise to pay a debt of honor and a debt of gratitude. I commend President Barack Obama for his decisive leadership, making the tactical decisions that were made, as well as providing our troops with the resources they needed to get the job done and come home safely. I commend his predecessor, President George W. Bush, whose tenacity and commitment to the war on terror clearly brought us to this day. I also commend our intelligence community, who, year upon year, never lost sight of the demand for justice.

But I mostly rise today to pay a debt of honor and gratitude to the members of our U.S. Armed Forces, past and present. Those Sunday night who slid down the ropes and captured and killed Osama bin Laden are in our hearts, but also those over the last 10 years who have made the necessary sacrifices in the war on terror, and I rise today to particularly pay tribute to them.

I was here on 9/11. After we had the opportunity for the roads to open, I made my way back to our small home in Northern Virginia, and there, with my wife and our children, 6, 7 and 8, we gathered for a short family meeting and for prayer before I would come back in to the Capitol.

My little 6-year-old daughter stopped me in the kitchen as I was walking to the car and she said, "Daddy, I have to talk to you." I said, "I've got to go." She said, "Daddy, I've got to talk to you." I said, "What?" She said, "If we have to make a war, do you have to go?" And I dropped down on one knee and I threw my arms around that 6-year-old and I said, "Daddy's too old." But every day since I have thought of all the daddies and mommies who looked their little ones in the eye, looked their spouses and their parents in the eye, and they said, "I have to go." And they went. And some of them didn't come home.

In the Sixth Congressional District, we have a roll of the fallen heroes of the war on terror. I recite them today with the deepest respect and gratitude.

Lance Corporal Matthew Smith of Anderson; Private Shawn Pahnke of Shelbyville; Specialist Chad Keith of Batesville; Staff Sergeant Frederick Miller, Jr., of Hagerstown; Sergeant Robert Colvill, Jr., of Anderson; Specialist Raymond White of Elwood; Lance Corporal Scott Zubowski of New Castle; Sergeant Jeremy Wright of Shelbyville; Master Sergeant Mike Heister of Bluffton; Staff Sergeant Michael Bechert of New Castle; Staff Sergeant Brian Keith Miller of Pendleton; Specialist Jonathan Lahmann of Richmond; Lance Corporal Layton Crass of Richmond; Lance Corporal Andrew

Whitacre of Bryant; Specialist William Justin McClellan of New Castle; Private First Class Jaiciae Pauley of Muncie; Staff Sergeant Phillip Chad Jenkins of Decatur; and Sergeant Jeremy McQueary of my hometown of Columbus.

This was a victory for freedom. And as much as it belongs to those who made the decisions, developed the intelligence, who slid down the ropes and stepped into harm's way Sunday night, this victory belongs to those who lie in earthen graves in my district and all over this country who brought it about.

□ 1020

Winston Churchill said, We sleep soundly in our beds because rough men stand ready to visit violence on those who would do us harm. Today, I pay a debt of gratitude to a Commander in Chief, present and past, but to all the members of the Armed Forces who allow us this day to say: Justice served. Osama bin Laden is dead.

PROTECTING CONSUMERS FROM HIGHER GAS PRICES

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Let me congratulate my colleague from Indiana on his eloquence. I don't think it could be better said.

Mr. Speaker, 1 year after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Americans are paying record gas prices. In northern Virginia, gas that used to cost \$3 a gallon now costs \$4 a gallon. This gas price hike is the result of instability in the Middle East and possible oil speculation, and is a reminder of our dangerous dependence on foreign oil. Sadly, our Republican colleagues are not advancing legislation to help consumers. Their plan would line the pockets of Big Oil, which saw its profits skyrocket 30 percent in line with these rising gas prices. Fortunately, there are positive steps we can take to promote energy independence and protect consumers: Improve vehicle efficiency, boost production of domestic renewable energy, and convert oil industry tax breaks into gas price relief for consumers.

America owns 3 percent of the world's oil but consumes 25 percent of its global reserves. The only way to end our dependence on foreign oil and reduce gas prices is by improving automobile efficiency and developing new sources of clean domestic energy. Energy independence is going to depend on reducing our oil consumption and shifting to domestic forms of energy like wind, solar, biofuels, and, most importantly, improved efficiency. Energy independence will save consumers money and protect us from political instability in the Middle East.

At the end of 2010, Congress extended tax credits for biofuels and the produc-

tion of wind and solar energy. Those tax credits increased wind energy production by nearly 43 percent in less than 2 years. So extending them now is important for energy independence.

Under the authority of the Clean Air Act amendments, President Obama and automakers recently announced an agreement to improve the efficiency of automobiles by 30 percent by 2016. This agreement will save consumers \$3,000 for each car purchased 5 years from now. Here's another way of looking at it. If you can save 30 percent at the pump, better vehicle efficiency would more than offset recent gas price hikes. Unfortunately, oil companies and their allies in Congress are trying to roll back much of this progress. Our Speaker has forced through legislation which would repeal much of the Clean Air Act, hurting American consumers and undermining our national security. Fortunately, the Senate will not allow that reckless legislation to become law.

This week, the Republican leadership in this House will try to short-circuit safety rules for the production of oil off America's coast, increasing the likelihood of another Deepwater Horizon catastrophe. Their legislation could also allow oil exploration that would impede Naval operations off Virginia's coast and threaten the Chesapeake Bay. I do not support these reckless efforts to allow unregulated oil drilling which endangers our coastal economies and our national security. I will be introducing an amendment in the nature of a substitute. My amendment would strike the anti-safety language and add a provision to repeal \$37 billion in oil company tax loopholes. It would remit this money equally to licensed American drivers. Averaged among licensed drivers, this amendment would give \$185 to each driver—the equivalent of reducing gas prices by 27 cents a gallon.

There are many positive steps we can take to promote energy independence and reduce the burden of gas prices: Improve vehicle efficiency, boost production of renewable domestic energy, and end Big Oil tax breaks in order to help consumers. We should be taking these positive steps instead of endangering our coastal economies with unregulated oil drilling which would do nothing to affect oil prices.

OVERSEAS SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Today, May 3, 2011, I would like to take this time to commend the Department of State's Overseas Security Advisory Council, or OSAC, on its 26th anniversary. Since 1985, OSAC, a public-private partnership, has provided accurate, timely, actionable information on global security concerns. Its constituents number over