great at creating new medications. This all comes from a highly educated workforce. By the way, comprehensive immigration reform means we can draw in some of the best talent into Silicon Valley, the best talent into our pharmaceutical research labs.

Mr. GARAMENDI. It's really true. The comprehensive immigration reform bill that's being discussed does bring into our economy those people who have the high skills, many of whom came here and got an education but who under the current law have to leave and go start their businesses in China, India or somewhere else around the world. Part of that comprehensive immigration reform would allow those men and women who have taken their education in the United States—gotten their degrees, their doctorates in engineering or electrical engineering or whatever—to stay in the United States.

It turns out that our State, California, is the great engine of economic growth. Some of it is in southern California with the entertainment industry and the way in which it is now merging into the electronic industry and all of the things that are going on with Google and the use of the smartphones for disseminating content—movies and the like. In the Silicon Valley, many of those start-up companies are immigrants. In fact, the majority of start-ups in the Silicon Valley are immigrants—a very interesting fact that goes back to the issue of immigration reform.

We want to bring to America the talent. We want to bring—we want to be able to use—in America these extraordinary workers and make sure that they have access to the education system that then is the fundamental investment and make sure that they are able to participate and move our economy forward.

Mr. TAKANO. Most of us come from immigrant stock. I think you're Basque Italian. My forebears came from Japan. We, ourselves, are examples of the striving of generations. I'm pretty sure your parents, as well as mine, instilled the importance of education. It's the story of America repeated over and over again—of people coming here because they hear about the freedom, the way of life that we have and the opportunity that our country represents. Much of it is embodied in our belief in education being the platform, the launching pad, for entering the middle class. Certainly, this dream will be cut short if we don't watch out for things like the doubling of the interest rates or allowing interest rates to be tied to variable rates.

As Mr. HOLT pointed out, he asserts that, really, it's a very sly way to try to raise revenue without actually being straightforward about it. It's a way to raise revenue on the backs of our children. I say let's do sensible things—pass comprehensive immigration reform. It, by itself, by the numbers I just showed, provides a tremendous amount of revenue to our government simply by the fact that we harness the energy of so many aspirational people.

Mr. GARAMENDI. All of that is true, and we've got 5 days. The Congress of the United States has 5 days in which to make a fundamental decision about how we treat those who are participating in the most important investment that any society makes, which is the investment in education.

Right now, we are asking most students to pay for their own education through loans and through some grants that are given through Pell Grants, but they've taken on enormous amounts of debt. Students in the United States have taken on $1 trillion of debt. A large portion of that debt is the Stafford loans, subsidized and unsubsidized. The loan rate on those programs is going to double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent in just 5 days, creating an enormous burden on the students on whom we rely to grow our economy.

They've made the investment, and this society has made the investment in them. We need to free them so that they can participate more fully in our society—so that they can participate as consumers and so that they can participate as small businesses men and women, the entrepreneurs. All of this is possible if we take action, and we must. We owe it to those students. We owe it to the economy. We owe it to our ability to make it once again in America. All of these things come together with immigration reform, as you've pointed out, Mr. TAKANO. I really appreciate you being with us tonight.

I think we've pretty much closed off this subject. We'll be back next week to talk about Making It in America—about jobs. Today, we've talked about how education fits into the jobs agenda. We've got 5 days to solve a very, very serious problem for millions of Americans who have gotten their educations or who have just graduated who are now going to be faced with a doubling of their interest rates. We can do this. We have the power, we have the ability, and we have the proposals—the President's proposal and the proposal here from the Democrats—and we ask that those proposals be acted upon.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 2000

AFFORDABLE ENERGY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentlewoman from Alabama (Mrs. ROBY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to be here on the floor tonight with my colleagues to discuss a very important issue, and that's affordable energy.

Mr. Speaker, like we did a few weeks ago, I just want to invite all of our constituents that might be paying attention right now, that they can contact us at #affordable energy.

We are trying something new, Mr. Speaker, as a way to continue communication with those that we represent back home in an effort to answer very important questions about some of the things that we've read in the news recently today.

Today, this subject couldn't be any more important. That's because today President Obama launched his latest assault in the war on coal. Those aren't my words. That's what President Obama's own climate adviser told The New York Times just hours before his speech today. And let me quote him:

> The one thing the President really needs to do now is to begin the process of shutting down the conventional coal plants. Politically, the White House is hesitant to say they are having a war on coal. On the other hand, a war on coal is exactly what is needed.

A war on coal? A war on coal ultimately amounts to a war on American energy and a war on American families. And the regulations that President Obama announced today are unprecedented executive actions aimed at punishing industries critical to domestic energy production, particularly the coal industry. These regulations would not pass the United States Congress, not the Republican House and not even the Democratic Senate.

President Obama is trying to accomplish through executive regulations that which he cannot accomplish legislatively or electorally.

He also again passed the buck on approving the Keystone pipeline. This is a project that would create up to 20,000 jobs and increase domestic energy production, but a project that has been delayed because of regulatory approval for almost 4 years.

Mr. Speaker, what strikes me the most about President Obama's aggressive unilateral actions is how out of touch he and his administration are with the American people. That's why we're here tonight.

I remind my constituents all the time that I'm Riley's wife and a mom to my two kids, Margaret and George. I'm putting gas in the car. I'm picking up carpool. I'm going to the grocery store. I see directly in my everyday life how these inflammatory statements and just in-your-face remarks to the American people that are going to be directly affected by this President's policies—I see it as milk prices increase, as gas prices go up, as domestic energy prices continue to skyrocket, and this is just unacceptable.

I'm joined by my colleagues tonight. The gentleman from Colorado I know serves on the Energy and Commerce Committee and can certainly weigh in on these matters. But again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind our constituents that it's #AffordableEnergy. And as we move through this leadership hour, we want to hear from you, our constituents

back home, about the issues that are important to you when it comes to energy production in the United States of America.

Mr. GARDNER. I thank the gentlelady from Alabama for her leadership tonight on this very important issue about the energy future of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, she is right. The conversation that we are having isn't something that is just occurring tonight on the House floor. It's not a conversation that's just occurring inside the beltway of Washington, D.C. It's a conversation about energy that's happening in California, in Virginia, in my home State of Colorado. It's about a strong future for this country. It's about our children finding the kinds of jobs and opportunity that we know they deserve, a kind of country that is growing stronger each and every day with better jobs and a stronger and growing workplace.

Tonight I hope that people, Mr. Speaker, around the country will send thoughts to #AffordableEnergy. Mr. Speaker, if they wish to join in that conversation, they'll be able to participate, and we can all see around the country what's happening with that conversation in their own homes, at their own dinner table tonight at #AffordableEnergy and what it is that they're seeing, whether their utility rates are increasing, whether they have a job in one of the shale plays booming around the country, or perhaps they're trying to find work. And energy presents an incredible opportunity for them to do just that.

Often times in Washington, D.C., you see this fight break down between the House or the Senate or Republicans and Democrats unnecessarily so. We ought to be focused on what's right for this country, not what's right for a political party, not what's right for this group or that group or favoring this special interest. It ought to be about what's good for the American people, the jobs that they're trying to keep and hold on to, the college that they're trying to pay for for their kids, to build a brighter future for their family.

The conversation is one that we know isn't just about left or right. That's not what energy is. Energy is about how we can produce it here in the United States, what we can do in our own backyards to create a more vibrant future. All of us have our own energy experience, whether that's as kids when we were told by our parents to make sure you turn the light off before you leave the house, go up and turn the light off in your bedroom before you go to school, or whether it's today trying to run a business, trying to make sure we're using efficient computers to lower the cost of our utility bill year after year.

Mrs. ROBY. I reached out specifically earlier today, Mr. Speaker, to my constituents on Facebook, and I've got a few examples of that. As you say, everybody has their own energy story.

Howard from Dale County, Alabama, pointed out that he's already struggling to make ends meet as is, especially with ObamaCare and an increase in payroll taxes. Now the President wants to raise his electric bill.

Suzanne from Montgomery, Alabama, said that the President just doesn't get it. She watched the President's speech today, and she doesn't understand why he won't focus on improving the economy instead of hurting it. She said the President doesn't have a clue how his policies actually affect the middle class.

Spike, a young man from south Alabama, correctly pointed out that regulations have a trickle-down effect that are felt by hardworking Americans. These new regulations on energy sources will be felt by young Americans just like him.

Kevin from Dothan, Alabama, works for the military and has recently been furloughed due to the President's sequester, and he worries about how rising energy costs would affect him, especially since he's already having to deal with less take-home pay.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my constituent's thoughts, and that's why we're here tonight.

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I'm RICHARD HUDSON from North Carolina, and I represent a district that's been hit very hard with job losses. People out there are really struggling.

I go home every weekend and I travel my district and I talk to real people every day who are struggling to get by. I talk to folks who have lost their jobs either in the textile industry or in the furniture industry. I talk to folks who are just trying to keep their companies afloat. I talked to a homebuilder the other day who is just trying to keep enough work so he doesn't have to lay off any more of his crew so he can keep a skilled labor force there, so when the economy does pick back up, he'll have the folks that he needs to get the job done.

People are really hurting out there, and there are some signs that the economy is getting better. But, Mr. Speaker, in my district, we're just not feeling it yet. In fact, I was in Richmond County, North Carolina, yesterday, and the folks there tell me that home foreclosures have increased this year over last year. We aren't out of this yet.

On top of this economy, where folks are struggling and just trying to stay afloat, trying to keep food on the table for their families and paying the bills, the President comes out today 4 years to the day from when he introduced his disastrous cap-and-trade ideas and has this new scheme that's going to add cost to our energy, that's going to destroy jobs in this country, and it's just unconscionable.

The people in my district are wondering the same thing they are in other places around the country: why doesn't the President understand what's going on here. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to continue to fight for an energy policy that makes sense.

We've got energy off the shore of North Carolina that we ought to be going after. We've got huge reserves of oil and natural gas. We've also got a potential for fracking in North Carolina. I want to get North Carolina in the energy business. I want to create those energy jobs in North Carolina like we see in western Pennsylvania and North Dakota and other places. Now is the time. Now is the time to start getting American energy sources, getting Americans in the energy game, not taxing and regulating our energy industry out of business, which is not only destroying the jobs but is increasing the cost of energy. When the cost of energy goes up, Mr. Speaker, everything gets more expensive, whether it's food or the cost of transportation of goods. It's hitting us really hard.

Mr. GARDNER. I think that you bring up an excellent point about this issue of regulations, about how the President has spent all of this time developing incredibly onerous regulations that will increase the cost of electric generation. It will increase the cost to produce the electricity that each and every one of us use every day at home and at our workplace.

□ 2010

And yet, it has taken years for him to develop this. And concentrating on this, this big announcement today, which will hurt American jobs. It will, indeed, impact negatively the middle class of this country. And yet, there's a project out there, like the Keystone XL pipeline, that he could approve today. After mountains of paperwork have been completed, environmental impact studies completed, people could be put to work today on the Keystone pipeline. Instead of focusing on putting them out of work, instead of focusing on regulations that will hurt our ability to grow the economy, like the President announced today, his plans to disarm our energy plans in this country, the fact is we could have a Keystone XL pipeline putting people back to work.

People that I talk to back in my district strongly support the Keystone pipeline. There are people in Colorado that I've heard from who don't support it. And one of the questions they lead with is: You know, Representative GARDNER, it's not really going to create jobs here in Colorado. Well, you know what? We know, thanks to research that's been done, done by a university, the impact of the Alberta oil sands development on U.S. State economies, in Colorado alone, the job increase, thanks to the Alberta oil sands development—and the Keystone XL pipeline is a major part of this—that we would receive about 11,200 new jobs as a result of further development of the Alberta oil sands in Colorado alone. That's 11,000-some jobs that we could benefit from because of the construction of the Keystone pipeline and further development of the Alberta oil sands.

In North Carolina alone, my colleague from North Carolina, 18,400 jobs could come from further development of the Alberta oil sands, the Keystone pipeline being a critical part of that.

And so today, the President announces a plan to make it more difficult to generate electricity, to increase the cost of coal-power generation. His top science adviser has said we need a war on coal. This is the President of the United States saying we need a war on coal—his administration saying that—and yet today we have an opportunity to say ''yes'' to a pipeline to create jobs in this country.

So instead of putting people out of work, why don't we put people into work by approving things like the Keystone pipeline.

Mrs. ROBY. I have with me kind of a checklist here about this administration and President Obama's energy record: obviously, delaying the job-creating Keystone pipeline you've already mentioned; stopping job-creating natural gas exports; regulating oil and gas production on Federal lands; investing in green energy failures.

Mr. Speaker, you can learn more about this at gop.gov/energy. So we continue to focus on this here tonight with all of my colleagues who have joined us.

A recent report from CBO came out which sought to find out just how higher energy costs would affect the economy, and the report said raising the cost of using fossil fuels would tend to increase the cost of producing goods and services, especially those requiring electricity and transportation. We have already mentioned that tonight.

I talked about being a mom and driving carpool and buying milk at the grocery store—it is very evident what is going on based on these policies. Higher production costs lead to higher prices for our goods and services. Areas in the country where electricity is produced from coal, places like Alabama and other States represented here, would tend to experience larger increases in electricity prices than other areas of the country would. Specific to Alabama, 36 percent of electricity is produced from coal, the largest of any fuel source. And as for jobs in Alabama, it is the sixth nationally for total electricity generation. All of us have stories here tonight that are just right along these lines.

We have an opportunity here as Members of the House of Representatives to, whether it is through oversight on Energy and Commerce and other committees of jurisdiction, to rein in this. That's our responsibility to our constituents. That's what this conversation here tonight is about.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to tell you again that #AffordableEnergy, if you want to know more or make a comment, Mr. Speaker, about what we are doing tonight, #AffordableEnergy. And any of my colleagues who want to chime in, please do.

Mr. HUDSON. I would love to address this war on coal a little bit more. I just think it's outrageous that the President of the United States' advisors say that the President wants a war on coal. You know, we ought to have a war on gas prices. We ought to have a war on energy prices. We ought to have a war on joblessness. I mean, these are the things that we should be concerned about and angry about and upset about.

You look at the fact that the United States has more coal than any country in the world, and we've got technology to use that coal for energy production in a clean way. Clean coal technology, liquefied coal, there are plenty of ways we can use that energy, Mr. Speaker, here in America, putting Americans to work to reduce our energy costs. That's what we ought to be focusing on. Let's get Americans to work making American energy. Let's bring American energy costs down, and let's stop the war on jobs, which is what we are seeing from this administration.

Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia. I would ask the gentleman if he doesn't agree with me that we would be much better off as a Nation if we focused on a way to have affordable energy, clean coal technology, and not just have a war on coal, and thus create those jobs that you were speaking of. Would you not agree with that?

Mr. HUDSON. Absolutely.

Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia. I would say it is interesting that the President has taken this action to have a war on coal when his Department of Energy has been investing in some clean coal technology, maybe not as much as some of us would like, but some clean coal technology which right now appears to be on the cusp of actually yielding benefits. They are working right now in Alabama on a plant to test out a chemical looping formula. That chemical looping formula would produce coal ash and pure carbon dioxide. There's no carbon capture, it's just right there. There's no SO_X, there's no NO_X, there's no mercury, and there are a lot of jobs. While it is a little more expensive than conventional plants using coal to produce energy, if this technology works, which the administration has already invested in, we could have both clean coal, affordable energy, jobs, and still protect the environment.

One of the problems that I have, Mr. Speaker, is that so often people say you can't have one and have the other. I believe the United States should be the leader in making sure that we develop and have available not only for companies in the United States but the entire world clean coal technology, because if we don't look at this as a global problem, if we just say we're going to shut coal down in the United States, what we do is we send our jobs to places like India and China and Russia and Kazakhstan, and the list goes on and on. And they don't have the regulations that we even had in the year 2000 on the burning of coal. And all that stuff goes into the atmosphere. And guess where it goes? According to a NASA study, it takes 10 days to get from the middle of the Gobi Desert to the eastern shore of my beloved Commonwealth of Virginia.

So ladies and gentlemen, when we talk about this, it's not a matter of choosing the environment versus coal; it's a matter of choosing America first and making sure that we make America's coal affordable, usable, and clean. And we can do it.

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. You know, when I look at this issue of energy, what strikes me is the President talking about jobs sounds good, but he doesn't like this sort of job or that sort of job. For example, he talks about wanting to create jobs, but he doesn't want the Keystone pipeline kind of jobs, he doesn't want the kind of jobs that come from coal. He doesn't want the kind of jobs that come from fracking, this technology that we have developed in the United States that is helping us lead the world. So he wants to talk about jobs, he has this idea that there are somehow these jobs out there, but not the ones that are right under his nose.

□ 2020

I am holding in my hand a Washington Post article from earlier this year, and the headline is, ''European Industry Flocks to U.S. to Take Advantage of Cheaper Gas.''

Wait a minute. I've heard the President talk a lot about jobs. I've heard him talk a lot about wanting more manufacturing jobs. Natural gas that is being developed here in this country, cheap natural gas, clean-burning natural gas, abundant natural gas, that is what is helping this economy.

Despite all the regulatory obstacles that this President has put in front of this economy, despite record debt, despite all of the problems that we in this body want to address, the economy is still doing some incredible things because the private sector is leading, and natural gas is a big part of that.

I've got another article here from The Wall Street Journal, from October of last year. The headline is ''Cheap U.S. Gas is Europe's loss.'' Manufacturing in Europe moving to the United States because of innovation in the area of natural gas.

Now, the interesting thing is I know the President is in a political bind because workers want jobs and environmentalists want to kill a lot of these projects, so he's torn between the two. How about you just go with the jobs?

Working Americans need jobs, Mr. President. And it seems to me, those are the folks that you ought to put first.

And I would note that there's a lot of talk by the environmentalists about killing coal and having a war on coal. Do they not realize that if you kill coal use in a country that regulates it very closely and that has developed clean coal, that coal's still going to be used?

But who's it going to be used by?

It's going to be used by China, where they don't have the clean air rules that we do, and so they're going to make even more pollution. Instead of turning to clean coal and the coal technology that we have here, he's sending it overseas.

Mrs. ROBY. I just want to chime in for a second. I think that it cannot be said enough in this Chamber tonight that his war on coal is a war on American energy and American jobs; and that what you will see if this unilateral decision happens, you're going to see an outsourcing of manufacturing to places like China that are unregulated, when all any of us in this room hear every time we travel our districts is: How come we can't bring the manufacturing jobs back to the United States of America?

And it's these type of threats coming from this administration that are chasing jobs offshore left and right, and this is not what our economy can withstand right now.

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. This is another reason that folks may want to go elsewhere to create jobs. We've got the gift of abundant, cheap energy. Let's not mess it up.

And let's be clear. This is not just a war on coal. This is a war on working people. This is a war on the family who is sitting at their table trying to figure out how they're going to pay their power bill, how they're going to heat or cool their home, how they're going to put food on their table.

And you know what?

Energy costs. We all know this. When it goes up, it's passed down through the cost of product.

I will tell you that Arkansas, where I'm from, a big percentage of our energy is based on coal

Mr. GARDNER. And I don't think that there can be any doubt that that's the President's intention under his plan that he announced today. The talk, the conversation, the focus tonight is about affordable energy. And there are people sending tweets around the country right now with the hashtag to affordable energy, hashtag affordable energy, about that very subject tonight.

But if you listen to the pattern of statements the President has made over the past several years, from the time he was a candidate to his administration today, as a candidate, President, then-Senator Obama said: Under my plan, energy rates will necessarily skyrocket.

He said years ago that his energy plan was for energy rates to skyrocket. Just a few years later, when he nominated Secretary Chu to be Department of Energy Secretary, the Secretary of the Department of Energy said he'd like to see gas prices around $8, European level prices of gasoline, doubling what they are today. They're already too high, nearly $4 in Colorado. That's too high.

Mrs. ROBY. I don't understand. All of us have heard this President, this administration, say, repeatedly: I support an all-of-the-above approach to energy production.

And then you try to promulgate a rule like what came out today and unilaterally announce a war on coal, a war on American families, a war on jobs in the United States of America, and what reasonable individual would put that with an all-of-the-above approach to energy production so that we can become independent in the United States of America?

It makes no sense. We should hold this administration accountable for this. We, in Congress, have a job to make sure our constituents back home understand this doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense for jobs. It doesn't make sense for families. And we absolutely have to hold him to this.

Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia. Let me say briefly that one of the interesting things I note is that when we were talking about this at the Energy and Commerce Committee, Lisa Jackson was in there and we talked about regulating greenhouse gases and how that was going to make the cost of energy go up and people wouldn't be able to heat their homes in my district, and she said we have programs for that. But in the President's budget request this year, he cut the LIHEAP program, which is the assistance to folks who are having trouble making their heat bills and paying those bills.

So while on the one hand the administration is going to make our electric bills go through the roof, on the other hand they want us to cut the assistance program that would help the poorest of the poor. That doesn't make any sense. I don't understand it, because they're really going to hurt American families.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. GARDNER, will you share the testimony, because I've watched it, and it's really powerful. You were questioning, in the Energy and Commerce Committee, about whether there's ever—and you can tell the story better than I can because I've just watched the clip—any connection between the number of jobs that would be affected by the regulations that come down from the EPA.

Mr. GARDNER. One of the most stunning things, of course, in the administration is their focus on regulations and a complete lack of focus on that regulation's effect on jobs.

We had an assistant administrator of the EPA come and talk to the Energy and Commerce Committee about whether or not a regulation on energy production was good. And I asked a very simple question, and the question was whether or not there was a jobs analysis that was performed when they issued the regulation; did they look at whether or not jobs would be impacted by this regulation.

And after 5 minutes of what can only be described as an Abbott and Costello ''Who's on First?'' kind of conversation, the answer was clearly no, that this administration did not take into account the impact energy regulations would have on job creation.

And so, as we have a conversation with the country about an all-American energy plan, we have got to realize that not only does it impact the coal-fired power plant or the nuclear plant or the wind farm down the road, but it impacts our families' ability to afford a brighter future.

Mrs. ROBY. In the President's speech today, he basically made the case that more regulations and restraints on the energy sector, to your point, would be good for our economy and create jobs.

Regulations creating jobs?

I know none of us in here believe that, and I know we've never heard from one constituent who owns a business that regulations, more regulations, create jobs.

And furthermore, this is the same President that tried to sell us Solyndra. And we're going to take this, we're going to take him at his word? It's really unbelievable.

Mr. YODER. Well, if I might add to the gentlelady's point, the gentlelady from Alabama, this administration has continually pushed the notion that the gentlelady's describing, that regulations do create jobs. Their argument is that when they regulate our industries, when they regulate our local companies, when they regulate the local small businesses in our communities, that those businesses have to then hire people to respond to the regulations. Therefore, presto, this administration has created jobs.

Mrs. ROBY. But aren't those businesses supposed to be—I mean, they want to create product to then sell to the American people, not hire people to follow regulations.

Mr. YODER. So to the gentlelady's point, what this administration has done is created a country that has focused their job creation on bureaucracy and regulation and red tape, and so they're forcing debt on our kids and grandkids to pay for bureaucrats to come out into our communities to force our small businesses to hire people to respond to the bureaucrats. I mean, what a maddening system. In a country where we are supposed to be the inspiration around the world, the land of hope and opportunity, and they are taking us towards becoming the land of regulation, the land of unemployment, the land of mandates and taxes.

And all this together, it's no wonder that our unemployment rate is still almost 8 percent, or 7.6 percent. It's the longest the unemployment rate's been this high since the Great Depression for this long. And for this administration to say that this is somehow a job-creation agenda, regulating our local businesses, regulating our energy costs and driving up the cost of energy.

And ultimately, the sad point is, and the gentleman from Arkansas spoke to this a little bit ago, is that this is not just a war on a business. This is not just a war on an energy producer. This

is not just a war on a coal company. This is a war on the American people.

□ 2030

They are the victims in this. It is not the small business owner that's the victim. It is the American people. It's the people struggling to pay their bills. It's the person on the fixed income. It's the single mom. It's the senior. It's someone whose energy costs are that big a proportion of their monthly budget that this really hurts them in the pocketbook. It's that family that's trying to make that life work. They are the folks that ultimately get hurt in the situation.

So we have to stand up for the victims in this country, that silent majority that is being hurt by these anti-energy policies. And at the end of the day, that's why I join my colleagues to support an all-of-the-above energy approach to put people back to work, to lower the cost of energy in this country, and to make us more secure by making us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. I've got some good news for my colleagues here tonight.

Mr. YODER. We need it.

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. I would like to lay this out and give the President the opportunity to digest what I'm about to say and change his mind on the Keystone pipeline. We know that he's been torn between workers on one side and environmental extremists on the other. And he's been looking and grasping for any excuse not to approve the affordable energy and the jobs that come with the Keystone pipeline. And there's a lot of these same, similar arguments, whether you're talking about coal or the Keystone pipeline or the natural gas that we're getting out of the ground that has really revolutionized this country and provided so many jobs for so many workers.

But one of the reasons that opponents of the Keystone pipeline have said that they're opposed to the Keystone pipeline is that the tar sands that's being taken out of the ground in Canada at its core, its bitumen, which is a little bit different kind of crude, a lot of them have said, Well, we're opposed to the Keystone pipeline because it's different than other pipelines. This crude is different. This crude is more corrosive. This crude is dangerous. This crude should not be going through pipelines across this country because it is somehow more dangerous.

Well, I've got great news for the President tonight if he's watching this. The great news is in January of 2012, we put in a requirement in the legislation. I want to be real clear about this because this is breaking news. It broke today. It hasn't gotten a lot of attention, but it's critical. We put in our bill that became law that the Obama administration needed to do a study through the Department of Transportation to determine whether this bitumen really was different than other crude, whether it was really more dangerous to pass through a pipeline across the country, whether it was really something we needed to be extra worried about. Because all the environmentalists, all the different folks who opposed the Keystone pipeline preach about bitumen and how dangerous it is.

Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia. I can't wait. What did the study say?

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. Here's the study, my friend. And this is just great news. It's from the National Research Council and not some third-party political group working for the Obama administration, the Secretary of Transportation, pursuant to this Congress's request that they study it. I have got the executive summary right here. And this just came out today. Here's what they concluded. And this is big news because this is one of the reasons the President is against the Keystone pipeline.

It says:

> The committee does not find any causes of pipeline failure unique to the transportation of diluted bitumen. Furthermore, the committee does not find evidence of chemical or physical properties of diluted bitumen that are outside the range of other crude oils or any other aspect of its transportation by transmission pipeline that would make diluted bitumen more likely than other crude oils to cause releases.

Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia. Are you saying it's just as safe as the oil that goes through pipelines in hundreds of thousands of miles already across the United States of America?

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. I wish I could have said it that clearly. But the bottom line is, this isn't TIM GRIFFIN saying it. This is the Obama administration's own study that we mandated they conduct. And I'll tell you, if you look at the argument against the Keystone pipeline that the environmental extremists have been putting out there, this is numero uno, number one, at the top. They've been basing almost their whole deal on this. And the Obama administration says, Sorry, not backed up by the facts.

Mrs. ROBY. So we need to say, What's the holdup? What's the holdup, Mr. President?

Mr. Speaker, again, I cannot emphasize this enough. And the whole point of this hour tonight is to say, based on that information and this new war on America families and American jobs, what is the holdup? What is the deal? This is 20,000 jobs. And we're just continually seeing the President, who's for the all-of-the-above energy approach, at every corner attack domestic energy production. I just don't understand.

Mr. GARDNER. In Colorado, the district that I represent, we really do have it all. We have a coal mine, and we have wind energy. Not only the wind farms, but we have wind energy manufacturing. We have one of the Nation's most promising oil and gas plays right now in the Niobrara in Weld County. In western Colorado, we have thousands of jobs that are being created and thousands more that could be created if the government would get out of the way and approve the permits that they're holding back on. In fact, the Bureau of Land Management, if they were just to approve a handful of permits waiting right now, it could create over a hundred thousand jobs that this country could put to work right now if these permits were approved.

And so we hear the President talk about an all-of-the-above energy policy and then see his actions go in a complete opposite direction.

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. I would almost rather the President just be straight up and say, I only like some kinds of jobs. And I don't like any of those kind.

Mrs. ROBY. And I only like some kinds of energy.

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. Just be straight up with us, President. Just say, I've got a war on coal. I've got a war on the Keystone pipeline. I've got a war on natural gas and removing it out of the ground, slowing down permits. I like a certain kind of energy, and I'm going to try to fund it through the government. Just be straight up.

Mrs. ROBY. And let me just say this real quick, as a reminder: Mr. Speaker, tonight's conversation is at #affordable energy. So I just wanted to remind you, Mr. Speaker, that that's where we're having this conversation tonight, alongside countless others. I just wanted to throw that in there as this conversation continues.

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. Well, I would also point out, again, going to the environmental responsibility that we have—you as a mother; I'm a father of two, a 3-year-old and a 5-year-old—we all want clean air and clean water for them.

I would point out that Duke University last month, working with the University of Arkansas and working with the Obama administration's own U.S. Geological Survey, tested about 130 wells in Arkansas, something like that, and concluded that well water was not polluted by the natural gas extraction that's going on there. Just more factual evidence that we can have the jobs; and if we extract the energy responsibly, we can take care of the environment at the same time.

Mr. GARDNER. One of those promising things about American energy development is not just the fact that it's creating thousands of jobs, but it's the side benefits of the revenue produced and what that revenue goes to. In fact, in Weld County, Colorado, in my district, it's probably the only county in the country that has zero bonded indebtedness because of the natural gas and oil production. They don't have any debt. If they need a road, they pay for it. They pay for it with the money that they've received out of severance tax payments from oil and gas development.

Two companies paid their 2011 property taxes a couple of months ago. They paid $150 million to one single

county. Forty percent of that revenue of $150 million goes to the school districts, goes to the community colleges. So not only are we able to develop affordable energy for the American people, not only are we able to put people to work but we're also doing better things for our schools and our community colleges because that revenue then turns around and goes to the core community institutions that make our country strong.

Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia. Let me follow up on that, if I might, real quick. In one of my counties, when you take away the money that comes from Richmond and take away the money that comes from Washington for education, 70 percent of the tax dollars in that particular county are derived from the coal and natural gas severance tax. You eliminate coal, they don't know how they're going to be able to fund their schools. So we're not just talking about big business. We're talking about the schools and the classrooms and the students.

□ 2040

Mrs. ROBY. So it's a war on education as well.

Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia. Well, it's a war on everything that we hold dear when you get right down to it. Because the truth of the matter is, when you're the number one nation in the world, everybody else wants to be where you are. Right now we're the number one nation in the world, but this administration wants to throw away what has helped us get there, and that is an affordable, reliable energy plan.

And we can't just throw it all out and expect to still have the standard of living that we have. That means we won't have the money for education, we won't have the money for roads, we won't have the money for so many things that people think of today as just automatically being there. But the money has to come from somewhere, and it just can't come out of thin air. I'm sorry, Mr. President, money doesn't grow on trees.

Mrs. ROBY. So when it comes back to our responsibility as a Congress, this week we're going to debate and hopefully vote on the Offshore Energy and Jobs Act. This is legislation that will increase production of home-grown energy, and it will drive down costs and it will increase American jobs.

What it does is it expands U.S. offshore energy production in order to create over 1 million new American jobs, lower energy prices, grow our economy, strengthen national security, and strengthen our communities by lowering our dependence on foreign oil. And the bill removes government barriers that block production of our own resources right here in the United States.

You know, currently, the Obama administration keeps 85 percent of our offshore areas off-limits to energy production—85 percent. So H.R. 2231—again, we will be debating and hopefully voting on later this week—will open new offshore areas for that energy production and require the Obama administration—and again, Mr. President, who's for an all-of-the-above approach—require him to submit a new lease plan by 2015 for developing our offshore energy resources.

Mr. YODER. And to the gentlelady's point, what a great opportunity for Members in both political parties to work together to do something that can help create jobs for the American people.

You've talked about the over 1 million jobs that could be created this week if folks on both sides of the aisle will just work together for some bipartisan, commonsense legislation that creates affordable energy job opportunities and puts Americans to work.

I'm sure this legislation will pass this week, but it's an opportunity for folks to vote for something that will actually make a difference. I challenge folks in both parties to stand up and support this legislation. Now, the real hope will be whether the Senate will actually take it up.

You know, we've passed dozens upon dozens of bills that create jobs, that help put the American people back to work, yet we still have almost an 8 percent unemployment rate in this country. I'll tell you what: I am fed up with Washington getting in the way of progress. At every turn the solutions out of Washington are greater taxes, greater mandates, greater burdens on the American people.

What we're talking about here is creating prosperity and opportunity for the American people to go back to work, to put food on the table for their families, and it's done through what is such a simple thing, domestic forms of energy that are right here at our grasp. Why wouldn't we utilize this energy that's right here in our country? It seems foolish and shortsighted. And frankly, it hurts the American people when we're not supporting domestic forms of energy.

So this week is a great opportunity for folks who say they're for job creation, who say they're for an all-of-the-above energy approach to step up and lead and to join us in proposals that will put Americans back to work and help rebuild this country.

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. I totally agree with the gentleman. We understand—and hopefully we can get more and more folks to understand—that this body is not creating the jobs. We want the private sector to continue to create the jobs and lead. But sometimes the barriers to job creation and growing jobs in this country are barriers that Washington has put into place.

I find that a lot of the times when we're legislating in this body, we're not trying to create jobs to get in the way of the private sector. We go to people in the private sector and we say, what's your biggest hurdle? What's your biggest barrier? How can we help you grow more jobs? And more often than not they will say: Get out of the way. A lot of the bills that we put on the floor are to help Washington get out of the way, move it out of the way and let the private sector continue to lead in this area.

I want to mention one more thing real quickly on optimism. If you study where we are as a country, whether it's with regard to the debt and regulations—some of these things, yeah, we've got a lot of work to do there. But if you study where we are with regard to innovation, energy extraction, natural gas extraction, the low cost of natural gas, the companies that I mention in these articles that are moving from Europe, I smell nothing and I see nothing but optimism.

The future of this country is limitless. And when I'm long gone, my kids that are 3 and 5 now are going to be living in a country—if we do things right—that just continues to grow and has all the energy we will ever need.

And as an economist pointed out to some of us earlier tonight, if you're Russia and you're Saudi Arabia and you're looking at the innovation that has come out of American companies, and you're looking at the deposits of natural gas and shale oil that we have in North America, you're worried.

Mr. GARDNER. It is exciting, the energy future of this country. When you see studies that are being done—here's a study that I will cite right here, it says: ''America's shale oil revolution is loosening the grip of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries on global oil markets.'' OPEC. Because of the work that we're doing here in this country, we're loosening the grip of OPEC.

Daniel Yergin, a renowned energy expert, testified before the Energy and Commerce Committee talking about how the energy development in the United States is allowing our sanctions against Iran to work, that we're lessening their ability to sell and fund terrorism activities because we're able to produce it here in the United States, displacing around the world the sale of Iranian oil, the sale of Iranian energy.

So when our colleague from Arkansas talks about the optimism that we have in this country, the people of my district who see it each and every day in little tiny towns that used to have one stop light, that now have a new housing development going up because of the production in the energy field, or traffic that they never had before because they've got activity going to and from the worksite that never existed before. People who graduated from the local high school who for the first time in their lifetimes—maybe even their parents' lifetimes—know they can stay there in that hometown with their family, with a good-paying job and benefits because of energy development.

We've talked a lot tonight about oil and gas and coal, but in Colorado we do have it all. We have wind energy and solar energy. And it's not just regulations that are blocking the traditional

fossil fuels; it's regulations that are holding up wind energy projects. The ability to site a transmission line, to get the power from the wind farm to the people who use it, is being held up because of governmental regulations.

And so there may be people out there who think that we're just down here talking about regulations on fossil fuels. Well, you know what? It's regulations that are holding up clean energy too. And if we truly cared about affordable energy, if we truly cared about doing something good for our country—which I believe we all do, and the American people are ready for it to happen—then we would get government out of the way and let America work. And our chance is this week.

Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia. That is one of the problems that we see in my district. I have a lot of counties that are really hurting. And it's not because we couldn't have jobs, it's because Washington is getting in the way. Every month we're having layoffs in some coal plant here or some coal plant there, or a company that makes things for the coal plant—or the railroad that hauls the coal, or the trucking company that helps move the coal. So while they've remained internally optimistic, it's really hard when that layoff slip comes to your house and you know that you're no longer going to be able to have that job.

That's why this war on coal affects each and every one of us, but it affects folks in my district maybe a little bit more because we're on the front lines and we're getting those layoff notices now. I have people that I know who are casualties in the President's war on coal, and I'd like to hear from them at #AffordableEnergy. And I hand it back off to you, Madam Chair.

Mrs. ROBY. Well, I just want to thank all of my colleagues for joining this conversation tonight. And Mr. Speaker, we will continue this conversation at #Affordable Energy.

But the bottom line is this: While the President continues to promote his political agenda, we here in the House of Representatives' majority are committed, as we have demonstrated time and time again, that we are committed to the all-of-the-above approach. And that this isn't, as you've heard from all of my colleagues tonight, Mr. Speaker, this isn't just a war on coal, this is a war on the American family and American jobs. We are committed to getting government out of the way so that the American family and the American business can thrive.

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

□ 2050

OBAMACARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PERRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. ELLMERS) for 30 minutes.

Mrs. ELLMERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the upcoming implementation of ObamaCare.

Prior to coming to Washington, I was a nurse for over 21 years, and I'm passionate about health care. My husband is a general surgeon, and he continues to practice in our hometown of Dunn, North Carolina. I'm very, very proud of that.

A couple of years ago when the President was proposing his legislation to basically overhaul health care in America, my husband and I became very active speaking out. That was well before ever considering running for Congress. As a result, because of our passion and concern for this country and health care as a whole, I found myself winning my election and here fighting this fight. We continue with this fight, and we are 98 days away from the open enrollment process going into effect for ObamaCare. This is something that the American people have been sitting back and watching for quite some time, and there are many, many questions that remain to be answered.

Mr. Speaker, a recent GAO study shined some light on some areas that we've been asking questions about for a very long period of time. Serving on the Energy and Commerce Committee, the Energy and Commerce Committee put forward a request to the GAO to find out where exactly are we in the implementation of ObamaCare, this takeover of America's health care affecting one-sixth of our economy and affecting jobs across this country. It's the number one reason today, Mr. Speaker, that employers are not hiring, because they're not sure of the effects that this will have once fully implemented.

There again, this week, the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office put forward their findings. I just want to highlight some of those for you:

States have yet to complete 85 percent of the required program activities. That means essentially, Mr. Speaker, that only 15 percent of what needs to be in place at the State level for ObamaCare is actually in place. Core functions of both Federal- and State-based exchanges have yet to be completed with less than 4 months before open enrollment, any other missed deadline threats, and timely establishment of exchanges. Exchanges are not in place, exchanges are not ready to be implemented, and yet we continue on this timeline path.

HHS has not yet completed the critical steps needed to determine eligibility for credits and cost-sharing subsidies. There's much groundwork that still needs to be laid and implementation figured out, and we don't even have those answers from HHS.

Key data-sharing agreements between the Federal exchange and its Federal and State counterparts are not complete.

Consumer assistance and outreach activities to individuals and employers have yet to be implemented and have been delayed.

It cannot simply be a political campaign on the road touting the virtues of ObamaCare that will implement this program. This is a major, major concern for all of us who know how important health care is.

I can go on. There are many more pieces to the GAO report, which basically cites the fact that CMS is not ready. CMS is supposed to come in and help the States that haven't implemented yet or aren't ready. Where are they? They're not there. They're not acting. We have these questions, but who does this affect? What are the questions that need to be answered?

This afternoon, I had the opportunity to go to National Children's Hospital and meet with some of the families there, very ill children, children dealing with diabetes, cancer. I got the opportunity to see a 1-year-old who's waiting for a heart transplant. These are the children that will be affected by the implementation of ObamaCare. Why? Because research will be affected, because lifesaving cures and treatments will be affected.

How can we implement a health care system that no one at this point can actually state will improve the quality of care of our health care system? It's very important that when we talk about health care and the takeover of health care that we separate the two issues: one, health care pay-for, health care insurance, health care coverage; and then health care itself. They both suffer as a result of ObamaCare being implemented.

We simply cannot stand by and allow this to happen. My colleague from Kentucky, he is here this evening as well, and he has some words. I yield some of our time to the gentleman from Kentucky.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

It seems there's no shortage of red flags regarding ObamaCare. The one-size-fits-all health care law is proving to be disastrous for consumers, for employers and health care providers alike.

Just last week, as my friend from North Carolina said, the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office warned:

> Because government officials have missed multiple key deadlines to set up the new health insurance exchanges, there is serious concern that the exchanges will not be ready in October, as scheduled.

Employers and families across Kentucky have expressed serious concerns about meeting the requirements of the law and wondering if they will lose their coverage, be forced to choose different providers, or be saddled with enormous new costs. Now these individuals are left with even more uncertainty.

When talking with business leaders across my district, I hear a barrage of questions and concerns. Small businesses, the backbone of our economy, are likely the hardest to be hit. Some