

to raise its minimum wage, but if not, your constituents are no better off. They are still making \$7.25 an hour.

So I have just one question: If you are a well-intentioned, patriotic Republican who wants to leave the decision up to the States, are you prepared to explain to your constituents why they are worth less to you than the people across State lines?

For my part, I do not want low-wage Hoosiers to make less than those in other States just because our general assembly decides not to act. Of course, I understand the argument that some people may work fewer hours and some may even lose their jobs. This may be true. But it is important to remember that we have raised our minimum wage in the past, and in the past, the very same argument has proven itself to be untrue. So I am very optimistic that American employers, and particularly Hoosier employers in my congressional district, will do what they can to weather a minimum wage increase without letting folks go.

Now, unfortunately, this is not the only unnecessary struggle Congress has laid on America's low-income families this year. Today, our well-intentioned, patriotic Republican leaders continue to block an extension of emergency unemployment insurance, and because of congressional inaction, nearly 2 million Americans, Madam Speaker, were instantly cut off from their benefits in December, with 72,000 more being cut off each week.

Many of my Republican friends have painted unemployment benefits as a slush fund for certain lazy Americans. This is not only incredibly offensive, it is untrue. Americans want to work, but in many communities, there are simply no jobs available. In our economic downturn, Madam Speaker, everything from restaurants to machine shops to retail stores closed their doors and are only now starting to come back.

In Indianapolis, many Hoosiers are finding they no longer have the skills necessary for the modern workforce. Educated men and women with years of experience have to retrain before they even get rehired. Others have seen their industries simply disappear and have to prepare themselves for an entirely new career. This is far from laziness. Retraining and looking for a job is hard work with no pay. These Americans deserve our help covering expenses while they get back on their feet.

Madam Speaker, my good House Republican friends have yet to bring a real jobs bill to the floor in the 113th Congress, instead, focusing continually on deregulation and repealing the Affordable Care Act. Meanwhile, they overlook that raising the minimum wage is the right thing to do, putting our country back on track.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair

declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 39 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Eternal God, through whom we see what we could be and what we can become, thank You for giving us another day.

In these days, our Nation is faced with pressing issues: constitutional, religious, and personal rights, and matters of great political importance.

We thank You that so many Americans have been challenged and have risen to the exercise of their responsibilities as citizens to participate in the great debates of these days.

Grant wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to us all, as well as an extra measure of charity.

Send Your spirit upon the Members of this people's House who walk through this valley under public scrutiny. Give them peace and Solomonic prudence in their deliberations.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. LANKFORD led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

SILICA

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

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. Speaker, comments have closed on a proposed rule from OSHA for sand in the workplace.

Prolonged breathing of silica, sand, can cause serious health issues. No one will dispute that. But this new rule is interesting in its design. In the comment request, OSHA specifically singles out one industry—oil and gas—as a key reason for the rule change. They write, in part, "A recent cooperative study identified overexposures to silica among workers conducting hydraulic fracturing operations," as their prime reason for the rule change.

It is interesting that after the rule has been in place since 1971, OSHA has made this change. Fracking is not new. It has been around for decades. Why the sudden change in this administration?

I believe the change is because this administration is looking for one more way to impede oil and gas development in the United States. If this is not just about oil and gas, will OSHA set new rules for beach lifeguards who work in sand all day? How about road crews in Arizona who work in blowing sand all day? How about gift shops and restaurants along our coasts? What about dune buggy operators in the sand dunes of Little Sahara State Park in north-west Oklahoma?

The people of my district work every day to provide our Nation energy independence and to get our Nation out of the Middle East. But they are tired of fighting mounds of new regulations, unfunded mandates, and attacks on their livelihood as they serve our Nation.

WIND PRODUCTION TAX CREDIT

(Ms. TSONGAS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. TSONGAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a member of the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition to talk about a significant issue for Massachusetts and our nation: the wind production tax credit.

In the past 2 years, clean energy jobs in Massachusetts have grown by 24 percent and are projected to grow another 11 percent in 2014. Thanks to the wind industry, the Commonwealth has seen an influx of over \$200 million in capital investment and is home to nine wind-related manufacturing facilities.

Massachusetts is also home to the Wind Technology Testing Center, which at the time of its opening was the first facility in the country capable of testing large-scale wind turbine blades up to 300 feet in length. This testing center has created high-skilled jobs and has helped spur the development of next-generation blades made here in the United States.

We must act now to make sure that these innovative American businesses can continue to create new manufacturing opportunities here in the United States.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting an extension of the wind production tax credit.

STOP TARGETING POLITICAL BELIEFS

(Ms. JENKINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JENKINS. Mr. Speaker, investigations by the Ways and Means and Government Reform Committees have uncovered numerous examples of what appears to be a concerted effort by the IRS to target conservative groups and develop new regulations that could essentially silence conservative groups.

If allowed to take effect, these proposed regulations impact groups that have always been allowed to voice their positions on public policy. Notably, one group exempt from these proposed regulations—even though they do similar types of outreach—is labor.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation is founded on the freedom of speech, and any effort to hinder grassroots advocacy by the IRS must be stopped. At the very least the IRS regulations should be put on hold until investigations into the agency's prior misconduct are complete.

I urge my colleagues to support the Stop Targeting of Political Beliefs by the IRS Act, to ensure the administration does not use the IRS as a weapon to silence groups based on political beliefs.

LET'S GIVE AMERICA A RAISE

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

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, the Federal minimum wage has failed to keep up with the cost of living, leaving far too many families on the brink of poverty. For millions of Americans struggling to make ends meet on the current minimum wage, times have gotten harder and harder.

Increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour would be especially important for the thousands of working women currently trying to pull their families out of poverty. Two-thirds of minimum wage workers are women. Nearly a third of the families headed by a single female are living in poverty.

This is wrong. No mother who works hard at a full-time job to provide for her children and family should be living in poverty. Our success as a nation hinges on the success of women. When women succeed, America succeeds.

That is why I have just signed a discharge petition to bring a bill to this floor so that we can vote on raising the Federal minimum wage to \$10.10 for all hardworking Americans, including our mothers and daughters.

I think it is time. Let's give America a raise.

OAS MUST DO MORE TO SUPPORT DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on the Organization of American States, OAS, to take immediate action in support of freedom and democracy in Venezuela. The OAS must not remain silent while the people who are peaceful in Venezuela are being murdered on the streets by the Maduro regime.

I commend the government of Panama for proposing a region-wide foreign minister meeting to discuss the violations of human rights in Venezuela.

If the OAS can convene a special session over the lack of airspace access for a plane from Bolivia, then surely it must convene one on the ongoing democracy in Venezuela.

As a member of the OAS and its largest international donor, the U.S. has a moral obligation to ensure that these democratic principles are upheld, and if the OAS does not do more to address these attacks on freedom, then, Mr. Speaker, we must use our full voice, vote, and influence to compel it into action.

PRODUCTION TAX CREDIT

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

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of a critical jobs-creating policy for Iowa and our country that must be extended immediately, the production tax credit.

Once again, Congress has allowed the job-creating production tax credit to expire. This is unacceptable. Now is the time to not just talk about job creation but to act on a policy that is a proven job creator.

The production tax credit has helped revitalize our manufacturing base and build a homegrown industry. The wind industry supports some 80,000 jobs across the country and over 6,000 in Iowa alone. With Iowa a leader in wind power, the industry is investing in our rural communities and moving us toward a cleaner, homegrown source of energy.

The last time the PTC expired, thousands of jobs were lost, including hundreds right in my district in Iowa. We can't let these jobs disappear again. The PTC must be extended.

THE TRAIN WRECK OF OBAMACARE CONTINUES

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

Mr. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, the train wreck of the President's health care plan continues. Last Friday afternoon,

curious timing, the Centers for Medicare Services released a report.

Mr. Speaker, the CMS is working with the IRS to implement ObamaCare, and the report said it looked at the effect on small businesses of ObamaCare and the effect on the premiums that were going to be paid by men and women who work in those small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, their report, from the President's own administration, said that 11 million workers will pay a higher health care premium under the Affordable Care Act. That is more than 5 million women who are going to pay a higher health care premium, when the promise the President made was that every family would save \$2,500 per year.

Mr. Speaker, they are not only not going to save \$2,500, those 11 million Americans are going to pay more for their health care next year, hard-working middle class Americans who can't afford it.

America deserves better.

PRODUCTION TAX CREDIT EXTENSION

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, while we fool around again with a lot of minor bills here today, we refuse to deal with the ones that we ought to be dealing with. We need to be involved in passing things that create jobs.

Now, the production tax credit is an absolute no-brainer. We have used it for years and years. As long as I have been in the Congress it has been here, and the wind industry is dependent on it.

It is 3,000 jobs in my State, and thousands of jobs across this country. We passed it in the nineties. We let it expire. We lost all the jobs, and we are doing it again.

Now, climate change ought to be impressing people that we have to move away from fossil fuels and look for alternative energy, and this is the way we are going to do it.

In the 20th century, we invested in aerospace and microchip industries through the production tax credit, and we made all the advances of the Internet and everything else on the basis of these Production Tax Credits.

The 21st century is going to be about alternative energy, and this House dawdles around, attacking the IRS, and trying to repeal the ACA and all of this.

Why don't you make it a suspension bill?

It would pass in a minute.

□ 1215

LOGAN REGIONAL HOSPITAL'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

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