

reverse a longstanding Medicare prohibition on critical health services for our seniors.

Since its implementation in 1965, Medicare has excluded coverage for hearing aids and related audiology services, routine dental care, and routine eye exams and eyeglasses, despite the large number of older Americans who critically need these items and services.

The Commonwealth Fund reports that, among all Medicare beneficiaries who needed a hearing aid, only 75 percent did not have one. Of those who had trouble eating because of problems with their teeth, 70 percent had not seen a dentist in the past year. And of those who had trouble seeing, 43 percent had not had an eye exam in the past year. The reason for many seniors was affordability.

According to the latest statistics from the Kaiser Family Foundation, more than half of Medicare beneficiaries live on incomes below \$26,200 per year. For them to pay out of pocket creates extreme hardship.

Sadly, reliable data shows that neglect of all health, and even the lack of routine dental exams and cleanings, can deteriorate overall physical health and exacerbate serious and complicated health problems that increase with age.

It is also increasingly well documented that untreated vision and hearing loss diminishes quality of life and increases the risk of costly health outcomes, such as falls and resulting disability, depression, and dementia.

My bill would remove the restrictions currently prohibiting Medicare coverage of these basic healthcare necessities such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, and dental care. Expanding Medicare coverage for these services is a cost-effective intervention that will prevent accidents, falls, cognitive impairments, and increases in chronic conditions and oral cancer.

Madam Speaker, if we do not address these gaps in health coverage now, the overall health of our aging population will continue to suffer and the need for costly and avoidable services will increase. But most importantly, giving our older adults the gift of hearing, vision, and oral health would go a long way toward helping our seniors enjoy their golden years free from depression and social isolation.

It is time to recognize that total healthcare for our seniors must include adequate access to vision, hearing, and dental services. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor the Seniors Have Eyes, Ears, and Teeth Act, and ensure a healthier future for all our seniors.

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PUT THE PEOPLE FIRST AND END GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

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

Mrs. TRAHAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about what is now the longest government shutdown in American history, its impact on the hardworking men and women of Massachusetts, and the opportunity cost of the current impasse.

Over the last several weeks, I have heard heartbreaking stories from Federal workers and their families from across north central Massachusetts. During a meeting I had last week in Andover with furloughed IRS employees, I heard about veterans struggling to afford their prescriptions and parents worrying about putting food on the table.

One woman had just recently lost her husband and others were still recovering from last September's gas explosions in the Merrimack Valley. A few days earlier, I spoke with an air traffic controller at Logan Airport who, after hearing President Trump's assurances from the Oval Office that the budget standoff would not lead to a shutdown last month, felt comfortable splurging on Christmas presents for his wife and four children. Now, with the bills coming due and his pay stub reading zero, he and his family are confronted with anxiety and financial hardship.

Each of the over 800,000 Federal workers impacted by this shutdown, close to 7,500 in Massachusetts alone, has a story to share. I am the daughter of a union iron worker and the country's biggest union, the AFL-CIO, has a saying: A fair day's wage for a fair day's work. We gain nothing from punishing the dedicated Federal workforce, nor do we position ourselves to recruit the best and the brightest if we can't even keep the lights on.

Today, the majority in this Chamber continues to vote for legislation that reopens the Federal Government, restores critical services, and makes Federal employees financially whole again.

As we continue to wait on the President and his party's leadership in the Senate to do the right thing by approving House-passed legislation to end this shutdown, critical pieces of legislation languish as the American people wait anxiously for Congress to act on real issues and crises, not the manufactured one on the border.

Healthcare costs continue to rise. Our climate is rapidly changing as coastal communities suffer from more intense storms and more frequent flooding, while California has faced down some of the largest and deadliest fires in the history of the State.

Gun violence continues to rip apart families and communities, and more Americans died of an opioid overdose than died during the Vietnam war. There is so much more we should be focused on.

Madam Speaker, we cannot allow shutting down the government over a policy debate to become the new normal. I was here as a staffer in 1995 during Newt Gingrich's shutdown and remember feeling that it was an unprecedented event, never to happen again. Sadly, that feeling was wrong.

We were all elected to this body to debate issues that matter to the American people. It is what our constituents expect us to do. It is time to open the government and debate border security on the floor of the people's House for all to see.

Ensuring the safety and the security of the United States is among our most solemn responsibilities. I take it very seriously, but the only crisis right now is the one the President is making.

Each day that the administration keeps the government closed, it threatens the financial security of Federal workers, the people who process our taxes, inspect our food, and ensure airport security as well as all of the people who depend upon them.

Each day of the shutdown is a day lost supporting education, improving roads and bridges, and providing affordable healthcare.

We have sent bill after bill to the upper Chamber to provide border security and reopen the government. This week, we will do it again. If the President wants to improve border security, he should work with Democrats on real solutions.

Madam Speaker, I oppose a \$5 billion wall. Experts say the wall won't stop the flow of drugs or prevent visa overstays. The people who live at the border don't want it. But wherever you stand on funding a border wall, holding Federal employees and their families hostage is unacceptable.

Madam Speaker, it is time to put people first, end this government shutdown, and get back to work.

MOURNING THE LOSS OF GDANSK MAYOR PAWEŁ ADAMOWICZ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, as co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Poland, it is with a truly heavy heart that I rise this morning to express deepest sympathy to our NATO ally, Poland, and its countrymen and women on the brutal slaying of visionary Gdansk Mayor Paweł Adamowicz.

Mayor Adamowicz had served his city since 1998 as it championed the values of liberty, equality, and democracy. I hold profound respect for his enduring dedication, perseverance, and honorable service to his community and nation. He loved Gdansk as a beacon for a free Poland and gave his life to it.

What a deep tragedy this is for his grieving family, his wife, his children, his associates, for the Polish nation, and for freedom-loving people everywhere.

Far too much blood has been shed on Polish soil for the world to ignore such a heinous crime that took his life.

I visited Gdansk in both 2009 and 2013, and through these visits, I gained an even deeper respect for its noble history and its place on Earth, including the location where Nazi shelling at Westerplatte began the cataclysmic invasion of Poland starting World War II.