

not have savings to fall back on during this time.

“How are we supposed to pay our rent, our bills, keep food on the table for our family, or pay for an emergency should it arise? I do have a full-time job that will at least bring us some income during this shutdown, and I am sure we are luckier than most Federal-employed families, but I can assure you that our family is in true panic mode.

“We have been doing everything in our power to ensure our family would be able to purchase a home this summer. How do we explain to creditors that we don’t have the money to pay them right now without it affecting our credit?”

I have also heard from a constituent who is a furloughed Federal worker who is “forced to come to work every day without pay due to the partial government shutdown.

“Every day that goes by, the stress and anxiety about not having a paycheck and having to support my family, all the while having to incur the costs of going to work every day, mounts. To top this all off, as an ‘excepted,’ or an ‘exempt,’ employee, under current Federal law, I am not allowed to apply for nor can I receive unemployment compensation.”

I have also heard from a local business owner who contracts with Federal entities. He says: “My work has ground to a halt. I won’t be compensated for any downtime, and I will have to reduce my workforce. We don’t need a wall; we don’t need to waste money; and we don’t need symbolic racism. We need an open government that manages land, services, travel, and commerce. Please apply pressure to get the government open and our district’s Federal employees, contractors, and private-sector partners back to work.”

I have heard from a constituent who served 40 years in the Coast Guard, under many different administrations, who said: “Worst of all, it is negatively impacting the most junior members of our workforce. These are the people you will meet if you ever take your family out boating on Puget Sound or the navigable waters of this country and experience some form of distress. As a retiree, I will not be paid at the end of this month, a statement I once believed I would never have to say.”

I have heard from a social worker whose client left a domestic violence situation and recently received a letter about discontinuation of Section 8 housing benefits: “This family, without this support, will be homeless once again, let alone the emotional strain that this is causing. Please do what you can,” she says, “to prevent the stress on our most vulnerable.”

The shutdown must end now. Federal employees and their families should not be held hostage for a wasteful and ineffective wall. People who rely on assistance from the Federal Government are now caught in the fray.

The House now has voted nine times to reopen the government with bipar-

tisan bills that have similar language to what the Republican Senate passed in December, and we will introduce similar legislation today, giving Republicans in the Senate yet another opportunity to open the government.

I will not support reopening the government in exchange for the President’s wall. This hostage-taking strategy must not be a successful one, or we will see it again.

The wall, as he defines it, is a monument to racism and xenophobia, an environmental disaster, and a huge waste of hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Let’s be clear that what Mr. Trump offered as a “compromise” on Saturday doesn’t even undo the damage he alone has caused. That is no compromise; that is lip service.

Get the government open, and then we can have an informed, evidence-based discussion about the best way to protect our borders without holding the American people hostage.

HOSTAGE TAKING

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise once again as a proud American. I love my country. I love what it stands for, in terms of its great ideals. And, Madam Speaker, as a proud American, I rise today to address the question of hostage taking.

One of the principles that we employ in international diplomacy—and I am being a little bit euphemistic by saying “international diplomacy”—is that of not negotiating with hostage takers.

If you take one of our planes, hijack one of our planes, and you demand a ransom, we will not negotiate with you. Grab an American off the streets in some distant place, and we will not negotiate with you.

It doesn’t matter that you start out at \$50 million and then reduce your desire to have a ransom to \$10 million, maybe. We don’t negotiate with you. You are a hostage taker.

The United States of America, the greatest and richest country in the world, which can pay the price, refuses to negotiate with hostage takers.

Madam Speaker, this is bigger than the President. This is about whether or not we will allow any President to take hostages and demand a ransom that must be paid or else the hostages will continue to suffer. This is about whether we will allow any President to do this—not just a Republican President, any President.

It is un-American to take persons hostage within this country and demand a ransom when we wouldn’t allow it on the international stage.

I am a person who decided that it was appropriate to meet with the hostages, and I did. I met with the hostages who work with the IRS. I heard their clarification call for help, their appeal for some understanding.

When I met with them, it became very clear to me that there is pain be-

yond the pain of not having the check to pay the bills.

Some of these persons literally indicated that they were having some mental concerns that would have to be addressed because they played by the rules. They have come to work; they have done their jobs; and now they find themselves in this most tenuous position of being denied the wages they have earned.

□ 1115

There is something wrong when a President will hold people hostage to the extent that they have mental issues as a result of the hostage taking.

One of the things called to my attention was that they don’t believe that this all ends with them the moment they are allowed to go back to work and receive the wages that they have earned. They believe that they may have to have some additional counseling to help them through and to better cope with the experience that they never contemplated they would have as a result of being employed by the United States of America, the richest country in the world.

This is bigger than this President. It is about him, but it is bigger than him. It is about whether or not we will allow hostage taking within the country and yield to it, or will we demand that we do what we continue to say is our bedrock principle when it comes to negotiating with hostages on the international stage, and that is, you release our people; you let them go.

Mr. President, let our people go. You have become a modern-day pharaoh. You are holding people hostage, Mr. President. Don’t you see what you are doing to the fiber and fabric of this country? Don’t you see how you are ripping it apart? You are a modern-day pharaoh. Let our people go.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

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 11 o’clock and 16 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:

God of wisdom and peace, thank You for giving us another day.