

I also congratulate and thank the thousands of activists who worked tirelessly for nearly a decade to bring our troops home.

I thank the Illinois State senator, who, on October 2, 2002, stood before a crowd in Chicago and said, "I don't oppose all wars . . . I oppose a rash war," a war, he said, which "distracts us from a rise in the uninsured, a rise in the poverty rate, a drop in the median income." That State senator was Barack Obama 9 years ago. Later, as a candidate for President, he promised to end the war in Iraq—a promise fulfilled today.

Welcome home, troops. And thank you, Mr. President.

NORTH CAROLINA MEDICAID BOONDOGGLE SHOWS NEED FOR MORE ACCOUNTABILITY

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, this week I learned of a recent audit of North Carolina's Medicaid billing system. Normally, I don't bring up State issues like this before the House, but it turns out that this isn't just a State issue.

North Carolina is currently upgrading its Medicaid billing system and agreed to pay a contractor \$265 million to make the upgrades. But surprise, surprise, the upgrade will end up costing \$495 million—nearly twice as much.

Who cares? That's a problem for North Carolina taxpayers; right? Not so fast.

It turns out that the Federal Government is expected to pick up 90 percent of the tab for this new system. That means all taxpayers, including North Carolina taxpayers, will be shelling out an extra \$200 million to cover for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' incompetence and inability to keep a lid on costs. Making matters worse, this department went so far as to give itself an "A" grade for managing the upgrade program.

Mr. Speaker, I doubt taxpayers will give the folks at the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services an "A" for flushing \$200 million of their money down the toilet.

This is a classic example of how government bureaucracies view Federal taxpayer dollars—as manna from heaven. This money is not manna from heaven. It is taken directly out of the pockets of hardworking taxpayers from across the Nation. When taxpayers hear stories like this, they wonder why they even pay taxes in the first place. It's no wonder they give Big Government a failing grade.

IN CELEBRATION OF BILL OF RIGHTS DAY

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. I rise today to recognize and celebrate

Bill of Rights Day, which is today, December 15, 2011.

The Bill of Rights was created to ensure a level of limited government. A "parchment barrier" was the way many of our Founding Fathers described documents such as the Constitution and its first 10 amendments—the Bill of Rights.

Our Founders viewed them as an essential guarantee on our freedoms. These documents would serve as a barrier to an oppressive government, preventing such forces from overpowering its citizenry. Our Founders also knew that such documents weren't worth the parchment they were written on unless a diligent citizenry knew of their distinct worth. For the protections offered under the Bill of Rights to endure, they knew that all citizens must understand their content and importance.

That's why today we celebrate Bill of Rights Day—for each of us to better understand our Bill of Rights and to know that, without them, liberty cannot prosper.

ENERGY SECURITY, AMERICAN JOBS, AND THE KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DUFFY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. TERRY. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, we are going to discuss energy security, American jobs, and the Keystone XL pipeline.

At this time I yield such time as he may consume to the chairman emeritus of the Energy and Commerce Committee, Mr. JOE BARTON of Texas.

(Mr. BARTON of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I thank the distinguished gentleman from Nebraska.

Mr. Speaker, we are here today to discuss a project that is of utmost importance to the American people. As the gentleman from Nebraska just mentioned, it's called the Keystone XL pipeline. It is a proposal to extend an existing pipeline that starts in Canada, comes down through the Midwestern parts of the United States, into Oklahoma. The proposal is to extend that pipeline to the gulf coast of Texas and Louisiana.

Why is this important to every American?

Quite simply because we use lots of energy in America and because we do not produce as much as we use, so we have to import some of the energy. A lot of the energy we use comes from oil; and the Keystone XL pipeline, if built, would bring crude oil that starts up in Canada, down through the Midwest, to the gulf coast where we have about 50 percent of the United States' refining capacity.

This is a good deal because, number one, Canada is an ally. We are importing quite a bit of oil right now from Venezuela, which has a government dictator, Mr. Chavez, who is somewhat hostile to the United States. We are importing oil from the Middle East. While we have allies in the Middle East, that is an unstable region in terms of its political stability. So, if we could get more energy from North America, from Canada, that would be a good thing for us.

In the construction phase, this pipeline will create—the gentleman from Nebraska would know the exact number—somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 jobs, I believe. Once in production, with all of the spinoffs, we think up to 100,000 jobs would be created here in the United States. It would make us more secure.

When you just look at the facts of it, you have to ponder why anybody would be opposed to it.

I am puzzled as to why some of my friends on the Democratic side of the aisle are opposed to it. The State Department, under the leadership of Hillary Clinton, endorsed the pipeline. They did an impact statement that said it was positive. At one point in time, it looked like it was going to get approval and move through. The environmental groups came to Washington last fall. They surrounded the White House, and protested against President Obama. Unfortunately, in my opinion, the President decided to delay a decision until after the election, which is why we're here today.

In what we call the "jobs bill" that passed the House 2 days ago, there is a provision in it that requires a decision to be made on Keystone within 60 days, I believe, of the enactment of the bill if the President signs it. The President has said he would veto that bill, which shows that, while he said back in the fall that he wanted to delay a decision, apparently he opposes it. So he opposes jobs. He also opposes energy security for the United States, which is an odd platform, in my opinion, to run on in a Presidential election campaign—but it's a free country, and if the President wants to go down that trail, he has the right to do that.

So I believe that Keystone is a good idea. In my congressional district down in Texas, there are numerous pipelines. There are oil pipelines, natural gas pipelines, gasoline refined product pipelines, water pipelines. We have never had any major problems with any of those pipelines from an environmental standpoint. The Keystone pipeline would be built using the absolute latest in technology and with the latest in safety, in inspections, in maintenance. I just cannot imagine why we would oppose it.

So I am in strong support of it, and I want to thank Mr. TERRY for his leadership on this issue. He has introduced bills. He has worked tirelessly in committee. He has worked tirelessly on the floor here. As I said, I hope that we get