

urge Congress to reject this proposal. Nationally, this bill will cut \$16 billion and result in the loss of more than half a million jobs, which will serve as an abrupt speed bump for our economic recovery. Mr. Speaker, that's unacceptable. We can and must do better.

Twenty-six business leaders in my community—including the Prince William and Fairfax Chambers of Commerce, realtors, builders, and contractors—recently signed a resolution in which they said: New transportation infrastructure is an investment, not a cost. Failure to invest will result in economic decline.

They are right. They have witnessed firsthand the consequence of not making significant, new, dedicated, and reliable investments in infrastructure. Due to this lack of investment at the State level, Federal revenues are now the single-largest source of transportation funding in my State. That's why \$500 million in State dollars are diverted annually from new construction to simple maintenance as more and more roadways deteriorate and along with them our competitiveness in attracting new employers and their families.

But it is not just roads. My community supports a multimodal transportation system that includes bus and van pools, commuter rail, and mass transit. We have the second-highest transit usership in the Nation; yet our success in getting people out of their cars and off the roads is now in jeopardy because of this bill eliminating dedicated funding for transit, breaking a 30-year commitment that we have to supporting multimodal options for commuters all across America. Under this proposal, money that has been dedicated to transit will now go to highways, and a one-time general fund transfer of \$40 billion is somehow supposed to make up for it.

To further salt the wounds of my constituents, House Republicans are proposing to pay for that one-time general fund transfer by gutting the retirement benefits of Federal employees. As a result of the 2-year pay freeze, Federal employees have already contributed \$60 billion over the next 10 years to deficit reduction, but that is not good enough. This new proposal would pile on by increasing out-of-pocket retirement costs by at least three times while reducing overall benefits by 40 percent. Once again, the House Republican majority is using the dedicated Federal workforce as a punching bag politically and discouraging today's young people from even considering a career in public service.

So let me get this straight. The Republican bill will actually reduce spending on transportation, end the reliable user-fee funding system that has been in place since 1956, shifting the burden onto the backs of Federal employees. That's not progress by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, it will just make congestion worse.

I urge my colleagues to defeat this bill and work together on a bipartisan alternative.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 8 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HARRIS) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

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

Loving God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

As we meditate on all the blessing of life, we especially pray for the blessing of peace in our lives and in our world. Our fervent prayer, O God, is that people will learn to live together in reconciliation and respect, so that the terrors of war, and of dictatorial abuse, will be no more.

As You have created each person, we pray that You would guide our hearts and minds that every person of every place and background might focus on Your great gift of life, and so learn to live in unity.

May Your special blessings be upon the Members of this assembly, in the important, sometimes difficult work they do. Give them wisdom and charity, that they might work together for the common good.

May all that is done this day in the people's House, be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina 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.

PRESIDENT'S BUDGET IS POLITICAL

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the President released his budget for 2013, which calls for a cut in defense spending, for the first time since 1998, by almost \$500 billion. It is clear the President is simply taking resources away from our military capabilities and using the funds to grow the size of government to promote more unsustainable domestic programs, putting senior citizens at risk of a devalued dollar and burdening young people and college students with crushing debt.

Instead of focusing on stopping defense cut sequestration, the President is putting our national security at risk and our allies in jeopardy during a time of international instability.

Cutting our defense budget with record-breaking tax increases destroying jobs will not reduce the national deficit, but only represents a diversion of funds. I urge the President to recognize the primary function of the national government is national defense, to provide peace through strength.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

DEMOCRATS PROTECT MEDICARE

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

Ms. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 3 million seniors represented by the Alliance for Retired Americans, I rise with my Democratic colleagues to accept their valentine for our vote to improve Medicare under the health care reform law. Our seniors deserve love, care, and support every day. But today, on a day when people all across the country are celebrating with their loved ones, let us stand together and show our appreciation to the more than 47 million seniors who make up the fabric of our country.

In my State of Maryland, the Affordable Care Act is already working to provide more than 70,000 seniors with preventive care benefits and offers a 50 percent discount for prescription drugs to nearly 4,000 beneficiaries who enter the Medicare part D doughnut hole.

The Ryan budget, lauded by Republicans, would replace Medicare with an inefficient voucher plan and increase the out-of-pocket costs of Maryland seniors by more than \$6,800 in the first year alone. And while they charge the health reform bill cut Medicare, Republicans fail to admit that they adopted in their plan the same \$500 billion in “cuts”—actually cost savings—included in the health care reform law.

So I stand with my colleagues to assure seniors that we'll protect Medicare today and in the future. And to all of those seniors I visited this morning, Happy Valentine's Day.

SUGAR REFORM

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, today, on Valentine's Day, millions of Americans will celebrate with a box of chocolates or candy. All told, consumers are expected to spend more than \$1.5 billion on candy this holiday.

What they don't know is that government sugar controls are making that heart-shaped box more expensive than it needs to be. What they don't know is that American companies are struggling to compete against foreign producers who pay half as much for sugar.

Because of government price supports, marketing allotments, and import quotas, U.S. consumers and businesses pay almost double the average world market price for sugar. By some estimates, this could be costing us more than 20,000 jobs. Many of us have watched good jobs lost because the government guarantees the profits of a relatively small group of growers and producers.

Reforming our sugar program isn't a partisan issue, which is why I've been proud to introduce H.R. 1385, the Free Market Sugar Act, with my friend from Chicago, DANNY DAVIS.

Maybe next Valentine's Day can be sweeter for American workers and consumers.

CONTINUED ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR OUR SENIORS

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

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, in 2010, the Affordable Care Act delivered a \$250 check to seniors in my district who were struggling to cover the gap between the cost of their prescription drugs and their Medicare coverage. In 2011, these same seniors benefited from an average savings of \$648 on their medications.

For my well-meaning Republican colleagues who say health reform is hurting Medicare beneficiaries, I ask them to imagine spending two and three times that amount on prescription drugs per month.

For most seniors, \$648 is a significant savings. And it is just the beginning.

The Affordable Care Act will provide more efficient care by bundling Medicare services, investing in our health care workforce, and focusing on quality.

Replacing Medicare with vouchers would erase the progress we have already made toward prescription drug coverage and lead to fewer choices for beneficiaries.

I encourage my colleagues to work with me on solutions that guarantee continued access to health care for our seniors.

CELEBRATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE HOMECOMING OF CONGRESSMAN SAM JOHNSON

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, today I want to acknowledge a colleague, a fellow Texan, a veteran, and a true American hero. Congressman SAM JOHNSON served in the United States Air Force for 29 years. During service, he flew in 62 combat missions in the Korean war and 25 missions in the Vietnam war. While flying in his 25th Vietnam combat mission, Congressman JOHNSON was shot down and captured in North Vietnam.

On February 12, 1973, after 7 years of imprisonment, Congressman JOHNSON was returned to the United States and reunited with his wife and daughters. This week, we honor Congressman JOHNSON and we celebrate the 39th anniversary of his homecoming. Through the years of agony, he persevered, and he left Vietnam with the resolution to support every man and every woman fighting for the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, we are all called to office for different reasons. For Members of my class 10 years ago, it was the tragic events of September 11. For Congressman JOHNSON, it was his imprisonment that empowered him to run for office.

It is an honor to celebrate a man who has given not only part of his life to protect our freedoms, but a man who continues to represent the American people with dignity and respect. Thank you, Congressman JOHNSON, for your service to our Nation.

COMMENDING THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN TO HELP RESPONSIBLE HOMEOWNERS REFINANCE THEIR HOMES

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

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis plunged our economy into a recession that we are still struggling to overcome. Homeownership is at the heart of the American Dream, and yet over 10 million American families now owe more on their home than

what it's worth. President Obama recently announced a plan that would give homeowners the chance to save hundreds monthly and approximately \$3,000 yearly on their mortgages by refinancing at historically low interest rates.

Under President Obama's plan, the administration would also expand the eligibility for the Home Affordable Modification Program to borrowers with higher debt loans. It would also triple incentives paid to banks to reduce principal on loans and to help borrowers rebuild equity. In addition to these proposals, the administration is also extending HAMP to December 2013 to help responsible homeowners lower their costs and stay in their homes.

Mr. Speaker, I thank President Obama for his proposal that will provide much-needed relief for millions of American families. And I thank the President for his leadership and his commitment to helping American families move forward.

CAMERAS IN THE SUPREME COURT

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court will soon take up the President's nationalized health care law. This case will go down in history as it affects every American. But unless every citizen has a seat inside the Supreme Court, they will not be able to watch the legal arguments or hear the questions by the Justices. The people will not be able to see justice in action. The American public should be able to view the proceedings on TV much like they do with C-SPAN when Congress is in session.

I know cameras can be placed in a courtroom without disruption because I was one of the first judges in Texas to allow an unobtrusive camera in the courtroom. I did so without any problem and proved the cynics wrong.

A lack of seating capacity is no reason to deny the American public access to the Supreme Court. The American people deserve an all-access pass to watch the High Court in action. The Supreme Court is the most important court in the world. Let the world know what takes place behind those closed doors. Let cameras and the people in.

And that's just the way it is.

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE

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

Ms. BUERKLE. Mr. Speaker, the President assured American seniors that under his health care package, their insurance plans would not be affected and that they would have the same health care choices as before the law.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, this is not the case. The President's health care law