

should play in our economy, foreign policy, and our daily lives.

Many Americans believe that if the United States had learned from the past, they would have realized that the greater the country got involved in the economy, with countries around the world, and in our daily lives, the greater the magnitude of the problems in the status quo would become. Many Americans believe that our government has not learned from the past and continues to make the same mistakes that once made its population distraught. Even though our country's interaction with foreign policy and the economy may not directly impact us, the interaction somehow influences a majority of America's population in their daily lives. This impact on the status quo and on the population's mindset is indicative through stories in the news, through personal experiences, and through observations of our surroundings.

Overall, our government should understand that the role that they play in our lives should be in balance. Foreign policy has made our country one of the most powerful countries around the world. We have a prestigious navy, a strong air force, and, most importantly, the most dominating army that money can buy; however, in this case, America's dedication towards the development of its army has preoccupied them to a point where it has reallocated funds from other areas that desperately need them. This reallocation would allow the government to play a more conservative role in our lives. If the funds that were dedicated towards foreign policy were reevaluated, I'm sure there are places where cuts can be made and the money saved be reallocated to other sectors. This begs the question of which sector requires the money the most, based on its influence on our daily lives. The education sector consists of the building blocks of this country and preoccupies most teenagers' daily lives. If more money was invested in this sector, we would be able to hire more experienced teachers, give teachers more freedom to construct their courses, create more effective ways of assessment, as well as pay our teachers more. What this would inevitably lead to is lesser involvement in education, for kids my age, most of our daily lives, and more freedom for teachers to foster growth and meet the needs of individual students, as well as give students the freedom to express themselves without being restricted to the methods of the government. This is important in demonstrating the balance that is necessary of government in our daily lives. If the government allowed students to embrace education, the United States would be able to be competitive with the education systems of other countries around the world. With smarter future generations, America would not make the same mistakes it made in the past that led to economic collapses such as the one that occurred during the Great Depression. Individuals in the American government would finally realize that they ought to play a smaller role in the economy by allowing it to be the one that causes its own downfall and also its own rebuilding. Over the past few years, it has become evident that the greater the role that government plays in the economy, the further it goes into shambles and the more jobs that are lost. This is important because even though I have been fortunate enough to have a family that has not had to go through the stresses of job loss, the effects of thousands of jobs going away are being felt by families all across the United States, affecting their daily lives, in how they live and how they interact with the people around them. If the government did not play as large a role as it is playing right now, we would probably see the economy col-

lapse and then gradually begin to rebuild itself, creating more jobs, steadying the economy, and more importantly, bringing stability to families across the country.

Thus, the role that government ought to play in our lives should be one in balance and it ought to be the government's responsibility to make sure their actions are properly affecting their population. However, in situations where the government loses sight of the problems that lay ahead due to their actions, it becomes the peoples' responsibility to speak and make sure their voice is heard. Because, after all, as Abraham Lincoln once said, this is a "government of the people, by the people, for the people."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 114, had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

IN RECOGNITION OF THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the second anniversary of the enactment of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. In the two years since its enactment, the Affordable Care Act has been good for seniors, good for women, good for small businesses, and good for all Americans.

As the Affordable Care Act is implemented, it will continue to expand access to affordable, quality health care for over 30 million Americans and will work to reign in the ever-escalating costs of health care. Passage of the Affordable Care Act was a major step toward fulfilling the promise all Americans were pledged: the promise of unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which quality healthcare embodies.

For the people I represent in the 37th District of California, the Affordable Care Act will improve coverage for 299,000 residents who already have insurance. It will give tax credits and other assistance to up to 146,000 families and 15,100 small businesses to help them afford coverage. Health care reform will also improve Medicare for 63,000 beneficiaries in my district, including closing the prescription drug "donut hole" once and for all.

In 2010, the Affordable Care Act made it possible for 354,592 Medicare beneficiaries in California to receive a \$250 rebate to help cover the cost of their prescription drugs when they hit the donut hole. In 2011, 319,429 Medicare beneficiaries received a 50 percent discount—an average savings of \$538 per person—on brand-name prescription drugs when they hit the coverage gap. That's a total savings of over \$171 million for seniors in California alone! In my district, 3,200 seniors received prescription drug discounts worth \$1.5 million, an average discount of \$460 per senior.

The Affordable Care Act extends coverage to 92,500 uninsured residents of the 37th District and will guarantee that 17,500 residents with pre-existing conditions can obtain the health insurance they need. Since enactment, health care reform has extended insurance coverage to 5,599 Californians through the new Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan.

The Affordable Care Act protects 1,100 families from bankruptcy due to unaffordable health care costs and currently allows 59,000 young adults to obtain coverage on their parents' insurance plans. The new law provides millions of dollars in new funding for 11 community health centers in my district. And finally, it will reduce the cost of uncompensated care for hospitals and other health care providers by \$125 million annually.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach the two year anniversary of the enactment of the Affordable Care Act, an attack on women's access to affordable, quality, and necessary healthcare services is underway. From the comments made by Rush Limbaugh about Georgetown Law Student Sandra Fluke, to Republican attempts to roll back coverage and restrict access to birth control, the GOP's war on women stands in stark contrast to the Administration's goal of ensuring that women have access to the healthcare services they need to remain healthy.

As a female Member of Congress, I understand that women have unique health care needs, and are often the ones who make health care decisions for their families. I voted for and strongly support the Affordable Care Act because it provides important benefits for women and their families. The Affordable Care Act helps women by eliminating the discriminatory gender rating system, making sure that insurance companies do not consider pregnancy grounds for denying coverage, and doing away with all pre-existing conditions.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, all Americans joining new insurance plans have the freedom to choose from any primary care provider, OB-GYN, or pediatrician in their health plan's network, or emergency care outside of the plan's network, without a referral. Under the Affordable Care Act, women joining a new health care plan can receive recommended preventive services, like mammograms, new baby care and well-child visits, and an annual wellness visit with no out-of-pocket costs. In 2011, over 6 million people with private insurance coverage in California gained preventative service coverage with no cost sharing as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

Before enactment of the Affordable Care Act, women could be charged more for individual insurance policies simply because of their gender. A 22-year-old woman could be charged 150 percent the premium that a 22-year-old man paid. In 2014, insurers will not be able to charge women higher premiums than they charge men. The law takes strong action to control health care costs, including helping states crack down on excessive premium increases and making sure most of your premium dollars go toward your health care.

The Affordable Care Act also allows young adults under the age of 26 to stay on their parents' health insurance plan. This provision has expanded access to health insurance coverage for 2.5 million young people nationwide. In my district, 7,000 young adults have taken advantage of this provision and are now covered under their parents' plan.