Most of us are called to be in secular jobs where our performance is part of our witness. Instead of looking for a career in a specifically Christian field, graduates should look for careers which suit their individual talents and desires. Witness of God's work in their lives will come with a job well done.

Jay has certainly done his job well, and served this House nobly. I thank him for his service., and wish him and his family all the best.

PROTECTING MEDICARE AND REBUILDING OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of tonight's Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Before I get into the issues that I want to talk about, I want to also reach out to Jay. Since nobody from this side of the aisle has yet spoken, I'd like to do so.

About 3 years ago, I started doing Special Order hours, and always Jay would come up to me during the floor session and ask me what we had planned and share with me the Republican plans for the Special Order hour. And we'd work it out: Will you take the full hour, yes or no? Probably 40 minutes, maybe less. That was so we would have a smooth transition from the Republican Special Order hour or the other way around, Democrat to Republican. It has been a great pleasure to work with you, Jay. You do a great job here.

I could echo everything that's been said, but I really don't know all of the intricacies on your side. I do know that when they involve our side of the aisle, you're there to make it a smooth transition and to make it work. It was a pleasure working with you, and I'll miss you along with, I'm sure, every other Member of this House. So Godspeed and best wishes to you in your retirement.

Thank you very much, Jay.

Many things have happened over the last several days. We've got the fiscal cliff, but we've also had not only the retirement of very special people in the lives of the House of Representatives and the Senate, but also the recent death of Senator INOUYE, which marks the passage of the generation that fought in World War II.

I've been asked, and I'll gladly yield whatever time our colleague, COLLEEN HANABUSA of Hawaii, would like to take in memory of an extraordinary Senator.

I had the pleasure of working with him in the mid-90s when I was the Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior. We were working on the Native Hawaiian lands issues. He was a remarkable individual, one that not only understood the intricacies of that very complex situation, but also had enormous passion for the Native Hawaiians.

So tonight I yield whatever time she might want to take to COLLEEN HANABUSA, our colleague from the great State of Hawaii.

IN MEMORY OF SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUYE

Ms. HANABUSA. Thank you very much to the gentleman from California.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an extraordinary person who has shaped and defined what my home State, Hawaii, is today, a State which is unique and as special as the person I honor.

The person I rise to honor is DANIEL K. INOUYE, a person who cannot be described by a single adjective, a person whose accomplishments would cause you to pause and ask, Is this one person? Is this one man? This is a person who was awarded the greatest honor anyone who serves in the military can achieve, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

But it was an honor about 55 years late from a country that questioned his loyalty due to the fact that he was an American of Japanese ancestry; a person who could not get a haircut after being severely wounded and giving his arm in battle because he looked like the enemy; a person who insisted that instead of being bitter, he would dedicate his life to doing all he can to right social inequities and discrimination of all kinds. To do this, he became a part of the Democratic revolution that took control of Hawaii's territorial legislature. Remember, back then, Hawaii was run by the plantation bosses, and it was the Democratic revolution that shifted the power base.

He is also a person who served his territorial government, his State, and his Nation for a period of time just short of 60 years; a person who came to Congress and was recognized by his peers to serve and chair various committees, the most recent the Senate Appropriations Committee, along with being President pro tempore and on historic investigation committees like Watergate and Iran Contra. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, what he has seen. Imagine more so what brilliance and skills he possessed to serve so effectively for all these years. He has left such a mark on Hawaii.

Hawaii is the home of the Pacific Command. There is no question in my mind that the pivot to Asia-Pacific is possible because of his vision, a vision shared by the President; a vision which is made possible by the Senator's strong commitment to entities such as the East-West Center and his placement of the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii so that the whole Pacific benefits.

Hawaii's military importance goes without saying, as the investments made to Pearl Harbor, the Pacific Missile Range Facility, PACOM, Schofield, Hickam, Kaneohe Marine Corps, Pohakuloa, just to name a few, were all part of his plan on how to stabilize Hawaii's economy and this Nation and the world.

The Senator recognized that the future for Hawaii is getting off our dependence on fossil fuels, a conversation, by the way, that we had at the last delegation meeting which he chaired where he made it very clear that this was his priority. He was, as you can expect, already ahead of everyone because he had been funding research and development in this area for years.

He also knew that education was critical to our success and insisted on ensuring that the University of Hawaii be the land, sea, and space grant institution that it is—one of the few institutions that has all three designations.

□ 2030

But the person I will miss the most is the man who always said ''Just call me DAN'' to whomever he met. It didn't matter who it was. It was ''just call me DAN''—the person who shared stories about the values he was raised with, which I think was his way of giving us a glimpse of what he was made of.

At his 88th birthday party—88 is a very significant birthday, especially among the Japanese community—he shared the story of his father and a carp—yes, the fish, carp. His father told him to be like a carp, fighting as hard as you can as the carp did, but when it was time to die, you died with dignity.

The Senator did exactly that, but then you would expect nothing less from the person of whom no one word can describe, a person who did not want buildings named after him. He just wanted to be remembered as someone who represented the people of Hawaii honestly and to the best of his ability. When asked for his assessment of how he did, he just basically said, ''I think I did okay.''

Senator, if what you did is just ''okay,'' the rest of us are failing because not one of us can measure up to your standard of okay.

Mr. Speaker, you have no idea how we in Hawaii are so anxious because we do not know how to make up for our loss. We will not have him, Senator INOUYE, to rely upon to make things okay. The Senator said ''aloha'' as his last word.

We can only say ''aloha'' and ''mahalo'' to you, Senator, and to Irene, Kenny, and Maggie for sharing you with us.

Mr. GARAMENDI. The eulogy that was just given is most appropriate. There are men and women of extraordinary talent that have served in this Capitol, and certainly, Senator INOUYE fits that. There is also a fiscal cliff out there, and I know the Senator was

working diligently on that before his last days. Here, too, in the House of Representatives, we also should be working diligently on that.

It seems as though we are not making as much progress as we should. We have about 10 days now. Actually, I guess it's 12, 13 days. We go to January 3, so it's 16 days before the fiscal cliff actually occurs. Between now and then, we have a great challenge. We have the well-being of this Nation, the world's strongest and, in many, many ways, the world's greatest Nation. It doesn't really hang in the balance, but its well-being in the years ahead will be largely determined by how well we address this challenge of the fiscal cliff. It's the deficit. Will we be able to put in place a solid plan that over the course of, perhaps, a decade addresses the deficit and brings it under control and begins to reduce it? I know we can. We've done it before.

We did it in the 1990s when President Clinton made a proposal that would raise taxes and reduce expenditures. It led during that period of time to a surplus, a surplus that was dramatically altered when the George W. Bush administration came in and started two wars and enormous tax cuts simultaneously, and it led to a deficit that was extraordinarily increased as the Great Recession took place in 2008. We need to turn that around.

President Obama has made a very solid set of proposals during the course of the campaign, one in which taxes for a couple would go up over $250,000 of adjusted gross income; all of their income below that would continue to have the tax reduction. He also made very substantial proposals to reduce expenditures. Those are now being negotiated in a back-and-forth between Speaker BOEHNER and the President. He also made some very important proposals to grow the economy—significant investments in infrastructure, significant investments in research, in education, in the fundamental investments that create ongoing growth in the economy.

I'm not sure how this is going to work out, but here on the Democratic side of the aisle we have some principles that we want to lay down, and tonight we will discuss those principles. We've done this before—we've talked about Medicare, we've talked about Social Security, we've talked about laying down the investments.

Joining me tonight will be my colleagues from around this Nation. I want to start with JASON ALTMIRE, who has talked to these issues many times and who wants to present to us our view as Democrats.

JASON, if you will take the floor and speak to these issues.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I thank the gentleman from California for his leadership on these issues and for his continued leadership in bringing these discussions to the American people. I also look forward to hearing my friend from New York in what he has to say.

We have talked time and again about the importance of what we are trying to accomplish in this House with regard to protecting the Medicare program. I represent a district, as the gentleman well knows, that has 135,000 Medicare beneficiaries. It has, actually, the fourth-most Medicare beneficiaries of any congressional district in the country. So the people I represent have a very strong interest, as does every Member of this House, in making sure that Medicare is preserved, that it's protected, that it's strengthened, and that it is always going to be there, not just for those 135,000 beneficiaries who participate in the Medicare program today but for generations to come.

We are not going to stand here as Democrats or Republicans or as any political affiliation and say that everything is working perfectly and that nothing needs to be altered. The fact is, with regard to Medicare, one-third of the people who qualify for Medicare today use every penny that they have paid into the system over the course of their entire lifetimes within the first year of qualifying for Medicare because they have extremely high health care costs. That is something that we need to address, but you don't address that issue by slashing the program, by gutting Medicare, by taking advantage of those same people we are trying to help.

The fiscal cliff we are talking about is, therefore, a reason because Congress had an inability to come to an agreement on a long-term, fiscally sustainable economic policy, so we put this deadline in place—the first of the year, 16 days from today—when we'll have the situation in which the rates of all of the so-called ''Bush tax cuts,'' which were extended 2 years ago under President Obama, expire at every level, not just at that top bracket that we are talking about in the House.

I do support making sure that that top bracket reverts back to where it was during the Clinton administration or whatever we can negotiate for that group of people. But in doing so, we can't allow that same bracket for all of the taxpayers in the country to revert back because, for example, the lowest income bracket, currently 10 percent—the people who are working hard and playing by the rules, working Americans, working every day for their families—that bracket would go back up to 15 percent, which would be a 50 percent tax increase for the people who can least afford it if we do nothing, and everyone in between would see their tax rates go up.

So, while we continue to have the debate and the discussion about ''what happens to that top bracket?'' we have to understand that all of those income brackets go up—similarly, the estate tax, the alternative minimum tax, the capital gains rate, the child income tax credit, the Making Work Pay tax credit that was put into place a few years ago—all of these things either go away or revert back to a much higher level than they were before.

That coincides with the cuts that we're talking about, the draconian, across-the-board, haphazard cuts that were put in place specifically to spur action. Because they are so ominous and make such devastating cuts in programs, in tandem with the Bush tax cuts expiring, Congress would in no way allow that to happen at the same time. That's what the fiscal cliff is. It's both sides—the spending and the revenue situation. Then with regard to Medicare, that can't be allowed to be swept up in the hysteria that we are facing here in Congress.

□ 2040

We're going to talk more about this, but just leading it off, that's the crux of the discussion. We're going to talk about tax rates. We're going to talk in this discussion about infrastructure spending and the other investments that we can make as a Nation in the future of the country. But in doing so, we can't allow the most vulnerable in this country—135,000 of them live in my district, but all across the country, 40 million Medicare beneficiaries and the generations to come—we can't allow them to be the ones who pick up the bill for the decisions that are made here in haste as we approach the first of the year.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. ALTMIRE, thank you very much for moving this issue along.

I've used this placard before when we were discussing the Republican budget that did pass this House that would end Medicare as we know it. That was just a way of doing it with vouchers or with what they call premium support. Either way, Medicare as a guarantee of health care for those people 65 and over would be over. Now, there are other ways that Medicare can be whittled away, weakened to the point where it could simply die of malnutrition. We want to be quite certain that this doesn't happen and that this tombstone never comes to pass. It was 1965 that President Lyndon Johnson signed Medicare into existence, and we're not going to let it end in 2011 or 2012 or beyond.

I recall so vividly an experience as a child, I was probably, I don't know, 10, 12 years old. My father took me to the county hospital, which is where the elderly went to die. There was no Medicare then. It didn't exist. More than half of the seniors were in poverty. There was no health care available to them. No insurance company would insure the elderly. They were expensive. And so there was literally no way that they would be able to get health care except at the county hospital, a ward strung out as far as my eye could see, beds on both sides, the stench unbelievable. The moaning and the crying that was going on unbelievable.

In 1965, America took a step to become a compassionate Nation where we would take care of the elderly. And so

proposals have been bandied about, the Republican budget basically terminating Medicare or whittling away at it in various ways, most recently to increase the eligibility age from 65 to 67. What is a person to do when they're 65 and cannot get private insurance? And at the same time, they want to do away with the opportunity that exists in the Affordable Care Act for an exchange that could possibly provide insurance, but they want to do away with that. Come on. Come on. This is America where we take care of the elderly and we provide the services.

Medicare can be dealt with. We can deal with the inflation in Medicare and in the Affordable Care Act. Many, many things were done to start on that process, for example, keeping seniors healthy, providing for the annual medical checkup; making sure that they had the drug benefits, making sure that the drug benefit part D was available to all seniors; closing the doughnut hole in the Medicare part D drug benefit; electronic medical records; infection rates in hospitals being reduced.

I'm going to take just 2 seconds to show you what has happened as a result of the Affordable Care Act and other measures.

The inflation rate in Medicare has been dramatically reduced since the Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare, went into effect. It is down in the 2, 2½ percent range now and has remained there since ObamaCare went into effect.

The changes in ObamaCare extended the viability, the financial viability of Medicare by 8 years, and here's the effect. The inflation rate is now less than the general health care inflation rate, and this has caused a recalculation of the deficit in the years ahead. The deficit in the years ahead was based on an inflation rate up here in the 5 percent range, but when it's down in the 2 percent range, the deficit has been reduced by over $200 billion simply because Medicare is not inflating, growing as fast as anticipated back 2½ years ago.

More can be done without taking away one benefit from seniors. The Federal Government could negotiate drug prices, bringing down the cost. The Federal Government could institute better payment mechanisms so there is a continuity of care rather than a one-off episodic care for seniors. In so doing, seniors stay healthier longer and the inflation rate and the cost are reduced. There are many other things.

But let me be very clear about this. If there is an effort to throw seniors who become 65 off of Medicare by denying them the opportunity, we will see an increase in the total cost of health care in the United States, because those seniors will not be able to get quality medical care. They will become sick and they will wind up somewhere in the system, perhaps in an emergency room, somewhere in the hospital, and the total cost of the system will go up. But if you keep seniors on Medicare, when they become 65, they will have access to quality care, better health care. And with the changes that were in the Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare, they will be healthier longer and the cost of care will be reduced for all of us in the health care system.

Now, I suspect we'll come back to Medicare before this night is done, but we ought to talk about jobs for awhile. We were on this floor a few weeks ago, and we spent some time talking about infrastructure, about jobs, and our colleague from the State of New York, that is the western side of New York, is joining us tonight to pick up that issue once again.

Mr. HIGGINS. I thank the gentlemen from California and from Pennsylvania for their leadership on these issues—jobs and protecting Medicare long into the future.

As we know, there's a debate going on here about the fiscal cliff. I think the American people are looking for leadership in Washington. They want a plan, and I think they are willing to endure some pain that will be in the form of spending cuts and perhaps some increased revenues, but the American people also want a plan that is going to be aspirational.

The fact of the matter is our infrastructure in this Nation is falling apart. According to the American Society for Civil Engineers, they give us a D grade for the quality of our infrastructure. They tell us that $2.2 trillion is needed just to bring our current infrastructure to a state of good repair. That's not even taking into consideration new infrastructure needs that we're seeing in New York and New Jersey as a result of the storms there.

Infrastructure investment is also a job creator, a creator of American jobs. When you invest in infrastructure, you're buying labor from American businesses. When you invest in infrastructure, you're buying equipment from American businesses.

Now, with public infrastructure, it's as old as Lincoln. He called it land improvements. He meant ports and railroads at the time. Public infrastructure is always the public's responsibility. So the question is never whether or not you're going to do it—you have to do it—the question is when does it make most sense.

I would submit to you that it makes most sense today. Why? Because money is as cheap as it's ever going to be. Every municipal government throughout this country borrows money by issuing debt—bonds—to underwrite the cost of building new infrastructure.

□ 2050

We could be borrowing money today for about 1 percent. Labor is cheap, equipment is cheap because both are idling. And we clearly need the infrastructure investment.

Final thought on this: Transportation for America, a not-for-profit organization, identifies 69,000 structurally deficient bridges in this Nation. There's over 2,000 structurally deficient bridges in my State of New York; and in western New York, we have 99 structurally deficient bridges.

Every second of every day, seven cars drive on a bridge that is structurally deficient. We saw a bridge collapse in New York State in 1987, the Harley Creek Bridge, loss of life and significant injury. We saw it again, subsequent to that, in Minneapolis.

How many more bridges have to collapse before we address this need?

We're going to spend less than $53 billion rebuilding the roads and bridges of America next year, less than $53 billion. It's weak and it's pathetically weak when you consider that we just spent $89 billion rebuilding the roads and bridges of Afghanistan, and we just spent $67 billion rebuilding the roads and bridges of Iraq.

Work needs to be done, and Americans need the work. With that, I yield back to my friend from California.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Well, let's continue this discussion of infrastructure. The last time we took this up 3 weeks ago, we had talked about an infrastructure bank, a proposal that's been presented to the House of Representatives now for at least 15 years. I believe our colleague from Connecticut, ROSA DELAURO, has introduced that bill year after year.

You said that the Federal Government can borrow money, 10-year notes, even 15-year notes somewhere around a percent and a half, maybe towards 2 percent. If we were to borrow that, put it into an infrastructure bank, and then loan money to infrastructure projects that have a cash flow, sanitation facility, water facility, toll bridges, and numerous other kinds of infrastructure which are desperately needed, we could have a financing system that, over time, would actually make money for the Federal Government, could borrow at 1½ percent, loan at 1¾ percent, have a margin there. The money would flow back in. You'd get that revolving.

The President has actually proposed this in his American Jobs Act. He's picked this up during his debate, the fiscal cliff negotiations, put it back on the table.

We ought to be doing that. In doing so, we will create tens of thousands, indeed hundreds of thousands, of American jobs, American jobs. And if we couple that with Buy American, so that the equipment, the steel, the concrete, the other ingredients used in these infrastructure projects were American-made, using our tax money for American-made equipment, we would even see a resurgence of the manufacturing base in America.

This is a no-brainer. This is something we ought to have done years ago. But here, as we approach this fiscal cliff, we ought to take up the President's challenge, move forward with an infrastructure bank and create jobs in America and build the foundation for economic growth.

Mr. ALTMIRE, why don't you pick this piece up and carry it.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I wanted to supplement my friend from New York's comments about structurally deficient bridges.

I always, when I would have town hall meetings and I talked with my constituents about this issue, I always use the example, because people think, you know, there's better ways to spend money. We're overspending ourselves. We're in great debt. Let's just not do anything this year. Let's wait till next year. Maybe let's wait till the year after that.

I always use the example of, there are certain things that you can put off. And if you're a family, you might say, times are tough, we need to tighten our belt. Maybe I can't go to the movies tonight. Maybe I'm going to have chicken instead of steak. Maybe we're going to have to drive a certain type of car instead of the luxury vehicle that we were hoping to buy—whatever it might be, whatever the family circumstance.

However, no matter what type of house you live in, large or small, if you get a leak in the roof, you have to fix it because if you ignore that leak, it's not going to fix itself. It's not going to remain where it is today. It's going to be worse tomorrow, and it's going to be worse next week, until the roof collapses and you have a catastrophe on your hand.

Well, that's the state of our infrastructure in this country, and I think people get that. And the gentleman talked about the State of New York and the structurally deficient bridges that he has in western New York.

Well, in 2007, I was here, I know the gentleman from New York was here, when we had the terrible disaster in Minnesota, when the interstate bridge collapsed and the loss of life that occurred. And the Secretary of Transportation at the time came to the Transportation Committee. I believe the gentleman served on the Transportation Committee at that time also, and Secretary Peters came and talked about the state of disrepair of our Nation's bridges.

Now, we can talk about locks and dams and our aviation system and the state of our airports and a variety of other infrastructure needs in this country which are just as critical; but just roads and bridges, we were all given a list of the structurally deficient bridges in our districts and in our States.

And I'm embarrassed to say to the gentleman, Pennsylvania is in even worse shape than what he described New York to be. We in Pennsylvania have 6,000 structurally deficient bridges. In western Pennsylvania it's 1,000. And in just the district I represent, currently one out of 19 districts in Pennsylvania, just my district, 300 structurally deficient bridges.

And the structural sufficiency rating, as my colleagues understand, Mr. Speaker, is based upon a zero to 100 scale, 100 being brand new, sturdy, as good and strong as they can possibly be, zero being the bottom.

Well, I had several bridges on that list that the Secretary gave me that were single digits. I had one that was a two, believe it or not.

And I remember asking the question in the hearing, I'm not an engineer, I've never been that great in math, but it seems to me if you have a bridge that's a two on a zero to 100 scale, that doesn't sound very good. And should I, as a driver, or any of my constituents be concerned when they drive across that bridge?

What would be the recommendation from the Department of Transportation?

And the response that I got, after they conferred on how to address this question, they literally said, well, not if you drive across it once. But if that's your daily commute, and you drive across that bridge twice a day every day, you might want to find a different route.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is not a good answer; but, unfortunately, that's the right answer. And at minimum, we should alert the public to the state of disrepair that our bridges are in so they can make intelligent and informed decisions.

But in the long term, the clear remedy to that situation, the solution is to invest in our infrastructure, to fix our roads and bridges because, yes, it puts people back to work, which is critically important.

The business impact, we transport goods all over the country by truck and by rail. We can talk about the state of disrepair in other transportation sectors too, but we benefit as a country.

But when you see the safety consequences and you think about the fact that we have bridges all across this country that are in such disrepair that they are in the single digits in structural sufficiency, that is a big problem, and that's why we need to invest in our infrastructure.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Indeed, we do need to invest in infrastructure and we need to rebuild.

I noticed another colleague from the great State of New York has joined us. Often Mr. TONKO and I are here on the floor in what we call the East-West Show.

But Mr. HIGGINS and Mr. TONKO, your State and the State of New Jersey got whacked by a superstorm.

Mr. TONKO. Yes, it did. Sandy.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Why don't you share with us a little bit of what the State of New York needs to do on infrastructure repair and how to prevent it from happening again.

Mr. TONKO. Sure. Absolutely. And you know the impact of Sandy, Representative GARAMENDI, comes on the heels of last year's storms with Irene and Lee, a double whammy that impacted several counties that I represent. And upstate New York was devastated. There was a loss of lives, there was destruction to the public infrastructure. Many businesses, farms and housing were destroyed, tremendously so; and the need to rebuild became very apparent.

This year, with Sandy, the same sort of impact, this time in a very densely populated region of New York City, Long Island, and the southern portions of New York State. And so I think it's a stark reminder, a very real example, a very painful outcome that speaks to the need of investing, investing in our infrastructure.

As we go forward, there's also an opportunity to improve upon what existed at the time of these storms. For instance, in the energy networks, the utility networks, we can do state-of-the-art. We have taught other nations how to build those systems. It's time to do nation-building at home.

I think the beauty here is that, while we invest in transportation and other infrastructure, energy infrastructure and water systems and treatment systems and public schools, what we're doing is rippling into the benefits of efficiency, of public safety, of employment and economic development.

□ 2100

That is a positive series of dynamics that then lifts the economy and provides for work. Ninety percent of the jobs, it's projected, that come from this sort of infrastructure investment are speaking to middle-income households—jobs that, again, provide for the strengthening of our economy, the reduction of our deficit, the confidence-building in our economy that is so powerfully felt as we walk this distance from the recession, as we continue to do the steady climb upward as we grow private sector jobs. This is an important part of it. It enhances our productivity. It provides for efficiencies. That's what infrastructure investment is about. And it's calculated that for every $1 billion of investment, 18,000 jobs are created and a sound public service is designed and structured and built so that we can go forward with rightful anticipation of a stronger tomorrow for our economy.

And so I think these are important elements, rebuilding after Mother Nature has impacted us with very profound damages to our communities—and building in a way that allows for the creation of jobs and an improved outcome, to top it off.

When the Representative from Pennsylvania, Representative ALTMIRE, talked about the Minnesota situation, I served in the State Assembly in New York when the collapse of a thruway bridge in upstate New York took 10 lives. We recently commemorated the 25th anniversary of that event back in 1987 and the painful consequences that came to bear upon that upstate region, where commerce was affected, where jobs were affected, where public safety was compounded. They took the major artery of the State of New York with

the thruway and had to reroute that through a community by establishing a makeshift system. And just the presence of that moment onto the economic consequences of the State spoke painfully well of how important infrastructure is.

And so we look at the needs in this Nation from coast-to-coast, from your west coast to our east coast, and we understand that there are needs for those water treatment facilities, for our energy infrastructure. We're wheeling electrons along a system that was designed for regional service, and now we're wheeling not only from region to region but State to State. We're wheeling electronics from nation to nation. Canada into the United States.

We need an upgrade. We need the sort of R&D component that translates into jobs that provide the best investment possible. And that's what we're calling for here—the sound stewardship of resources and Federal tax dollars being utilized in a way that provides the strongest outcome. Sometimes it's in the saga of urgency, as is the case with Sandy in New York State, as it's been with Irene and Lee, as we continue to recover over a year later from those storms that damaged upstate New York just over a year ago, and now the most recent element of consequence that came with Hurricane Sandy.

So I thank you for bringing us together to shed light, to acknowledge that we can create jobs as we address public safety, as we address efficiency, as we address productivity, as we address economic boost, so that we can walk from this arena here in this House of Representatives knowing that we're doing the sound, academically driven, analytically provided results that will speak to a favorable impact across the board.

Thank you for bringing us together.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you very much, Mr. TONKO.

Mr. HIGGINS, I see that you would like to get into this also. I know that you're there. So please pick up this conversation and carry it on.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you.

My colleague from New York is obviously very familiar with all of the issues that we're confronted with, but we also recognize that our Governor had the presence of mind in putting the package together for Federal relief for reimbursement to seek infrastructure money to rebuild the infrastructure that was destroyed in a way that would mitigate or reduce the damage in a future storm, because here's what we know with global warming. Storms are becoming much more severe. And whether it's New Orleans or whether it's Queens, New York, we are going to see another storm.

It also underscores the need for infrastructure investment to mitigate the damage, because by making that upfront investment—those mitigation factors—it will reduce the amount of damage when the next storm hits if, in fact, our Nation can meet that challenge of rebuilding our infrastructure in a way that it ought to be built.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I thank you very much for bringing that up. It's not only an issue on the east coast; it's an issue in the Midwest, it's an issue in the West, it's an issue all across this Nation. The climate is changing. The storms are more severe and are likely to continue to be even more severe in the future. For me, my district is 200 miles of the Sacramento River. The second most city at risk of flooding in the United States after New Orleans is Sacramento. The Natomas portion of Sacramento and certain portions along the American River in Sacramento are in extraordinarily dangerous territory. We need to rebuild our levees. We need to upgrade our levees. We should not wait until they break and then try to deal with the death, the destruction, and the rebuilding that then occurs, but do exactly what you said, Mr. HIGGINS, and that is anticipate the next storm. Build ahead of it. Protect ourselves ahead of it.

I have some 1,500 to 2,000 miles of flood levees in my district. We need serious infrastructure improvement. Just this last week, Friday, I was in the Yuba City area of Sutter County. Forty miles of levee need to be upgraded and improved. We need action by the Federal Government. The Army Corps of Engineers needs to issue the 408 permit in a big hurry so that we can begin the construction of the improvements of those levees. And that's not unusual across this Nation because many other parts of this Nation, including the rebuilding of New York and New Jersey, need to build higher standards—and not just repair what was damaged, but to build to a higher standard. That takes money. And this is where the Federal Government has a critical role to play. We need to make that money available.

In some cases, there are repayment systems. We talked about that with an infrastructure bank. In other cases, there are not, and the local governments, together with the State and Federal Government, come together and build those systems.

But the Federal Government has to step forward as the major partner in all of these. And if we do it in a way that uses the money to buy American-made equipment and supplies, we can create even more jobs in America.

Part of the Make It America agenda that we have been promoting now for 2 years is just that—you use that money to buy American-made equipment and you rebuild the American manufacturing base at the same time that you build the infrastructure.

Mr. ALTMIRE, you stood up with enthusiasm while I was speaking. So what do you have here?

Mr. ALTMIRE. I wasn't sure if the gentleman was planning to transition into another topic as he draws to a close.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Well, we actually need to do that, but why don't we wrap up the infrastructure here and then I do want to spend a few moments talking about Social Security and perhaps ending back to where we started on Medicare and these programs.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Very quickly, and then I will yield to Mr. TONKO directly, if that's okay, afterwards.

I wanted to bring to the attention of my colleagues and the American people we're talking about what can happen if you ignore infrastructure needs, we're talking about past examples and the potential for future examples of infrastructure problems all across this country and, yes, it's an investment that we need to make. Our roads and bridges, our locks and dams, our rail system, our aviation system as we talked about, our waterways, commerce, there's hundreds of billions of dollars of need. But we're also trying to remain internationally competitive, and we can't be internationally competitive if we have substandard infrastructure. And that just doesn't mean infrastructure that's in disrepair; that means upgrading and improving to adapt to modern technology.

□ 2110

I know as one example, I visited the Port of Miami a year or two ago. They're undergoing a multibillion-dollar project to redredge the port—one of the largest ports in the United States—to accommodate the larger ships that are going to be able to come through the Panama Canal when the Panama Canal project is completed. If we don't do that in this country, if we don't continue to modernize and upgrade our infrastructure—not just prevent disasters from occurring, economically and through the physics of infrastructure disrepair, but upgrade and modernize our port system and our aviation system to be able to continue to compete internationally with the other countries that have modernized their port infrastructure, we're going to continue to fall behind and we're going to lose jobs; we're going to lose the economic impact. That's what we have to consider when we discuss the fiscal cliff as we started this discussion.

So with that said, I would yield to my good friend, Mr. TONKO.

Mr. TONKO. Yes, just rather briefly, the opportunity to invest in infrastructure—for an example, our water treatment facilities. When I was at my last work station prior to entering the House, it was with NYSERDA, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. There I witnessed these consummate professionals working away at retrofitting systems or designing new that dealt with water treatments. The savings that were anticipated—that were measured in some cases—were significant so that the energy cost for local governments doing their role, performing their role for treatment of water became much cheaper. Those are savings that are recurring. So that while we invest in this opportunity, we're also chipping away

at those budget costs into the future. The same is true of some of the research investment that found us, for example, capturing waste heat and getting more bang for the buck, so to speak, for the investments made in energy systems.

The American intellect, which has always served as our DNA for discovery—you know, we are proud of our pioneer spirit of this Nation. It drove an industrial revolution, it inspired a westward movement, and it created from mill town capacity these epicenters of invention and innovation. Well, we still have that within our core spirit. If we can come up with the innovative ideas, the concepts that allow us to serve the taxpayer with more useful outcomes of their investments, it is beholden upon us to provide the climate by which to do that.

Earlier, our colleague, Representative HIGGINS from New York, spoke of the mitigation opportunities now facing New York with its repair of its infrastructure. If we can do the preventative measures that provide for longer life expectancy for these investments, isn't that not only the wise thing to do, isn't that the responsible thing to do?

So there are ways that we can move forward in a transitional sort of format where it's ever impacting to a favorable outcome of operating costs into the future, of research investments that's translating into job creation, and then the infrastructure build that takes to mind the concepts, the intellectual capacity of this Nation. It also speaks to the wisdom of responding to infrastructure repair, replacement, new construction that looks statistically at the data that are collected that speak to the impacts of global warming and climate change.

If we were to, for instance, rebuild exactly as the infrastructure in my upstate district after the impact of these storms, it would be foolish. We need to adjust the span length. We need to adjust the height of this infrastructure so that it is accounting for the dynamics of change that are real, that are recorded, that are statistically valid. We need to do that in a way that brings this investment into the job-creation zone that it is.

As we stated earlier, as I made mention earlier, for every $1 billion of investment in infrastructure, we can anticipate, rightfully, 18,000 jobs being created, 90 percent of which are finding their way into the middle-income community. This is what it's about. It's not about this cost-cutting frenzy that denies opportunity, denies our responsibility that we all bear here, but, rather, inspires us to belt-tighten, where we get rid of outmoded programs and where we most effectively invest in the improvements, the repairs, the replacements that are under our stewardship.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, Mr. TONKO. Once again, we have a challenge ahead of us.

Mr. HIGGINS, I know that this has been one of your principal issues here in the House of Representatives. If you would like to wrap up on this piece of our discussion tonight, on the infrastructure piece, then we will take the final 10 to 15 minutes and pick back up to the Medicare and Social Security issues that are also very much part of what is on the table today as we address the fiscal cliff, growing the economy, and jobs.

Mr. HIGGINS. I thank the gentleman.

At the outset, my colleague from California, a great leader on this issue, had said that it was 12 years ago when we had a budgetary surplus of $258 billion. How was that created? It was created by having created 22 million private sector jobs in the previous 8 years, telling us that the best tax policy is bringing back lost taxpayers to productivity so that they're contributing to the Federal Treasury. That allows us to make the investments into our economy and, as my colleague from New York said, to nation-build right here at home.

One thing that historically here Democrats and Republicans were able to agree on is infrastructure investment. I think the need is extraordinarily great right now, and we should do an infrastructure bill that is robust and aspirational in addressing the infrastructure needs and the decaying state of our infrastructure as soon as possible.

A final thought on this. There's a report out of the State of Nevada that says if you defer infrastructure repair for 2 years, you increase the cost of making that repair by a factor of five. So a $5 million bridge repair that could be done today, 2 years from now will cost you $25 million. A $1 million road repair today will cost you $5 million 2 years from now. So we need to get to work, and much work needs to be done.

Mr. GARAMENDI. You're absolutely correct that if we're to deal with the deficit, we have to put Americans back to work. The infrastructure has, over the years, been a principal way in which you employ Americans—we did this with the stimulus bill and it had great effect—but it also builds the foundation for tomorrow's economic growth and protects people along the way. It protects property; it protects valuable assets that we have in our Nation.

The President has been very clear about this for more than 15 months now. Fifteen months ago he put before Congress the American Jobs Act, one element of which was the infrastructure. He wanted an additional $50 billion over and above the $53 billion that you described earlier, Mr. HIGGINS, as the ongoing infrastructure.

Our colleague here, we talked earlier—I think Mr. HIGGINS you raised this issue, and Mr. TONKO did also—Thursday, two days from now, we're going to take up the National Defense Authorization Act, which is the plan for our national security, the military. In that piece of legislation there is a minimum of $88 billion to be spent between October 2012 and September 30 of 2013 on the Afghanistan war, $88 billion. That's a lot of money.

All that we're talking about in this cut discussion that's under way between the President and Mr. BOEHNER is somewhere, $400 billion, maybe $500 billion; $88 billion in Afghanistan next year. A good portion of that is for infrastructure in Afghanistan, as was discussed earlier today.

We know how to make decisions here. Part of those decisions that are on the table today are very serious cuts to the Medicare program. I discussed earlier the Medicare eligibility age has been proposed by the Speaker of the House on the Republican side to be increased from 65 to 67 years. It will have a disastrous effect on those who have paid into Medicare their entire working lives and expect to be able to have that health care benefit available to them when they become 65.

□ 2120

It will not save much money, but it will surely harm thousands upon thousands of Americans.

Similarly, suggestions have been made to dramatically alter Social Security. Suggestions that will significantly harm a vast number of Americans—perhaps, I don't know the numbers—probably 20 million Americans who are currently obtaining Social Security benefits but will not see the adjustment for inflation. These are people that are receiving less than $1,500 a month for Social Security. And for many of them, for many of them that is their total source of income.

Mr. ALTMIRE, you have been a person that knows the statistics here and knows the numbers. I speak more from my heart rather than the precise numbers, so my colleagues, let's join in this conversation about Social Security. I think the starting point comes from the compassion that we should all possess for seniors, but the facts also need to be understood here.

One fact should be clear to all 435 Members in this House, and that is that the deficit that we are facing and all the discussion about the deficit and the fiscal cliff is not a Social Security problem. It is not a Social Security problem. It is a tax revenue issue which we've talked here a little bit about. It is an issue for Medicare, which we can solve without cutting benefits. It's an issue for the military, the war in Iraq, the $88 billion that we're going to spend there in the next 9 months. Those are real issues about the deficit.

Social Security does not contribute one nickel, one penny to the deficit. It is a trust fund apart from this deficit issue. It has its own source of revenue, and we ought not be harming seniors while we are giving continuing tax breaks to people that are making lots of money. Let's get this straight: Social Security should not be on the table as we discuss this issue.

Now, we know 8 years from now, 7 years, maybe 9 years from now, Social Security has to be adjusted because of the continuing number of people that are coming on.

Are we out of time just as I'm getting wound up on Social Security?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BUCSHON). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I think we are finished for this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 1792. An act to clarify the authority of the United States Marshal Service to assist other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies in the investigation of cases involving sex offenders and missing children; To the Committee on the Judiciary.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled bills of the House of the following titles, which were thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 6116. An act to amend the Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands to provide for direct review by the United States Supreme Court of decisions of the Virgin Islands Supreme Court, and for other purposes.

H.R. 6223. An act to amend section 1059(e) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 to clarify that a period of employment abroad by the Chief of Mission or United States Armed Forces as a translator, interpreter, or in a security-related position in an executive or managerial capacity is to be counted as a period of residence and physical presence in the United States for purposes of qualifying for naturalization, and for other purposes.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The Speaker announced his signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following title:

S. 3193. An act to make technical corrections to the legal description of certain land to be held in trust for the Barona Band of Mission Indians, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 22 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, December 19, 2012, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4310, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013

Mr. MCKEON submitted the following conference report and statement on the bill (H.R. 4310) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2013 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

CONFERENCE REPORT (H. REPT. 112–705)

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 4310), to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2013 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes, having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses as follows:

That the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment as follows:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted by the Senate amendment, insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013''.

SEC. 2. ORGANIZATION OF ACT INTO DIVISIONS; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) DIVISIONS.—This Act is organized into four divisions as follows:

(1) Division A—Department of Defense Authorizations.

(2) Division B—Military Construction Authorizations.

(3) Division C—Department of Energy National Security Authorizations and Other Authorizations.

(4) Division D—Funding Tables.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title.
Sec. 2. Organization of Act into divisions; table of contents.
Sec. 3. Congressional defense committees.

DIVISION A—DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATIONS

TITLE I—PROCUREMENT

Subtitle A—Authorization of Appropriations

Sec. 101. Authorization of appropriations.

Subtitle B—Army Programs

Sec. 111. Multiyear procurement authority for Army CH–47 helicopters.
Sec. 112. Reports on airlift requirements of the Army.

Subtitle C—Navy Programs

Sec. 121. Extension of Ford class aircraft carrier construction authority.
Sec. 122. Multiyear procurement authority for Virginia class submarine program.
Sec. 123. Multiyear procurement authority for Arleigh Burke class destroyers and associated systems.
Sec. 124. Limitation on availability of amounts for second Ford class aircraft carrier.
Sec. 125. Refueling and complex overhaul of the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln.
Sec. 126. Designation of mission modules of the Littoral Combat Ship as a major defense acquisition program.
Sec. 127. Report on Littoral Combat Ship designs.
Sec. 128. Comptroller General review of Littoral Combat Ship program.
Sec. 129. Sense of Congress on importance of engineering in early stages of shipbuilding.
Sec. 130. Sense of Congress on nuclear-powered ballistic submarines.
Sec. 131. Sense of Congress on Marine Corps amphibious lift and presence requirements.
Sec. 132. Sense of the Senate on Department of the Navy fiscal year 2014 budget request for tactical aviation aircraft.

Subtitle D—Air Force Programs

Sec. 141. Reduction in number of aircraft required to be maintained in strategic airlift aircraft inventory.
Sec. 142. Retirement of B–1 bomber aircraft.
Sec. 143. Avionics systems for C–130 aircraft.
Sec. 144. Treatment of certain programs for the F–22A Raptor aircraft as major defense acquisition programs.

Subtitle E—Joint and Multiservice Matters

Sec. 151. Multiyear procurement authority for V–22 joint aircraft program.
Sec. 152. Procurement of space-based infrared systems satellites.
Sec. 153. Limitation on availability of funds for evolved expendable launch vehicle program.
Sec. 154. Limitation on availability of funds for retirement of RQ–4 Global Hawk unmanned aircraft systems.
Sec. 155. Requirement to set F–35 aircraft initial operational capability dates.
Sec. 156. Shallow Water Combat Submersible program.
Sec. 157. Requirement that tactical manned intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles use specified standard data link.
Sec. 158. Study on small arms and small-caliber ammunition capabilities.

TITLE II—RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST, AND EVALUATION

Subtitle A—Authorization of Appropriations

Sec. 201. Authorization of appropriations.

Subtitle B—Program Requirements, Restrictions, and Limitations

Sec. 211. Next-generation long-range strike bomber aircraft nuclear certification requirement.
Sec. 212. Extension of limitation on availability of funds for Unmanned Carrier-launched Surveillance and Strike system program.
Sec. 213. Limitation on availability of funds for milestone A activities for an Army medium range multipurpose vertical takeoff and landing unmanned aircraft system.
Sec. 214. Use of funds for conventional prompt global strike program.
Sec. 215. Next Generation Foundry for the Defense Microelectronics Activity.
Sec. 216. Advanced rotorcraft initiative.

Subtitle C—Missile Defense Programs

Sec. 221. Prohibition on the use of funds for the MEADS program.
Sec. 222. Availability of funds for Iron Dome short-range rocket defense program.
Sec. 223. Authority for relocation of certain Aegis weapon system assets between and within the DDG–51 class destroyer and Aegis Ashore programs in order to meet mission requirements.
Sec. 224. Evaluation of alternatives for the precision tracking space system.
Sec. 225. Next generation Exo-atmospheric Kill Vehicle.