Hurricane Irene began as a tropical storm on August 20, 2011. By the time it completed its path on August 29, it had wreaked havoc from Puerto Rico to New England, becoming the seventh most costly hurricane in our Nation's history, while taking 56 lives. The storm lasted a mere 10 days, no more than 36 hours in any one spot; but in my district and other affected areas, people are still recovering more than 2 years later. Infrastructure still needs to be repaired or replaced or improved upon. Businesses have not fully recovered, and many families are still struggling to rebuild their homes and their lives.

The costs continue to mount. We have denied our responsibility to deal with climate change for far too long. The time to act is now.

□ 1915

PROTECTING AMERICAN INNOVATION AND JOBS

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

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong concern about the increasingly discriminatory trade and investment environment in India.

The United States and India share a very important trade and security relationship. But our trading relationship is being threatened by an alarming array of discriminatory and internationally inconsistent actions and decisions recently. This is particularly the case in the area of intellectual property.

Intellectual property is the engine that drives the U.S. economy. The attacks on our IP not only harm U.S. job creation and competitiveness, but also chip away at the overall global IP framework that is essential to the innovation of new medicines. Since 2012, India has inappropriately revoked or denied patents on at least 14 lifesaving and life-enhancing drugs. These decisions harm the R&D system, hurting patients and their families who rely on the development of new cures and treatments.

That is why earlier this year Representative JOHN LARSON and myself were joined by 170 other Members of this body in urging the administration to raise these issues at the highest level of discussions with the Indian government. It is critical that we send a strong message to our trading partners that we will not sit idly by while India blatantly undermines intellectual property rights and discriminates against our businesses.

FIGHTING FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS

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

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, I was visited today in my district office by an individual who is one of my constituents—and one of my bosses—who told me about his disappointment with me and our government here in Washington and our inability to positively affect his life.

He told me a story about how he and his wife lost their health care policy. What is worse, he told me about his diagnosis of cancer, which has wracked his body and is spreading throughout his organs. He told me how he felt Washington didn't care at all about him and how he had been lied to. He wanted someone to fight for him and the other people in the middle class.

I just wanted to come to the floor today, Mr. Speaker, and echo that account so that he knows that someone is here fighting for him. I dedicate myself to fighting on his behalf and for the other millions of Americans just like him.

A PROMISE MADE IS A PROMISE KEPT

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

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, where I come from in northeast Georgia, a promise made is a promise kept.

This is my constituent, Theresa, from Commerce, Georgia. She wasn't initially opposed to ObamaCare. For 12 years, Theresa has been paying on a plan that provides no deductible and reasonable copays. As a 54-year-old on a fixed income, this plan has worked well for her. A few weeks ago, she found out that her plan will be terminated at the end of this month. Alternative coverage will cost her at least $5,000 more a year and will not provide as many benefits as her current plan. Theresa says many of her family and friends will have their health insurance premiums double, thanks to an unaffordable Affordable Care Act.

House Republicans don't just talk about giving Americans the opportunity to keep their insurance coverage if they want to, but we have wanted that all along. We are listening to the American people, even if the President won't.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS: HUNGER IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CRAMER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HORSFORD) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HORSFORD. 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 materials into the RECORD on the subject of this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Speaker, this evening, we come to this Special Order to bring attention to the issue of hunger in America.

In just a little more than over a week, many of us will spend time around our tables celebrating Thanksgiving dinner. And as we give thanks for the incredible benefits that we enjoy, there are many Americans who will go without. They will go without a nutritious meal. They will go without meals in the classrooms or after school. Many of our veterans will go without meals as well.

And so tonight, the Congressional Black Caucus uses its hour in this Special Order to bring attention to these important issues, particularly at this time in the debate about our budget.

Earlier this month, on November 1, the 2009 Recovery Act's temporary increase in funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, expired, resulting in an additional benefit cut to all households. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, this is approximately a $25-per-month or $300-a-year cut to nutritional benefit programs for a family of four. SNAP benefits will now average less than $1.40 per person per meal in 2014, down from $1.50 previously.

Bringing attention to these issues is critical, particularly, as I said, when we are entering negotiation on the farm bill as well as negotiation on the budget. So tonight you will hear from members of the Congressional Black Caucus who see these issues as priorities in these negotiations.

I would like to extend time now to the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, a lady who serves on the Agriculture Committee and who has been a champion for the issues of SNAP as well as other food assistance programs in the farm bill. I yield to the gentlelady from Ohio, Representative FUDGE.

Ms. FUDGE. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I would like to thank my colleagues, Congressmen HORSFORD and JEFFRIES, for continuing to lead the Special Order and for tonight leading on a Special Order hour that addresses another important topic, and that is hunger in America.

In 10 days, Americans will come together with family and friends to celebrate Thanksgiving, but for many families around the country, their Thanksgiving tables will be sparse and some even bear. As one of the wealthiest countries in the world, it is shameful that this Nation has not and will not address the issue of hunger.

As ranking member on the House Agriculture Subcommittee that oversees our country's nutrition programs, I am working hard to end hunger in America.

One in every six Americans struggle with hunger or food insecurity. This is an issue that plagues nearly every community, from our inner cities to our rural countrysides. While Americans are still struggling to rebound from the recent recession, many families have already seen a setback as they experience a reduction in SNAP, which my colleague talked to you about just a moment ago. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that this reduction is equal to the loss of 16 meals for a family of three.

When children are hungry, they are not able to focus in school. When seniors have limited resources and limited incomes, they are forced to make the difficult choice between purchasing medicine and sufficient groceries.

Mr. Speaker, when the House adjourns this Thursday, many of us will go home to spend the Thanksgiving holidays with our families. Some will serve the less fortunate in our communities. But let's all take the time to talk to workers at food banks and other charities, ask about the impact of Federal benefits cuts, the increased demand on charitable antihunger programs and what has been done to fill the gap. Just a short discussion with those who have fallen on hard times can be a sobering reminder of the impact a little help can provide.

And to the American people who are struggling this Thanksgiving, please know that the CBC has not forgotten you. As the conscience of the Congress, we continue to fight for you every single day. The fight is far from over, but as long as one American is suffering, we will fight on.

I thank the gentleman.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you to the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. As she said, we will fight on. These are issues that are not going to go away.

With the farm bill negotiations, I am optimistic that, despite the fact that when that bill was brought here to the House of Representatives in October and there was an incomprehensible $40 billion cut to SNAP, we can bridge that gap between now and the end of the year and pass a farm bill that includes the important policy for farm subsidies in this country that are necessary, but do so by not including special subsidies for Big Agriculture and other corporations while cutting $40 billion in SNAP food assistance to the poor.

Again, these are issues that are critically important to American families across this great country. They are issues that we are hearing about daily from our constituents.

Many people don't realize that it is not only good for the individual who is on food assistance, but it is also good for our economy because this is money that goes back into our local grocery stores that keeps people employed and helps our local economy. So it is a benefit in two ways.

I would now like to turn attention to the gentleman from Indiana, Representative CARSON from the Seventh Congressional District, for his remarks during this Special Order.

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Thank you to my dear colleague from Nevada, Congressman HORSFORD, also to my colleague from Brooklyn, Representative JEFFRIES, and also Chairwoman MARCIA FUDGE of the CBC.

Mr. Speaker, a special ed teacher contacted my office last month, worried about cuts to food stamps and the impact that they would have on her classroom. One of her sixth grade students had burst into tears in the middle of her lesson because she heard on the news that benefits would be cut on November 1.

Mr. Speaker, this teacher was compassionate enough to take the child's concerns quite seriously. She gave them a voice by contacting our office. I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to be this child's voice—and the voice of all of those who live in the wealthiest Nation on Earth but still live in hunger.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the list of the most food insecure districts in the country, you see populations of every race and every ethnicity. Even in the State with the least food insecurity, 15 percent of families still struggle to find their next meal. So while I speak today as a member of the esteemed Congressional Black Caucus, we stand with all Americans.

Sadly, my congressional district in the great Hoosier State of Indiana holds the dubious distinction of having one of the highest rates of food insecurity in the entire country. Over 30 percent of families in Indiana struggle to put food on the table and don't always know where their next meal is coming from.

To be clear, this is not a criticism of the local food banks or not-for-profits that serve the poor very honorably. Hoosiers take care of one another, which is why we have some of the best service organizations in the entire country. But sadly, even the best food banks can't pull food out of thin air.

Over the past few years, Mr. Speaker, I have heard from many Indiana food banks that donations are down as more people struggle to make ends meet in our economic downturn. With high unemployment and underemployment, Federal assistance simply isn't buying enough food to meet their demand. The shelves just aren't as full as they used to be. This leaves many low-income constituents to rely on SNAP, also known as food stamps, a program that will be cut by $5 billion next year as recovery provisions expire.

Even with ideal funding levels, food stamps never means large, multicourse meals for poor families. The average person receives less than $1.50 per meal.

□ 1930

For many of these families, Mr. Speaker, a healthful meal is already a luxury that remains out of reach. These families just want to put food on the table. The program means a few hundred dollars a month per family, which is enough for some bread, cereal, and canned food, but rarely is it enough for fresh vegetables or meat. No one gets rich off of food stamps, but at least they can eat. Yet, for some reason, the program remains one of the prime targets of the Members of Congress who are now fighting to cut nearly 4 million people from this program. This is unacceptable, and it has real-life implications.

Fortunately, in our district, the Seventh Congressional District of Indiana, we have the Indy Hunger Network, the Butler University's Center for Urban Ecology, the Indiana Healthy Weight Initiative, Indiana's Family and Social Services Administration, FSSA, and the Indy Food Council. They are working with our local farmers' markets to encourage people who are receiving assistance to reinvest in our local economy by matching the SNAP dollars spent on fresh fruits and vegetables. These types of partnerships are not supported when we decide to cut benefits and eligibility. We must invest in these types of creative initiatives, programs that feed our communities and incentivize healthy living, programs that create jobs and rebuild our economy so that people are fed and healthy enough to go to school, to work and to contribute to our economy.

Some of my colleagues argue that our debt is out of control, that we need to rein in spending, and that every American should be asked to sacrifice equally, but we have to put this thing into perspective. If you are a person who makes millions of dollars every year, you might lose hundreds of thousands of dollars, maybe. If you own a business, you might decide to invest a little less. By contrast, if you make a minimum wage and live under the poverty line year after year, what might you lose? Monetarily, very little—$50 here, $100 there. There would be a small impact on our debt, but that small amount—those few dollars here and there—equates to food on the table.

When looking for so-called ''equitable treatment,'' no one is ever asking a wealthy person to go hungry, but that is exactly what some of my Republican colleagues are doing with their proposal to cut $39 billion to SNAP. They are suggesting that some Americans, like those in poor neighborhoods in Indianapolis, simply don't deserve to eat because it is too expensive. Other Republicans argue that SNAP is only meant as a temporary stopgap.

For most people, Mr. Speaker, poverty isn't a temporary stop on the way to prosperity. If a family is fortunate enough to pull itself out of poverty, it could take many years, maybe even a decade. Unfortunately, our recession pushed many families in the wrong direction, costing jobs, incomes, and homes. It also moved people deeper into poverty. This means more children will go to school on empty stomachs. It means more aging seniors already on

fixed incomes are forced to choose between buying groceries and medication. It means more poverty, not less. In fact, between 2007 and 2012, during the height of the Great Recession, the number of food stamp users rose 77 percent because more people needed them.

I am standing here with my brilliant and esteemed colleagues, Representative HORSFORD and Representative JEFFRIES and the Congressional Black Caucus, because our districts are some of the hardest hit, but this isn't a Black issue, Mr. Speaker. This is a nationwide problem that impacts every color and ethnicity in every city, county, and town. Yet some of our colleagues in this House are willing to ignore millions of their constituents—those who are struggling to eat—just to pass a bill to cut SNAP by $39 billion. We should be increasing SNAP funding, not decreasing it. We should learn the lessons of European austerity measures. We should be debating an extension of expiring provisions to avoid benefit reductions next year. We should be focused on ending hunger in America, not just on cutting programs that might reduce the debt.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, many of us take for granted that we can grab a sandwich or make a salad when we need to eat. Most people here—I know I will—will celebrate Thanksgiving next week and will have tables full of good food, some of the best food that money can buy. Yet, for many in America, Thanksgiving is just another day spent in hunger. For these people, a traditional Thanksgiving meal is simply out of reach. Yet we believe that struggling families across the country would say that, on Thanksgiving, they are thankful for any amount of food they can buy—the food that SNAP helps them buy.

Instead of taking this away, let's fight for a higher quality of life, and let's stand together to make sure our neighbors, our children, and our vulnerable seniors never go hungry.

Mr. HORSFORD. I would like to thank the distinguished gentleman from Indiana for his remarks and for highlighting the fact that this is an issue that affects all American families across this country. We all know someone who relies on SNAP benefits or we have come into contact with individuals—our neighbors, our friends, our veterans—who rely on these benefits as well. To somehow suggest that this is an issue that only a certain number of communities should care about is simply false, and it is why we are having this conversation, Mr. Speaker. This is a conversation that we have on each and every Monday that we have the opportunity to come to the floor of the House in order to raise important issues like the one we are raising tonight on hunger.

I want to encourage people who are listening right now to send us your comments and to share your experiences with SNAP benefits. You can do so by sending us a tweet at #cbctalks, and we will try to share your comments and your questions so that we can have this conversation here on the floor of the House, because it is a conversation that many families across America are confronting.

I would like to invite up my esteemed colleague from New York, with whom I have the honor of co-anchoring the CBC Special Order hour. It has been a great opportunity to get to know him and to work with him on these important issues. I would like to start a bit of a conversation with him, if I can, on these issues. There are a number of things I would like to touch on with the gentleman from New York.

The first is on which households are most affected by this food insecurity across America. Will you touch upon that? Then I would like to talk about how the attack on SNAP also plays into the Affordable Care Act.

I yield now to the gentleman from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES).

Mr. JEFFRIES. Congressman HORSFORD, thank you very much for yielding, and thank you very much for the tremendous leadership that you have shown on this issue and for anchoring the CBC Special Order, this hour of power during which, for 60 minutes, members of the Congressional Black Caucus consistently, every Monday that we are in session, have the opportunity to take to the floor of the House of Representatives and to speak directly to the American people about an issue of great significance affecting their quality of life. Today, we are tackling an extremely important issue in a country that is the wealthiest Nation in the world. It is the issue of hunger.

For the life of me, I haven't been able to figure out why in this country, with all of this wealth—I come from the city of New York, where Wall Street is the engine that drives the world's economy. Yet, in neighborhoods that are in the shadows of Wall Street, you have children and seniors who are going to bed hungry and who are waking up the next day without any hope as to how they will be able to satisfy their nutritional needs.

Across this country, it appears that there are approximately 50 million people who are food insecure—50 million Americans who go to bed hungry at night. Approximately 16 million of those Americans are children born into very difficult circumstances not of their doing. They are not hungry by choice. They are hungry based on the urgency of their situations. It seems that, in this great Nation, we should be doing everything possible to deal with that food insecurity.

Now, as it relates to Americans and to those who are most impacted by food insecurity and hunger, approximately 1 in 10 Caucasian households is food insecure; one in seven overall households in America is food insecure; and approximately one in four African American households—25 percent of the people in the African American community—goes to bed hungry. Not a single person, whether he is Black or White, Asian or Latino, old or young, should be food insecure in the greatest Nation in the world.

The reality of the situation is that, as opposed to making progress on this issue in America, we stand here today on the floor of the House of Representatives and are at the risk of going backwards because there are some in this Chamber on the other side of the aisle who, for some reason, think that it makes sense to balance the budget on the backs of children and seniors and of those who are hungry in America. There is no other way, Representative HORSFORD, to explain the fact that, in this Chamber, you had people voting for a $39 billion cut to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, colloquially known as ''food stamps''—a $39 billion cut.

Now, the explanation that is often given to us is that this is a fiscally responsible approach to the reality that, from a financial standpoint, we are on an unsustainable path in America. Certainly, as a member of the Budget Committee, I am of the view that there are some challenges that we have to confront in moving forward, particularly as they relate to the growth of the older American population and to the fact that people in America are living longer. Those two realities are going to create a strain on health care costs in America, and it is something that we are going to have to confront in moving forward. When you hear doom and gloom statements made about the deficit and the debt in America, it is important to unpack those statements and to really and truly evaluate what has driven the explosion of the debt in America.

It certainly hasn't been the fact that there are hungry people in this country whom we are trying to help. That is not driving the debt explosion in America. It is a failed war in Iraq while in search of weapons of mass destruction, weapons that to this day have not and will never be found because they didn't exist; a mis-prosecuted war in Afghanistan that has carried on much longer than it needed to because we were off on a diversion in Iraq; the Bush tax cuts that were passed in 2001 and in 2003, which helped to explode the deficit, that were unpaid for and that benefited disproportionately the wealthy and the well off in America.

These are the reasons we are in the debt and deficit situation that we confront in this country today. It is not because we have got 50 million Americans who are food insecure whom we are trying to help in the greatest Nation in the world.

Now, I am thankful for organizations like the Food Bank For New York City, back at home, which provides assistance to those who are trying to make it on a day-to-day basis with food banks all across the city, including many in the district that I represent.

□ 1945

But there is a role for government to play in providing assistance to needy Americans. These aren't individuals who have chosen poverty as a lifestyle. They have not chosen hunger as a lifestyle. These are individuals who find themselves in a difficult spot, and we as a government should be doing everything we can to help them turn their lives around.

In 2008, the economy collapsed. It was the worst situation financially that we found ourselves in since the Great Depression. Since that moment, the recovery that we have experienced, as I have talked about from time to time on the floor of the House of Representatives, has been a very schizophrenia one. It has been an uneven one. It has been a recovery that has benefited some in America while others have been left behind.

Earlier today, the stock market crossed over to the 16,000 point mark for the first time, I believe, in our Nation's great history. The stock market is way up, CEO compensation is way up, corporate profits are way up, the productivity of the American worker is way up. Yet unemployment remains stubbornly high and consumer demand is stagnant and working families and middle class folks are struggling. Income inequality has reached levels in some places in this country not seen since the Great Depression; and, as we have discussed, far too many Americans are hungry.

It seems that in the midst of this uneven, schizophrenia, economic recovery, where the corporate titans are doing well and those with robust stock portfolios are doing extremely well, and CEOs and companies are doing extremely well, that we can find the compassion in this House and in the Congress and in our great government to make sure that in America, the richest Nation in the world, we can embrace the principle that no child, no senior, no individual should go to bed hungry; and that we can't rest until every single American has been able to benefit from the turnaround that began to take place under this administration, but that still has a ways to go in order for all Americans to be included in getting up off the ground, moving forward, and putting them in a place where they can pursue life and liberty and happiness consistent with that principle included in that grand document of our Founding Fathers.

Let me close by making an observation. Earlier this week, or a few days ago over the weekend, I had an opportunity to attend a farmers market in the east New York portion of the district. At this farmers market, there was a whole host of healthy food options that were being sold, many of which were grown in the community garden that was immediately adjacent to this farmers market. It was a wonderful sight to see seniors and young people and others who were out with the opportunity to purchase healthy food options—fruits and vegetables—at an affordable price. It was an example for me of what can be done on a community level to help tackle this issue.

I resolved myself that as I came back down to the Congress, I would commit to doing all that I can to replicate that effort for the people in the Eighth Congressional District back home, for the people in Nevada, for the people all across this country to deal with the hunger issue, but also to make sure that healthy food options are made more available, because we recognize that the consequence, not just of hunger, but of poor diet, bears a direct relationship to the fact that many in urban America and in other parts of the country are disproportionately suffering from a wide range of ailments—respiratory disease, heart disease, childhood obesity—that directly relate to poor nutrition.

That is one of the reasons why we on this side of the aisle have remained committed to the Affordable Care Act as something that is good for America. All of these issues that we work on here in this country ultimately tie toward trying to do things that are good for America—for children, for seniors, for working families, and for the middle class.

That is why I am proud to stand with my colleague, Representative HORSFORD, as well as the members of the Congressional Black Caucus, in tackling the issue of food insecurity, tackling the issue of the Affordable Care Act, and continuing to work on behalf of the betterment of America.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you to the gentleman from New York, the co-anchor for this Special Order hour, Representative JEFFRIES. I look forward to a dialogue on this, but let me just underscore what it is we are faced with in this House of Representatives.

Our colleagues on the other side, the House Republicans, proposed $40 billion in food assistance cuts to low-income families over 10 years. This would affect 210,000 children who currently receive free school meals and would affect some 170,000 veterans—yes, veterans—who also depend on SNAP benefits in our country, and would cost an estimated 55,000 job cuts in just the first year of cuts alone.

At a time when we should be growing the economy, adding jobs, helping our veterans, helping the poor, and those who are striving to be part of the middle class, the bill that was passed in October has these devastating cuts to children, to seniors and, yes, even to our veterans.

Now, I have said before, and I will say it again, we should not be cutting the safety net for our most vulnerable while maintaining costly government subsidies for the well-off industries. That is what my colleague from New York just talked about. Littered in this farm bill are subsidies for Big Ag, some of which they themselves didn't even ask for and they know should be expiring in order for us to preserve funding for children, seniors, and veterans.

So it is not a Nevada child in my district who receives just over $4 a day to eat who is the problem with the Federal budget deficit. The problem is corporate welfare and the special interest giveaways that litter our Tax Code. It is time that we put a face to the individuals who are benefiting from these programs. That is what we are here to spotlight tonight.

I would like to share just three quick stories of constituents who have shared with me in my office their impact and reliance on the food assistance program, known as SNAP.

The first is Alma. She lives on Social Security in my district. She currently receives $932 a month. Out of that she pays all of her bills—her rent, her utilities, she gets all of her necessities, and has very little left over. She has about $91 a month that she can live off for food. Now, with these proposed cuts, it would be $54 based on a history of cuts and adjustments. She doesn't want to be on SNAP benefits; but without that safety social net, she will go hungry.

Another constituent, Erin, is currently a pre-law student and is unemployed and recently found out she is pregnant. She is working really hard to make a better life for herself and her family, but right now she can only provide for herself; but she has a child to take care of and the SNAP cuts will hurt her ability to do that.

And, finally, there is Bertha, whose monthly SNAP benefit is $310 a month. She is a single mom of four children, and that SNAP benefit gives her about 2 weeks' worth of food. Her paycheck barely covers daily expenses, so any cut—$10, $20, $30—will have a serious impact on her family. And, oh, by the way, her kids are 9 months, 12 years old, 14, and 18.

So these are the real people who are being affected by these cuts, and it is not just the SNAP program. Unfortunately, this targeting of the poor for savings throughout the budget is nothing new by our colleagues on the other side. Those who are striving to break into the middle class face serious barriers to entry because the House Republicans' budget cut job training, they are about to cut unemployment benefits, they have cut child care assistance and funding for Head Start.

They are also trying to undermine the Affordable Care Act, which provides health insurance to many who could not afford it otherwise. I would like to tell you some stories of constituents in my district who have voluntarily shared their story and given me permission to share their story of the success of the Affordable Care Act.

One is Michelle. She is a constituent in Pahrump, Nevada, which is about an hour outside of Las Vegas in my district. Michelle enrolled in a plan on the exchange that will save her $200 per month and allow her access to her OB/GYN services closer to home. She calls her enrollment in the program an

''overwhelmingly positive experience.'' Michelle is currently on a HIPAA-guaranteed plan that costs her about $565 per month. If she gets sick and needs an urgent visit to the doctor or a mammogram or other OB/GYN service, she has to drive to Las Vegas from Pahrump, which I said is about an hour outside.

After enrolling in the Affordable Care Act, she will save more than $200 a month and have access to local urgent visits and OB/GYN services in her community in Pahrump. Mr. Speaker, now is not the time to turn back the clock or leave constituents like Michelle behind.

There are other constituents who have also shared their stories with me—Jeronimo and Teresita. They have been without health insurance for 10 years and were finally able to receive affordable insurance through Nevada Health Link. So, if you are watching, go to nevadahealthlink.com and sign up today.

There is another one—Victor and Yumaria. They had never had insurance before. They are a father and a daughter who were approved for a qualified health plan at an affordable price, and they are very happy and thankful to finally have insurance.

Then there is Lisa, who is also enrolled in Medicaid for her and her family, which she is entitled to based on the eligibility requirements.

In my home State, there are some 21 percent of Nevadans who are currently uninsured. More than 30 percent of the children in my State are uninsured. So not only is it the cuts to SNAP, the cuts to Head Start, to job training, to vital services that so many families depend on, but it is this undermining of vital social safety net programs that people in the middle class are striving to be a part of.

So I want to ask my colleague, Representative JEFFRIES, from New York, what are some of the positive economic impacts to the SNAP program? How can we help to reinforce this message that not only is this good for the families that we are talking about, but it is also good for the economy? And what about those 55,000 jobs that could be cut in the first year alone if the House GOP plan to cut these services goes into effect?

I yield the time to the gentleman from New York.

□ 2000

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the distinguished gentleman from the Silver State, and I think it is very important to note that in addition to the compassionate reasons to provide food assistance to hungry Americans in the greatest Nation in the world—that, it seems to me, should be sufficient enough reason for the government to act. But if that, for whatever reason, does not provide adequate motivation for my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to deem it significant, to allow for the robust Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to remain in effect, I would suggest that there are also economic benefits to making sure that we provide assistance to low-income Americans.

Every economist who has studied the sluggish nature of our economic recovery recognizes that perhaps the biggest problem that we confront is the inadequate nature of our consumer demand, that Americans, for a wide variety of reasons, aren't spending enough. One of the reasons on the low-income side of the socioeconomic strata is because poorer Americans just don't have the resources. One of the reasons why I support an increase in the minimum wage is because independent economists have clearly indicated that, if you put additional dollars in the hands of lower-income Americans, the likelihood is they will spend those dollars, which increases economic productivity because of the increase in consumer demand.

Similarly, if you have Americans who are food insecure and you provide them with additional resources in order to deal with the hunger problem in their household, they are not going to save that money. They are going to spend that money to deal with their food insecurity and that of their children. But that has a stimulant effect on the economy. It helps our economy grow. That was the reason why increased SNAP benefits were included in the Recovery Act.

As my colleague from Nevada indicated, as of November 1 of this month, those increased SNAP benefits have lapsed; therefore, you have got people all across America with $20 to $24 less per month that they can spend in trying to address the food insecurity issues that they have. That is a problem in America. That is why one of the reasons when we as Democrats talk about things that should be done to turn the economy around, to invest in America, we support a balanced approach to deficit reduction and economic recovery. The other side supports an approach that balances the budget on the backs of the most vulnerable in our society. My friends on the other side of the aisle will say: That is just hyperbole; what facts do you have to support that charge?

Well, is it hyperbole when you cut $39 billion from the Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program that your intent is to balance the budget on the backs of the hungry in America? When your budget cuts $168 billion in higher education spending, is it hyperbole to suggest that your intent is to balance the budget on the backs of younger Americans in pursuit of the American Dream through a college education? Is it hyperbole to suggest that when you cut $810 billion from Medicaid, as your budget does, that your intent is to balance the budget on the backs of the sick and the afflicted and the poor in America? That is not hyperbole. These are the facts that your budget, your legislative action, have laid on the table.

Mr. HORSFORD. I would like to underscore a couple of points that the gentleman is making here. The first is the fact that this does disproportionately affect the poor and those who are striving to become a part of the middle class. At the same time, there are corporate subsidies, billions of dollars of corporate subsidies for the agriculture industry in the farm bill and in other legislation that has come before this House that they will move expeditiously and then leave the food behind in the farm bill, for the first time that I am aware of that we have approved a farm bill without also including the food assistance component to it. They later came back and included it, but with a $40 billion cut.

And the positive economic impacts of this cannot be underscored either. I hear from representatives from the retail industry who tell me that SNAP creates some $340 million in farm production for each $1 billion of retail that is generated. There is some 3,300 farm jobs that are created for each $1 billion of funding that is provided for; that for every $1 billion of SNAP benefits, it also creates between 9,000 to 18,000 full-time jobs. So not only is this the right thing to do, not only is it the morally conscionable thing to do, it is also good for the economy.

And so as we make this argument, how important it is to debunk some of the myths surrounding SNAP, one of them being that there is fraud in the SNAP program and that is why the cuts aren't going to hurt the poor or those who are striving to be part of the middle class.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I think if I had a dollar for every time that a Member on the other side of the aisle claimed wage, fraud, or abuse in order to justify some egregious, draconian cuts, I would be a multimillionaire right now.

It is unfortunate that in the absence of legitimate facts, in order to justify going after these programs, that the allegation of waste or fraud or abuse, without a scintilla of systematic evidence, is laid on the table to justify actions, but let's be clear. The reason that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, have made the decision to go after programs like SNAP and higher education funding and a wide variety of our social safety net programs that have made America great in many ways is because, essentially, in the budget supported by the majority, passed in this House, Representative HORSFORD, the majority wants to take the top tax rate in America, 39.6 percent, and what they do in this budget, after making all of these egregious cuts, is to lower that top tax rate from 39.6 percent all the way down to 25 percent. Now, the argument is always made that the reason this is being done is because of stimulating the economy as a result of some well-worn, tired, trickle-down theory that has been proven to be discredited based on the facts as we know them over the previous two administrations.

And I will just briefly make that point related to why in the world would you, in 2013, make the argument that if you drop the tax rate from 39.6 percent to 25 percent and then cut $39 billion from SNAP in order to try and do it, cut billions of dollars from higher education funding, voucherize Medicare, cut hundreds of billions from Medicaid, it is because you expect America to accept the argument that that is going to create a stimulating effect on the economy. Well, when the top tax rate was 39.6 percent during the 8 years of Bill Clinton's Presidency, 20 million jobs were created; when, under the Bush administration, the top tax rate was dropped to 35 percent, we lost approximately 650,000 jobs. The facts don't support the nature of your argument.

That is why we think that there is just absolutely no justification to engage in alleged cost-cutting behavior, such as cutting $39 billion from SNAP in support of an economic theory that has widely been discredited.

Mr. HORSFORD. I thank the gentleman.

I would like to debunk another myth, and that is: just let the charities handle it. We have a number of great nonprofits out there, the church community, the faith-based community, can step up and fill the void.

Well, I would like to turn your attention to this chart which shows that, with all the great work that the nonprofits and the faith-based community is doing in addressing hunger and food insecurity, that amounted to about $5 billion in estimated value of all food that is distributed by U.S. charities this year. That compares to $5 billion that has already been cut since November 1 because of the setback, the so-called hunger cliff. This does not take into account the additional cuts that are on the horizon both in the Senate plan, which is about $4.1 billion of additional cuts, compared to the House GOP plan, which again is estimated to be $39 billion.

Now, I support the charities in my local communities. Three Square is our local food bank. They do a phenomenal job in southern Nevada in helping both our rural and urban areas, getting the needs of the families and the food that they need in those communities.

While my family and I will be making a donation to our local food bank and helping families get meals for Thanksgiving, that is not going to absorb the $39 billion of cuts that are proposed by the other side. This is just another one of those examples where the arguments don't support reality.

We are living in reality. The families who are struggling on these benefits whose stories we have shared tonight are dealing with reality. It is not a mother who is raising her children who is struggling to make ends meet who wants to rely on SNAP benefits that is the problem with our budget. It is simply not. It is not the veterans who have served our country with distinction and honor and who have come back, and because of the environment in their communities, they are also relying on SNAP benefits. They are not the problem with the Federal budget deficit. It is not the seniors at the Pahrump food bank that I visit who literally are having their meals cut back because of their draconian budget cuts. These American families are simply relying on a safety net that has been there and should be there in the wealthiest country in the world.

Now, I agree with my colleague who says that from a budget standpoint we have to tackle these problems, but there is a way to do it right. There is a way to do it without costing more in human toil, and there is a wrong way to do it. And the proposal by House Republicans to balance the budget on the backs of our children, our seniors, our veterans, the working poor and those who are striving to be part of the middle class is not it.

We will work with you on other ways to balance the budget, but it shouldn't be by making more families food insecure.

Mr. Speaker, may I ask how much time we have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 5 minutes remaining.

□ 2015

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Speaker, in that remaining time, I would like to yield to my colleague, Mr. JEFFRIES, for any concluding remarks that he has, and then I will close out this Special Order hour.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the distinguished gentleman again for his tremendous leadership in bringing to the House floor such an important issue of concern to the African American community, but really of concern to all Americans.

Hunger is an issue that should be nonpartisan in nature. It affects urban America and parts of suburban America and certainly rural America. It affects individuals who are Black, who are White, who are Latino, who are Asian, all different religious groups and ethnic persuasions. It is an issue that we should be willing to work on on a nonpartisan basis to find common ground with folks on the other side of the aisle to address an issue that should trouble every single Member of the House of representatives.

How can it be that we accept the fact that there are 50 million Americans who are food insecure in the wealthiest Nation in the world?

I have traveled all over the district that I represent, and I hear the arguments of some on the other side of the aisle that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, as it is sometimes referred to, is a program that creates dependency. Well, I haven't met a single one of my constituents who chooses hunger as a lifestyle. It seems to me that is a rough style to choose.

These individuals, for one reason or another, find themselves in a tough spot, and we in the Congress should be doing everything we can to try and help them out, to get them back on their feet, to put them in a position where they can move forward and make progress for themselves and for their families. Ultimately, that would mean progress for the community and for this country.

I thank the gentleman again for his leadership, and I look forward to working with you on this issue as we move forward.

Mr. HORSFORD. I thank the gentleman from New York for your leadership and commitment to this issue. You have come to this floor on many occasions to talk about the important issues facing our country, and you are always inclusive and factual. You make a compelling argument for why this body needs to take up these issues.

Let me just conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying not only do we reject $40 billion in cuts to the food assistance program, but we are actually calling on our colleagues on the other side to work with us, to help make SNAP work even better for America's families, to build on the great things that SNAP already does. This program is actually one of the most successful antihunger programs that we have. It lifts more families out of poverty than most other programs.

Let me just close by sharing one example that we can be addressing. The example I want to close with is the Thrifty Food Plan, which is currently how SNAP benefits are currently calculated. The TFP is the lowest cost of the four food plans developed by the USDA, and it is unrealistic for a family of four.

A family of four receiving $632 per month doesn't go very far in buying those fresh fruits and vegetables that my colleague talked about at the local farmers market. The current TFP formula fails to calculate difficulties associated with the lack of food availability. The fact that in many of our communities, both rural and urban, the accessibility to nutritious, wholesome meals and fruits and vegetables isn't even available. That falls disproportionately on the poor to have to pick up those costs. For example, it doesn't include the cost of transportation. It doesn't include food preparation time that so many working families struggle with. It leaves the average family of four with a $200 monthly benefit shortfall.

Again, this is simply unacceptable. As the wealthiest Nation in the world, no American—not our children, not our veterans, not our seniors—should be forced to survive on what is now $1.40 per meal. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we are here this hour to bring attention to this issue and to call upon our colleagues to work with us, to not implement these cuts and to make these programs work—not only SNAP, but Head Start and the other vital programs that so many families are depending on as part of that social safety net and the fabric of the American society.

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

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the devastating impact of hunger in America. The debate surrounding cuts to nutrition assistance coupled with nationwide food insecurity is a recipe for disaster for our neediest citizens.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a vital tool that help feed Americans struggling economically. More than 90 percent of SNAP beneficiaries are children, elderly, veterans, or disabled. Four to six million low-income people will be affected by cuts to SNAP funding, including the 450,000 residents in Dallas County, that are food insecure, 300,000 of which are children.

The GOP's efforts to cut $40 billion in SNAP are unconscionable and we must stand strong for the 16.4 percent of our population that remains food insecure. According to the USDA, one in every five Texas households experiences food insecurity. Out of the estimated 1.8 million Texas children, one in four live in food insecure households. Approximately 3.6 million Texas residents receive some type of federal food assistance.

In my district, I chair the Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions which is composed of organizations dedicated to fighting hunger and making Dallas County food secure. I strongly support the federal programs that work to support the needs of our citizens nationwide. I urge my colleagues to oppose any proposed cuts to nutrition assistance. Collectively, we can do so much to confront food insecurity in our nation.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, on November 1st, thousands of families in my congressional district saw a cut to their SNAP (food stamps) benefits. A family of four saw a loss of up to $36 a month. Over the course of the next 12 months, many families across my district will lose more than 24 million meals. Michigan families are already struggling to put food on the table, and the last thing we should do is take food away from those who need it most. Unfortunately, this has already happened.

There's no sugarcoating it: we have a hunger problem in Michigan and across the United States. The majority of households receiving SNAP are those with children. It is our responsibility to protect—not cut—critical programs like SNAP for the families and kids who rely on them. That's why I introduced H.R. 3353, the "Extend Not Cut SNAP Benefits Act" which would extend the Recovery Act's 13.6% increase in SNAP for an additional year.

This extraordinarily low level of SNAP benefits under the new levels will force families to find ways to stretch their already limited benefits even further at the grocery store in order to put healthy, nutritious food on the table for their kids. With less money to spend on groceries each month, the importance of nutrition education becomes even more real.

Yet the House and Senate proposed deep cuts within the Farm Bill could cut SNAP by as much as an additional $40 billion (on top of the cut we just saw on November 1st) and would cut funding for SNAP Education (SNAP-Ed). Keeping SNAP and SNAP-Ed strong isn't just the right thing to do—it's also the smart thing to do. Children who get enough of the healthy food they need, as a rule, face fewer health problems, do better in school and grow up to lead stronger, more productive lives.

THE ABUSE OF POWER BY THE IRS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FLORES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FLORES. Mr. Speaker, thank you for the recognition. This evening, I would like to lead the discussion about the blatant abuse of power by the Internal Revenue Service, specifically regarding its targeting of Americans because of their political beliefs.

In early 2012, the Waco Tea Party contacted me to express concern about overly onerous information requests regarding their request to become a 501(c)(4) organization. I subsequently contacted the IRS to get answers, and I also contacted the House Ways and Means Committee and the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee to inform them of the situation that I had been made aware of. Unfortunately, following my inquiry into the IRS, the issue did not go away and, in fact, it got worse. I began to learn that this targeting was wide and spread throughout the country.

In April of 2012, I, along with 62 of my House colleagues, sent a letter to then-IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman requesting a response as to why the IRS was targeting and intimidating conservative groups. We received a basic, nonresponsive letter from the IRS that outlined how applications are processed and that in no way answered our questions on the targeting and the onerous questioning of the grassroots groups.

On May 10, 2013, just a little over a year later, the IRS officially apologized for inappropriately targeting conservative groups like the Waco Tea Party. The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee started and continued to conduct hearings into this targeting of conservative groups.

News reports would go on to reveal that senior IRS personnel knew about this practice as far back as 2011, directly contradicting earlier testimony of senior IRS personnel, who claimed that they did not know of these practices. I, along with my colleagues here on the House floor tonight, are far from satisfied with just an apology.

We have several letters from groups that we are going to share with you tonight. This needless and abusive targeting has burdened many conservative groups throughout the country. I have invited several of my colleagues to come to the House floor and to join me as we bring back to the forefront this blatant abuse of power from the IRS on conservative groups. Tonight, I would like to present the injustice that has been done by reading letters to Congress from these targeted groups that go into detail about their experiences.

The first letter is from a group in my district, Texas District 17. It is the Waco Tea Party. Here is what their letter says:

> We are writing to you to explain to you and to your colleagues what it is like to be targeted by the government via the Internal Revenue Service. We are not writing to explain the facts and details—that is all a matter for public record and the courts—but rather to explain what happens to United States citizens who simply exercise their rights under the law.
>
> When we began the Waco Tea Party, we were regular Americans who spoke out about being taxed enough already. We weren't political operatives or politicians. For the most part, we were new to the world of politics. We were naive. We believed our government had problems, but we didn't realize that it would target citizens for their political beliefs, that it would put us on a "be on the lookout," or BOLO, list, for short, for using the words "Tea Party" in our name; that some Members of Congress would write to the IRS and demand action against us because we held a different position on policy.
>
> We weren't targeted because we broke the law; we were targeted because we were compliant with the law. We weren't targeted because we spoke out; we were targeted because our viewpoints weren't acceptable to government bureaucrats at the IRS. The law was wrongly used against us in an attempt to shut us out and to shut us up.
>
> The toll this IRS targeting is taking on our lives is immeasurable. The financial burden on our small grassroots group has been staggering, requiring many of us to dip into our household budgets to cover expenses, the sleepless nights worrying about what would happen if we couldn't find someone to help us, the emotional stress of explaining to your spouse, your children, family, and friends why you have to miss a special event or special day because we had to work on inane and intrusive demands by the IRS, questions that had nothing to do with our application but were instead used as a weapon of intimidation.
>
> The countless nights that we have laid in our bed not able to sleep, the times that we quietly cried into a pillow because we don't want our spouse to know how scared we are, or the isolation we have felt because of how the media and even some Members of Congress have demonized us, none of this matters to an agent of the government. We are not seen as people. We deeply love our country. We are patriotic, and we are dedicated to preserving our birthrights guaranteed by the Constitution and passing them on to the next generation.
>
> Our grandfathers, fathers, and others fought wars against countries that use government to squelch freedom and liberty of their citizens, only to find that out our own government was now engaging in these tactics. We are not ashamed of our country, but we are disgusted with our government and those who condone the IRS tactics.
>
> We implore you to act to preserve political speech, free speech, to hold people accountable for what they have done to the American citizens. We pray that you and your colleagues will act to restrain government, punish those who were responsible, and restore our First Amendment rights to what the Founders intended.
>
> Sincerely, Toby Marie Walker, Carol Waddell, Becky Kodrin, and Bobby Keith, Waco Tea Party members, supporters and volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, as I told you, there are several letters we have to share tonight. The next person I would like to invite to speak is RANDY WEBER from Texas District 14, and he will share