

Many Americans aren't aware that there are Americans who are being held hostage today in Iran. When Ronald Reagan dealt with the Soviet Union to try to end the Cold War, Ronald Reagan handed the Soviets a list of dissidents that he wanted freed in order for him to begin these talks with the Soviet Union. He sent a signal to the Soviet Union. It said, in America we believe every American life counts. That sent a very strong message.

In the case of the Obama administration negotiators, they didn't even bring it up. They didn't demand that one American be released before we talk. Now, this is interesting because the Obama administration put a lot of pressure on Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel. He said, You, Mr. Prime Minister, have to agree to release over 100 murderous thugs, including murderers who murdered an American, before the Palestinians will come to the table to negotiate with you on the Israel-Palestinian conflict. That was our President who put pressure under the prime minister—you have got to release thugs in order to negotiate. We would put that kind of pressure on Israel and we wouldn't put that kind of pressure on Iran?

You see, that is why, Mr. Speaker, I ask the question: Did the negotiators forget which Nation they were negotiating for? Because it looks to me like the score is pretty clear: United States zero, Iran made out on the deal.

The sad thing about that final score—and let's hope it is not the final score—is that, again, the hinge of history turns. If you have an Iran with a nuclear weapon, it won't be just Iran. You will explode proliferation. Saudi Arabia will have a nuclear weapon. Egypt will have a nuclear weapon. We will have a nuclear weapon most likely in Lebanon. And then at that point, what will happen with terrorist organizations like Hezbollah, al Qaeda, the al-Nusra Front, and on and on from there? The world changes. The hinge of history turns.

That is why this isn't political. That is why it is bipartisan here tonight. It is why Mr. ROSKAM has taken this very important courageous step of holding this time when Members of Congress can weigh in, because we aren't about bashing the Obama administration. That is not why we are here. We are here because we believe in national security—America's national security, Israel's national security—and peace across the world. That is Pax Americana. America doing everything that we can to be forward of keeping the peace in the world.

This action nearly guarantees war and a threat of a nuclear strike. We can prevent that. But the final deal that comes out in these final P5+1 negotiations must be very simple: close down the plutonium reactor, zero right to enrich for Iran, and zero processing. If you do that, then we will have a deal.

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, we have had a discussion tonight that has been

incredibly robust. It has been bipartisan. We have had insight from members of the Intelligence Committee, the Armed Services Committee, Members who have had a long-term interest in Middle Eastern affairs and American military affairs, all of whom, Mr. Speaker, have a clear view of history. A clear view of history says let's look back at past activities as the best indicator of what the future is going to be like.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, what we know is this. That the administration has struck a bad deal, maybe for all the right reasons, but they have struck a bad deal. It is the responsibility of Congress not to put its imprimatur of support on a bad deal, but to act as a co-equal branch of government and say, We ought not do this. We have got to recognize the weakness of it. We have got to recognize the long-term consequences of it, and we have got to hold this administration accountable.

I yield back the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of the Special Order today.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, we learned that the Obama Administration, along with representatives of the so-called P5+1 countries, had reached an agreement with Iran on freezing nuclear enrichment and relieving a portion of the sanctions that have been rightfully levied against Iran.

I think it is a positive step to have engaged Iran and to have reached a multilateral agreement. Certainly, freezing their nuclear enrichment, diluting the enrichment levels of Iran's uranium stocks, and reestablishing intrusive IAEA inspections are improvements over the current situation.

However, while I appreciate the need for a course of action that addresses the threat of a nuclear armed Iran, I maintain strong concerns about this agreement.

Foremost, I have serious doubts about the amount of trust we can extend to Iran. Engaging in negotiations that merely freeze their nuclear enrichment is a far cry from Iran forswearing nuclear weapons, not to mention their abhorrent support for terrorism in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and beyond. We must recall that this is the same fundamentalist regime that has supported the murder of Israelis in Argentina, has cast doubt on the existence of the Holocaust, and that enabled attacks on American military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Amazingly, despite the supposed goodwill of the agreement, three Americans continue to be detained in Iran. I find it extremely regrettable that the release of these Americans—Pastor Saeed Abedini, former U.S. Marine Amir Hekmati and ex-FBI Agent Robert Levinson—was considered marginal to the nuclear issue, and could not be addressed simultaneously while negotiations occurred in Geneva. These Americans' families are understandably left in pain as they wonder about

their loved ones' welfare, and what it will ultimately take to get them home. This speaks volumes about the intents and reputability of the Iranian regime—how can we trust a government to follow through on an agreement about nuclear issues when they continue to hold our citizens captive?

I am also very concerned about the implicit acceptance, if not endorsement, of Iran's right to enrich uranium. Numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions have stipulated that Iran must stop enrichment and set-aside its nuclear program. Yet, somehow, this agreement falls short of that previously established UN mandate. While it may be acknowledging the nuclear capacity that Iran has achieved, I cannot accept that.

It is unclear to me what peaceful need Iran has for uranium enrichment. There are international offers on the table to develop and fuel nuclear power plants and to provide medically necessary isotopes for Iran, in order to eliminate their purported need for indigenous nuclear capability. But Iran would prefer to deny those offers, and use the ruse of power and medicine to enable its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

This agreement even allows Iran to maintain the facilities, centrifuges and basic stockpiles that have enabled their nuclear pursuits. Remarkably, the Iranian military facility at Parchin, where research on a nuclear weapon has been widely suspected, is not included in the inspection program and imposes no restrictions on activities at this site.

Though the opportunity to use these implements may be forestalled for now, should a subsequent agreement not materialize, Iran could return to its current nuclear capacity in short order, and have billions of dollars' worth of sanctions relief in hand, with little long-term benefit to show from this short-term accord.

Yet, an agreement has been reached and we have to accept that as the reality at the moment. Nonetheless, I think it is important for the U.S. Congress to continue to pursue new sanctions that are contingent on Iran's absolute adherence to this agreement, and earnest engagement towards a deeper, longer-term agreement that further removes Iran's nuclear capacity. We must make clear that there will be swift and severe consequences should Iran deviate from the agreement. And, we must continue to aggressively counter their terrorism threat, meddling in the security affairs of the region, and abuse of human and religious rights.

We must maintain a strong posture towards the Iranian regime, as they have done nothing to earn the trust of the United States, or the western world in general. Iran remains a threat to regional and global security, and we must not neglect or forget that.

Implementing this agreement and pursuing any longer-term accord must be done with open eyes to the real threat that Iran has been and continues to be.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

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

Mr. POCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Congressional

Progressive Caucus to talk about the engine of our economy—the American worker. The American worker is known for their ingenuity, their work ethic, their drive, and their ability to get things done faster, better, and more efficiently than our competition. But also, unfortunately, the American worker is working harder than ever and they still aren't getting ahead.

The obstacles facing our workforce have never been greater. Too many people are still unemployed or underemployed, too few possess 21st century skills needed by employers, and the workforce protections fought for by generations are under attack like never before.

But tonight, the Congressional Progressive Caucus would like to focus on two issues promoting worker fairness: First, we want to ensure that we value and respect work through a fair wage; and second, we want to ensure that our country pursues fair—not free, but fair—trade deals that ensure American workers can compete on a level playing field.

Mr. Speaker, we are now in the biggest sales season of the year. Having already passed Black Friday and Cyber Monday, businesses are relying on the sales of the next month for their yearly profits. But a major problem faces our retailers this season. Too many people, many of them employed by retailers themselves, do not make enough money to purchase the consumer goods that drive our economy.

It has been 4 years since minimum wage workers have received a pay raise. Since that point, incomes of the top 1 percent have grown more than 31 percent, while CEO pay is 354 times that of the average employee. Meanwhile, the minimum wage, in its real value, is at historic lows. Adjusted for inflation, the 1968 minimum wage was at \$10.60 an hour in 2013 dollars, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index. The minimum wage today is only \$7.25. That comes out to approximately \$15,000 a year for an individual and \$30,000 a year for a family with two parents. The typical big business CEO, who got a 16 percent raise in 2012, got paid \$15.1 million. That person will make more in a couple of hours than a full-time minimum wage worker will make in an entire year.

□ 1815

Making \$15,000 a year working full time is simply not enough to get by in the United States. Think about the cost of rent, food, transportation. These costs keep going up, but the minimum wage does not. Is there any wonder why tomorrow Americans across the country will strike at food stores for a livable wage.

I joined one of these food strikes earlier this year in Madison, and I was inspired by the encourage of workers when they spoke out and took the risk of losing their job in order to talk about the low wages they were receiv-

ing. Something is wrong when in the richest country in the world, full-time workers have to strike because they can't afford their basic living expenses. When millions of Americans who work hard and play by the rules can't support themselves or their families, when they live in poverty, we face an economic crisis. Consumer spending goes down, deficits go up, and the gap between the small group of the very rich and the large group of the very poor grows even wider.

Mark Zandi, a chief economist for Moody's Analytics, recently said for the economy to thrive, we need everyone participating. Mr. Speaker, corporate profits are thriving. The stock market is thriving. The top 10 percent of the country are thriving.

According to tax expert David Cay Johnston, the top 10 percent earners took in 150 percent of the increased income in this country between 2009 and 2011. In fact, 40 percent of the increased income since 2009 went to the top 1 percent of the top 1 percent, those making at least \$8 million in 2011.

But do you know who is not thriving? Well, pretty much everyone else. During that same time period, incomes fell for the bottom 90 percent of Americans, and the minimum wage continued to lose its value. This is not a sustainable future for our economy.

As the President said today in a speech, the combined trends of increased inequality and decreasing mobility pose a fundamental threat to the American Dream, our way of life, and what we stand for around the globe.

Democrats proposed a solution, and we are honored to have the President's backing. Congressman GEORGE MILLER of California and Senator TOM HARKIN of Iowa have introduced the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2013. This bill, which already has 150 cosponsors in the House of Representatives, would gradually increase the minimum wage over 3 years from \$7.25 an hour to \$10.10 an hour, and it would be indexed in the future to increase in inflation thereafter.

I have already detailed the negative effects of today's unlivable minimum wage; but if we pass the Fair Minimum Wage Act, 30 million Americans would receive a pay raise. Thirty million Americans would have more money in their wallets to support their families and therefore support our still-recovering economy. And who are these 30 million Americans, Mr. Speaker? Critics charge that these are all a bunch of high school students trying to make a little extra cash, get some work experience, and if you raise the minimum wage, you will take away opportunities from young people.

Well, let me put that claim to rest. It is a myth. Nearly 90 percent of the workers who make the minimum wage are 20 years or older. More than half are over 25 years old, and 55 percent work full time. In other words, they rely on minimum wage for their full-time work; and 44 percent have some

type of a college education, an associate degree or a bachelor's degree or higher. And 56 percent of those low-wage workers are women. And yet the critics still persist with these myths that somehow raising the minimum wage will slow down hiring, especially for small businesses.

Just last month, Speaker BOEHNER was asked about the minimum wage and he said:

When you raise the price of employment, guess what happens, you get less of it.

He continued:

At a time when the American people are still asking the question, Where are the jobs? why would we want to make it harder for small employers to hire people?

Well, Speaker BOEHNER has a very different experience than we have heard from experts across the country and my experience as a legislator in the State of Wisconsin. Every single time we raised the minimum wage in recent history in Wisconsin, more people entered the workforce. It actually created more jobs by offering that increased wage. More people decided they were willing to go out and work. The same has been shown to be true at the national level.

I support raising the minimum wage, as do Businesses For a Fair Minimum Wage. So does the U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce and the American Sustainable Business Council. A number of business organizations see the very key to helping fix the economy is to help raise that minimum wage. In fact, two-thirds of small business owners across the country, according to a poll by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research on behalf of Small Business Majority, two-thirds of small business owners across the country support raising the minimum wage because small business owners, like myself—I have owned a small business for 25 years—understand two things. First, when you pay your workers with a decent wage and treat them with respect, you earn their loyalty. You get their hard work, and your business does better. That's why 85 percent of small business owners already pay their workers more than the minimum wage. Second, small business owners know that we need customers and we need people making enough money to afford the very products and services that we sell.

When you give a pay increase to the people who need it the most, that money goes directly back into the economy and helps support a rising tide, lifting all boats in the economy. Sixty-five percent of small business owners agree that "increasing the minimum wage will help the economy because the people with the lowest incomes are the most likely to spend any pay increases buying necessities they could not afford before, which will boost sales at businesses. This will increase the customer demand that businesses need to retain or hire more employees."

This is backed up by research, contrary to what Speaker BOEHNER and

other critics will say. Extensive research refutes the claim that increasing the minimum wage causes increased unemployment and business closures. In fact, according to the Economic Policy Institute, raising the minimum wage would actually have a positive impact on our economy by investing those dollars right now in the economy when we need it the most. When we increase the minimum wage, we raise wages for 30 million Americans, increasing salaries by \$51.5 billion over the next 3 years.

And that is not just helping the wages of people who make minimum wage, but for millions of Americans whose salaries are pegged to the minimum wage. That is extra earnings that could be put in our economy right now when we need it the most. We could increase consumer spending at a time when weak consumer demand is one of the biggest obstacles facing our economy. These extra earnings would increase the gross domestic product by \$33 billion over the bill's 3-year period, generating 140,000 jobs.

So when we increase wages, we increase consumers' ability to buy, which increases the gross domestic product and therefore increases jobs. At the very worst, raising minimum wage has no effect on employment, but it does provide a greater standard of living for millions of American workers. That is why 80 percent of Americans support raising the minimum wage, including 57 percent of Republicans and 59 percent of self-identified conservatives. It is a commonsense economic policy; and as a small business owner, I know it is a good business policy.

The Senate will hopefully consider an increase by the end of the year, and I encourage the people's House to do the very same.

That is one issue that is really important, but I want to just read a couple of quotes from business people specifically about raising the minimum wage. Let me read a quote from Business For a Fairer Minimum Wage director Holly Sklar who said:

The biggest problem Main Street businesses face is a lack of customer demand. With the Federal minimum wage stuck at \$7.25 an hour, just \$15,080 a year, workers now have less buying power than they did a half century ago in 1956, and far less than they had when the minimum wage was \$10.55, a high point in 1968, adjusted for inflation. We can't build a strong economy on downwardly mobile wages. It is time to raise America by raising the minimum wage.

There are small business owners who have said the exact same thing, who realize what we need to do with the economy. Camille Moran, owner of Caramor Industries and 4 Seasons Christmas Tree Farm in Louisiana said:

A minimum wage increase is long overdue. It is not right or smart for any business to pay a wage that impoverishes not only their working men and women and their families, but also impoverishes our communities and our Nation. Boosting the wages of low-paid workers who could then purchase goods and services they need is the best medicine for our ailing economy.

Let me read from another business owner specifically about raising the minimum wage. This is David Bolotsky, founder and CEO of Uncommon Goods in Brooklyn, New York:

Businesses don't expect the cost of energy, rent, transportation, and other expenses to remain constant; yet some want to keep the minimum wage the same year after year despite increases in the cost of living. That kind of business model traps workers in poverty and undermines our economy. The minimum wage should require that all businesses pay employees a wage that people can live on.

I have more and more stories from small business owners who get that the best thing we can do right now is provide the minimum-wage worker an increase in pay, put that money into the economy, create those jobs, and let's give a boost to what we need to most in America.

But the second issue that we want to address with the Congressional Progressive Caucus Special Order hour on the American worker is a trade deal that is coming down the pike possibly as early as the end of year, and that is the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

We have spoken a lot today about the need to ensure workers receive a fair wage for a hard day's work, but we are also concerned about another way our workers can get the short end of the stick, and that is with unfair trade deals that decimate American industries and ship jobs overseas. Unfortunately, we appear to have a massive, secret, and likely very harmful unfair trade deal on our hands.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership, or the TPP for short, is a NAFTA-style agreement between the U.S. and 11 other nations that have been largely negotiated in secret, and seems to not just repeat but perhaps worsen the mistakes made in the past.

In fact, this coming week, TPP negotiators are going to meet again in Singapore, and they plan to have a deal by the end of the year, in less than a month. That means we may be less than 30 days away from having a final TPP deal, a deal that we have no idea what it may contain. While we may not know what is in the bill, we do know what we have been promised, and it is similar to promises that people across the country and in my State of Wisconsin have been told before about these massive trade deals, from NAFTA to CAFTA to the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement.

We have been told that free trade would lead to increased U.S. jobs; it would reduce our trade deficits; it would boost our exports; and it would lead to improved human rights and labor standards around the globe. Unfortunately, almost every single one of those promises has gone unfulfilled.

In Wisconsin, we have seen the devastating effects of free trade agreements such as NAFTA to our local manufacturing industries and our jobs. In fact, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 5 million Americans have lost manufacturing jobs since the

passage of NAFTA. A recent report found that the U.S. actually experienced a net loss of 700,000 jobs to Mexico from NAFTA. As a small business owner myself, I have seen the number of American-made products dwindle that used to be available and made here in the United States.

The record on trade surpluses is equally as damaging. The year before NAFTA went into effect, we had \$1.66 billion trade surplus in goods with Mexico. Last year, we tallied a \$62 billion deficit. And just 1 year after the U.S.-Korea FTA took effect in March 2012, our trade deficit in goods with South Korea has increased by \$5.5 billion, a 46 percent increase.

Meanwhile, in countries from Mexico to Colombia to Bahrain, promises of improved labor rights have instead been replaced with reports by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the U.S. Department of State of continued, and oftentimes worsening, abuses.

So with all of these examples behind us, and with our economy continuing to recover slowly from the financial crisis, it should be our Nation's priority to pursue transparent trade policies that promote American industry, protect American workers, and improve the economic interests of middle class families across our country.

But as I have mentioned before, the TPP is no better than the deals of the past, and it could even be worse.

□ 1830

At this time, I yield to my colleague from the State of Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO). She is the cochair of the Steering and Policy Committee and the ranking member on the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriation Subcommittee. She is also a long-time legislator and a hero of mine in Congress.

Ms. DELAURO. I want to say thank you to my colleague from Wisconsin and thank you for all of your efforts and what you have been doing. It is an honor for me to serve with you.

At the heart of soul of what your interests are all about is what that chart reflects. It is about people who are making the minimum wage. What is their life about? What are we doing in terms of the policies that we create in this institution, which is an institution which historically has been about providing opportunity? A drop in the minimum wage is not an opportunity for future success. Your characterization of the Trans-Pacific Partnership in creating this kind of an effort is absolutely on target.

In terms of this agreement, next week, as you know, the trade ministers from 12 nations are going to meet in Singapore. As U.S. trade negotiators continue to push for this partnership, the TPP agreement, they want to push to move it so that we can do something by the end of this year.

You made a point before that this could have been a new opportunity. It

represented an effort to create something that was new, a sustainable model that promoted economic development with shared prosperity. But, as you know, unfortunately the talks have gone down the same road as previous trade agreements: export of more jobs, not more goods; unsafe imports; and threats to the public health, among other things. You made that clear.

The country lost more than 5 million manufacturing jobs, millions of service sector jobs since the North American Free Trade Agreement, which I will tell my colleague that I was proud to vote against when that came before this body, and the World Trade Organization. Both of those went into effect, and we have seen the loss of more than 5 million jobs.

Again, your point is well stated. Wages in the United States have decreased and economic inequality is something that is talked about a lot today. It is not an abstract concept. It is not an abstract construct. It is the result of public policy that has fostered economic inequality in the United States, and that has increased as a result of these past trade agreements.

The recent trade agreement with Korea reinforced why we cannot continue to do more of the same. In its first year, U.S. exports to Korea dropped 10 percent as imports from Korea increased. The trade deficit with Korea exploded by 37 percent in just 1 year, which equates to a net loss of approximately 40,000 more U.S. jobs. Why in an economy that is so difficult for people today are we embarking on public policy initiatives that increase lost jobs, lost wages, more economic uncertainty, and insecurity for families in the United States? It is wrongheaded. There is no reason to believe that the Trans-Pacific Partnership deal will not be the same kind of a raw deal for U.S. workers and more as this agreement would be unprecedented in scope.

The President himself has commented that the pact would establish rules that extend far beyond traditional trade matters to include “a whole range of new trade issues that are going to be coming up in the future: innovation, regulatory convergence, how we are thinking about the Internet and intellectual property.”

The agreement will create binding policies on future Congresses in numerous areas to include those that are related to labor, patent and copyright, land use, food, agriculture and product standards, natural resources, the environment, state-owned enterprises, and government procurement policies, as well as financial, health care, energy, telecommunications, and other service sector regulations. This is a treaty that goes beyond tariffs. The scope is, as I have outlined, unbelievable.

We also know that the lack of transparency on this treaty is unbelievable. It is interesting to note that industry has had great access to the process and what is going on. Members of Congress,

both sides of the aisle, have not had that same access to the information in this trade agreement, and it is our constitutional authority as Members of Congress to approve trade agreements. We cannot be frozen out any longer. We are not going to tolerate that.

We know, for example, that the agreement will likely lead to increases in U.S. imports of shrimp and other seafood from Vietnam and Malaysia. Here is something I believe my colleague knows but others need to know:

In 2012, imported seafood products from Vietnam were refused entry 206 times because of contamination concerns while some exporters in Malaysia have acted as a conduit to transit Chinese shrimp to the United States in order to circumvent both FDA import alerts and antidumping duties.

When I said they had been stopped, why have they been stopped? Filthy product, contaminated product, antibiotic-laced product putting in jeopardy the public health of people in the United States. And rather than improving food safety enforcement and regulations in partner nations, the agreement may lead to a drain of resources needed to ensure that food safety at agencies like the FDA are called in to resolve these disputes with other countries. The agreement may even undermine critical U.S. food safety regulations.

We also know from the recently leaked text that U.S. trade negotiators—I say “recently leaked” because we don’t have access to the information. We are not able to come in and have people lay it out for us.

We now know from the leaked text that U.S. trade negotiators are proposing unbalanced intellectual property provisions that are going to hinder our trading partners’ access to safe and more affordable drugs. This is not only going to raise the price of medicines overseas, preventing millions from getting the medical care that they need, but it limits the ability of United States companies exporting these drugs to grow internationally and to generate more jobs at home.

Incredibly, even as the administration is proposing to lower drug costs for consumers here in the United States by proposing in its budget to modify the length of exclusivity on brand name biologics from 12 to 7 years, our trade negotiators are demanding 12 years of data exclusivity from our trading partners, denying their people quicker access to more affordable drugs.

How can the United States be in that business? It is morally unacceptable that people overseas will have less access to lifesaving drugs. That is not who we are as a Nation. That is not where our values lie.

These and other critical areas are being negotiated without sufficient congressional consultation, even though, as I mentioned, under the Constitution, the Congress, not the Executive, has the exclusive constitutional

authority to “regulate commerce with foreign nations” and write the Nation’s laws. Over the last few decades, Presidents have increasingly taken over both of those powers through a mechanism known as “fast track.” What it does is erode Congress’ ability to shape the content of the free trade agreement, which today, as I said again earlier, clearly goes well beyond tariff issues of the shaping of the trade agreement, but it then becomes—if you provide for fast track authority, then that means it comes to this body. My colleague from Wisconsin knows this. He served in legislative bodies. We will have no ability to amend, and you just come and you rubber-stamp it. No more. No more.

Under the recent iteration of fast track—which expired, by the way, in 2007—U.S. trade negotiations required various stages of congressional consultation before and during the negotiations. But even that minimal level of congressional consultation has not occurred with regard to the Trans-Pacific Partnership treaty, which is why myself and so many of my other colleagues from both sides of the aisle, including my colleague from Wisconsin (Mr. POCAN), have made it clear that the 20th century fast track and its lack of any meaningful input from Congress in the formative stages of an agreement is not appropriate for the 21st century trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership. More fast track is a nonstarter.

What we need to do is to create a 21st century mechanism to negotiate approved trade agreements that ensure that they benefit more Americans. Don’t decrease their wages. Don’t decrease the minimum wage. Give them a fighting chance to help themselves and their families. We cannot approve a Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement that continues to follow the same failed trade template that has hurt working families for so long, that jeopardizes our public health here and abroad, and that creates binding policies on future Congresses that we had no input in creating.

If we are to uphold the trust of our constituents, for them, for this economy, for our country, we need to do better, and the content and the process of the Trans-Pacific Partnership does not allow us to do better by our constituents or the great people of the United States. This is a treaty that needs to be restarted. Instead of being brought up and finished by the end of the year, we need to restart the effort, have congressional input, and do something that will help to make a difference in the lives of the people that we serve.

I thank the gentleman for having this Special Order to focus on this issue. I know that he will, as I will, continue to try to make clear to the public what we are talking about, what is in this legislation, which is not going to benefit themselves and their families. That is something that I

know that you are committed to and I am committed to, as well. And we are going to continue this battle. As far as I am concerned—I won't speak for you—we are not going to make that end-of-the-year treaty. There are going to be many roadblocks before that occurs.

I thank the gentleman for allowing me to participate in this Special Order tonight.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you, Representative DELAURO, not only for your long history of standing up for the American worker and trying to get fair trade and not just free trade, but also for really giving a strong explanation about the problem with food coming into our country.

Ms. DELAURO. The food issue is supreme, and this usually stays under the radar. We are bringing it to the fore.

Mr. POCAN. And medicine. Much less labor standards. We know in Vietnam the wage is 28 cents an hour. That is 4 percent of our currently already low minimum wage. To think that somehow we can have fair trade with a country that has 28 cents as minimum wage, that the factories have violated safety requirements eight out of 10 times they have been inspected, that workers routinely fail to get the minimum 4 days a month of rest.

□ 1845

This is not a trade partner that you can have in a trade agreement that is going to at least raise the level for American workers. It can only lower the level.

And another concern I know you and I have had, Representative DELAURO, has been on procurement and what exactly is in this agreement on procurement. I was an author, when I was in the State Legislature in Wisconsin, of Buy America laws, to make sure that our tax dollars went to goods that supported American workers.

The very language that has been in these trade agreements could take away our ability to have Buy Local and Buy American laws, and we need to change that.

So, again, thank you so much for your efforts on this. We are going to work with many other colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do what we can to defeat this fast track.

Ms. DELAURO. I think it is important to note that there is bipartisan support in opposition to a fast track authority unless it gets changed to include congressional input, as well as bipartisan support in opposition to this trade agreement for what it does, because people being hurt don't have a party label.

The minimum wage, the drop in the minimum wage, affects Democrats, Republicans, Independents. I don't care where you are and who you are, it is affecting your life and the life of your family.

So I thank the gentleman again and look forward to our continuing efforts.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you again, Representative DELAURO, for your many

years of advocacy for the American worker and your continued strong passionate advocacy on behalf of the American worker. Thank you.

One of the things that, as we talked about the various provisions, there are literally over 20 chapters that involve everything from labor conditions, the environment, procurement, food safety, intellectual property, on and on. This is a wide, wide variety of topics that are covered in the trade deal.

And the fact that Congress could maybe lose its say through a fast track agreement would be completely egregious because we are elected by the people. We have to represent our constituents and make sure we defend that worker in our district.

If you take away Congress' voice, that is wrong. Whether it is done by a Democrat or a Republican, we must have our say.

People will say that somehow we are anti-trade. We are, in fact, very much pro-trade. We just want it to be fair trade. We want it to be drafted carefully and correctly, and I believe you can do that.

But when you have an agreement like we have seen with past agreements and what we expect so far to see in the TPP from some of the leaked text, it looks again that the interest of global corporations will be ahead of the good of the American worker.

There are situations where a foreign-owned business could have more power than our own sovereign courts on issues, and where Buy American policies can be undermined, where corporations can be incentivized to move their production offshore, and it can engage us in a race to the bottom on worker protections, wages and rights. And the American worker gets left behind.

We simply can't do that. We need to make sure that Congress has every possible say in a trade agreement, especially something as wide as the Trans Pacific Partnership can include.

We need to know what is in these laws; and if you think about it, we don't know that. You just heard Representative DELAURO and me, who have been following this issue, we don't even know exactly what is being negotiated in this agreement.

So we have a lot of questions, and we have very few answers.

Does the agreement do anything to tackle currency manipulation? We don't know.

Does it include enforceable environmental and labor standards? We don't know.

And how much does it deal with the blatantly non-trade items from, food safety to financial regulations to Internet freedom?

Once again, the answer is we don't know.

Yet, despite all these unanswered questions, despite the fact that most Members of Congress have barely gotten a chance to see leaked portions of the agreement, and despite the fact that this deal will have lasting reper-

cussions on our economy and our workers, once again, there is word that we are hearing they are going to try to fast track this through Congress. And that simply is not acceptable.

Given all the lingering questions that we have out there on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, I firmly believe that rushing this bill through Congress is both dangerous and irresponsible.

Just earlier this year, I led a letter, with 35 other freshman Democrats, expressing similar concerns about transparency and making sure that we have a bill, a trade deal that is in the best interest of our constituents, our workers.

Madam Speaker, our job in Congress is to represent the people who sent us here. It is not our job to represent the interests of foreign corporations or CEOs who want to find the cheapest labor they can to increase their profit margins, and it is not our job to sit on the sidelines while more bad trade deals get passed through this body.

We have a responsibility to the American worker to ensure that they can compete on an even playing field with workers across the world. If we compete on an even playing field, we will always win. We have the work ethic. We have the ability to do that.

But unless we are given that equal opportunity, the American workforce cannot be treated in a fair and sustainable way. They can't compete when their jobs are shipped overseas, or their wages get driven down so low that they face almost unlivable conditions.

We can and must do better for our workforce. We can raise the minimum wage. We can pass job-first trade deals. We can invest in our workforce through education and job-training programs that prepare the American people for the challenges of the 21st century.

That is what the Congressional Progressive Caucus is committed to doing, and that is what I am committed to doing. That is why I encourage the entire body to help us move forward.

Madam Speaker, the Congressional Progressive Caucus has done the best we could tonight to try to raise—

Mr. POLIS. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. POCAN. I yield to the gentleman from Colorado.

Mr. POLIS. I will be happy to talk about TPP for a moment. I have some time coming up on a different topic.

But one of the issues around it has been the secrecy under which it has been negotiated. I actually, some months ago—to show that these are not just partisan concerns—sent a bipartisan letter, with DARRELL ISSA, requesting that there is more transparency about this process.

I have had the opportunity on three occasions to review the text in my office. My own staff wasn't allowed to even be there with me.

The American people are unable to execute the proper oversight over something that is of great economic

importance to our country because of the secrecy under which it is being negotiated.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you, Representative POLIS from Colorado. Again, you have been an outstanding advocate on behalf of the American worker.

And I too did the exact same thing. I looked at sections of this, and my staff weren't allowed; but even more troubling, I wasn't allowed to take notes about the language of these agreements.

But from what I saw in the agreements was definitely no better than past agreements and very likely could be worse when it comes to labor standards and when it comes to our procurement policies allowing us to have Buy American laws.

So the Congressional Progressive Caucus today really wanted to highlight the American worker. And the two issues that we wanted to highlight tonight, one was the need to raise the minimum wage, something we expect the Senate may be taking up yet this year, and that we hope this body will take up. And let's raise that minimum wage to \$10.10, just like the proposal that we have before Congress.

Secondly, let's make sure we have fair trade deals, not just free trade, but fair trade deals that protect the American worker, protect the environment, protect our businesses around intellectual property and other concerns. We can do that. And the Congressional Progressive Caucus will continue to do that.

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

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. WALORSKI). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS) for 30 minutes.

Mr. POLIS. Madam Speaker, I am here today, unfortunately, to talk about the continuing inaction of this body on immigration reform. It has been 159 days since the Senate passed a commonsense immigration reform bill securing our borders, creating jobs for Americans, restoring the rule of law, requiring employment verification, uniting families. And this body has failed to act.

The House's failure to act on immigration reform has already cost our economy over \$6 billion. Today, Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the human cost as well.

In the week following the Thanksgiving holidays, I want to recognize those individuals that are suffering because of our inaction, families that are torn apart, immigrant workers so critical for our economic success, living in the United States, who even helped put our Thanksgiving dinners on the table this year.

I want to begin by telling the inspiring story of a Capitol Hill staffer, sadly, a former Capitol Hill staffer,

Erika Andiola. I had the opportunity to meet Erika and her mother today, and I hope that her story will inspire this body to finally reform our broken immigration system.

Erika wrote this letter to many of her friends, including some of your staffers, Madam Speaker, just the other day about why she is leaving:

Dear friends, today is my last day on the Hill. While "last day on the job emails" are customary, I wanted to share the unfortunate reason I am leaving. A few days ago, I informed my boss I would be leaving my job on Capitol Hill to return home to Mesa, Arizona, and fight against efforts to deport my mother.

After a year as a congressional staffer, during the push to bring millions of people out of the shadows in the U.S., I am now needed most as a daughter to my mother.

In many ways, my life represents a broad spectrum of experience for undocumented young people in our country. I am facing the most painful aspect of the record-setting deportations of the Obama Administration: family separation by deportation.

My home was raided by ICE on the same date I began my work in Congress. The raid stemmed from a traffic stop. While ICE is supposed to prioritize deportations for violent crimes, they decided to go after my mother, who has never committed a violent crime.

Families being separated is nothing new. The administration is currently nearing the 2 million deportation mark. Behind that number is an even larger number of families, like my family, being left behind.

I had the opportunity to meet Erika Andiola and her mother earlier today, and I can tell you we will miss her service in this body for the Member she worked for. She has her legal status, thanks to President Obama's Deferred Action program, or DACA, that allows her the paperwork to work, again a result of the inaction of this body, that the Executive had to take action, with the limited authority he has, to at least give a temporary reprieve to Erika. But no such help for her mother.

And who among us wouldn't, if forced to choose between our job and our family, who wouldn't choose our family?

As Erika returns home to Arizona, I wish her and her mother well and good luck in ensuring that they can stay together in a country that I hope values families, just as it valued Erika's service to her country as a congressional staffer.

I encourage everyone to share Erika's story and to get involved at keepustogether.org to help keep Erika's family together.

Our inaction on immigration reform has also impacted our immigrant workforce, a critical part of our economy. Roughly 16 percent of all workers in the U.S. are foreign born, in diverse sectors from agriculture to information technology to self-employed entrepreneurs.

As the Aspen Institute's November series of "Working in America" noted, the experience of immigrant workers varies significantly. Some achieve great success, while others are employed in low-paying and substandard working conditions.

In my State of Colorado, according to the 2011 census, over 11 percent of our workforce is comprised of immigrants. Among them, unauthorized immigrants comprise nearly 5 percent of Colorado's workforce. That is according to a study by the Perryman Group.

If we were to remove unauthorized immigrants from Colorado tomorrow, our State, my State, would lose \$3 billion in economic activity, \$3.6 billion in gross state product, and it would cost our State almost 40,000 jobs for Americans that would be destroyed if we didn't have the people that are in Colorado today already working and simply lack a legal way to do that that only this body can fix.

Nationwide, the millions of undocumented immigrant workers are often marginalized and exploited. In many cases, they have harvested our Thanksgiving dinners. They have harvested our onions, packed our tomatoes, perhaps cleaned your hotel room, Madam Speaker, or mine, washed our dishes.

Yet, their immigration status means that when unscrupulous employers try to take advantage, they often lack a voice to stand up for stable and fair working conditions or to report crimes.

Undocumented workers around our country engage in difficult, dangerous work under the harsh conditions. They often live in fear of detention or deportation.

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Consider the example of a worker in Nashville who, while cleaning the restaurant where she was employed, cut herself, yet her managers refused for 4 hours to take her to the hospital. Even after receiving medical treatment, her employer refused to pay any of the costs for an employment-related injury. And the injury caused her a permanent handicap, with limited mobility in her hand.

Or consider the case of Raul, a North Carolina farmworker who lacks documentation. Raul shares a room and dirty and freezing bathrooms and showers with six others. Raul rises every day to provide for his family and give them the life he never had. Because his family is in another country, he hasn't seen his children in 5 years and misses them terribly, but his immigration status prevents him from even visiting his family back home and being able to return to his job here.

Or consider the case of Guadalupe Hernandez, a returned migrant and former undocumented farmworker who came to the U.S. at the age of 12 and has been back and forth three times since. Guadalupe endures working for 12 to 14 hours a day at minimum wage in order to provide for schooling for her five children.

So while Congress is working 113 days next session, 113 days next year—that is how much we will be here. I sure hope it is enough time to reform our immigration system. So while Congress is working 113 days, the average undocumented farmworker's workload