The story of the Flushing Remonstrance is not for New Yorkers alone. It is a precursor to a fundamental right to practice one's religion. It is a value in our First Amendment. I am proud to represent a district that tended to the early roots of religious freedom that have now grown into an unquestionable American right. I hope the Flushing Remonstrance Study Act and the December 27 anniversary will help us all remember the courage of John Bowne and the passion for religious freedom held by the authors of the Flushing Remonstrance.

PROTECTING MINNESOTA RATEPAYERS FROM WASHINGTON INACTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PAULSEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, recently, the D.C. Circuit Court ruled in favor of America's energy ratepayers.

For more than 30 years, the Department of Energy has assessed a special tax and a special assessment on my constituents and the residents of 40 other States around the country who receive their electricity from nuclear power. Minnesotans have paid over $400 million alone. The stated reason for this tax: to pay for the disposal of used fuels generated from nuclear energy. To date, the total amount collected is more than $24 billion, but little of that money has even been spent.

Since 1987, the law of the land remains that Yucca Mountain is the site for geological storage of nuclear spent fuel. Unfortunately for ratepayers, partisanship and bickering in Washington have nearly halted the program from moving forward. In classic Washington fashion, even with all of this inaction, the tax has continued to be assessed and the moneys have continued to be collected.

Fortunately, this court action will bring an end to this, but just for now. I have long been an advocate of stopping these payments. The government is not doing what it promised to do with used fuel; yet millions of ratepayers are still being forced to foot the bill. Minnesotans and Americans should not be taxed for a service that the government is not providing.

Mr. Speaker, we should be expanding the development of nuclear energy. It is safe, it is clean, and it is renewable. Storing these used fuels is a critical piece of that effort, and we need a permanent solution, whether it is at Yucca Mountain or somewhere else.

It is reasonable and fair that if the administration is going to continue to drag its feet on a permanent storage site, as they have for several years now, then ratepayers and taxpayers should not be forced to fund inaction.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the court's decision to protect Minnesota ratepayers and stopping these payments. In addition, it is time to get serious about the future of nuclear energy and moving forward with safe and proper storage facilities for the waste.

THE DO-NOTHING REPUBLICAN MAJORITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. TONKO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, well, here we go again. Our to-do list continues to pile up and Republican House leadership of this legislative body—if we can even use words like ''leadership'' and ''legislative'' to describe the House anymore—has officially cemented the first session of the 113th Congress as the ''least productive of all time.''

We have not passed a budget, have not passed a farm bill, have not fixed the Voting Rights Act, or done anything in our charge to make the people's voices heard in their Nation's Capital. In fact, if recent reports in the D.C. newspapers are any indication, House leadership seems to be more concerned with planning fund-raisers in New York City than getting anything done here in Washington, D.C.

The leadership of the people's House has continued to govern by sound bites and passing messaging bills that go nowhere—even shutting down the government for more than 2 weeks in the process, a painful exercise and expensive exercise.

But we are about to call it a year and skip town with so much left undone. Our unemployment—or employment—rate is at its lowest point in 5 years. But imagine how much lower it would be today if we would work together and focus on jobs instead of attempting to repeal the Affordable Care Act since 2011;

Rolling back sequestration and replacing it with a responsible budget that cuts where we can and invests where we must;

Passing comprehensive immigration reform to expand the American Dream to our friends and neighbors who want so desperately to contribute to the greatest country on the planet;

Updating the Voting Rights Act so that everyone is able to fulfill their basic human right and duty of going to the polls;

Increasing the minimum wage to restore dignity to those who have been forced to work two, and sometimes three, jobs simply to put food on the table;

Passing a farm bill—something that needs to be done and used to be routine—and empowering our Nation's family farms to ensure that our national food supply remains secure and remains plentiful;

Focusing on the clear and present danger that climate change has brought to the Midwest and to our shores along the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic coast.

I could go on and on, but I only have 5 minutes.

Tax reform, certainly commonsense gun reform like expanding background checks, and passing ENDA.

The fact is that there are about 10 to 15 pieces of major legislation that would improve our country and the quality of life for Americans of every race, orientation, political party, and socioeconomic status. But they are not being pushed by this House.

Almost all of these bills, if given a simple up-or-down vote, would pass with a bipartisan majority; but House leadership continues to act in the interest of a few extremists in their own party instead of doing what is right for our American people.

I, like many of my Democratic colleagues, have signed onto a resolution introduced by my good friend LOUISE SLAUGHTER, which would prevent Congress from adjourning unless the House agrees to a budget by December 13.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this resolution so that we stay in town until we perform at least one of our basic duties before leaving for the holidays. The American people deserve so much more than what we have given them in the past year.

It is my hope that when we gavel in next year, we will do so with a renewed willingness to work together and focus on the top priority for Americans, which is, indeed, putting people back to work. The American public expects and deserves nothing less.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 22 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

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

PRAYER

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

Almighty God of the Universe, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

We join the world this day to ask Your blessing upon all worldwide who mourn the death of Nelson Mandela.

One of the great figures of human history, and most certainly of our own era, Madiba joined a small fellowship of heroic people whose commitment, ultimately, to nonviolence and reconciliation changed our world.

As today marks the 20th anniversary of the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, we ask that You give all who inhabit the Earth the will to intensify our efforts to fulfill our collective responsibility to promote and protect the rights and dignity of all people everywhere and the wisdom to know how best to do so.

Bless us this day and every day, and may all that is done within the people's House be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentlewoman from Arizona (Mrs. KIRKPATRICK) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT STANDS ON A SAND FOUNDATION

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, even the White House's best ObamaCare damage control efforts, waivers, delays, penalty deadline, adjustments, and temporary fixes sadly leave the so-called Affordable Care Act's sand foundation untouched.

Math undergirding the entire law remains structurally unsound and threatens the broader insurance market in this country. That is a shame for each and every American.

As someone who wants to see greater access and affordability in health care, and more options for Americans in the individual insurance market, it is my hope that the country moves toward a competitive, patient-centered system like the one outlined by the House Republican Study Committee in the American Health Care Reform Act.

Something as transformative as health care policy should never be forced on the American people on an embarrassingly unstudied and purely partisan basis, the way President Obama chose to proceed with the Affordable Care Act.

VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL FACILITY LEASES

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

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in favor of H.R. 3521, which authorizes medical facility leases for the Department of Veterans Affairs. I am a cosponsor of this bipartisan bill, and I am pleased that it allocates $20 million for community-based outpatient clinics in my home State of Arizona.

The Phoenix VA Health Care System serves the majority of our veterans. More than 300,000 veterans reside in this service area. Having an additional facility will help these men and women access the care they deserve.

I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for supporting this bill. Helping our veterans isn't a partisan issue; it is a national responsibility.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, December 9, 2013.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker, U.S. Capitol, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in clause 2(h) of rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on December 9, 2013 at 6:06 p.m.:

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 3626.

With best wishes, I am
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 4 of rule I, the following enrolled bill was signed by Speaker pro tempore DENHAM on Monday, December 9, 2013:

H.R. 3626, to extend the Undetectable Firearms Act of 1988 for 10 years

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY LEASE AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2013

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3521) to authorize Department of Veterans Affairs major medical facility leases, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3521

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Department of Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Lease Authorization Act of 2013''.

SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION OF MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY LEASES.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out the following major medical facility leases at the locations specified, and in an amount for each lease not to exceed the amount shown for such location (not including any estimated cancellation costs):

(1) For a clinical research and pharmacy coordinating center, Albuquerque, New Mexico, an amount not to exceed $9,560,000.

(2) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Brick, New Jersey, an amount not to exceed $7,280,000.

(3) For a new primary care and dental clinic annex, Charleston, South Carolina, an amount not to exceed $7,070,250.

(4) For the Cobb County community-based Outpatient Clinic, Cobb County, Georgia, an amount not to exceed $6,409,000.

(5) For the Leeward Outpatient Healthcare Access Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, including a co-located clinic with the Department of Defense and the co-location of the Honolulu Regional Office of the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Kapolei Vet Center of the Department of Veterans Affairs, an amount not to exceed $15,887,370.

(6) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Johnson County, Kansas, an amount not to exceed $2,263,000.

(7) For a replacement community-based outpatient clinic, Lafayette, Louisiana, an amount not to exceed $2,996,000.

(8) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Lake Charles, Louisiana, an amount not to exceed $2,626,000.

(9) For outpatient clinic consolidation, New Port Richey, Florida, an amount not to exceed $11,927,000.

(10) For an outpatient clinic, Ponce, Puerto Rico, an amount not to exceed $11,535,000.

(11) For lease consolidation, San Antonio, Texas, an amount not to exceed $19,426,000.

(12) For a community-based outpatient clinic, San Diego, California, an amount not to exceed $11,946,100.

(13) For an outpatient clinic, Tyler, Texas, an amount not to exceed $4,327,000.

(14) For the Errera Community Care Center, West Haven, Connecticut, an amount not to exceed $4,883,000.

(15) For the Worcester community-based Outpatient Clinic, Worcester, Massachusetts, an amount not to exceed $4,855,000.

(16) For the expansion of a community-based outpatient clinic, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, an amount not to exceed $4,232,060.

(17) For a multispecialty clinic, Chattanooga, Tennessee, an amount not to exceed $7,069,000.

(18) For the expansion of a community-based outpatient clinic, Chico, California, an amount not to exceed $4,534,000.

(19) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Chula Vista, California, an amount not to exceed $3,714,000.

(20) For a new research lease, Hines, Illinois, an amount not to exceed $22,032,000.

(21) For a replacement research lease, Houston, Texas, an amount not to exceed $6,142,000.

(22) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Lincoln, Nebraska, an amount not to exceed $7,178,400.

(23) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Lubbock, Texas, an amount not to exceed $8,554,000.

(24) For a community-based outpatient clinic consolidation, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, an amount not to exceed $8,022,000.

(25) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Phoenix, Arizona, an amount not to exceed $20,757,000.