

on the responsibility that we sought when we ran for public office and took on the privilege of representing the people who sent us here.

□ 1845

So I say thank you to Gabby for all she has done, and I challenge us to try to do a little bit of what Gabby would do if she were here to help us today.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, how much time do we have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Tennessee has 3 minutes remaining.

Mr. COHEN. At this point, I would like to yield to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. PERLMUTTER).

Mr. PERLMUTTER. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee, because I want to just talk about something Mr. WELCH said and also something Mr. COURTNEY said.

Mr. COURTNEY said that she had worked on some things involving technology with respect to the VA, and there were some technological problems with whatever it was she was getting. She was a curious, and is a curious, individual. She brought a curiosity about technology. She was one of the first adopters of the iPad as we began using it here. She just had become an expert in it long before any of the rest of us.

She also was strong enough that she worked in her dad's tire store. So here is a woman who brought that energy, brought that enthusiasm, brought that curiosity and brought a real service, a desire for service to this country. Despite terrible wounds, she continues that service today. If we could all do that this Nation would be unbelievable. It is our job to continue to try to provide that service and follow her example. Despite all the obstacles, here is a woman still changing the world. I am very glad to be able to speak for her in this moment today, 3 years after she was shot, but she is still making a difference.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the Members. There were others that would have been here but had certain conflicts at this time.

We all loved Gabby. She was the star of our class. It was before 3 years ago on the 8th of January that she was the star of our class. We all knew it, and we all loved her.

I want to thank each of our colleagues for joining us. I want to thank Gabby for her service and her continued service. She is an American hero.

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

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2279, REDUCING EXCESSIVE DEADLINE OBLIGATIONS ACT OF 2013; PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3362, EXCHANGE INFORMATION DISCLOSURE ACT; AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3811, HEALTH EXCHANGE SECURITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT OF 2014

Mr. BURGESS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 113-322) on the resolution (H. Res. 455) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2279) to amend the Solid Waste Disposal Act relating to review of regulations under such act and to amend the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 relating to financial responsibility for classes of facilities; providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3362) to amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to require transparency in the operation of American health benefit exchanges; and providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3811) to require notification of individuals of breaches of personally identifiable information through exchanges under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BARLETTA. 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 on the topic of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues in the House and I are here today to talk about another unintended consequence of the Affordable Care Act. We understand there is little appetite in this body to provide fixes to a flawed law. However, we believe that an unexpected and previously undetected problem with the law represents special and urgent circumstances.

This really took me by surprise. The fact that the Affordable Care Act could force volunteer fire companies to provide health insurance to their volunteers or pay a fine would burden them with unbearable costs and possibly cause them to reduce the number of volunteers they have or shut their doors altogether.

Simply put, this is a public safety issue. This is a problem today because

the Internal Revenue Service currently treats volunteer firefighters as employees for Federal tax purposes. Under the Affordable Care Act, if they have 50 or more employees and they work 30 hours a week, then the employers have to provide health insurance or pay a fine.

Here is a key point that I want to make. Some fire companies may hear about this and immediately think: well, we only have 25 volunteers so we are safe, we don't have 50. Well, that may not necessarily be the case. Some fire companies are considered part of their local government. That could mean that if you take the number of firefighters paid and unpaid now considered employees by the IRS and add them to the number of other public employees, such as highway workers, police, code enforcement officers, health officers, clerical workers, you can easily reach 50, even in a small town.

This would be a very big deal in my home State of Pennsylvania. Ninety-seven percent of our fire companies are either completely or mostly volunteers. Nationally, 91.7 percent of fire companies use at least some volunteers and 86.2 percent depend on all or mostly volunteers. Those numbers come from the 2012 National Fire Department Census conducted by the United States Fire Administration.

So I wrote a letter to the IRS, just like many of my colleagues here, and asked them for clarification. To this point, as of this afternoon, we have gotten no reply from the Internal Revenue Service. They have said that they are "reviewing" it.

This should be very easy to clear up for the IRS. Just say that volunteer firefighters are just that—volunteers. But we are still waiting.

Let's be clear about this. This wrinkle in the Affordable Care Act will not provide health care to the uninsured; it will only shut down fire companies and cause a severe threat to public safety.

That is why I have introduced H.R. 3685, the Protecting Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Responders Act. The bill will specifically exempt volunteer firefighters and volunteers providing emergency medical services from the employer mandate provision of the Affordable Care Act.

I was happy to learn that there is a bipartisan Senate bill that is a companion to mine. I hope that we can see bipartisan support for this in both the House and in the Senate and that we can get through this quickly so that the President can sign it.

Mr. Speaker, this problem with the Affordable Care Act represents a clear and present danger to public safety.

I would like to invite my colleagues to offer their thoughts about this problem and how it relates to their own districts.

I would like to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK).

Mr. FITZPATRICK. I thank my friend from Pennsylvania, Mr.

BARLETTA, for organizing this Special Order tonight.

I have to say that I never assumed it would be easy to get an answer quickly from a massive bureaucracy of the Federal Government like the Internal Revenue Service, but I have to admit that I never thought it would be this hard either, especially on a question important to the safety of communities across my district and across our great country.

My question to the previous IRS chief—and more recently the new agency head—has been a simple one: Can you clarify the rules within the President's health care law as they relate to volunteer firefighters? As my colleagues here tonight have noted, confusion exists within the first responder community about the effects of the health care law's mandates and the IRS's definition of an employee, which currently, as we have heard tonight, covers volunteer firefighters.

Yet the question goes unanswered, and I can't offer any information or comfort to the fire departments who would be the one's hurt by the misguided mandate. One way or the other, they just want to know so they can keep on serving their communities.

I would like to read just two emails of many, many emails that I have heard from my district about the importance of this situation.

The first is from Charles Rumble, who is president of the Plumsteadville Fire Company:

We are an all-volunteer fire company that is being penalized for our ability to attract and retain members to protect the community. There is no way that we—or our community that supports us—can bear that cost of offering insurance. We would be forced to shut down and our community forced to seek substantially more costly and diminished fire protection alternatives.

From Frank Farry, who is chief of the Langhorne-Middletown Fire Company, who is also an elected State representative in Pennsylvania:

The administration and the IRS have been aware of this issue for months but yet have not taken any steps to address it. The volunteer fire service already faces many challenges, and if the ACA is applied to it, the volunteer fire departments will have their backs broken.

Mr. Speaker, waiting for an answer isn't good enough, especially for people with jobs as important as our volunteer firefighters. That is why I was proud to join with Congressman BARLETTA and so many others gathered here this evening in introducing the Protecting Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Responders Act to try to address this problem legislatively.

I know we all remain optimistic that the administration will address our concerns. We hope that the IRS takes action and takes action swiftly. If not, we are prepared to do so in this House.

Mr. BARLETTA. Thank you, Mr. FITZPATRICK.

Now I would like to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. DENT).

Mr. DENT. Thank you. I would like to also join my colleagues tonight in

support of Representative BARLETTA's very important legislation to help clarify the fact that the volunteer firefighters should not be counted as full-time equivalents under the employer mandate under the health care law, more commonly known as ObamaCare.

It has been very clear to me, after having meetings with many of my friends in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, where a number of firefighters from different fire companies came to speak to me on this issue, that the potential impact of this idea of counting volunteer firefighters as full-time equivalents will really have a very negative impact on public safety in that particular community, where volunteer firefighters really do provide the bulk of the fire service, as is the case in much of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and throughout the country.

It is clear to me that the health care law is riddled with so many problems. We always knew that this employer mandate was going to be a problem where it says that if you have more than 50 employees you are going to have to provide health care benefits after the first 30 for those working more than 30 hours a week.

I don't think anybody in their wildest imagination would have ever thought that a volunteer fire company would have been impacted by this. It raises a whole host of questions too: Well, are those volunteer firefighters part of the municipal workforce? There are all sorts of questions that we simply don't know the answers to.

It is my hope that we never have to address the Barletta legislation, as important as it is. I am hopeful that the IRS will come to a ruling at some point to clarify the fact that these volunteers are not full-time equivalents for the purpose of the health care law in the employee mandate. That would be the easiest way out. Absent an IRS ruling, well then let's pass this bill. I am proud to be a cosponsor. I am delighted that my good friend and colleague LOU BARLETTA, we share a county, Dauphin County, in the Harrisburg area. We share that county. This is also a very big issue in that part of the State.

It is important that we move forward with this legislation in the event that the IRS fails to do its job and provide the clarity and the guidance that so many of our volunteers depend on. More important than the volunteers is the people they serve. These volunteer firefighters are protecting us and this employer mandate will only make that task that much more difficult and deny fire service, unfortunately, to too many people across the country in the Commonwealth.

With that, I commend my friend, Mr. BARLETTA, for his very important legislation.

□ 1900

Mr. BARLETTA. Thank you, Mr. DENT.

I would like to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MEEHAN).

Mr. MEEHAN. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I want to join the gentleman and my colleagues not just from Pennsylvania but from across the Nation as we challenge this problem that has emerged. Once again, it is symbolic of a number of things—of when we heard the mantra: just pass it, and we will find out what is in it.

We have found out what is in it more and more frequently; and once again, we are beginning to see the implications of a law that was not understood when it was passed and that is now becoming worse as it is being implemented. As my colleagues have stated, it begins here in this particular circumstance with the IRS and the determination that volunteers are going to be considered to be employees of municipalities.

In places like mine, the impact of this is very severe because, if this kind of thing happens in the first place, think of the concept of a volunteer. These are the guys who are getting up at 2:30 or 3 o'clock in the morning on these cold evenings like this and answering the call and going out and putting out the fires in homes in neighborhoods like ours. They are going to be considered to be employees under this law, but that means that the municipalities are going to be fined if they choose not to supply the kinds of medical that will be required under the Affordable Care Act, under ObamaCare. Then, if they do pay for it, what is going to happen in communities like mine is that that cost is going to be passed through.

I sat and I asked the mayor—and I have five separate volunteer fire companies just in my own township—and he estimated that it would cost about \$4 million a year to provide that kind of health care coverage to the members of the volunteer fire departments who were there. Now, where do you think that \$4 million is going to come from? It is going to come from the homeowners and the taxpayers in our districts, who are going to see their taxes raised to pay for this service for volunteers. This is how insane it is.

The second part of what is so frustrating is the difficulty of dealing with this bureaucracy because, some 3 months ago, like many of my colleagues, I wrote to the IRS and asked for a simple clarification: Why can't we just have a clear signal sent to these departments which rely on this kind of certainty to be able to make decisions as they move forward on the utilization of their resources? These are the guys who are holding bake sales to be able to find the money to put together the equipment and other kinds of needs that they have, and they have got to worry about whether they are going to be encumbered by this kind of a bill.

So, for so many reasons, we need clarification and we need action. Once again, this is symbolic of the particular problems that are faced by this interpretation, which is affecting communities all across the Nation. When I

say “all across the Nation,” that is 750,000 volunteers in fire departments and some 25,000 fire companies that are volunteers all across this Nation. It is touching every community in America.

I join my colleagues in the hope that we will be able to get some action from the IRS and this administration so we don't have to rely on the passage of the Protecting Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Responders Act to get the clarification that we need.

I thank my colleague for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. BARLETTA. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. Speaker, if you could just imagine the bookkeeping nightmare that these volunteer fire departments would face in determining whether or not the volunteer firefighters have worked 30 hours or not in order to be considered a full-time employee or less. Do they count the times that they have their pagers on as hours worked or the time that they are listening to a scanner or the 12- or 24-hour shifts that many of the volunteers would have to work and who would record this? It is the fact that these men and women who are volunteers to protect the communities that they love would be forced into doing things that we just know they wouldn't do. It would simply close firehouses or volunteers would no longer be volunteering their time.

I would like to yield to the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. DAVID JOYCE.

Mr. JOYCE. I would like to thank the gentleman for yielding and thank Mr. BARLETTA for organizing this Special Order on this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we are here today because it is critical that we protect our local volunteer firefighters from the Affordable Care Act's employer mandate. As we all know, the IRS has a history of treating volunteers as employees for tax purposes; and if the employer mandate is incorrectly implemented, volunteer fire departments may be forced to comply with these requirements, and that could force them to close or to curtail their emergency response services.

In the seven counties I represent in northeastern Ohio, there are over 220 fire departments, many of them with an all-volunteer force. Chief Scott Hildebrand related to me that some of these departments will be forced to double in size due to the mandate, and each one of these extra volunteers will need additional turnout gear at a cost of \$2,500 to \$3,000 per individual.

Before coming to Congress, I was the Geauga County prosecutor for 25 years. During that time, I founded an organization called the Geauga Bluecoats. The Bluecoats is a charitable organization that provides relief and services to the family members of police, fire and emergency responders who have become disabled or who have lost their lives in the line of duty. These men and women are our friends—they are our neighbors—and they have gone above and beyond the call of duty. We owe it

to our local communities to continue to allow these brave men and women to carry out their duties.

This legislation will ensure that those brave men and women are protected from the employer mandate and can continue to serve.

I thank Mr. BARLETTA for his leadership on this, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. BARLETTA. I thank the gentleman from Ohio.

I would like to yield to the gentleman from Kansas, Ms. LYNN JENKINS.

Ms. JENKINS. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank him for his leadership on this critical issue. I will note that I am a proud cosponsor of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up on a family farm in Holton, Kansas. However, as anyone from a tight-knit community knows, folks see it as a civic duty to pitch in where help is needed. This means that many folks choose to be volunteer firefighters. These volunteers give freely of their time and well-being to help ensure that, when disaster occurs, folks in the community are safe. I know this well because my daddy served as a Kansas State fire marshal for many years.

I have spent significant time on the House floor talking about the unintended consequences of passing the President's health care law, which allows the government to take control of the health care industry. This is another one of those unintended consequences. The President's health care law will penalize volunteer firefighters and EMTs by counting them as full-time employees and possibly subjecting their departments to the employer mandate tax.

Penalizing volunteer fire departments should not be the intent of the President's health care law, and the effects could be disastrous. In Kansas alone, there are 550 volunteer fire departments that are staffed by 13,000 volunteer firefighters. It would be a terrible mistake to jeopardize the status of these departments and the communities they serve by penalizing them under the Affordable Care Act. Given the commonsense nature of this legislation and the bipartisan support of it, I remain committed to ensuring that this gets fixed.

Mr. BARLETTA. I thank the gentleman from Kansas.

I yield to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BARR).

Mr. BARR. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for his leadership on this important issue.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the more we learn about ObamaCare, the more disappointing it becomes. The American people continue to be disappointed that President Obama's health care law is not only wreaking havoc on their families and that it is not only wreaking havoc on small businesses and on our economy but that now it could be endangering our com-

munities that rely on emergency response services provided by volunteer firefighters and EMTs. This is impacting volunteer firefighters in my home State of Kentucky.

Just this morning, despite a wind-chill of negative 5 degrees, firefighters in Anderson County, Kentucky, rushed to the aid of fellow citizens to battle a barn fire that was threatening to spread to a nearby home. As their equipment and even the water froze in the extreme temperatures, these brave firefighters courageously took shifts to protect their community.

It is not unusual for these heroic men and women to routinely perform acts of bravery. It is also not unusual for them to hold pancake breakfasts or chili dinners simply to raise enough money to pay their electricity bills. These volunteer companies are now being asked to provide coverage under ObamaCare's costly employer mandate, which Anderson County Fire Chief Mike Barnes warned could force them to lay off heroic, life-saving personnel and leave communities like Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, in Anderson County, without adequate fire protection.

So, while fire departments work tirelessly to provide essential safety services, we must do everything we can to ensure that our emergency services volunteers are not forced to be counted as full-time employees under ObamaCare. It is a cost they simply cannot absorb.

The project of ObamaCare is the project of the entire Obama Presidency. It is a project to determine whether or not Big Government can solve big problems. It is a project to determine whether or not the Federal Government can micromanage one-sixth of the American economy. With this issue with these volunteer fire departments, we now find out, once again, that ObamaCare and the project that it embodies is an abject failure.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, may I have a time update, please.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Pennsylvania has 10 minutes remaining.

Mr. BARLETTA. I would like to yield at this time to the gentleman from New York (Mr. COLLINS).

Mr. COLLINS of New York. I would like to thank my friend from Pennsylvania for taking up this important and timely issue.

Mr. Speaker, ObamaCare has proven to be the devastating law that many of us predicted. The recent debacle of the online exchange roll-out and the negative impact the law has had on our economy seem to be only the beginning of the problems we face. Every few weeks, we hear about more unintended consequences of the law, which are hurting the very people the President and the Democrats in Congress promised to protect.

The IRS considers volunteer emergency responders, including firefighters, employees for tax purposes. Under this employee designation, large

volunteer fire departments will be subject to the ObamaCare employer mandate. This will force them to provide health insurance to their volunteers or to pay a significant penalty. These unnecessary costs will cripple the strong volunteer fire community that protects western New York and the rest of the country.

In November of last year, I wrote a letter to the Acting Commissioner of the IRS, seeking a specific exemption for volunteer responders, but my office has yet to receive a reply. Since the administration has not corrected this disservice to America's volunteer EMTs and firefighters, we must act legislatively.

I urge the House to take up H.R. 3685 and address this issue as soon as possible. We must protect our volunteer emergency service responders so they can continue to protect us.

Mr. BARLETTA. I thank the gentleman from New York.

I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STIVERS).

Mr. STIVERS. I would like to thank the gentleman for yielding, and I would like to thank him for his strong leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I am a proud cosponsor of H.R. 3685. The health care law could cause many communities to lose fire service because of an unintended consequence of the law that would treat these volunteer firefighters as employees and that would require them to have health insurance.

Volunteer firefighters risk their lives every day to provide our safety. They provide important emergency services in many of our communities. In fact, in Ohio, 70 percent of our fire departments are either fully or partially staffed by over 16,000 volunteer firefighters. Unfortunately, we could risk service in some of our communities if these communities are required to pay either a penalty or provide insurance. My district towns, like McConnelsville, Ohio, use volunteer firefighters, and they raise money. Every year at a dinner, they raise about \$10,000 to help pay for the costs associated with their volunteer firefighters. If they had to pay penalties and insurance on top of that, it could cause them to lose service. I think these families and these communities that are served by volunteer firefighters deserve the same service as other communities and shouldn't lose their services as a result of the health care law.

We don't want to put American families and Ohio families at risk of losing their fire service, which is why I am a proud cosponsor of H.R. 3685.

I would like to thank the gentleman for his leadership, and I hope everyone will support the bill.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, may I have a time update again.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Pennsylvania has 6 minutes remaining.

Mr. BARLETTA. Thank you.

I would like to yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS).

Mr. MEADOWS. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank him for his leadership on this commonsense approach to solving a problem that was unintended.

Mr. Speaker, when it really gets down to it, our firefighters and our first responders deserve our attention and our support. They are the ones who, quite frankly, are missing birthdays, anniversaries, who are called out in the middle of the night to serve their communities. My communities in western North Carolina are served by some of the greatest volunteers that a country could want; and here we are tonight, debating this over something that should be common sense.

I would just urge my colleagues across the aisle to join with many of the fire chiefs whom we talked to today—over 13 of them—from large counties and small counties alike, Democrats and Republicans. Every one of them without exception, Mr. Speaker, said that we need to address this because it will hurt the people that they serve.

□ 1915

I think it is time that we come together in this Chamber and make sure that we correct a wrong that has been done.

Mr. BARLETTA. I thank the gentleman.

I would like to yield to the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MCKINLEY).

Mr. MCKINLEY. Thank you, Congressman, for your leadership on this matter.

According to Tom Miller, the West Virginia representative to the National Volunteer Fire Council, 95 percent of all fire departments in West Virginia are staffed by volunteers.

To pay for their training, equipment, and operating costs, these men and women are forced to raise money through bake sales, pancake breakfasts, steak dinners, and standing in the streets, humbly, at the stoplights, holding their boots out and asking people to put money into those boots. And now these financially strapped fire departments have been told that they may have to pay health care costs.

Mr. Miller has projected that the added cost of paying for this health care for these volunteers will force some departments to close their doors, putting families and businesses at risk.

Mr. Speaker, cutting emergency services upon which rural America depends is clearly an unintended consequence of ObamaCare. Therefore, we must exempt our volunteer emergency responders from this additional cost by bringing this bill to the floor as soon as possible.

Mr. BARLETTA. I thank the gentleman from West Virginia.

I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON).

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. I thank the gentleman for yielding and for sponsoring this. As a 30-year-plus

State-certified volunteer EMT and rescue technician, on behalf of my brother and sister firefighters and rescue workers, EMTs, EMS folks, thank you for your leadership on this.

Just very quickly, our volunteers are not employees. Our volunteers are neighbors helping neighbors. Our volunteers are community servants. They are trained professionals today. They are heroes. They are willing to walk into burning buildings when everyone else is running out. But they are not employees. And it is time for the Obama administration and the IRS to give us that clarification.

Mr. BARLETTA. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

I yield to the gentleman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM).

Mrs. NOEM. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I rise today as a cosponsor of H.R. 3685, the Protecting Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Responders Act. I am very proud to do so.

In my home State of South Dakota, there are nearly 8,000 volunteer firefighters and over 350 volunteer fire departments. These men and women are on the front lines protecting our families, our homes, and our businesses. Nearly every one of them fulfills that duty while holding down a full-time or part-time job that oftentimes covers their health insurance coverage.

I had one constituent from Rapid City drive home the point to me, talking about the shoestring budget they operate on. Many departments raise money privately at community events and dinners to make ends meet. Requiring them to cover health insurance, as the Affordable Care Act may do, would be extremely detrimental.

Emergency service volunteers are essential to our safety and well-being for South Dakota families and businesses. That is why I am proud to support this bill and proud to speak on its behalf today.

Mr. BARLETTA. I thank the gentleman from South Dakota.

Mr. Speaker, I had sincerely hoped that we wouldn't have to be here this evening to take up the valuable time of this body, but the flaws in the Affordable Care Act and the deafening silence from the IRS on a question so basic and obvious compels our attention.

Over 1,000 different groups have received waivers from the Affordable Care Act, covering over 3 million people. Don't our volunteer firefighters and the communities they serve and protect deserve at least the same consideration?

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

AN IMPORTANT TIME IN AMERICAN HISTORY

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