According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics of the 6.1 million workers are paid hourly rates in Texas in 2012,

In Texas 282,000 earned exactly the prevailing federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour, while 170,000 earned less.

From 2011 to 2012, the number of Texas workers who earned at or below the federal minimum wage was 7.5 percent. The percentage of workers earning less than the federal minimum in 2012 was 2.8 percent, while the share earning exactly the minimum wage was 4.7 percent.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to help celebrate Women's History Month by becoming cosponsors of H.R. 863.

BY THE NUMBERS

161 million: The number of females in the U.S. as of December 2013. The number of males was 156.1 million.

2 to 1: At 85 and older, the approximate ratio by which women outnumbered men in 2012 (3.9 million to 2.0 million).

JOBS

74.8 million: The number of females 16 and older who participated in the civilian labor force in 2012. Women comprised 47.4 percent of the civilian labor force in 2012.

41.6%: Percent of employed females 16 and over in 2012 (annual average) who worked in management, professional and related occupations, compared with 34.7 percent of employed males in the same year (annual average).

MILITARY

1.6 million: Number of female veterans in the United States in 2012.

EARNINGS

$37,791: The median annual earnings of women 15 or older who worked year-round, full time in 2012. In comparison, the median annual earnings of men were $49,398.

77¢: The amount that female year-round, full time workers earned in 2012 for every dollar their male counterparts earned. This ratio was statistically unchanged from 2011.

EDUCATION

11.3 million: Number of women college students in fall 2012. Women comprised 56.8 percent of all college students.

31.4: Percent of women 25 and older who had obtained a bachelor's degree or more as of 2012.

25%: Percentage of women 18 and older with an alternative educational credential—such as professional certifications, licenses and educational—not statistically different from men. However, women had higher rates of alternative credentials than men at the bachelor's degree and advanced degree levels.

15%: Among people with advanced degrees, the percentage of women who held educational certificates compared with 12 percent of men; 51 percent of women held professional certifications or licenses compared with 43 percent of men.

VOTING

63.7%: Percentage of female citizens 18 and older who reported voting in the 2012 presidential election, in comparison to 59.7 percent of their male counterparts.

MOTHERHOOD

85.4 million: Estimated number of mothers in the U.S. in 2009.

1.9: Average number of children that women 40 to 44 had given birth to as of 2010, down from 3.1 children in 1976, the year the Census Bureau began collecting such data. The percentage of women in this age group who had given birth was 81 percent in 2010, down from 90 percent in 1976.

MARRIAGE

66 million: Number of married women 18 and older (including those who were separated or had an absent spouse) in 2013.

5.2 million: Number of stay-at-home mothers nationwide in 2013; compared with 214,000 stay-at-home fathers.

THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF ABORTION-INDUCING DRUGS IN OBAMACARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MEADOWS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, tonight I would like to share the tale of two garages: the American Dream and the threat to that American Dream.

The first garage is down in Oklahoma, and it is owned by David and his wife Barbara. In 1972, David and Barbara borrowed $600, and they began making picture frames in their garage. They had a dream. They said, you know: People might want to buy premade frames. There are pictures all the time that people take, and we could do that.

So they enlisted their two sons, Steve and Mart, and they began building those picture frames. And then they opened up a retail location—actually, it was 300 square feet in size—and they started selling those picture frames, and it was very, very successful. And now, their dream has just blossomed into 556 stores in 41 States, and 70 more are scheduled to open this year.

They have now what started out in the garage with just David and Barbara and their two sons, they have 16,000 full-time employees. And we all know that store. I am sure many of us have been there. It is called Hobby Lobby. We love it. It has expanded now not just to picture frames, but all kinds of art and decorating supplies. And their headquarters is actually located just down the street from that garage in Oklahoma City.

The other garage is over in Pennsylvania, and it is owned by Norman and Elizabeth Hahn. They have three sons: Norman, Anthony, and Kevin. And in 1964, about 40 years ago, they, too, had a dream, and they started in their garage making high-quality doors and wood components for kitchen cabinets. You know, they said: We can do this, so let's do it. So they started working hard and expanding.

And from their modest beginnings in just a small garage in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, they have now grown to be one of the industry leaders in wholesale wood products for kitchen cabinets. They have five facilities located in the United States in three States—Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Washington—and what started out with five family members, they now have 950 full-time employees. It is truly an encouraging sign that the American Dream is alive and well.

And something else these two garages and these two families—David and Barbara Green as well as Norman and Elizabeth Hahn—have in common is that they care for not only their customers and having a high-quality product, but they also care about their employees. They both have provided a lot of high-quality benefits to their employees, paying them well, and also providing health care for years, as well as other benefits.

But I am sad to say both of these businesses and both of these families are in trouble, and these businesses are in jeopardy of having to close—not because of the economy. Like I said, Hobby Lobby is actually planning to open 70 more stores. There is a need. People want their products. It is not because of any other reason other than, sadly, the government.

The government is threatening these American businesses, what we need more of. They are providing good jobs and are providing health care. They are in jeopardy of closing because our government and our Representatives, a few years ago, passed the President's health care takeover law. And part of that was a mandate that said, if you provide health insurance for your employees, you have to include abortion-inducing drugs. It doesn't matter that you already had a good policy that your employees like; you have to do that. And if you don't, you are going to be fined not just a little bit, but a lot.

I have a poster here I want to show you that shows the injustice of this mandate. You have two numbers here: $36,500; $2,000. Here is the situation for these two families:

The ObamaCare law says that if you don't provide health care for your employees, we are going to fine you $2,000 an employee; but if you do provide health insurance for your employees but just don't include the abortion-inducing drugs, then we are going to fine you $36,500. Where is the justice in that? Where is the common sense?

I am from Missouri, and we are the Show Me State. Show me how this makes any sense at all. This is the situation that faces the Hahn family and the Green family. They are providing their health insurance coverage. They are conscientious. Due to their beliefs, they believe that all life is valuable,

and they don't want to be complicit in paying for potentially life-ending drugs. And because of that, our government is going to fine them this amount of money, $36,500 per employee, which, sadly, could put both businesses out of work. We would have tens of thousands of people across this country out of work just because of this government takeover of health care. It is wrong.

We have a long-standing tradition in this country of following something in here. It is in the Constitution. It is an amazing little document that our Founders started. But you know the very first amendment to the Constitution establishing our rights is that it lays out the importance of religious liberty. It says: ''Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.''

Our country has always upheld religious freedom and the right to exercise and live according to your beliefs. There are examples everywhere where we have done this before up until this point. Employees have been able to take off on Sundays or religious holidays. That has been respected. Crosses and other religious symbols have been respected. Certain special activity restrictions, like kosher foods, have been honored. Not working certain days, Sabbaths, have been honored. There is even a religious conscientious objector provision, where we have honored people's religious beliefs regarding military service. Always our country has upheld the Constitution first and held that sacred that it is our religious right to live free.

You had the Pilgrims come to this country. Why? So they could have religious freedom. It is the foundation our country has been built on. And yet it is being jeopardized, trampled on, and attacked by the Affordable Care Act.

Now, tomorrow, the U.S. Supreme Court is going to hear the case of these two American families and see if they can be forced by their government to go against their religious moral objections. This is a historic moment. It is one that will have ramifications forever in our country. What do we stand for? What will we allow our government to do and inflict on our lives?

My colleagues and I are here tonight to share the concerns we have as we stand up for the people that we represent and for what our Founders started this country on and why we want to stand for future generations, to protect those freedoms that those who have gone before us stood up and fought for us, for our generation. And we hope and pray that the Supreme Court will uphold the Constitution and will not jeopardize it or trample on it.

So I thank my colleagues for coming tonight, and I would like to ask my friend from Ohio, BOB LATTA, to share his thoughts on this very important historic moment.

□ 2045

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for first hosting this Special Order tonight, and I appreciate you recognizing me to speak here tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in defense of our First Amendment rights and in support of the millions of American jobs, livelihoods, and health care plans that are now in jeopardy as a result of the ObamaCare HHS mandate.

Tomorrow, the Supreme Court will be hearing oral arguments in both the Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties v. Sebelius cases challenging the constitutionality of the ObamaCare HHS mandate. I am hopeful that the court will recognize and acknowledge that the mandate unquestionably infringes upon Americans' rights of conscience and the freedom to live and work according to one's faith or religious beliefs.

This ObamaCare mandate wrongfully forces American citizens to choose between their conscience or face oppressive fines, as the gentlelady has already pointed out, that will undoubtedly destroy family-owned businesses across this great country. Equally alarming is that this mandate will drive employers to stop offering health insurance coverage to their employees altogether to escape the encroaching hand of government that is coercing individuals to violate their fundamental freedoms.

We have to remember this is occurring at a time when ObamaCare is cutting millions of jobs and forcing taxpayers from full-time jobs to part-time jobs. This is unacceptable and completely contrary to the tradition of our country and the principles of our democratic government.

My hope and the hope of millions of other Americans is that the Supreme Court will act to protect Americans from this government infringement and reassert the full scope and intent of the liberties conferred upon all citizens through the First Amendment.

I again thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mrs. HARTZLER. I thank Representative LATTA, and you brought up a great point, of how employees can lose coverage. They have health insurance now, these two families are offering it, but an option they have is to drop coverage completely. How is that helpful to these hardworking Americans who work there?

Now I would like to turn to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BENTIVOLIO).

Mr. BENTIVOLIO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for giving me this opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I, along with 71 of my colleagues, have signed on to the brief in support of Hobby Lobby. We must fight for religious freedom. In responding to the Hobby Lobby case, the President has acknowledged how critical religious liberty is to our freedom. I couldn't agree more.

There is a reason why the Bill of Rights prioritizes our right to religious freedom: our Founders knew people could never be free if they could not worship in a manner they found appropriate. Sadly, ObamaCare takes away that right by forcing Americans to participate in a practice they are morally opposed to. ObamaCare is more about forcing Americans to follow a certain dogma rather than promoting a healthy society.

Tomorrow, the Supreme Court will hear the advocates for religious liberty pitted against the voice in support of government moralism. From Plessy v. Ferguson to Roe v. Wade to the ObamaCare ruling, we have seen how a handful of judges can take away our natural rights. I pray the Supreme Court will rule on the side of American liberty.

The Supreme Court must protect the First Amendment. The foundation of our Nation rests upon it.

Mrs. HARTZLER. I thank Representative BENTIVOLIO. Well said. Foundational principle: religious liberty. I thank you very much for that.

Now I turn to the gentlewoman from Minnesota (Mrs. BACHMANN) to share her thoughts on this historic moment.

Mrs. BACHMANN. I thank the gentlelady from Missouri for hosting this important discussion because nothing could be more important and more basic to every American than standing on the principle of our First Amendment rights of speech and religious expression.

You know, it was very interesting, just the week before last we had an expert on James Madison speaking to us, and he wrote a book about Madison. Madison is the author of our First Amendment, and we had the document in Madison's own handwriting where he had his First Amendment. James Madison crossed out the word ''full toleration'' when it came to religious liberties, and instead he inserted not just belief but also the free exercise, the acting of our beliefs. This is what America is about. We are standing here in the well of the House of Representatives, the most important forum for freedom of speech in the world, and just beyond the double doors of this Chamber lies the rotunda, and in the rotunda is a painting of the Pilgrims, and the Pilgrims are on their knees before they come to the United States. It is the ''Embarkation of the Pilgrims.'' They have open before them a copy of the Bible, the Geneva Bible, turned to the New Testament. And why was it that the Pilgrims came to the United States? They searched for religious freedom and toleration.

One thing that the bill that will be before the Supreme Court tomorrow addresses is this issue: will toleration be a two-way street? I think it is. Toleration should not be just the government-enforced coercion of government's beliefs on every American, because that is what is happening in a family business, for the Green family with Hobby Lobby or the Hahn family with Conestoga. This is the government enforcing its beliefs down the

throats of two family-owned businesses, and what is at stake is not just the rights of the people who own the business. What about the rights of those who work in the business, the employees? They also have moral rights and protections. These businesses pay very good wages and they offer very good benefits to their employees. So here is what we are being looking at: either the business pays over $36,000 a year per employee for the price of standing up for their moral beliefs, or they have to give up health insurance altogether for their employees and pay the government a $2,000 fine per employee. Who, I ask you, benefits? That is dealing with a case that is coming before the court tomorrow.

An even more fundamental issue is at stake, and it is this: here we are, Representatives of the United States Congress, and we are having to fight President Obama on whether or not we can retain our constitutional rights and liberties. That is what is at stake.

We are standing here for the Constitution. We are standing here for every man and every woman in the United States that agrees with those rights. This is a discussion worth having. I thank the Speaker. I thank the gentlelady from Missouri. Tomorrow is an extremely important day, and I thank God for all of the wonderful Members of Congress who are standing up for these important issues. They are not negotiable. They are not for sale at any price.

Mrs. HARTZLER. I thank Representative BACHMANN. Very well said. I thank God for Members here as well who are standing up for religious freedoms. I thought she said it so well: Is toleration going to be a two-way street, or are we going to allow this government to impose its will, its morals on the rest of us? Thank you for sharing.

Now I turn to my fellow friend from Missouri, Representative ANN WAGNER, and look forward to hearing what she has to say.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding and for hosting this Special Order. There is no greater defender or champion for faith or family or freedom than Congresswoman VICKY HARTZLER.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to protect the conscience of the American people. Since taking office in January of last year, I have heard from countless constituents on how the government is abusing their individual freedoms under ObamaCare over and over again.

I recently heard from my constituent, George, a seminarian from St. Louis County, about the administration's mandate. He notes that what the administration is asking Catholic hospitals and nonprofits to do is in direct opposition to our Catholic beliefs. He writes to me:

> Mrs. WAGNER, I ask you to please stand up for us. We are being persecuted and unjustly forced to comply with procedures that are in conflict with our own beliefs.

As George articulated, the United States Federal Government is currently discriminating against its citizens of faith in this country.

One of this country's founding principles is the freedom to worship without interference by the Federal Government. Our forefathers did not flee from oppressive nations, build a country on liberties, and emblaze them in the Bill of Rights just for this administration to trample on them over and over again.

Yet the rule issued by the administration under ObamaCare does just that. This administration now mandates that religious nonprofits and businesses must provide health care benefits that go against their fundamental beliefs. If businesses and nonprofits do not comply with this mandate, they are penalized with crippling fines that the gentlewoman from Missouri has talked about. These fines can go up to $100 per day per employee. This means that if a business decides to provide health care but does not comply with the mandate, they can owe up to $36,500 for one employee for the year. This is in comparison to the $2,000 they could owe for not providing any health insurance—any health insurance—for that same employee at all.

Mr. Speaker, not only does this not make any sense, it is discrimination by the Federal Government and it is wrong. This mandate puts the jobs, the livelihoods, and the health care of millions of Americans at risk. It forces those who stand up for their conscience to choose between paying detrimental fines that could shut down their business or dropping health care coverage, as has been discussed before, completely for their employees altogether.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you: Should the Federal Government be allowed to tell the St. Louis Post-Dispatch what they can and cannot print? Should the Federal Government tell my neighbors in Ballwin, Missouri, what they can and cannot say about their government leaders? Should the Federal Government tell George, the seminarian from St. Louis County, what he can and cannot preach?

Mr. Speaker, while in many parts of the world authoritarian governments control the press, prohibit freedom of speech, and only allow for certain beliefs, that cannot be the case in the United States of America. We will not, I believe, stand by and watch this administration strip away our freedoms. I will continue to fight on behalf of the constituents of Missouri and all the American people to keep this the land of the free.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, ANN. That was great. It really goes back to people like George. The individuals are having their liberties violated, and it is wrong. It is just chilling what he said: Are we going to allow this government to discriminate against citizens of faith? We don't want that to happen. Thank you for your comments.

Now we turn to someone who knows personally one of these families who started their business in a garage, followed the American Dream, succeeded, provided jobs, and now that is in jeopardy. I turn to Representative JAMES LANKFORD from Oklahoma to give us your insights in this moment of history.

Mr. LANKFORD. I thank the gentlelady for hosting this conversation and for standing up for liberty. I have seen you on this floor over and over again, speaking up for what is right in our Nation. I very much appreciate that.

When a family runs their business by the principles of their faith, which those principles used to be protected in America, can a President step in and say: I disagree with your faith, and so I will pass a regulation.

This is very important because some people believe this is written into the law. It is not. This is a regulation that was selected by this President. Can a President step in and say, I am going to create a new regulation that you can no longer practice your faith at work? You can practice your faith at home, but you can't practice your faith at work.

Hobby Lobby is a family-owned business. It doesn't want Washington to be its boss. They believe that abortion takes the life of a child and that every child deserves the chance at life. What is wrong with that?

If a Federal employee disagrees with the faith practice of someone in a company, does that business have to change their faith, change it to the faith of the Federal employee, or can they keep their own faith?

□ 2100

It is now the rule that to open a company or to work in a job or to get health care, you have to have the same religious convictions as the President of the United States.

If you don't, you will be fined until you change your faith practice. That is not what we are founded on; that is not who we are—every faith, every opportunity for every person to live out what they believe at home, at work, and in the community.

Just days ago, the President spoke at the National Prayer Breakfast about the cornerstone right of the free expression of religion. That includes Americans who believe that children are a gift of God and they should be nurtured and cared for, not discarded as tissue.

Washington is not the boss of every American. Our Constitution matters, freedom of religion matters, and, quite frankly, children matter.

This family is not some corporate ogre trying to rule over their employees. They are my neighbor. They live a mile from my house. They are a quiet family. They are a great family that has lived out their faith. They are a tremendous community partner in so many ways in our community and around the country and, quite frankly,

around the globe with what they have done to take care of the poor and the needy and the people of faith all over the world.

They are an incredible gift to our Nation, yet they are being told: you cannot practice your faith anymore.

This is not something new that they are doing. The government changed the rules on them. They didn't change their practice. Suddenly, a new administration walked in and changed the rules and said: you can no longer live your faith at work.

Well, I am honored that they have stepped up and they have said not so, not so for their business, not so for businesses around the country. All of us have seen the lists and lists and lists of waivers that this administration has given for the Affordable Care Act, waivers for the employer mandate, waivers for the income and verification requirements, waivers for the Small Business Health Options Program, a waiver just given a month ago.

The administration delayed the requirement for businesses with fewer than 100 employees to offer health insurance until 2016; and then this one, just March the 5th, a few days ago, the administration announced it will allow people to keep noncompliant insurance plans through 2016—that is, noncompliant except in this area.

In this one area, they have said: no, we are not going to give a waiver for that one; instead, we will fine you $36,500. Everyone else that is noncompliant, we will give you a waiver, except for Hobby Lobby and other businesses like them. They get no waiver. They get the hammer.

Is that fair? Is that right? Is this what we have really become as a Nation? I think better of us.

I look forward to the Supreme Court taking up this case and setting things straight because, in this country, we have a constitutional right to speak out and to live out our faith.

With that, I yield back to the gentlelady.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, Representative LANKFORD. I am so glad you shared about this family. You know them. What a treasure they really are to our Nation and the world, as you said, and truly courageous, standing up, putting their business on the line, saying this is worth fighting for. Those who have gone before us have fought for us. Now, it is time for us to stand up and fight. Thank you for sharing that.

You are right. They are trying to change the regulations. You can't practice your faith at work, being coerced to change your faith practice, gave waivers to others, but they give the Green family the hammer. Well said. Thank you.

Now, I turn to someone who knows the other family involved in the Supreme Court decision, who has the honor of representing the Hahn family. That is my friend and courageous leader for faith, family, freedom, for years, Representative JOE PITTS.

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank the gentlelady for hosting this Special Order. This is so important because, tomorrow, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments in the case of Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties against Sebelius. I have the privilege, tomorrow, to sit in the Chamber and listen to the oral arguments.

At the heart of the argument is the question about whether you stop following your conscience when you go into business. For family businesses like Conestoga Wood Specialties, located in my Congressional district, faith and business are not separate.

Their business would not be the same if they did not apply the values that guide their life. I visited this business. I have talked to their employees. I know the Hahn family. They are sincere Mennonites and wonderful people of faith and good business people.

It is those values that prompted Conestoga Wood to provide quality health insurance to their employees in the first place. They provided health insurance long before this regulation or mandate came along under ObamaCare.

No government mandate had to tell them that it was the right thing to do. Now, the government wants to use force and fines to stipulate the details of what that plan covers. Conestoga Wood and many other businessowners of faith now find themselves in a catch-22 of conscience.

The First Amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act were meant to guard against using the heavy hand of government to infringe on our religious rights. We should not have to leave our faith at the church door.

Under the First Amendment, we are guaranteed freedom of religion, and I might remind you, it is the First Amendment. It is not the Second Amendment. It is not the Sixth or the 16th or the 26th. It is the First Amendment. It is the first thing mentioned in the First Amendment—freedom of religion, not freedom from religion.

Pennsylvania has a long history of people of differing faiths engaging in commerce. 100 years before there was a First Amendment, William Penn established his colony as a place where religious dissenters could find freedom and safety.

The Forefathers of the Hahn family—Mennonites and others—came to Pennsylvania because it was advertised as a place where you could live and work freely according to your religious beliefs.

These people of faith supported themselves with businesses, and the colonial authorities in Pennsylvania let them apply their principles freely. These principles of religious freedom would later inform the founding of our Republic, and something that had at first been uniquely Pennsylvanian would become part of our national culture.

Family-owned and -operated businesses provide millions of good jobs in America. The Hahn family is facing a difficult choice that no American should have to face.

We hope and pray that the Supreme Court will uphold a basic Pennsylvania value and a basic American value and the First Amendment right to religious freedom.

Every American, including family businessowners, should be free to live and work according to their beliefs without the fear of punishment or coercion by the government.

Americans don't give up their freedom when they open a family business. Let's hope and pray that the Supreme Court will uphold all of our rights to religious freedom here in this great country we call America.

I yield back.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, gentlemen. So true. Family-owned businesses have a right to not be coerced into giving up their faith just for providing jobs.

Now, I would like to turn to my friend and truly a leader here for families and life and common sense, Representative CHRIS SMITH.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend and colleague from Missouri for her outstanding leadership on behalf of the life issues, for her courage, and for her consistent approach to these vital issues that really are also passing. She has been a leader for so long. Thank you for organizing this, this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I, like my colleagues, am grateful that the U.S. Supreme Court took up this critical case for religious liberty; and I—we, Mr. Speaker, are hopeful that the court will provide much-needed relief from this discriminatory ObamaCare policy.

Under the Obama administration's coercive mandate, family-owned businesses like Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood have found themselves in the impossible situation of being forced to violate their moral or religious beliefs or face crippling fines. This not only puts businesses in serious and unnecessary risk, but also employees who may lose their jobs, as well as their health care.

It is the height of hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker, for the Obama administration to coerce family businesses that provide generous health care for their employees into a situation that may force them to close and to shutter their businesses.

The ObamaCare financial penalties are draconian, egregious, and without precedent in U.S. law. Under ObamaCare, family businesses that do provide health care for employees, like the Hobby Lobby, but object to covering certain drugs and devices—in their case, that provide for abortions—will be fined up to $36,500 per year, per employee. That is outrageous.

For the Green family of Hobby Lobby, this could mean an amount to nearly half a billion dollars in fines every year. There is no way they can absorb that kind of body blow without closing their doors.

I would note, parenthetically, that a company that does not provide any health care insurance—the gentlelady from Missouri spoke about this in her opening comments—will be fined some $2,000 per year, clearly, an unfair burden, but far less than the $36,500 per year, per employee, if they refuse, again, to include certain drugs or devices that violate their moral or religious tenets.

When you calculate that out for the Green family of Hobby Lobby, dumping their existing health care coverage for employees could result in fines up to $26 million per year; again, a huge penalty, but that is still $448 million less than if they actually provided health insurance and remained true to their core convictions, which they will do.

Mr. Speaker, this burdensome penalty is completely unfair, unreasonable. It is unworkable, and it is unconscionable. The Obama administration is saying: we will punish you, we will hurt you, we will even put you out of business for providing health care to your employees, unless you provide health care according to the government's conscience.

Also, employees currently on their business health plan could lose their coverage that they desperately need for their families, as well as for themselves. Secretary Sebelius and President Obama have no business whatsoever imposing their morality on people of faith, but that is exactly what their oppressive mandate does.

The Supreme Court, Mr. Speaker, has a duty to protect the religious and conscience rights of the Greens and the Hahns and everyone else suffering government-imposed harm. The U.S. high court must act to protect the First Amendment rights of these families. Protecting these rights also protects their employees.

Let's make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker. This mandate and its deleterious effects and consequences are very much Obama's willful intention. The imposition of this attack on religious freedom is no accident. It comes straight from the pages of ObamaCare.

In December of 2009, in the runup to the passage of that legislation, Senator MIKULSKI offered an amendment which provided the authorizing language for this oppressive mandate.

In 2009, the same year, when President Obama spoke at Notre Dame University, which parenthetically is also suing over the mandate, he spoke about drafting a sensible conscience clause—his words—and yet, today, protection of conscience is another highly visible broken promise of ObamaCare.

Mr. Speaker, to tell people that their conscience is irrelevant and that they must follow the Federal Government's conscience, rather than their own, is completely antithetical to the American principle of religious freedom and the First Amendment.

Unless reversed, Obama's attack on conscience rights will result in government-imposed discrimination against those who seek according to their faith and their moral code.

Under the weight of the mandate's ruinous fines and penalties, many businesses could be forced to shut down, eliminating jobs. I would never have believed that this kind of religious violation could occur in the United States of America, but it has. The Supreme Court must end this abuse.

I yield back to my good friend.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Absolutely. This is a moment in history, a moment of opportunity, for this Supreme Court to stand up and to do the right thing. Half a billion dollars in fines, half a billion dollars in fines this company is facing. Thank you for bringing home what that means.

□ 2115

You know they are going to coerce. You said that it is draconian, that it is unprecedented, that they are going to force you. That is the definition of a bully. ''We are going to bully you into doing what we think is right.'' We stand up against that in every other arena, and we are standing up against it here as well.

Now I would like to turn to my friend from Nebraska, Representative JEFF FORTENBERRY, to share his thoughts at this moment in history.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. First, let me thank the gentlelady from Missouri for her leadership, not only tonight, but on this absolutely most critical issue.

Mr. Speaker, there is an important court case tomorrow, one that has come upon our country fairly quietly. I am not sure most Americans actually know what is at issue here. What is at issue is whether or not the relationship between the government and her people will fundamentally shift, whether the government will be able to coerce people who disagree as to the content of what their health care should be based upon their religious faiths or their deeply held ethical sensibilities. If they don't obey, they will be fined, as was mentioned here earlier.

In a very ironic way, the case before the Supreme Court tomorrow is about whether or not Hobby Lobby, a store at which millions of Americans, I assume, enjoy shopping—at which I enjoy shopping—that very outwardly celebrates, projects, its Christian perspective in the way it conducts its business. I assume, because of that perspective—the desire to do the right thing by their employees—they have established a good health care plan. If they drop their health care plan, they will be fined $2,000 by the government. That is all they will have to pay. Yet, if they refuse to go along with that which violates their religious perspective and fundamental ethical sensibilities, the government will fine them $36,000.

Again, the irony here is striking in that a business that is doing the right thing, which is based upon the values of their owners, which promotes good products that millions of Americans enjoy, which closes on Sunday because that is their stated Christian belief and because that is the way they choose to exercise it—I don't see any lawsuits over that—nonetheless is saying, in their health care plan, they simply cannot provide certain drugs that would violate the dictate of their faith, certain drugs that this administration has deemed ''preventative.''

Another irony here is, when most of us were looking at the health care bill when it was first passed, there was a portion that was put in there called ''prevention services.'' Now, I did not vote for the health care bill. I believe we need the right type of health care in our country, one that actually reduces costs and improves health care outcomes and protects vulnerable people; but what we have instead is a huge shift of cost to unsustainable government spending and a serious erosion of health care liberties. We can do better than this. We must do better than this.

Buried in that health care bill was prevention authority. To me, that means that we are going to try to prevent the onset of diabetes or the onset of heart disease—chronic disease—which is part of what is driving up our health care costs and which is that we could maybe get underneath if we were all thinking about and adhering to the principles and dynamics of wellness. That is what I thought it was about. Instead, it is an ideology of the administration's that is imposing upon people of faith or other Americans who simply do not have a faith perspective on this but who know that religious freedom is a first freedom and the government should not coerce people from their deeply held, reasonably held belief systems or those who have ethical sensibilities to certain types of drugs and procedures. That is what is at issue here, and if it goes the wrong way, the relationship between the government and her people will ultimately change.

You see, the government will then be conferring this right of religious liberty, not protecting it. It will be deciding who gets to exercise what type of religious liberty rather than protecting the individual conscience of the person—that sacred space that is inherent to the dignity of all persons—which is where our rights actually come from. In the First Amendment of the Constitution, this is clearly stated, and it is reflected in the ideals of religious liberty and in the separation of church and State. I have a copy of the original Bill of Rights—not the ''original'' original but a copy of the original—in my office, and actually penciled in there, as they were working through the draft, is ''the rights of conscience.'' That concept actually precedes the principle of religious freedom because it says, again, rights are not conferred by the government. They come from the inherent dignity of each person by virtue of who he is and the way in which he has been created; and that person's ability to exercise who he is in the most poignant way, particularly in his religious faith, is a sacred space

that the government must protect. That is why they listed it as the number one spot in the Bill of Rights, but that is what tomorrow is about.

In the aftermath of the French Revolution, there was a young child born named Jeanne Jugan. She was one of eight children, and they lived in the west coast of France, and her father was a fisherman. One day, he was lost at sea, and the family was reduced to poverty. As a teenager, Jeanne Jugan went out and worked as a maid servant, doing servile labor, to help the family and to help sustain herself. She received a proposal of marriage, but in her own discernment decided that was not appropriate for her, and she, apparently, lived a quiet and humble life.

One day, outside in the cold, she saw a woman who was blind and paralyzed and freezing, and she picked her up and brought her to her own bed. This was a key turning point in Jeanne Jugan's life. Perhaps she always knew her life would turn out this way. There was a religious order called the Little Sisters of the Poor, which traced its origins back to that simple act of kindness, to Jeanne Jugan. She was canonized a saint by Pope John Paul after a medical doctor from the Omaha area of Nebraska received a miraculous cure after having asked for her intercession. She was recently canonized a saint. The Little Sisters of the Poor are not nuns on a bus, and they are not political activists. They just take care of the vulnerable elderly through health care facilities. Yet they find themselves having to sue the Federal Government to be able to exercise their religious freedom as they see fit.

That is what this health care bill has brought about through this prevention mandate. It is a direct frontal assault on America's first freedom, so much so that a group of humble nuns—and as I spoke to one, she told me: In the elderly, we just see Christ—that has dedicated its life to the poor and vulnerable in health care is now having to fight in the court system for its right to exercise its religious faith as it sees fit.

So tomorrow's decision, while it is about two very strong businesses—Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood—has very vast ramifications. Even the people who are in religious orders who have set up charitable institutions are being forced by the government to, again, buy products through their health care plans for their employees, products that are inconsistent with their faith traditions. As one of the nuns told me: It violates our conscience. We didn't want to sue the government, but yet here we are.

I am glad to have had a little bit of opportunity with you tonight, my good friend VICKY HARTZLER, to discuss this most essential of issues because, if we don't speak, who is going to speak? I am not quite sure that all of America has really realized what is at stake at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning—whether the government will be allowed to coerce Americans into violating that fundamental first freedom of religious faith and the rights of conscience. If so, it will be tremendously unfair. It is un-American. It will change the nature of the relationship between government and her people. Let's hope that the Supreme Court gets this right. There have been a few precedents before this in which they have gotten it right. In fact, the Little Sisters of the Poor has gotten an injunction so that this is not being forced upon it at the moment.

The deeper principle here that is at stake is whether or not the First Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees the right to religious freedom—an appropriate separation between church and State—is going to hold and remain that most cherished freedom in our country to come.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, gentleman.

A fundamental shift this would represent, you said. The relationship between the government and her citizens will forever change. That is chilling.

I appreciate your sharing the story of the Little Sisters of the Poor to show that this isn't just about the two entities that are before the Supreme Court tomorrow. In fact, there are 94 different lawsuits around the country from other small businesses and entities and colleges and others that, too, are being forced into this. So this has huge implications, not just for the 94 that have bravely, courageously stood up and said ''no'' and challenged it, but for each and every citizen.

With that, I would like to thank my friend, Representative DAN LIPINSKI from Illinois, for coming here today. I appreciate his leadership of the Pro-Life Caucus and of other pro-family liberty issues.

So thank you for coming. What would you like to share tonight?

Mr. LIPINSKI. I thank Mrs. HARTZLER for yielding and for her leadership on this critical issue, which is not just as partisan issue. I am a Democrat. I know this is not a partisan issue—religious liberty.

This is not even just a foundational American principle. It is a fundamental human right. Many of the men and women who came to America were fleeing religious persecution and were searching for a place where they could freely exercise their faiths. They had the courage to pledge their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor to the cause. As a number of my colleagues have stated, the First Amendment to our Constitution starts with these words: ''Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.'' I used to teach my American Government students that, clearly, this was not freedom to worship—just the freedom to go on Sunday or Saturday or whatever day of the week that you worshiped—but a freedom to exercise religion in the way they see proper.

As First Lady Michelle Obama stated at a conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, our faith journey isn't just about showing up on Sunday; it is about what we do Monday through Saturday as well.

That is what Americans believe, and we must protect the freedom to exercise our religious beliefs every day of the week. Many millions have had the courage to fight, and many have died to protect our Nation in this constitutional right. We all have a duty to our fellow Americans and to the world to reclaim a true religious liberty in our Nation because this goes beyond our borders. America has been a beacon of liberty for people around the world for more than two centuries. As people blessed with liberty, we have a special obligation to protect it and to proclaim it for all the world to see. Especially today, as we see around the world attacks on religious freedom, we must stand up here in America.

I want to thank all of my colleagues for standing up here today and for continuing to work in Congress to protect our religious freedom, and I want to pray for wisdom for our Supreme Court Justices tomorrow as they consider this very critical, fundamental case. We all must rededicate ourselves and continue to fight for religious freedom in our Nation, without which freedom we would be giving up on a fundamental principle that underlies this greatest of nations.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, Representative LIPINSKI.

It is so true that we are and have been the beacon of liberty for this world, and this Court decision tomorrow has implications for not only our country and its citizens but for those around the world. I, too, was a teacher, and I appreciate that, how we taught our students what the basic rights were, but this decision will impact their futures, too. If government can force its citizens to go against their basic, most fundamental, moral values and consciences, what else can it do?

With that, Representative ANDY HARRIS of Maryland, thank you for being here tonight. The floor is yours.

Mr. HARRIS. I want to thank the gentlelady from Missouri for hosting this Special Order hour this evening.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Illinois talked about people who come to this country in fleeing religious persecution. As the gentlelady may be aware, my mother emigrated from Ukraine. She was, in fact, a Ukrainian Greek Catholic. As the gentlelady probably knows of the history, when the Soviet Union took over Ukraine, they persecuted the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, burning them to the ground. It is ironic that we are discussing this here—and that the Supreme Court will be taking up this issue—as we are seeing what is going on with religious persecution in Ukraine this week and last week, where the church in Dora, for instance—the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church—burned to the ground because, you see, the Russian Government didn't agree with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church's beliefs.

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So what do they do? They burn churches to the ground.

It is interesting. We have to learn the lesson, though, because they tried that. After World War II, the Soviet Union tried to destroy churches that way, but they learned the lesson that the church is not the building. The church is the group of believers who share common, deeply held religious beliefs. That is why when the Soviet Union fell, the churches that they thought they had burned to the ground rose up.

I would suggest that what is going on in Oklahoma City with Hobby Lobby and in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, with Conestoga Wood Products is a church burning without a match. In fact, it is even more insidious because you can't see something. You can't see the ashes. But in fact, if the government has its way with these two employers, they will attempt to persecute them for their religious beliefs and attempt to destroy them. That is not the way it is in America.

As the gentleman from Illinois said, there are plenty of places in the world where that may be true, but we do have a First Amendment. We have a First Amendment that doesn't protect church buildings, it protects religious believers in whatever walk of life they are in, whatever they are doing, from the government imposing their belief system, whether it is the case of a belief of a religious body or a belief that you shouldn't provide life-destroying drugs. Because that is what is at issue in these cases.

And I would hope that the Supreme Court realizes that this country does have a First Amendment and that its job, its duty, our duty is to protect the religious beliefs of every individual, including those owners of Conestoga Wood Products and Hobby Lobby, who deserve the right and freedom in America to believe their religious beliefs and not have the government impose theirs.

So I thank the gentlelady from Missouri.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Well said. Thank you for sharing your story.

I now have a friend from Kansas, Representative TIM HUELSKAMP.

Mr. HUELSKAMP. Thank you, Congresswoman. It is a pleasure and honor to join you tonight. I will keep my comments short.

You have heard the words here tonight. You have heard the words ''religion tax.'' You have heard the words ''religious litmus test.'' You certainly heard the words ''religious liberty.'' Of course, we also heard that the principles of the First Amendment have to do with religious liberty and religious freedom.

I was on the floor the day after the Supreme Court decision on the President's health care law, and I would like to issue a challenge to what is generally considered the swing vote of this current court, the Chief Justice himself.

When I spoke about this issue, court challenges were already coming forward on this HHS mandate, but knowing that the Chief Justice is a Roman Catholic, I issue a strong challenge to the Chief Justice.

Given the history of the Catholic Church in this country, it has been one of severe discrimination at times. I would ask the Chief Justice—the deciding vote—to consider his core convictions. I believe he bears a particular burden to protect the religious liberties of employers and their employees from the excesses of his very own constitutional creation.

The court asked to be in the middle of this position. They asked for the government to have the right to tell businesses what to do, whether for profit or nonprofit or businesses or non-businesses as well.

What is at stake here is not the choice of businesses alone. What is at stake here is not necessarily what the government can tell selected entities. At stake is our Constitution and our rights and freedoms as Americans.

We were founded on the issue of religious freedom and liberty from our very beginning. Tomorrow, I stand with the businesses, the non-businesses, and the private entities as well.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, gentleman. Well said.

We have been here, and we are not done yet. My time is about done, but we are going to continue on here because we believe in standing up for the Constitution. We believe in the First Amendment: religious liberty. We believe in our country and our future and our children's future. We want to preserve those freedoms that others have sacrificed for.

So I want to thank all my colleagues who have come here tonight and have shared their wisdom and their insights into this. Let us pray tomorrow that the Supreme Court hears the words that we have spoken and rules on the side of freedom.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE CONSTITUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for the remainder of the time until 10 p.m.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to yield to my friend from Pennsylvania (Mr. ROTHFUS).

Mr. ROTHFUS. I thank the gentleman from Texas. I also want to thank the gentlelady from Missouri for organizing the previous hour's discussion on this very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the people of faith at companies like Hobby Lobby and Pennsylvania's Conestoga Wood. These companies want to provide health insurance for their workers, and they should be able to do that without violating their deeply held religious and moral convictions.

It is simply unacceptable that President Obama's health care law requires people of faith to violate their conscience rights. This happens when regulations issued pursuant to the law forces them to pay for services such as abortifacient drugs when they provide health insurance for their employees.

The hostility in the President's health care law towards people of faith is made clear when you consider the penalty scheme in the law. If these family-owned businesses do not comply with the mandate, they could be fined $100 per day per employee. That amounts to $36,500 per year per employee, even if the health insurance provided is of excellent quality.

Compare that with the $2,000 fine per year per employee if they stopped offering insurance altogether.

How is that fair, just, or respectful of their beliefs?

This poster, Mr. Speaker, is striking. This discrepancy is simply indefensible. Looking at these numbers, you would think that this administration thinks that it is more important for an employer to provide abortifacient drug coverage than it is to provide comprehensive health insurance coverage that would cover items such as cancer treatment.

As the Supreme Court considers this case tomorrow and hears oral arguments, I join men and women of faith from western Pennsylvania and across the country in defending conscience rights and religious liberty, and standing with Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood.

I thank the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. GOHMERT. I thank my friend from Pennsylvania very much. They are very, very good points.

Also along the lines my friend was talking about, some of us were here when our fine President stood at that podium and spoke to all of us here and he said in his speech that in his bill there would be no funding of abortion. We all heard that. In fact, there was such an involuntary response of JOE WILSON to categorize that statement. From the bill, we had seen from the Democrats it was clear there was going to be money forced out of taxpayers' hands and forced to fund abortion, and we now know that is true.

Most of the time, the decent thing to do, if you find out that something you said was simply not true, the decent thing to do is to step up and say, You know what? JOE WILSON, you were right, but it was unintentional. I didn't mean to misrepresent anything. So I want to set this straight.

Instead, it is like this administration has doubled down and said not only is the government funding it, but you are going to have to fund abortion for your employees, and it doesn't matter that you have firmly held religious convictions against it.

I just wanted to mention to my colleagues that before I came to the floor