

HOBBY LOBBY

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

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Speaker, today, the United States Supreme Court, just down the street, heard the arguments for Hobby Lobby, Inc., a for-profit corporation, which is refusing some or all contraceptive services in health plans offered to their employees.

The issue here is whether the religious beliefs of a shareholder, the owner, can dictate what type of contraceptive services a health plan will offer.

Note, this is not a religious institution or an employer like a church or a religious institution of any kind. It is a for-profit corporation.

The issue here is also whether an employer can pick and choose what type of services female employees can avail themselves of; and remember—remember—women in childbearing age actually pay 68 percent more for their medical coverage now—68 percent more. That is just not fair.

I hope the Supreme Court will reverse the Hobby Lobby decision and say that the Constitution and the laws of this great Nation support women.

HIDDEN TAXES INCLUDED IN THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

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

Mr. YODER. Mr. Speaker, you wouldn't know it by the weather, but it will soon be April, and tax day is right around the corner. As Americans scramble to gather their W-2s and other important tax documents, many are unaware of the extra hidden taxes included in the Affordable Care Act that will ultimately fall on them.

These hidden taxes will surprise and catch hardworking families and small businesses off guard and put a strain on family budgets that are already stretched thin.

A 3.5 percent tax on insurance premiums, a 2.3 percent medical device tax—raising the cost of pacemakers, prosthetics, stents, and more—a tanning tax, an investment income and Medicare payroll surtax, the list goes on and on; and all these costs are passed on to Americans and families in our communities.

That is hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars leaving our communities, out of the pockets of hardworking families in States like Kansas and heading to Washington, D.C.

Mr. Speaker, with the many challenges Americans face today, the last thing they need this tax season is to carry a heavier government tax burden on their backs.

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

(Mr. LIPINSKI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember and honor the more than 3 million Americans who served in the Vietnam war. This weekend, we will observe Vietnam Veterans Day to pay tribute to these brave Americans who were called to serve during one of our Nation's longest and most difficult conflicts.

Lasting more than a decade, Vietnam defined a generation. Over 58,000 Americans were killed, and those who did return home were not treated as the American heroes that they are.

In recent years, I am grateful that most Americans have been able to put aside their opinions about specific military missions and have an unwavering commitment to our courageous men and women operating in dangerous places around the world.

Vietnam Veterans Day is meant to reaffirm our respecting gratitude for those that served our Nation in that war and show a generation of soldiers our immense gratitude. I will be doing so this Saturday at the VFW Post in Lemont, Illinois.

I ask my colleagues to join me in doing the same, not just this weekend, but every day, because our Vietnam veterans, and all our veterans, deserve this.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, for far too long, comprehensive immigration reform has been a low priority for the Speaker and for the Republican leadership. Americans have spoken loud and clear. They want comprehensive immigration reform.

Just last year, as the Senate was considering comprehensive reform, the Speaker implied that the House would take it up after the Senate did. The Senate acted in a bipartisan fashion and passed comprehensive reform on a vote of 68–32.

Then we were told that the House would take up comprehensive immigration reform after the Speaker brought to his conference his immigration reform principles. That happened at the end of January; yet nothing—nothing has been brought to the floor.

If there is not a reason for us to do this on the basis of the policy, which I think is clear, it is consistent with our national interest and our national values to institute comprehensive immigration reform.

I just would direct Members of the other side to take a look at the bipartisan CBO report that was published that shows that comprehensive immigration reform would reduce our national deficit by \$900 billion.

It is the right policy, it is good economics, and we should bring it up right away.

CONGRESS MUST REVERSE GOP ELIMINATION OF CRITICAL LIFE-LINE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, during Women's History Month, I rise to recognize and pay tribute to the life of Joyce Wise of Sandusky County, Ohio, a remarkable, sparkling, witty, intelligent, generous, and kind woman who loved her family, her community, and her country.

She was a political activist. Her indefatigable efforts improved our State, improved our community, and broadened representation for women and men across our country.

Joyce would have been the first person to speak up here on behalf of the 2 million American job seekers who have lost their unemployment benefits and the 72,000 Americans who lose their benefits every single week, one every 8 seconds due to Republican obstruction.

She would have been the first to point out it is the Republican's failure to extend unemployment insurance that has actually put millions and millions of our families out to sea.

If the Republicans want to limit unemployment benefits, they should start by creating more jobs. I am waiting for the first good jobs bill to come to this floor from the other side of the aisle.

Joyce Wise understood that every citizen matters and those who work hard for a living shall be respected. May her family and friends draw strength from her unbelievable spirit and may her legacy live on in fighting for justice for all.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

(Ms. BROWN of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time.

The Republicans have turned a blind eye to the plight of more than 2 million Americans whose unemployment benefits have been cut off.

In my State of Florida, we have over 100,000 Floridians struggling to find work and are unable to collect insurance, which has also led to nearly \$130 million in lost revenue for the State of Florida; yet in spite of repeated attempts time and time again, Republicans in Congress have coldheartedly refused to restore this vital economic lifeline that helps people support their families and pay their bills while they look for a new job during this very difficult time, the worst time since the Great Depression.

To whom God has given much, much is expected. I urge my House and Senate Republican colleagues to look inside their hearts and do the right thing for the American people and pass an

unemployment insurance extension today.

□ 1230

ELECTING A MEMBER TO CERTAIN
STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the House Republican Conference, I send to the desk a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration by the House.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 523

Resolved, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE—Mr. Jolly.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS—Mr. Jolly.

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading.

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

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PREVENTING GOVERNMENT
WASTE AND PROTECTING COAL
MINING JOBS IN AMERICA

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. 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 bill H.R. 2824.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YODER). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 501 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 2824.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WOODALL) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1231

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2824) to amend the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to stop the ongoing waste by the Department of the Interior of taxpayer resources and implement the final rule on excess spoil, mining waste, and buffers for perennial and intermittent streams, and for other purposes, with Mr. WOODALL in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

It is well-known the Obama administration has waged a long-running war on coal, which last year a White House adviser admitted "is exactly what's needed," but this is not only a war on coal. It is a war on jobs, our economy, affordable energy, small businesses, and the household budgets of American families. Already faced with higher home heating costs, middle class families will be further squeezed if the Obama administration is successful in its attempts to shut down coal production.

One of the ways the administration has carried out this war on coal is through the reckless rewrite of a coal production regulation, the 2008 Stream Buffer Zone Rule. Shortly after taking office, the Obama administration discarded the 2008 rule that went through 5 years of extensive public comment and environmental review. Since then, the administration has spent over 10 million taxpayer dollars in working to rewrite this rule, including hiring new contractors, then only to dismiss those same contractors once it was publicly revealed that the administration's proposed rewrite would cost 7,000 jobs and cause economic harm in 22 States. A report released by our House Natural Resources Committee staff in September of 2012, following years of oversight and investigations, exposed the gross mismanagement of the rule-making process, potential political interference, and widespread economic harm the proposed regulation would cause.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General, or IG, released a report with similar findings. However, what is more troubling is that the IG has identified significant ongoing problems with the rulemaking process. To make matters worse, they are refusing to disclose those problems to us here in Congress. For example, there is an entire section of the report that we have received, entitled "Issues with the New Contract," that have been almost completely blacked out. Despite our repeated requests, Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall has refused to give Congress an unredacted copy of this report. In a letter, she states that the Department of the Interior decided that it should be withheld from the committee.

The IG is charged with being an independent watchdog for Congress. It is completely unacceptable and inappropriate for the IG to be taking orders from the Interior Department, espe-

cially about what information to withhold from us here in Congress.

Mr. Chairman, I don't take what I am going to say lightly. That is why, today, I have issued a subpoena to the Department's Inspector General Kendall for this information that she has withheld from us. If the IG discovered ongoing issues with the way the Department is currently conducting this rulemaking process, they have a responsibility and a duty to share that information with Congress now. The committee is not asking the IG for materials produced by the Department, but we are asking for materials and interviews produced by the IG's staff.

The Obama administration's rule-making process has been and continues to be an unmitigated disaster. Despite having spent millions of taxpayer dollars, they have absolutely nothing to show for it and, to date, haven't even produced a draft. Meanwhile, States, industry, and America's coal miners are left in limbo, unsure of what the operating rules are on the ground. Without the 2008 rule, we are left with a rule that was put in place in 1983.

That is why we are here today—to consider H.R. 2824, the Preventing Government Waste and Protecting Coal Mining Jobs in America Act. This legislation will put an end to the years of ongoing waste and dysfunction. It will put in place a responsible process to ensure there is no rush to recklessly regulate.

First, Mr. Chairman, it stops the administration's unnecessary rewrite and implements the 2008 Stream Buffer Zone Rule that I mentioned took 5 years to put in place. It then directs the Department to responsibly study the impact of the rule for a prescribed period of time prior to initiating another new rule. This will provide certainty to the economy, to the individual States, and allow a clear examination of what may be needed and changed in the future. This bill will make certain that a new rule is written properly.

Now, some will attempt to criticize this bill for the fact that it puts in place the 2008 rule that was vacated on a very narrow technical ground by a Federal judge last month. There is really nothing new here, however, because this is the exact outcome that the administration has been seeking for over 5 years—to get rid of the 2008 rule. But let's be clear what the court ruling and, subsequently, the Department's actions really mean.

The court ruling strikes down the more protective 2008 rule and sets us back 30 years to a less restrictive 1983 rule. The 2008 rule is more modern and more protective in limiting the impacts of coal mining than the 1983 rule, but one Federal judge ruled that the 2008 rule must be set aside due to a narrow procedural technicality. This judge ruled, because the 2008 rule didn't have formal consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service on possible impacts to endangered species, the entire rule