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CIVILIAN AID TO AFGHANISTAN: IF IT'S SO IMPORTANT, WHY AREN'T WE DOING MORE OF IT?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, there was a very compelling op-ed piece in The Washington Post last week by U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Ryan Crocker. In it, he paid tribute to the many American civilians who are risking their lives doing important humanitarian work to bring security and stability to Afghanistan.

I couldn't agree more with Ambassador Crocker that those men and women working for or contracting with the State Department or USAID are doing extraordinary work rebuilding infrastructure, helping children to go to school, improving infant and maternal health, wiring the Afghan people to the Internet.

Mr. Speaker, the burning question is this: If this work is so important, why aren't we doing more of it? The human need in Afghanistan is far greater than the resources we're devoting to the effort.

For the last few years, we've had a military surge in Afghanistan, a surge that's led to more death, more violence, more instability, and more strength for the extremists and insurgent forces we're trying to defeat.

What we need, Mr. Speaker, is a civilian surge. We need a great emphasis on development and diplomacy, on democracy promotion and debt relief, on peacekeeping and conflict resolution, not just in Afghanistan, but in impoverished and unstable countries around the developing world.

All of this is at the heart of the SMART Security proposal that I've been promoting since 2004 that I introduced during the middle of the Iraq war. Contrary to the conventional wisdom we've been fed, military aggression does not advance our national security goals. It undermines them. It makes us less safe, not more. It emboldens terrorists, instead of vanquishing them.

We've tried it this way for more than a decade now, Mr. Speaker, and it simply has not worked. It hasn't fundamentally changed the fortunes of the Afghan people, and it hasn't driven the Taliban and other terrorist networks into oblivion.

At an international conference on aid to Afghanistan this past weekend, Secretary of State Clinton said that the administration would request Afghani-

stan aid funding at or near levels provided over the last decade. But at or near is not enough. It comes to somewhere between \$1 billion to \$4 billion a year, which seems like a lot of money, until you realize that's what we spend on military operations in Afghanistan roughly every week or so; \$10 billion a month waging a destructive war on Afghanistan that is killing civilians, but only a few billion dollars a year rebuilding Afghanistan and empowering civilians.

That just doesn't make sense. Ambassador Crocker has pointed this out. Our priorities are totally out of whack.

We can't continue on the same current destructive course, Mr. Speaker. This military occupation is failing America and failing Afghanistan.

Let's finally end this war. Let's bring our troops safely home and start investing in civilian aid and other SMART security initiatives, and let's do it now.

Let's also expand these initiatives to prevent war around the world.

□ 1110

THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. BONAMICI) for 5 minutes.

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that we are here once again talking about repealing the Affordable Care Act, a bill that passed almost 2 years ago and that, as we all know, was recently upheld by the United States Supreme Court. We should be focusing on jobs and the economy. The repeal bill we are about to vote on isn't going to go anywhere, and we all know that. It won't pass the Senate, and it won't be signed into law. We could be doing real things to help Americans and the economy right now. Yet here we are, for the 31st time, voting on the same thing. So, instead of repeal, let's talk about the benefits to Americans as the Affordable Care Act is implemented.

Because it will result in more people having access to health care, the Affordable Care Act will change the lives of millions of people. It will prevent more of the heart-wrenching stories like those we all hear about with regard to the consequences of a lack of access to health care. I know someone whose life would have been changed by the Affordable Care Act.

Bob, in Oregon, lost his job. Because he lost his job, he lost his health insurance, so he got on to COBRA. He had that expensive option for a while, and at least it gave him coverage, but then his COBRA ran out for him, just as it does for so many other people, and he was forced to live without health insurance. It was quite a risk that he had to take, and it didn't work out so well for him. Like many people without insurance, he had medical troubles, but he put off treatment, hoping for the best. In the end, though, he ended up in the

emergency room, which is exactly what the Affordable Care Act is designed to prevent. He had surgery, and was then in the hospital for almost a month. Because of the sky-high medical bills, he almost lost his home.

Fortunately, he is doing okay today, but it was a very close call. This would not have happened under the Affordable Care Act, and it will not happen under the Affordable Care Act. Bob would have had access to affordable health care coverage, and he would not have put off preventative care, which is covered under the Affordable Care Act. He would have seen his doctor at the first sign of a problem, and he would not have ended up in the emergency room, which raises health care costs for everyone—a cost shift that the Affordable Care Act is designed to prevent—and he would not have come so close to losing his home.

The benefits of the Affordable Care Act are undeniable: Already in my home State of Oregon, 43,000 young people have taken advantage of the opportunity to stay on their parents' health plans; children can't be denied insurance because of preexisting conditions; and 54 million Americans now receive free preventative care, and that's just after 2 years.

There are more and more benefits that will be implemented over the next several years: Insurers will no longer be able to discriminate against women; insurance marketplaces, called "exchanges," will be created to make sure that everyone has access to affordable health insurance options; and starting just next month, women will have access to free preventative health care and contraception. All of these will be put into place, and as they are, more people will see how the Affordable Care Act positively affects their health and their wallets.

Repealing the Affordable Care Act has no benefits. In fact, doing so would take away every single benefit I just mentioned and more. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the repeal would increase the deficit—increase the deficit—by \$210 billion over the next 10 years. We can all agree that such an increase is unacceptable and fiscally irresponsible. So this will mark the 31st time that the House has voted on some form of repeal of the Affordable Care Act. I hope it's the last so that we can focus more on the things that really matter.

WALL STREET V. MAIN STREET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about what is nothing less than the largest transfer of the American people's wealth from Main Street to Wall Street. It is likely the largest transfer in American history due to the fallout from the financial crisis of 2008.

Banks at the heart of the crisis all got larger as their CEOs made more

money while average citizens saw their incomes stall, or drop, or be eliminated, and while communities across this country were hit hard by their losses. Recently, the Federal Reserve issued a startling report showing that the net worth of the average American family fell by as much as 40 percent in the last 3 years. But I can tell you the banks and speculators at the heart of this crisis that has hurt us all have all done better. It's really startling. The 2010 numbers set families, ordinary middle class families, back by nearly two decades. America's middle class was the hardest hit. Many families saw losses in their retirement savings, they saw their home worths go down, and so many millions lost jobs.

The majority of the damage nationwide was caused by the collapse of the housing market because the largest form of savings that any family actually accumulates is in the ownership of a family's home. According to the Federal Reserve, the median value of Americans' stake in their homes fell by 42 percent—nearly half—between 2007 and 2010 to about \$55,000. Those are shocking figures. While we have seen wages stagnate for the vast majority of Americans during the past three decades, the median income fell nearly 8 percent in 2010 to \$45,800. Our citizens are meeting the crisis, in my opinion, with great resolve and dignity. But those who are largely responsible for their situations have averted any real responsibility and scrutiny. Let's just take a look.

The Federal Reserve actually found that only, roughly, half of America's middle class remained on the same rung on the economic ladder. Most fell down. Yet, as the Federal Reserve's data show, not everyone lost in the recession. The median net worth of the wealthiest among us—the millionaires and billionaires who helped cause the crisis—actually rose. Moreover, the value of some of the very top has simply been obscene. I think you'd say it's un-American. Let's take a look at the top executives on Wall Street. How did they fare when most Americans lost decades worth of their hard-earned savings?

Reportedly, the take for 2011 of the chief executive officer of J.P.Morgan, Jamie Dimon, was a whopping \$23.1 million. That's just, you know, the take-home. It's not all the stock options and everything else. I wonder if he thinks that's enough? His salary went up 11 percent—11 percent more—even though J.P.Morgan recently admitted to trading losses of over \$2 billion. How would you like that job? He got paid more while the institution lost money. Of course J.P.Morgan, still standing after it helped cause the crisis, got bigger after it became one of the Big Six. Mr. Dimon is not alone in taking home millions more while average American families lost much of their life savings.

John Stumpf from Wells Fargo, well, he only earned \$19.8 million for 1 year—

\$19.8 million. Lloyd Blankfein from Goldman Sachs took in \$16.2 million. That's just the salary. His compensation reportedly rose by about 14.5 percent last year despite a sharp decline in profits and share price during that year. Isn't that interesting? Who among us could have that kind of position—you make more money when your institution loses money.

This transfer of Americans' wealth has left most communities hollowed out with abandoned homes, abandoned commercial strips, high unemployment, soaring public debts, cars that have been confiscated sitting on the backlots of banks, and weakened infrastructure across this country. When you look at this picture, you can tell there is something really wrong here.

In this body, we continue to debate how to get our fiscal house in order, but Republicans have been unwilling to negotiate. Last year, we saw how House Republicans gambled with our economy. They rejected plan after plan to raise the debt ceiling and to responsibly balance the budget by putting both spending cuts and revenues on the table. They were protecting their favored few and their like at any cost, including those who get special tax breaks and get millions even when their companies do poorly or fail. When and why are the interests of the privileged money barons put before everyone else? House Republicans refuse to provide tax relief for working families unless we give even more tax breaks to the super wealthy.

We need to get our priorities straight. We need to get our fiscal house in order. We need a smart approach that puts revenues and spending cuts on the table, and we need to focus on job creation. We need to hold these Americans accountable for the damage they have done, and let them carry a hod and bear their fair share of the burden. So, for the sake of full disclosure, let's put their base earnings for last year on the record.

WALL STREET CEOS TAKING MILLIONS

Jamie Dimon, JPMorgan, \$23.1 Million.
John Stumpf, Wells Fargo, \$19.8 Million.
Lloyd Blankfein, Goldman Sachs, \$16.2 Million.
Vikram Pandit, Citigroup, \$14.9 Million.
James Gordon, Morgan Stanley, \$13.0 Million.
Brian Moynihan, Bank of America, \$8.1 Million.

□ 1120

YOU CAN STOP WORRYING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I am well aware of the fact that there are many Americans who think when they hear the word "ObamaCare," that somehow it is a takeover by the government of our freedom and of our health care. I'm hoping that people will take another look now that the Supreme Court has

declared this to be the law of the land and see what the advantages are for you, for individuals, what does it really mean.

For example, if you're a woman, did you know that being a woman is like being a preexisting condition? Over a lifetime, women pay about 48 percent more for their health insurance than men do. That is ended right now because of ObamaCare. Did you know that if you're a woman, you're now able to get lifesaving preventive services like a mammogram? You can go in now and get a mammogram at no cost because it's a preventive service under ObamaCare.

If you're a parent and you have a child with a disability, right now you are able to have that child insured. They cannot be excluded because they have a preexisting condition. Of course, that meant so much to the mother of Olivia. Let me just read the story of the mother of Olivia. Olivia suffered a stroke at birth, and now she's 11 years old. She has multiple health issues, including epilepsy and cognitive delays and cerebral palsy. ObamaCare means that Olivia can't be denied coverage based on her preexisting condition, and there is no lifetime limit. That's true of everyone now in America. There is no lifetime limit on her insurance coverage.

Both of Olivia's parents have switched jobs since having Olivia; and each time they switched, they had to fight to get the needed coverage for their daughter due to her preexisting condition. Imagine the relief that they don't have to do that, and no one with a child with a disability has to do that anymore.

This idea of government takeover is just not true. You will still be able to choose your providers. All the decisions you really want to make are not going to be taken away. You will even be able to choose your insurance company. If you can't afford it, you will be put into an exchange where you still get to choose a variety of insurance companies. If you can't afford the premiums, the government will help you do that.

By the way, all Members of Congress will be required to be in those health exchanges. You won't be able to say that the Members of Congress are taking care of themselves with their great health benefits. By the way, they are the same as all Federal workers. We pay our premiums, and we pay our copays. We're the only Americans that are going to be required to be in those health exchanges. So you can be assured that we're going to be making sure that we're taking care of ourselves, as well as all other Americans.

Because of ObamaCare, my adult son the other day on his birthday said, Thank you, Mom. He is a small business owner. He owns a tropical fish store in Chicago. He said, I just found out from my accountant that I received a pretty hefty tax credit, because that's what's given now to small