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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.

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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