over again, only this time it's worse for our parents and grandparents. It will turn Medicare into a voucher system, and leave millions without the health care they need and deserve.

As a doctor, I've sat with these seniors when they're trying to choose between one medication or another, one treatment or another, and they can't afford it. This is just wrong. It's bad medicine.

Our parents and grandparents did not work their whole lives paying into a system only to be handed a voucher that doesn't even cover the cost of needed care.

If we work together, we can do better. We can lower the cost of health care. We must honor the promises that we've made to them, and make sure Medicare is secure and strengthened for the next generation.

Mr. RYAN, don't pull the plug on Medicare.

□ 1730

SKILLS ACT

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the House will vote on the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills Act, or SKILLS Act. With 12 million Americans out of work and 3.6 million job openings unfilled, the SKILLS Act will modernize and reform our Federal workforce development programs and reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act.

As a former volunteer member of a Workforce Investment Board who had the responsibility for administering these training opportunities, I witnessed firsthand the difficulty and expense these duplicative and overlapping programs create. The SKILLS Act consolidates current programs efficiently so that individuals seeking training will be able to navigate the system with greater success and greater access. The SKILLS Act also refocuses the accountability and control at the local level rather than Washington.

Mr. Speaker, America's competitiveness depends on having a qualified and trained workforce. The SKILLS Act offers just that. President Obama called on Congress in 2012 to work with him to develop a skills training program that is more efficient and effective. The SKILLS Act does just that. Let's take action to put Americans back to work and make America more competitive.

INTRODUCTION OF THE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE NOW PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP ACT

(Mrs. BUSTOS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk about a bill I introduced earlier today. It's called the Water Infrastructure Now Public-Private Partnership Act. Senator DURBIN and Senator KIRK from Illinois introduced the Senate version as well today.

My bill would improve the Nation's water infrastructure, including the aging locks and dams along the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, through public-private partnerships that would expedite projects and save taxpayer money.

My bill would help clear a $60 billion backlog of U.S. Army Corps projects that will take decades to complete without the help of private investment. It does this by creating a pilot program to explore agreements between the Army Corps of Engineers and private entities as alternatives to traditional financing, planning, design, and construction methods.

Mr. Speaker, the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers are absolutely critical to the economic well-being of not just my region, but also to the entire Midwest, the Nation, and even to the world. Many of these locks and dams were built during the administration of Franklin Roosevelt and are now more than 80 years old. That is why action must be taken to expand and modernize the locks and dams that help transport our goods and products worldwide.

HONORING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Every March we commemorate National Women's History Month, a time in which we highlight the many contributions of women who have shaped our great Nation. While we celebrate the tremendous achievements of pioneers who have paved the way, it is important to remember the young girls who need an encouraging environment so that they can grow up to become strong women of character. Education is key to make this happen.

Education is not simply a means to an end but, rather, a vital tool that can help overcome poverty, ignorance, and so much more. However, one in four girls in America does not finish high school, and the dropout rate is even higher for Hispanic teens. Nearly four in ten Hispanic girls will drop out of high school this year. This is alarming.

Mr. Speaker, let's stop this high school dropout rate for all teen girls, and I ask that we renew our commitment to put literacy on our national agenda. Literacy is paramount in the struggle for self-empowerment and education.

HONORING THE MCDONNELL FAMILY

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

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the last memory that Lynn McDonnell has of her 7-year-old daughter, Grace, is of a beaming, beautiful girl blowing kisses to her from a bus as she went on her way to Sandy Hook Elementary School. Soon thereafter, tragedy struck. Grace and 19 of her classmates and six teachers were gunned down by a madman with a semiautomatic rifle.

Our country came together. We mourned together. And now, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking this Congress, come together and do something so no other family knows the sadness of the McDonnells.

Too many lives have been lost and too many communities have been torn apart by violence. Too many families have mourned the loss of their brothers and sisters. Too many people have endured unimaginable pain and grief caused by gun violence. When Lynn McDonnell and her husband, Chris, came to Washington for the State of the Union last month, she said Congress must choose ''action over inaction.'' And I agree.

It's been exactly 3 months now since the Newtown massacre. For the McDonnells and the families in Newtown, Aurora, and my hometown of West Palm Beach, I say let's come together and pass responsible gun safety legislation.

THE HOMES OF CHRISTIANS ARE BURNED IN PAKISTAN

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Christians are under attack in the Muslim nation of Pakistan. Christians live in fear of being persecuted because of their faith. They also can face life in prison or even death if convicted of insulting Islam.

Some say that the religious laws are used as a tool to deal with personal vendettas. A Christian man living in Pakistan last week was accused of committing blasphemy. Suddenly, a large group of men—a mob from a nearby mosque—stormed his home Friday night. The man was arrested. Fearing for their safety, hundreds of other Christian families fled in the dark of the night. On Saturday morning, the mob, as shown in this photograph, returned and began ransacking more Christian homes and setting them ablaze. According to Human Rights activists, more than 100 Christian homes were burned.

Mr. Speaker, Pakistan takes our money but they do not respect the human rights of religious minorities. Some radical Muslims believe that