

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, there is much that Congress deals with that seems intractable. We struggle with the great issues of war and peace. We view climate change and its devastating impacts and are paralyzed. We look at this still-simmering racial unrest and the painful events of Ferguson, Missouri, and largely are ignoring the underlying issues.

There is one area where government at the State and local level and here in Congress can make things a little easier, a little more sensible, and that is dealing with our failed policy of marijuana prohibition.

There was a sad article on the front page of *The Times* yesterday about a call center employee, paralyzed since he was 16 years old, who was fired from his job because he used medical marijuana in a State where it is legal, on his off-hours, at home at night, to control his back spasms.

That had nothing to do with his job performance, yet this person was terminated. There is a certain degree of hypocrisy, where someone having a glass of wine at home is treated radically different.

This is just one small example of a much larger problem. The cost of our failed prohibition causes untold damage to racial minorities, especially African American young men who are much more likely to be arrested and jailed, even though they use marijuana no more frequently than young White men, jailed for something most Americans now think should be legal.

That hypocrisy was on display with the NFL, who suspended a player for a year for smoking marijuana, but remember, the wifebeater was suspended for only two games until an even more graphic video of the beating forced the NFL's hand because of the public outrage; yet this is the same NFL that encourages—some would say pressures—players to be pumped with shots and pills to dull their pain, which often leads to serious consequences for these players later in life, especially prescription drug dependency.

Remember, we have an epidemic of prescription drug abuse that kills more people every year than heroin, methamphetamines, and cocaine combined, and of course, no one has ever been killed from a marijuana overdose.

We are wasting lives, law enforcement resources, and money when we have more important issues to tackle. I am pleased that my State of Oregon, which was the first State to decriminalize a small amount of marijuana, now may become the next State to legalize adult use.

We have seen significant progress here in Congress to allow the cultivation of industrial hemp, allow Kentucky tobacco farmers and Oregon ranchers to grow hemp for products that are perfectly legal and you can buy in any city in America.

We have helped rein in the Federal Government interference with the 23 States that allow over 1 million people

to use medical marijuana. People are picking up and moving to States that permit medical marijuana to get access to the therapeutic benefits of marijuana, which can reduce the violent epileptic seizures that torture their children.

It is time for us to do a reality check. Let's legalize, regulate, and tax marijuana, and then get on to those bigger problems that need our attention, like war and peace, the consequence of a failure to deal with climate change, and the epidemic of prescription drug abuse that is killing three or four Americans every hour. Let's get our priorities straight.

RADICALIZED AMERICANS FIGHTING WITH ISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, according to a new poll released by CNN last evening, "Americans are increasingly concerned that ISIS represents a direct terror threat" and that they are "fearful that ISIS agents are living in the United States."

A Washington Post poll released this morning shows that 90 percent of the American people believe that ISIS poses a "serious" threat to the U.S.

This threat is growing, largely due to the fact that an increasing number of radicalized westerners, including more than 140 Americans, are freely traveling to Syria to link up with ISIS and al Qaeda-affiliated groups.

Consider that over the last month, while this Congress was out on recess, the number of Americans killed fighting with terrorist organizations in Syria quickly grew, signaling a trend that should be troubling to all Americans.

Earlier this summer, Moner Mohammad Abu-Salha, a 22-year-old from Florida, became the first American suicide bomber fighting in Syria for the al Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusra.

Equally concerning as his deadly act was the fact that he traveled from Syria to Florida and back again in the months before his deadly terrorist act. In August, two more Americans were reportedly killed fighting with ISIS—Douglas McArthur McCain and Abdurahmaan Muhumed, both originally from Minneapolis, Minnesota.

We must take proactive steps to discourage Americans from traveling to Syria to link up with these groups. Unfortunately, current law does not prevent Americans from traveling freely to Syria and back, which creates loopholes would-be jihadists can exploit.

Currently, unless the U.S. has solid evidence that they have joined one of these terrorist groups, the FBI cannot arrest suspects upon their return. Unfortunately, it can be very hard to prove that suspects fought with a terrorist group in Syria, due to limited U.S. intelligence about their activities in the region.

I am concerned that the absence of laws preventing unrestricted travel to Syria means the U.S. is not taking any substantial steps to discourage Americans from going over to fight. This is an untenable situation that puts our country at greater risk of attack from a radicalized American who trains and fights with these groups and later returns home. That is why I have introduced legislation in March, aimed at curbing this threat.

Over the last 6 months, since its introduction, the dramatic gains by ISIS and a growing number of foreign fighters has only reaffirmed the need for legislation to address this issue.

My bill, H.R. 4223, the International Conflicts of Concern Act, will give the President authority to temporarily restrict travel and material support to countries like Syria, and the President could add additional countries of concern when conflicts spill over into other countries, as we have seen in Iraq.

The bill would also contain important protections, allowing legitimate travel by licensed humanitarian aid workers, journalists, and other groups cleared by the U.S. Government. I want to add that this bill was developed with the input of the FBI and has been supported by Director Comey of the FBI.

I believe it is a commonsense solution to an increasingly urgent threat, and the House should bring up this bill and pass it before it recesses. Should we fail to do so, I believe that one day we will regret not doing all that we can to protect our homeland from the radicalized fighting with ISIS in Syria.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to close by encouraging the President to call on the expertise of two men who know more about fighting terrorists and insurgent threats in Iraq than anyone, General David Petraeus and General Stanley McChrystal.

Although both have retired and neither work for this administration anymore, our country would benefit greatly from their expertise as the military and intelligence community address the growing threat in Iraq. I hope the President and his team will ask for their assistance.

THE SEPTEMBER MESSAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, September should be a particularly important month for this House. It will be a month of contrasts. It will be a month in which the American people will be able to see that the Republican message to the American people is, "You are on your own," while Democrats say, "We are on your side."

All right. Well, what does that mean? The Republicans' announced agenda for this month ought to be no surprise to anyone who has been paying attention to the gridlock in Congress.

Instead of focusing on the issues that matter—creating jobs, raising the minimum wage, fixing our broken immigration system—they are planning to reintroduce partisan messaging bills the House has already passed.

So we are repeating what we have already done, as little as that may be.

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Mr. Speaker, it appears as if the Republican House majority in the 113th Congress will go out much as it came in: fixated on a single goal. The Republican chairman of the Rules Committee, PETE SESSIONS, summed up that goal late last year when he said—and I quote Congressman SESSIONS, Republican chairman of the Rules Committee: “Everything we do in this body should be about messaging to win back the Senate.” Not about creating jobs, not about making America more secure, not about energy, not about the minimum wage, not about immigration reform, not about making sure that women get equal pay for equal work, not about any of those things. The chairman of the Rules Committee that controls how we consider legislation on this floor said it is about messaging so we can take back the Senate.

All of us should remember that when Senator MCCONNELL was asked a few years ago in the first term of the President of the United States, Barack Obama, he said, when asked, What is your major objective? his response was, To ensure that President Obama is a one-term President. Again, not about jobs, not about the economy, not about growing the middle class, not about making sure voting rights were secured, but making sure that President Obama only served one term. He failed in that objective, but the fact of the matter is they have stayed on that messaging and objective.

Central to achieving that goal Republicans believe is to repeal or undermine the Affordable Care Act. And it comes without a shock to anyone that this month will also feature—as a matter of fact, this week—the 53rd vote to do just that.

However, Mr. Speaker, the American people are obviously tired of partisan gridlock. All of us hear that and all of us on both sides of the aisle say we don't want partisan gridlock, but we have seen wasted opportunities in this House over and over again for Congress to make headway on the challenges that we face as a nation.

Many are asking what happened to the promise Republicans made in 2010 when, in their pledge to America, they wrote—and again I quote—in their pledge to America: a plan to create jobs, end economic uncertainty—by the way, they are the ones who threatened to default on the debt twice and who shut down the greatest government on the face of the Earth and the greatest country on the face of the Earth, shut down its government for 16 days at a cost of \$24 billion. A plan, they said, to create jobs and economic certainty—it

was uncertainty they created—and make America more competitive. They said that must be the first and most urgent domestic priority of our government.

That is what they said in the pledge, but Chairman SESSIONS said, of course, messaging to take back the Senate was their major objective; therefore, that was a promise forgotten.

Throughout September, House Democrats will be outlining how Republicans have failed to focus on the issues Americans care about and what Congress should be doing instead. House Democrats are ready to jump-start the middle class. That is not just a phrase.

We know the middle class is shrinking, and we know to the extent the middle class is shrinking, America will not be doing as well. We need to expand the middle class, giving opportunities for those who are not in the middle class to climb ladders of opportunity to get into the middle class. We need to move our economy beyond recovery and into prosperity. We are for raising the minimum wage and ensuring equal pay for equal work. The overwhelming majority of Americans are for that.

Poll after poll after poll shows that over 70 percent of America is for those two propositions. In my opinion, both have majority votes on this House floor. But Americans must be surprised that those two issues are not brought to this floor for action so that the people's House can speak.

Now, there may be differences of opinion. Many Republicans may want to vote against the minimum wage, but America deserves to have a vote on that issue, and it has a right to have a vote on making sure that women get paid equally to what men get paid for the same job. They do that in the House of Representatives. Women are paid exactly what men are paid. That is right. That is what ought to happen.

We need to fix our broken immigration system. My friend, Mr. Cantor, who is no longer with us, and I had colloquies, week after week after week, in which Mr. Cantor said, We understand the immigration system is broken. I said, We agree, it is broken. And we have done nothing to fix it.

The Republicans have passed some five or six bills to fix it. They haven't brought their own bills to the floor so that the House could work its will. I don't believe that is the kind of Congress, Mr. Speaker, that America wants. We need to fix that system in a way that secures our border and brings millions out of the shadows.

Mr. Speaker, we need to bring to the floor bipartisan Make It In America jobs bills designed to grow our manufacturing base, help our businesses to compete, and attract jobs that pay well and open doors of opportunity to workers and their families.

The Republican-led committee passed out a bill sponsored by Mr. LIPINSKI almost unanimously—I think it was on a voice vote—a bill that passed in the last Congress with over

300 votes. I have been asking for the last 10 months that that bill be brought to the floor. All it says is America needs to have a playbook, a plan, a strategy, if you will, to grow our manufacturing sector, create more middle class jobs and compete with the rest of the world. We cannot get that bill to the floor. Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that is the kind of Congress America wants.

These are the issues that the American people want Congress to focus on, not undoing the patient protections and cost savings that health care reform has brought, not rebranding an antiregulatory and antiworker platform as a jobs package that would add—Mr. Speaker, Americans are going to be astounded, legislation we are going to consider this week will add \$560 billion to the debt. Now, we passed most of those bills and created a larger debt by more than that \$560 billion already, but we are going to do it again—not wasting taxpayers' money and time on partisan lawsuits and investigations, not giving the American people the least productive, and least open Congress in modern history.

The pledge to America talked about transparency. We have had more closed rules in this Congress than any Congress in which I have served.

Mr. Speaker, Americans want leaders who are on their side, not ones who have broken their promises. They need and deserve a people's House that is truly on their side.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, this September 29 marks the 115th birthday of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It is a day that will be celebrated at VFW posts and in communities around the country, and it is a day that deserves our recognition here in Congress as well.

As a member of our local VFW Ladies Auxiliary and the proud wife of a Vietnam veteran and a VFW member, I have seen firsthand how our VFW makes good on its promise every day to honor the dead by helping the living.

Each year, the nearly 2 million VFW and Auxiliary members contribute more than 8.6 million hours of volunteerism in their communities. These are men and women who have already sacrificed for their country by traveling into harm's way to defend our freedoms or waiting anxiously for our loved ones to return home from combat, yet they continue to serve wherever they see a need.

At our VFW post in Hendersonville, for example, members maintain a food pantry for disadvantaged veterans, and they started an Operation Spearhead to specifically serve the families of those called to serve in the war on terror.

Perhaps most importantly, the VFW has always risen above partisanship