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Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) Opening Statement for Full Committee Markup of H.R. 4320 and H.R. 4321

Thank you, Chairman Kline.

Our committee is meeting today to mark up two bills that do nothing to help the millions of Americans who are struggling to make ends meet.

In fact, these bills do just the opposite. They are designed to make it more difficult for workers to organize and bargain for a better deal.

We know that union workers earn higher pay, get better benefits, and have greater job security than non-union workers.

And yet the committee is now considering ways to make it more difficult for working Americans to secure those benefits—in one bill, by mandating union election delays so that unscrupulous employers have more time to intimidate, threaten, and coerce workers into abandoning their efforts, and in the other, by preserving employers' ability to campaign 24/7 with full access to employees, while limiting a union's ability to find, let alone contact, employees.

And while there are actual pressing issues facing our nation's workforce, with solutions supported by the vast majority of American people, regardless of their political stripe, the Republican majority is choosing to move bills that they know will be dead on arrival in the Senate and strongly opposed by the administration.

This is a waste of our time and a waste of taxpayer resources.

Instead, we should be using this opportunity to consider legislation that makes a real difference in peoples' lives—legislation that creates jobs, safeguards Americans from discrimination, protects workers' health and safety, and helps millions receive a fair wage.

To help put this committee—and the country—back on the right track, my fellow Democrats and I will move today to bring legislation that benefits millions of working Americans out of committee and to the House floor for a vote.

The amendments we will offer all include common-sense pieces of legislation that would help workers and families—and they’re all bills that the Republican majority has thus far refused to consider.

First off, the Fair Minimum Wage Act will give hard-working Americans a long-overdue pay raise by increasing the national minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 per hour, and indexing future annual increases to inflation thereafter.

It would also gradually raise the minimum wage for tipped workers, which currently stands at just \$2.13 per hour.

No one who works full time should have to raise their family in poverty, and that’s especially true for the women across our country who are disproportionately working in low-wage jobs.

That is why we are also offering the Paycheck Fairness Act, which will strengthen the landmark Equal Pay Act of 1963 and close the loopholes that have allowed employers to avoid responsibility for discriminatory pay.

By giving women critical tools to fight pay discrimination and raising the wage floor so that they can afford to feed and clothe their families, we can go a long way to restoring the promise of the American dream.

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act—known as ENDA—will also ensure we live up to that promise, by prohibiting discrimination in hiring and employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity by employers with at least 15 employees.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity goes against core American values.

All Americans should have the opportunity to earn a living and provide for their families, and be judged based on their talents and job performance.

And finally, we will offer the Robert C. Byrd Mine Safety Protection Act to bring our nation’s mine health and safety laws up to date.

This bill will give the Mine Safety and Health Administration the ability to effectively protect miners’ lives, holding mine operators accountable for putting their workers in unnecessary danger, and strengthening whistleblower protections for miners who speak out about unsafe conditions.

We have only a few legislative weeks left in this Congress. Time is running short. Let’s get something positive done for the economy and American workers.

Let’s reject the underlying bills and move on legislation that will boost workers’ earnings, workers’ safety, and workers’ rights.

Thank you, and I yield back.