



Making life work: Remarks by Majority Leader Eric Cantor

Tuesday, February 05, 2013 | 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

AEI, Twelfth Floor
1150 Seventeenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

About This Event

Event Summary

The government should ensure that Americans from all walks of life have a fair shot to pursue success and achieve their dreams, declared US House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) in an address Tuesday at the American Enterprise Institute. In the address, Rep. Cantor unveiled a series of policy proposals aimed at “Making Life Work” for more Americans that will serve as legislative priorities for House Republicans in the 113th Congress.

Although parts of Rep. Cantor’s address touched on the fiscal challenges the United States faces, in particular a looming entitlement crisis brought on by Medicare and Medicaid, most of his remarks focused on creating the conditions necessary to maximize opportunity for everyday Americans.

Rep. Cantor articulated the House GOP’s vision for the upcoming legislative agenda, spotlighting priorities including education, tax reform, immigration, and health care. He put a human face on many of his proposals by citing anecdotal evidence from several guests in the audience who have struggled to navigate these systems and urged Congress to “move heaven and earth” to address these problems.

One week before President Obama’s State of the Union address, Cantor concluded with a call for bipartisan solutions, declaring, “Making life work for more working people, and all who want to work, is the best way to a future of higher growth and more opportunity.”
-- John VerWey

Event Description

US House of Representatives Majority Leader Eric Cantor will deliver remarks focusing on conservative reforms that the 113th Congress can embrace to make life work for more people. In particular, he will address the areas of education, health care, workforce reform, immigration, and innovation.

Agenda

12:00 PM
Registration and Lunch

1:00 PM
Introduction:
Arthur C. Brooks, AEI

1:05 PM
Speaker:
Eric Cantor (R-VA), US House of Representatives

2:00 PM
Adjournment

Speaker Biographies

Arthur C. Brooks is the president of AEI. Until January 1, 2009, he was the Louis A. Bantle Professor of Business and Government Policy at Syracuse University. He is the author of 10 books and many articles on topics ranging from the economics of the arts to applied mathematics. His most recent books include “The Road to Freedom: How to Win the Fight for Free Enterprise” (Basic Books, 2012), “The Battle: How the Fight between Free Enterprise and Big Government Will Shape America’s Future” (Basic Books, May 2010), “Gross National Happiness” (Basic Books, 2008), “Social Entrepreneurship” (Prentice-Hall, 2008), and “Who Really Cares” (Basic Books, 2006). Before pursuing his work in public policy, Brooks spent 12 years as a professional French hornist with the City Orchestra of Barcelona and other ensembles.

Eric Cantor has represented Virginia’s Seventh District in the US House of Representatives since 2001. In the wake of the 2010 midterm elections, Rep. Cantor was first elected by his colleagues in the House to serve as majority leader for the 112th Congress, and was subsequently reelected for the 113th Congress. A former small businessman, he has emerged as a leading voice on the economy and job creation. As minority whip, he assembled a highly effective and energetic Republican whip team that served as the nerve center of the Republican Conference. In early 2009, the whip team coordinated the effort in which no Republicans voted for the nearly \$1 trillion stimulus bill. Rep. Cantor authored the Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006, which became law in late 2006 and popularized health savings accounts. He also co-authored the New York Times bestselling book “Young Guns: A New Generation of Conservative Leaders” (2010).

American Enterprise Institute (AEI)

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**Introduction:
Arthur C. Brooks,
President,
AEI**

**Speaker:
Representative Eric Cantor (R-VA),
U.S. House of Representatives**

**Location:
AEI, Twelfth Floor
1150 Seventeenth Street, NW
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**Time: 1:05 p.m.
Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2013**

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Transcript by Federal News Service, Washington, D.C.

ARTHUR BROOKS: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Arthur Brooks, president of the American Enterprise Institute, and I'm very pleased to welcome House Majority Leader Eric Cantor to AEI today to give an important policy speech entitled, "Making Life Work."

Now, an ordinary introduction would chronicle Eric's incredible political career and rise to majority leader and talk about his numerous legislative accomplishments. But Eric's career, as most of you know, is not primarily a collection of accomplishments. It's a long-term effort to make a better, fairer country for all Americans. Eric is someone who regularly pauses to remember the "why" of public policy, valuing justice for all, protecting the vulnerable and fighting against class divisions in American life. He cares about freedom and opportunity because he knows they lead to a happier, more prosperous life for more people. He cares about those who are being left behind by failing schools, people who are looking for work and cannot find it and people who face barriers to starting businesses and building a better life. Eric Cantor knows that behind each piece of legislation and policy analysis is an American or someone who wants to become an American.

Here – the – here's the reason I admire Eric the most, I think, in the years that I've gotten to know him and become his friend: He fights for everyone whether they're going to vote for him or not. And we're very honored to have him here today to hear his thoughts. After his remarks, he'll take a few questions.

Ladies and gentlemen, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor. (Applause.)

REPRESENTATIVE ERIC CANTOR (R-VA): Arthur, thank you very much. It is great to be here at AEI, because I'll tell you, I am such an admirer, Arthur, of what you do, because you have done so much to, I think, put into context what it means to be a conservative and how conservative policies actually help people. And I do think that your insight and commitment in this vein has only begun to reap rewards and look forward to continuing the fight with you to try and make a better life for all Americans, so thank you very much for hosting this today.

You know, in Washington over the past few months, our attention has been on cliffs, it's been on debt ceilings, budgets, deadlines and negotiations. All of this is extremely important, because I don't think there's any substitute for getting our fiscal house in order. There's no greater moral imperative than to reduce the mountain of debt that's facing us, our children and theirs. And our House Republican majority stands ready for the president and his party to join us in actually tackling the big problems facing this country.

But today I'd like to focus really on what lies beyond the fiscal debate. And over the next two years, our House majority will pursue an agenda that is based on a shared vision of creating the conditions of health, happiness and prosperity for more Americans and their families and to restrain Washington from interfering in those pursuits. We'll advance proposals aimed at producing results in areas like education, health care, innovation and job growth. Our solutions will be based on the conservative principles of self-reliance, faith in the individual, trust in family and accountability in government. Our goal is to ensure that every American has a fair shot to earn success and achieve their dreams. It's my hope that I can stand before you two years

from now and report to you that our side as well as the president's found within us the ability to set differences aside in order to provide relief to so many millions of Americans who just want their life to work again.

You know, in so many countries throughout history, children were largely consigned to the same station in life as their parents, but not here, because here we've seen the son of a shoeman become the president of the United States. We've become – we've seen a daughter of a poor, single mom develop and build a company that turned into her being the owner of a TV network. In America, the grandson of poor immigrants who fled the czarist Russia, come here, and that grandson became the majority leader of our House of Representatives. (Scattered applause.) That's what this country is about.

You know, in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, two bicycle shop mechanics gave mankind the gift of flight. The Wright brothers flew only 22 feet at that time, 18 feet in the air, but they performed a miracle. As a result, only 66 years later, this country put a man on the moon and brought him back. That's who we are. We can do an enormous amount as a people.

The Wright brothers' father, Milton, actually inspired his sons by giving them a toy helicopter. He never, ever wanted his two sons, Orville and Wilbur, to fly together for fear that he'd lose them. And seven years after the original flight, so in 1910, Milton gave them the permission to fly together, the only time they ever did, and it lasted six minutes. Now, later that day, Orville took his 82-year father up into the air. It lasted seven minutes, rising 350 feet at that time, while Milton shouted, "Higher, Orville, higher."

And I think it's a great testament to what our country is about, because in America, we do have higher expectations for our nation, just like Milton had higher expectations for his sons. Since our founding, we believed that we could be the best hope to mankind. That hope led generations of immigrants to risk everything to endure a tough journey to come to our shores. And the driving motivation for the millions of immigrants passing by Lady Liberty in New York Harbor was the generation that came after them. And because of that hope and those high expectations coupled with the determination to see them through, every generation since has had it better up until now.

You know, lately it's become all too common for us to hear parents really fear that their kids are not going to have it better than they. And for all of us parents, that is a scary thought. I mean, let's face it. It's gotten a lot tougher to raise a family in America. And our goal has got to be to eliminate this doubt gripping our nation's family and families and to restore their hope and confidence so that they, the parents, can once again see a better tomorrow for their children.

You know, together my wife, Diana, and I raised our three children, Evan, Jenna and Mikey, and we couldn't be more proud of the young adults that they've become. Our nest is now empty, but I can tell you I understand – we both do – the pressures that all parents are under and the tough times they're going through: parents working, saving for college, paying for braces, helping with homework, shuttling from one after-school activity to the next. It's not easy. That's why we worry so much. Where can you afford a home in the best neighborhood so your kids will have the right school? Which health care plan can you afford so you can see your doctors? Will

your children actually make it through all those nights of homework and graduate from school and if so, get into a college? And then are you going to be able to afford it? What about a career? Is that going to be available to them? These are all real-life concerns. This is what keeps parents awake at night, fearful that life is not going to work out the way they hoped.

During the last several years, with a stagnant economy, too many mothers and fathers have had to come home, walk into the kitchen and tell their family they didn't have a job anymore. Now, how's a family like that supposed to save for a rainy day when it just got tough to even make it through the next month? These are the families that should be our focus. They're desperate to have the nightmare over. And the best way to ensure that their hope for the future is restored is by making reality – making opportunity a reality for them. And it's going to come if we provide a path forward, give them the tools to take advantage of a growing economy. We need to see business expansion and startups created so that there can be more jobs and opportunity for their kids and for them.

Now, just like parents, Washington has got to start showing care for the generations ahead while leaving the parenting to the parents. Now, government policy has got to strike a balance between what is needed to advance the next generation, what we can afford, what is a federal responsibility and what is necessary to ensure our children are safe, healthy and able to reach their dreams.

Now, opportunity and belief in tomorrow starts with an education system that works. In an 1822 letter, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "I look to at the diffusion of light and education as the resource to be relied on for ameliorating the condition, promoting the virtue and advancing the happiness of man." With an eye toward Mr. Jefferson's vision, since 1965 the federal government has poured hundreds of billions of dollars into improving schools, especially in low-income areas, over \$15 billion last year. And frankly, the results have not matched the investment.

Joining us here today is Joseph Kelley and his family. Now, Joseph is a heroic dad in my book. And he was worried that the public schools were not helping his son Rashawn, who is here on the front. Rashawn flunked the first grade. And by the fifth grade, he was three years behind on most subjects. The school actually put him into a special education class. And Joseph would try and sit in on the classes in order to help his son Rashawn but was met with hostility by school administrators and even had to obtain a court order so Rashawn could have a tutor. Violence was so prevalent in Rashawn's school that there were eight D.C. police officers patrolling it on a daily basis.

Mr. Kelley heard of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program and dedicated himself to making sure that Rashawn and his three sisters could have access to a school that would provide them with a safe environment in which to learn to give them an opportunity, in fact, that they could see college as an option, an opportunity that Mr. Kelley did not have.

Within two years at a private school, Rashawn caught up to his classmates, and he's now a student in college. And his sisters, who are here with us today as well – Domonique, Shakayta and Rhunetta – are attending the Preparatory School of D.C. and are on a similar path to

opportunity. Now, I visited this school yesterday, and it is amazing. It is making a real difference in the lives of kids who, without that school, could possibly be lost. And this is what is at stake because now, they have great teachers, terrific administrators, small class sizes, and a mission that said every kid's got to succeed.

Now, no one should deny Rashawn or his sisters this opportunity. (Applause.) Joseph Kelley nor any parent should have to wait for failed education systems, failed school systems to get their acts together.

You know, throughout the country, there are some promising signs that we can bring schools and parents together to improve our educational system. San Francisco public schools adopted a funding mechanism according to what's termed a weighted student formula. And under this policy, the more students a school attracts, the more money that school, its administrators and teachers receive. Low-income students are weighted heavier in the funding formula, as are children with disabilities and those learning English as a second language. So there is incentives for schools to seek the more vulnerable population and reasons for schools to differentiate themselves and to excel.

Imagine if we were to try and move in this direction with federal funding, allow the money we currently spend to actually follow individual children. Students, including those without a lot of money or those with special needs, would be able to access a school which would give them a shot at having a successful life, a shot at earning their success in achieving their dreams and wouldn't be just subjected to the failing school that they were assigned to.

Their options ought to include not just public schools, private schools but also the charter schools. A competitive environment where schools compete for students rather than the other way around gives every child from the inner city of Washington to the streets of Los Angeles an equal chance at a greater destiny.

Now, one of our priorities this year in the House will be to move heaven and earth to fix our education system for the most vulnerable. And when those children graduate from high school, we must expand their choices, and college has got to be an option.

In 1980 the average cost of college was roughly \$8,000 a year. Today it's over \$20,000, and less than 60 percent of the students who enroll in a four-year program graduate within six years. Clearly, something's broken.

Now, according to President Obama's former jobs council, by 2020 there will be a million and a half jobs without the college graduates to fill them. While there is a persistent unmet demand of 400,000 to 500,000 job openings in the health care sector alone, recent reports indicate that there are not enough skilled applicants to fill the jobs in the booming natural gas industry.

Now, suppose colleges provided prospective students with reliable information on the employment rate and potential earnings by major? What if parents had access to clear and

understandable breakdowns between academic studies and amenities? What would those costs be?

Armed with this knowledge, families and students can make better decisions about where to go to school and how to budget their tuition dollars. Students would actually have a better chance of graduating within four years and getting a job. Helping students realize opportunity and a career while keeping tuition costs low makes common sense.

Now, Senators Rubio and Wyden have a proposal that they unveiled right here at AEI which addresses this goal. And I look forward to working with them, along with Chairman John Kline, in pursuing legislative action in the House.

Now, over the course of this Congress, we also want to work to reform our student aid process to give students a financial incentive to finish their studies sooner. We'll encourage entrepreneurship in college education, including for-profit schools, and we'll fix the way we'll subsidize education by making the cost more transparent to parents, students and the millions of taxpayers who helped pay some of the bill. We owe it to them.

Now, a good education leads to more innovation. And throughout our history, American colleges and universities have served as a cornerstone for the world's innovation. They're a big part of why the U.S. remains the destination for the world's best and brightest. Investment in education leads to innovation, which leads to more opportunity and jobs for all.

Our problem? The investment we make is not yielding the maximum return. Each year our colleges and universities graduate approximately 40,000 foreign nationals with master's and Ph.D. degrees, many of whom are then forced to leave the country because there are not enough visa slots in our immigration system to permit them to stay. So rather than being able to invent things here in America, grow businesses or start one of their own, they do all these things somewhere else.

Now, Fiona Zhou is here with us today. She's earning her master's at GW's School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. Originally from China, she's been in the United States for five years, studying operations research in the systems engineering department. If you talk to her, you'll see she's pretty smart.

She'd like to stay here. She wants to invest her talents in America and maybe even start her own company. But she's seen too many of her friends with advanced degrees have to go home despite sharing some of her same dreams and aspirations of wanting to become part of this country.

Now, last year the House passed the bipartisan STEM Jobs Act, which helped fix this problem. We will act again in this Congress, and we hope the Senate chooses to join us this time. I look forward to Fiona realizing her dreams and our country reaping the rewards of her hard work and talent.

Whether it's college or the cost of daycare, making life work for more families means reducing the economic insecurity plaguing so many working moms and dads.

Over the last 20 years the world has changed. It used to be that one could make a career out of working for just one company. And today the average worker stays at his or her job for barely four years. Median income in 2010 was about the same as it was in 1997.

Now, experts correctly point out that this statistic ignores that many working families are getting more benefits like health care from their employer, not just wages. But try explaining that – try explaining that rising health care costs are depressing take-home pay and saying that it's justified. That's little consolation to the working mom because her grocery bills are still higher, her kids still need – have needs that are getting more expensive, the rent is up, and now she's just trying to get by. I think all of us know getting by is not the American dream.

As job markets are changing, more skills, training and education are needed. Federal job training programs ought to make it easier for Americans who are out of work or changing their careers to get the skills they need. Yet today the federal government has a patchwork of over 47 different overlapping programs that are not dynamic or innovative enough to meet the needs of employers or potential employees. We can fix this, and we will if we can muster the bipartisan support to do so.

If you're a working parent, you know there's hardly enough time at home to be with kids. Too many parents have to weigh whether they can afford to leave work for even half a day to perhaps attend a field trip or to go to a parent-teacher conference.

You see, federal laws dating back to the 1930s make it hard for parents who hold hourly jobs to balance the demands of work and home. An hourly employee cannot convert previous overtime into future comp time or flex time. In 1985 Congress addressed this issue but only did so for municipal and state employees, because they have now the flexibility to go about earning comp time and flex time so that perhaps if they work one month, they can get off and join their kids on a school activity the next. But the same privilege is denied all those employees in the private sector who are hourly – paid hourly wage.

There's a police officer at home in my district, and her name is Vicki. She's working a tough job with long hours while raising her kids. And her life is made a little easier because she's a local government employee. She's permitted to work some extra hours and save it up for a sick day or a school event. Just imagine if we simply gave this opportunity to employees and employers, at their option, in the private sector. A working mom or a working dad could make overtime and reap the benefits of it when they – when their kids needed them, and they wouldn't have to miss work so they could still pay the rent. This is the kind of common-sense legislation that should be noncontroversial and moves us in the right direction to help make life work for more families.

Another step we can take is on taxes. There's a lot of talk about taxes in Washington right now. For most families, tax preparation is hard, and it's time-consuming, this time of year especially. Think about it. Think what they're going through. What tax form are you supposed to

fill out? Is it more beneficial to file jointly or as a married – as a married couple or separately? Is a truck or gas mileage deductible, or are you forgetting something that the IRS will give you credit for?

In 1935 the Form 1040 was accompanied by a two-page instruction booklet. Today taxpayers have got to wade through over 100 total pages of instruction. Just filling out a W-4 at a new job is confusing. You really shouldn't need a worksheet to see how many dependents you have. Chairman Dave Camp and his committee are already under way in their efforts to responsibly rewrite the nation's tax laws.

As in education policy, health care and all else, tax reform should reflect the priority of working families and the future they're trying to shape for their kids. If nothing else, we must stop putting special interests ahead of our working families' interests. Loopholes and gimmicks benefiting those who've figured out how to work the system in Washington are no more defensible than the path of wasteful and irresponsible spending we've been on for decades. Working families should come first. Everyone agrees a fairer, simpler tax code would give all of us more time. And in our attempt to make the tax code simpler, we must continue to demonstrate support for young parents who invest in having kids and raising a family, because after all, they are America's most valued investors.

In 1997 a Republican Congress created the child tax credit specifically to help ease the financial burden of families raising children. In 2001 it was expanded. Such a policy helps to limit the size of government and results in fewer Americans looking to the government for support.

Now, leading up to April 15th, families will be besieged by concerns over their taxes. But it's health care and the concern for a healthy family that always worries parents most. Most Americans have come to expect the best health care in the world, but there's no doubt that our current system is too complex and too costly.

President Obama's health care law resulted in higher premiums and costs for families and has made access to quality health care and innovation tougher. If we want to reverse this trend, we should start by choosing to repeal the new taxes that are increasing the cost of health care and health insurance, like the medical device tax.

With us today is Erin Shucosky. Erin has been a clinical nurse for 30 years in Baltimore. She spent the past 10 years coordinating the research on a study to approve a new replacement disc to treat patients suffering from crippling neck and back pain. Over time Erin discovered that she suffered from the very condition that her work aimed to treat. On her days off, Erin would spend time at her daughter's lacrosse tournaments, barely able to move, and then would have to go home and spend most of her time there with an ice pack on her neck. She went in for surgery and got those new disc replacements. Erin's with us in a cervical collar today, but thankfully, she's on the mend.

The new medical device tax in "Obamacare" makes it harder for researchers to develop those innovative devices in the United States and thus makes it harder for patients like Erin to get

the care they need. “Obamacare” has unnecessarily raised the cost of our health care. Even those who have pre-existing conditions could get the coverage they need without a trillion-dollar government program costing all of us more. And that’s only the tip of the iceberg when we talk about health care reform.

Many families like mine are dealing with the challenges presented by aging and very sick parents. They rely on Medicare for relief. In 1965 the federal government created Medicare and modeled it after the standard Blue Cross Blue Shield plan at the time. But in the past 50 years both health care and health insurance have changed dramatically. But the government and Medicare have just not kept pace.

And Medicaid is doing – is not doing any better. Under the Medicaid system, the rules are set in Washington, but much of the bills are being paid in our state capitals. Collectively, states are spending more on Medicaid than they do on K-through-12 education. And states don’t have the flexibility to innovate in order to lower costs and provide better care. As a result, in many cases, patients have been swallowed up by the system and have become an afterthought.

These programs are broken, and many patients are going without proper care. That’s not fair to the people and the family who depend on these programs, and we’ve got to fix them. We can modernize Medicare so that it isn’t so complicated for seniors or health care providers and make it easier for them to get the care they need in a cost-effective manner.

We should begin by ending the arbitrary division between Part A, the hospital program, and Part B, the doctor services. We can create reasonable and predictable levels of out-of-pocket expenses without forcing seniors to rely on Medigap plans. Seniors who choose to receive their health care treatment through a group of doctors and hospitals working together to control costs – they should share in some of the savings through lower Medicare premiums and out-of-pocket costs. This is both cost-effective and good for seniors.

We can provide states more flexibility with respect to Medicaid that will allow them to provide better care for low-income families in a way that ultimately brings down the cost. Options for states should include streamlining the process for determining eligibility and allowing them to offer health coverage through patient-directed health care for flexible benefit programs. And we must make it faster and simpler for states to gain approval of federal waivers to modify their Medicaid programs.

Now, long term, controlling health care costs will require smarter federal investments in medical research. Many of today’s cures and lifesaving treatments are a result of an initial federal investment, and much of it is spent on cancer research and other grave illnesses.

Now, one of the most courageous people that I know is a young girl from Richmond named Katie. And Katie’s here with us on the front row. And I have known her for many, many years, and her mom. See, Katie was diagnosed with cancer just after she was 1 years old. That is any parent’s nightmare. And Katie and her family went through a tremendous struggle over many years trying to deal with this tumor that was discovered. And by the time she was 7 years old, the family went to St. Jude in Memphis and had a successful radiation treatment. Katie is

doing well today, but she still is worried about her condition, and the family will soon return to Memphis, as she often does, to make sure that she's going to stay on this path to having her life work again.

And I know – (applause) – if you come up here and see Katie smile, she has the best, most brightest smile of anybody I know. It's an inspiration. And her mom and Katie and their family are very interested in seeing smarter federal investment in childhood cancer and for us to continue to play that role that can make life work for families like Katie again.

Now, prayers for Katie's recovery do help, but we've also got to pray that the scientists and researchers – that they find cures to the diseases so that our parents and grandparents don't leave us too soon, so that children like Katie are not robbed of a healthy life. And there is an appropriate role and a necessary role for the federal government to ensure funding for basic medical research. Doing all we can to facilitate medical breakthroughs for people like Katie should be a priority.

Now, we can and we must do better. This includes cutting unnecessary red tape in order to speed up the availability of life-saving drugs and treatments and re-prioritizing existing federal research spending. Funds currently spent by the government on social science, including on politics, of all things, will be better spent helping find cures to diseases. Scientific breakthroughs are the result of, and have helped contribute to, America's being the world's capital of innovation and opportunity in nearly every field.

For this and many other reasons, people across the globe want to become part of our country. We must never diminish that desire or, worse, become a place that is no longer desirable. It's no secret that there are more than 11 million people here illegally, many of whom have become part of the fabric of our country. They, like us, have families and dreams. While we are a nation that allows anyone to start anew, we are also a nation of laws, and that's what makes tackling the issue of immigration reform so difficult. In looking to solve this problem soon, we've got to balance respect for the rule of law and respect for those waiting to enter this country legally with care for the people and families, most of whom just want to make a better life and contribute to America.

A good place to start is with the kids. One of the great founding principles of our country was that children would not be punished for the mistakes of their parents. And it is time to provide an opportunity for legal residence and citizenship for those who were brought to this country as children and who know no other home.

I'm pleased that many of my colleagues in both chambers of Congress on both sides of the aisle have begun work in good faith to address these issues. And I'm pleased these discussions make border security, employment verification and creating a workable guest-worker program immediate priorities. It's the right thing to do for our families, for our security and for our economy.

Now, there are some who would rather avoid fixing the problem in order to save this as a political issue. I reject this notion and I call on our president to help lead us towards a bipartisan solution rather than encourage the common political divisions of the past.

A sonnet by Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus,” was placed at the Statue of Liberty in 1903. Parts of it read: “Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand, A mighty woman with a torch ... From the beacon hand glows worldwide welcome... I lift my lamp beside the golden door.” The message of this sonnet should sound familiar to most of us. The image of the Statue of Liberty blended with the stories of our immigrant past serve as a humble reminder of who we are as a country.

It's the reason I'm able to stand here before you today. Like so many of the generations living in Eastern Europe at the turn of the last century, my grandparents fled the vicious anti-Semitic pogroms of the czars of Russia to come to America. Widowed at a young age, my grandmother raised her two sons in a tiny apartment atop a grocery store that she and my grandfather had opened in downtown Richmond.

With little but her faith, thrift and hope for a better tomorrow, my grandma worked seven days a week to ensure that my dad and uncle could realize the promise of this great country. And today my children and I stand as proof of the possibility to what may have seemed to her then like an impossible dream.

To uphold this legacy of those who've come before us, Washington will need to make some choices. And in a divided government, these choices are often tough. We in the House majority remain committed to making those tough choices and stand ready to lead with this president.

“Higher,” Milton Wright once shouted from the air. “Higher.” Making life work for more working people and all who want to work is the best way to a future of higher growth and more opportunity.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Questions. Yes, sir.

Q: Are these going to be – are these thoughts today going to be incorporated in legislation, or is this the beginning of Virginia, mother of presidents, finally seeing a Republican candidate?

REP. CANTOR: (Laughs.) No, it's not the latter. I will say we do intend to follow up with some policy proposals and legislation, working with our committees, to move forward on many, many of these issues.

Yes.

Q: Do you stand by the – or agree with the principles in the immigration legislation that the Senate put out last week?

REP. CANTOR: I've not looked at the details of what the Senate has put out. I will say that I look to and admire the work that Senator Rubio has done, and in that spirit, think that we can work towards a solution and do so in quick fashion.

Q: As you stated, today the government is very inefficient, and large amounts of monies are going wasted. However, in Congress and the newspapers, the focus is on cutting budgets and reducing the spending. From your introduction, is the intent to put focus on outcomes and making reduction in expenses a consequence of getting better outcomes or more efficiency, or we just cut money and hope that the efficiency comes afterwards? Is my question clear?

REP. CANTOR: Well, I mean, obviously, we want to be smart about the way that taxpayer dollars are being spent. And my message today is to make sure that we explain and demonstrate how our proposals actually benefit people. It's about making life work again for more people. I think that so many Americans feel disenfranchised. They don't understand why Washington can't be of some help to them. And we have put policies on the table, and we will go forward with this agenda with a conservative emphasis on individual effort and opportunity, on self-reliance and on opportunity for more people. That's what it's about, and we can show and demonstrate benefit to make life better and life work again through these proposals.

Q: You spoke about health care costs –

MR. BROOKS: Microphone.

Q: You spoke about health care costs, and this – are the – the thing is that America, we have the most expensive health care in the world, and so we are about twice the number two. And is there any scope for America to maybe move to target – to be maybe the number two in the world rather than number one in terms of health care cost?

REP. CANTOR: Well, certainly, I mean, we all know that the system is too costly and it's too complicated. And our efforts at reform are aimed at trying to reduce those costs, to increase access to care. We talked about Erin Shucosky and the impact of the latest law, the president's health care law, that will negatively impact, you know, many, many patients, because then now that tax is going to be put into place. You know, we've got to increase the ability for a lower cost and smarter and less utilization of our system, and we're going to need to come together to make some difficult choices, as I indicated, when it comes to the Medicare system, the Medicaid system to affect those outcomes.

I would also say for the future, we're never going to get a handle on our health care costs long term unless we go about making sure those investments are made in basic medical research so we can see the treatments and cures that we so desperately need.

Yes.

Q: Good afternoon, Mr. Leader. I was taken by your invoking your own family's immigrant past but also that Washington Opportunity Scholarship Program here. What things do you think the Republicans in the Congress can do to get more young people in the United States to pursue careers in math, science, engineering, the STEM fields that there seem to be so many opportunities?

REP. CANTOR: Well, there's obviously a lot of need, and when I spoke about, you know, colleges – and for them, we would like to see them provide clearer and understandable information to parents when they're trying to make the decision not only to put a lot of money to work for their kids' education, or if they've got to go borrow some money to do that, to make it so that they know what the return will be. That's why it's important for us to know. There's a lot of job openings in certain areas, and the colleges are not doing their job in readying our students for the workforce of today. And that's one big thing that we've got to handle, is to demonstrate this is where you're headed, and obviously something's not right if there are that many job openings when we've got unemployment the way they are.

Yes.

Q: Thank you, Mr. Leader, for being here today. My name's Robert Mahaffey. I'm with the Rural School & Community Trust. I'd like to pick up on the example you gave at the top of your remarks with regard to a weighting system in the San Francisco school system. As you know, in Title I we currently have a number-weighting formula in how we distribute resources to high-need populations. We have 12 million kids in rural America, and they don't meet a lot of those thresholds. So consequently, we spend less investing in those young people than we do in urban areas. We don't advocate for, you know, rural versus urban, but what would you do in your plan to meet those needs for rural kids?

REP. CANTOR: I think the weighted issue is a little bit different than what you're talking about, and the weighted issue really is about trying to give preference to special needs children, to children in low income, to set the incentives right for schools. And then there'll be an incentive for schools to differentiate themselves and to attract those kind of kids.

I mean, right now, if you talk to Joseph Kelley, his kids and the kids here with those in the front row, they would have been destined to a school that had eight D.C. police officers there every single day patrolling. If you don't have a safe environment, there's no way that you can expect these young people to have an opportunity to learn.

So it really should be that these schools have an incentive to go after and compete for the kids, not the other way around. There shouldn't be any monopoly here. I know there's a lot of controversy around this in terms of teachers' unions and the rest, but at the end of the day, what we're talking about is the lives of these kids, you know, and we've got to save these kids. And the proposals we're going to be about are aimed directly at that, at families like Joseph Kelley's, families in the rural areas that are suffering the same outcome.

Yes.

Q: (Off mic) – Cantor, we’re hearing from many Republican governors and senators and now House members about what’s most important for the Republicans as they go forward. For the average American trying to figure out where the Republican Party is headed now after the election, who should the public be listening to? Who really speaks for the Republican Party at this point?

REP. CANTOR: Look, you know, I would just differ a little bit. (Scattered laughter.) The average American – the average American is not thinking about and trying to wonder about where the Republican Party is. They’re thinking about how to make their life work, which is exactly what we’re talking about here today. Joseph Kelley doesn’t care where the Republican Party’s going. He cares about taking care of his kids. You know, Fiona Zhou, she doesn’t care about where the Republican Party is. She cares about having the ability to stay in this country to help all Americans, Republican or Democrat or independent, have a better life. You know, I can assure you that Katie Schools and her mom don’t care about what Republicans are advocating here. They want to see results. And the point of my talk today is to say that we Republicans in the House are dedicated to those ends.

Yeah.

Q: Can you say a few more words about what you see as the proper role for the federal government in education? I understand why Democrats and progressives want centralized education programs. Don’t Republicans and conservatives see education as a state and local function?

REP. CANTOR: Well, you know, I really, as a parent of three kids, all of whom went through public schools and two in college, one in the workforce right now, I can tell you education starts with parents. They know what’s best. Joseph Kelley knows what’s best for his parents (sic). And we’ve got to set up a system where we empower parents to do what’s best for their kids.

And as you know, the preponderance of education monies by far goes to the schools from the state level. And from the numbers that I am familiar with, the federal government provides maybe \$1,000 to \$2,000 towards every student in this country, if you’re talking about the mix between state and federal. And I’m talking about trying to rearrange or redirect the flow of those funds and allow it to be that the parents and the students are put back in the driver’s seat, not some failing school system that will cause the loss of a generation.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

(END)