

IT IS WRONG TO USE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES AS PAWNS IN THE GAME OF THE BUDGET DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. HOLDEN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOLDEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Hawaii [Mr. ABERCROMBIE].

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that I wanted to have that minute was to give the gentleman an opportunity to discuss, just for at least a moment, his proposition that the President has not kept his word. I appreciate the civility of his comments and understand he has been an ex-mayor, he has had some legislative experience; but it is hard for me to comprehend why would he punish innocent people if somebody else does not keep their word? We are legislators. Why do we not get together then, and come up with a proposition, and we could present it to the President? I fail to understand the rationale, and I do not think the American people accept the proposition that because the President is perceived by the gentleman from California and his colleagues as not having kept his word, they are going to punish the American people.

Punishing the American people will not solve it. We are legislators. We need to solve it right here in this Chamber.

Mr. HOLDEN. Mr. Speaker, the time has come in this Chamber for action. Senator DOLE summed it up absolutely correct when he said in the other Chamber, "Enough is enough," as he guided a continuing resolution through the other Chamber that opened up the Federal Government.

We need to do the same thing in this Chamber.

I have thousands of Federal employees in my district, in the Social Security Administration, in the Veterans' Administration, at Federal prisons, at Minersville, Lewisburg, and Allenwood who are either on a furlough, or who are being forced to work extra hours, an extra shift, and not being paid. It is not right to use Federal employees as pawns in this game in this whole budget debate.

□ 1730

So I say to my colleagues, let us pass a continuing resolution and let us continue this debate on balancing the budget.

I say to my colleagues on the other side, I want to work with you. I want to work with you in balancing the budget in 7 years using CBO numbers, and we can do that. The framework for doing that is already in place. We need to continue the dialog and have a give-and-take process.

If you look at the coalition budget that was offered in this House, it balanced the budget in 7 years and had no tax cuts. I say to you that is a framework. We can work with that and we

can balance the budget. You look at the budget that passed this House and we had \$245 billion in tax breaks in that. To me, that is personally unacceptable; it is too large. But I am willing to go halfway and meet my friend on the other side in moving toward balancing the budget.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HOLDEN. I yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the gentleman's attitude, and I would be open to work with you guys on that. I think a lot of people on our side of the aisle would. I also want to say that I am one of those who think that we should get the folks back working.

Let me say this: Would the President accept that coalition budget? Because one of our reluctances is that if we pass that, will the President stand behind it?

Mr. HOLDEN. I do not know if the President will accept that budget, but I can tell you that I will accept it, and there are numerous Members on our side of the aisle who have already voted for it and many more who will vote for it when it comes up again.

When you look at the differences in the budget, the budget that passed the House that the gentleman voted for had a \$245 billion tax break in it. If you would reduce that, say, down to \$110 or \$100 billion, still giving a tax break to working families, and put that \$100 or \$110 billion in savings into the Medicare system where we would only be having, say, \$150 or \$170 billion in the slowing of growth of the Medicare Program, that is something that is acceptable to me.

I look at my district where I have 95,000 Medicare recipients and thousands more waiting to go into the Medicare Program; and I look at the hospitals in my district, and right now they are only receiving \$1 for every \$1 of services they are providing for Medicare patients. Under the proposed budget that the gentleman voted for, that would go down to 88 cents.

Mr. KINGSTON. If the gentleman will yield, I want you to know that I believe that there is a lot of room for discussion on that. I do not pretend to represent all Republicans on this, but I know that there are many who would like to work with you on it. Again, the concern is, could we do it as a veto-proof measure if the President will not go along with a bipartisan budget. Would you have any feel for that?

Mr. HOLDEN. Well, I would say to the gentleman, if we can put a budget on this floor that I believe in, I would vote for it and I would vote to override a veto if it was.

I cannot speak for the entire Democratic membership, but I believe that this process that is going on now where people are saying, it is going to be my way or no way at all, is not healthy for the gentleman or me or the American people. We need to get this process

going, and there are points of contention that I believe can be ironed out.

Medicaid is one of the contentions that I have, the Medicaid system. I am not exactly thrilled with block-granting Medicaid, and the reason for that is Pennsylvania has the second highest senior citizen population in the country, next to Florida. Under the proposed budget that passed the House, Pennsylvania would lose \$9 billion over 7 years in the Medicaid Program.

Forty-five percent of all Medicaid expenditures in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are for the senior citizens and nursing homes. So to lose \$9 billion, half of that which goes to seniors and nursing homes would put a terrible burden on the Commonwealth.

I am not saying that would vote for a program that block-granted Medicaid, but we would have to make sure it was fair and that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in my case, would be treated fairly. I am sure the gentleman would feel the same about Georgia.

If I could just sum up and thank the gentleman for the dialog and say that I believe that we can pass a balanced budget, but there are those who will not give in on the tax cut that might have to be left behind, and there are those who do not really have the priority of balancing the budget that may need to be left behind, but we can drive a budget down the middle, and that is what the American people want us to do.

KEEP WORKING TO END THE SHUTDOWN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Ms. WOOLSEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, today the West Marin Chamber of Commerce in Marin County, CA released a report showing that the communities around and near the Point Reyes National Seashore, which is in my district, have lost upward of \$5 million in lost tourist revenues, to date, as a result of the Gingrich government shutdown. That is right. Due to the Gingrich shutdown, business in West Marin is down 45 percent from last year. As one of my constituents said just recently, last year was not a particularly good year.

But it is not just the businesses in West Marin who are hurting, Mr. Speaker. Americans all over the country are being denied crucial services, services that include passports, home mortgages, child support, and small business loans. That is because of the new majority's shutdown. But that is not all either, Mr. Speaker.

If the shutdown continues, if it continues much longer, 600,000 elderly Americans, many of them invalids, may not be able to participate in the popular and successful Meals on Wheels Program.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear: We are already paying the price for the new majority's radical agenda. If you think

this shutdown is bad now, believe me, we are really going to be paying the price if the Republicans get their way when their crown jewel, the special interest tax breaks, and their huge education and Medicare cuts are proposed or go through.

To add insult to injury, the Gingrich Republicans are now talking about calling it quits and going home while people in my district and across this Nation continue to suffer the consequences of the shutdown.

Mr. Speaker, 198 House Democrats want to keep working, working to end the shutdown. The other body wants to keep working; for Pete's sake, BOB DOLE wants to keep working, and as he said just yesterday or earlier this week, enough is enough. But it is the Gingrich Republicans who would rather go home than get Government up and running again. It is the Gingrich Republicans who are willing to hang on to their radical agenda no matter what the impact is on American people, and it is the Gingrich Republicans who are willing to use Federal workers and Federal services, services, by the way, that have been paid for by taxpayers, to try to blackmail the budget process.

Mr. Speaker, for the people of this country, for the families and businesses in my district and across the country, for the honor of this institution, I say to the other party across the aisle here, do not even think about sending us home. We belong here; we must continue working, and we must stop this shutdown and we must do it now.

COMMUNITIES PULLING TOGETHER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nevada [Mr. ENSIGN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay special tribute to four banks in southern Nevada. Sunstate Bank, Pioneer Citizens Bank, American Bank of Commerce and Bank West. These four banks, Mr. Speaker, have decided to give interest-free loans to Federal workers who are either furloughed or working and not receiving their full paychecks. This is a private-sector solution happening for community banks helping local people. This is a solution that shows that not all answers have to come from the Federal level.

Mr. Speaker, the presidents of these banks, when I approached them about making these loans, these interest-free loans to Federal employees, jumped at the chance. That is the way local communities pull together. These are people living in the local community; they understand the needs of the local people, and they were willing to pull together to help these Federal employees through this difficulty that each one of them is going through at this point.

A few things that have been addressed tonight, Mr. Speaker, that I would also like to address because in

this context of Federal employees being furloughed, we are talking about balancing the Federal budget: There are many, many good people on the other side of the aisle who have talked about balancing the budget and actually have brought a balanced budget to the table. It is something President Clinton himself promised to bring to the table in November, which he has failed to do up to this point. I commend the Democrats in the Congress who have been willing to follow their words with actions and actually bring a balanced budget to the table.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all know that actions speak louder than words, and in our negotiating, we need to have people to keep their word. But let us keep the bigger picture in mind, Mr. Speaker. Let us keep the big picture of what this country is about.

For the last 26 years, Republicans and Democrats have voted for deficits now that have totaled a national debt of over \$5 trillion. It is immoral to live and to pass on debt to your children and your grandchildren while you enjoy the benefits of that spending.

I just had a little girl born on December 2. Every child born in the United States last year has a \$187,000 bill hanging over their heads just to pay interest on the national debt in their lifetime. They get nothing for that, just interest, because career politicians here in Washington have been unwilling to say no to special interest groups.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the freshman class came here to do something different. We were elected to say no to the big spending career politicians in Washington, and we are doing that, Mr. Speaker. Today we are faced with the opportunity, the greatest opportunity any of us could have imagined, to actually balance the Federal budget over the next 7 years. Frankly, many of us think that it is too long, 7 years is too long. Some people think that 10 years is maybe the amount of time that we should spend. Seven years I think to most Americans, they think that it is too long as well.

For the last 7 years, we spent a little over \$9 trillion, total Federal spending. In the next 7 years under these Republican cuts that you hear about, we are going to spend over \$12 trillion, almost \$3 trillion more in Federal spending under the Republican plan, and we hear in Washington that is a cut. That is why many of us think that 7 years is actually too long.

Medicare alone, the last 7 years, we spent a little over \$900 billion. The next 7 years under Medicare, Mr. Speaker, we are going to spend under the Republican plan of cuts that you hear about, over \$1.6 trillion. That is over \$700 billion more in the next 7 years versus the last 7 years.

Mr. Speaker, this year in the United States we spend in Medicare \$4,800 per person in Medicare this year. Under the Republican plan in the year 2002, we will spend a little over \$7,100 under the Republican cuts that you hear about, \$4,800 to \$7,100.

Under the President's plan, we would be looking at \$7,200. A difference of actually \$137 a month out of over \$7,000 per person spending. It is a minute amount, and yet we hear how the Republicans are going to be throwing old people out in the streets, they will not be able to get quality medical care. I think that if you ask any American if they actually thought about a cut in Medicare, they would think that if you are spending \$4,800 a year now, that you would actually be spending less of that in the year 2002 per person.

Mr. Speaker, let us just let the facts speak for themselves. Let us do what is right for the future of America, for my children, for your children and the future of America's children.

REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP SHOULD KEEP ITS WORD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. BISHOP] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Speaker, I have heard a lot about keeping their word. I think one of the most interesting things that has happened this year is that during the first 100 days as a part of the so-called Contract With America, there was an item that some of us supported called the line-item veto.

We passed the line-item veto. It passed both Houses of the Congress and yet it has not been sent to the President for his signature. They will not send it. They will not keep their word, because had there been a line-item veto, we would not be in this shutdown that we are now in. We would be able to continue the operation of Government and the American people would no longer be suffering, and only those items in the budget where there was a bone of contention would be on the table for discussion.

Keeping their word, the Republican leadership ought to keep its word and send to the President a line-item veto and get us out of this shutdown.

There are some of us that have supported a 7-year balanced budget, some in the 103d Congress using CBO numbers, but having no tax cut.

□ 1745

We are being led to believe that the reason that the Government is shut down is because Democrats and the President will not agree to a 7-year balanced budget using CBO numbers. The real bone of contention is the tax cut, 245 billion dollars' worth for wealthy people, while cutting in half the tax breaks and adding to the taxes of the working poor, people who earn \$26,000 a year or less, by repealing half of their earned income tax credit.

I must agree with Senator DOLE—enough is enough. This message comes across loud and clear from my constituents in the Second District of Georgia.

For the second time in 3 months, the U.S. Government ran out of money and