

This does not mean we should isolate ourselves from the world. On the contrary, we need more rather than less interaction with our world neighbors. We should encourage travel, foreign commerce, friendship and exchange of ideas. This would far surpass our misplaced effort to make the world like us through armed force. This can be achieved without increasing the power of the state or accepting the notion that some world government is needed to enforce the rules of exchange. Governments should get out of the way and let the individuals make their own decisions about how they want to relate to the world.

Defending our country against aggression is a very limited and proper function of government. Our military involvement in the world over the past 60 years has not met this test, and we are paying the price.

A policy that endorses peace over war, trade over sanctions, courtesy over arrogance and liberty over coercion is in the tradition of the American Constitution and American idealism. It deserves consideration.

BLUE DOG COALITION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this evening as a member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition, a group of 37 fiscally conservative Democrats that are concerned about our Nation and its future due to the rising cost of our debt, our deficit. We believe it is time to restore some common sense in fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today on the floor of the United States House of Representatives as a voice for the people of Arkansas' Fourth Congressional District.

It is one thing for all of us to have the title U.S. Representative, but it is another thing to be one, and I believe it is important that we go back to our respective districts; I go home every weekend to places like Hot Springs and Texarkana and Pine Bluff and El Dorado and Mena and Hope and Arkadelphia, and throughout the 29 counties and 150 towns that I so proudly represent, and listen to the people. And then I do my best to bring their voice back here to the floor of the United States House of Representatives.

The people are telling me that it is time that our Nation get its fiscal house in order and stop this reckless spending that has resulted in the largest deficit ever in our Nation's history for a fifth year in a row and has resulted in a debt that totals \$8.137 trillion. That is \$8 trillion, 137 billion and some change.

In fact, for every man, woman, and child in this country, if we all had to

get our checkbooks out tonight and retire this debt, everybody, including the children, the babies being born today, would have to write a check for some \$27,000.

You hear a lot of talk these days about this being a Democratic idea or this being a Republican idea. And, Mr. Speaker, I am here to tell you that I believe the people in this country like me are sick and tired of all the partisan bickering that goes on at our Nation's Capital.

It should not matter if it is a Democratic idea or a Republican idea. In fact, the American people are concerned not about petty partisan politics, but they are concerned about paying for the high cost of their children's college education, the skyrocketing cost of health care and how to pay for prescription drugs. They are concerned about their retirement security, about privatizing Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, skyrocketing natural gas and energy prices, the war in Iraq and thousands of Katrina victims who nearly 4 months after the devastating hurricane still today remain homeless.

Let me tell you about my America. My congressional district back home in Arkansas ranks 415 out of 435 among congressional districts throughout the country in average income per household. Half the children in Arkansas are on Medicaid. Eight out of ten seniors in nursing homes are on Medicaid. One in five people in my home State of Arkansas are on Medicaid. Yet, around 1 o'clock in the morning on November 18, Congress nearly passed the so-called Deficit Reduction Act that would directly and adversely impact the poor, the disabled, the elderly. This bill mandates nearly \$50 billion in spending cuts, including \$11.4 billion in cuts to Medicaid, the only health insurance plan for the poor, the disabled, the elderly; \$14.3 billion in cuts to Federal student aid programs; over \$3 billion in cuts to our farm families; and over \$700 million in cuts to food stamps. Then the Republican leadership turns around and passes \$56 billion worth of tax cuts, \$50 billion in spending cuts, \$56 billion in tax cuts. Only in Washington do you add \$6 billion to the Nation's debt and call it the Deficit Reduction Act.

Mr. Speaker, I will never stop fighting for the conservative smalltown values that I was raised on and still believe in, and I cannot help but reflect on one of the memory verses that I learned growing up at Midway United Methodist Church just outside Prescott, Arkansas. It is from Matthew 25:40, and it goes like this: I tell you the truth. Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

Mr. Speaker, the idea of cutting programs that would negatively impact the poorest among us does not resonate with the principles on which this country was founded. These budget cuts are indicative of misguided priorities and do not reflect the values I learned growing up in places like Emmet, Prescott and Hope, Arkansas.

As members of the Blue Dog Coalition, we believe we have the answer to this massive debt, this ongoing deficit, and we believe we can get it under control without harming and cutting programs for the poorest among us. It is called the Blue Dog 12-Point Plan. It is 12 simple points, quite frankly, that, if implemented, would truly restore some fiscal discipline and common sense to our Nation's government. This evening, Mr. Speaker, we plan to spend the remaining part of this hour going over these 12 points. So many people criticize what is going on, but they do not offer up a solution, and what we are trying to do as members of the Blue Dog Coalition is offer up an alternative, offer up a solution to this massive debt and deficit, this budget problem our Nation has today.

With me to help do that I am real proud to have JOHN TANNER, one of the founding members of the Blue Dog Coalition from the State of Tennessee; DENNIS CARDOZA, one of the co-chairs of the Blue Dog Coalition from California; and Allen Boyd from Florida, one of the founding members, longtime members, former chairman of the Blue Dog Coalition. So we come to you this evening from all across America, from Arkansas and Tennessee and California and Florida, to offer up what we believe are commonsense ideas to truly try to get this Nation's fiscal house back in order. As 37 members of Congress, we have come together, and we have written this 12-point reform, and we are encouraging Democrats and Republicans to join us as we try to get this Nation back on track.

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And the reason this is so important and why this should matter to everybody across our land, \$8.137 trillion in debt. That is very important for a lot of reasons, not the least of which is our Nation today. The first \$500 million we collect every day in taxes from taxpayers does not go to better roads, better education, better health care. It simply goes to pay interest, to pay interest on the national debt.

It is not getting any better. In fact, our Nation is borrowing another \$907 million every 24 hours. As Members of the Blue Dog Coalition, we want to fix this, and we can do it with our 12-point plan.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlemen from Florida (Mr. BOYD).

Mr. BOYD. Madam speaker, I want to thank my friend from Arkansas for organizing this hour to give the Blue Dogs a chance to talk to the Nation about our 12-point plan. I came here 9 years ago and have been a part of the Blue Dog Coalition since that time and am real proud of the work that they do in trying to bring a message to this Congress and to the country that fiscal responsibility and fiscal discipline does matter.

Now, as our friend from Arkansas, Congressman ROSS, said earlier, he grew up in a small town in Arkansas. I

grew up in a small rural community in North Florida just right on the Georgia border, a little community, 3,000 people or so, grew up on a farm. My wife and I still live today on that farm.

I spent all of my adult life as a business person, and, Madam Speaker, one of the things that I learned a long time ago was the lesson that all of our business people out there understand, our government leaders and even those who are not running a business, but are running households, that fiscal responsibility does matter.

We always have to be conscious of our fiscal condition no matter what kind of operation we are running. And indeed, this U.S. Congress and the administration are running the largest business, almost a \$2.5 trillion business. That is about the budget, about the average annual U.S. Government budget now. And we are running about a \$350 billion annual deficit.

Now, Madam Speaker, I got into politics back about 17 years ago, and one of the reasons that I chose to run for public office was because I was concerned about some of our governments, State and particularly Federal governments, spending more money as a matter of practice than they took in on an annual basis. And so I got into the State legislature, and I watched the Federal Government build annual spending deficits of almost \$300 billion.

I think the number in 1992 was about \$290 billion, at which point the American people finally said this is not right, we ought to do something about this. Pursuant to that 1992 Presidential election, the United States Government, under a Democratic President and a Republican-run Congress, later on House and Senate after 1994, worked really hard on eliminating that Federal annual deficit. And it went from \$290 billion. It was not easy. A lot of sacrifice. A lot of pain. A lot of programs cut, and it was necessary, led by, at that time, President Clinton.

We moved from in 1992 a \$290 billion annual deficit, and in a short 8 years later, we actually had an annual surplus. \$290 billion annual deficit in 1992. In 2000 we had an annual surplus; our U.S. Government budget was right.

What has happened since then? We have gone from an annual surplus and a \$5.6 trillion debt in 2001, when we had the last one, this administration came into office, to today where we have about a \$350 billion annual deficit.

As you see there on the chart, a debt amassed at over \$8.1 trillion dollars, \$27,000 for every man, woman and child in the country. You know, ladies and gentlemen, Madam Speaker, we know what we have to do to eliminate this deficit and start reducing this debt.

We cannot do it all at once. It takes a lot of hard work. We want to use the model that President Clinton and the Republican-led Congress in 1997 put together.

And that is what the Blue Dogs are trying to convince the leaders of the Congress and the administration today,

is that it has to come together in a bipartisan way. We have to work together. We cannot continue to try to move policies strictly on a polarized and partisan basis.

I am real honored to be here tonight. Again, I thank the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) for putting this together. But I believe that the most important thing we can do in that 12-step plan is to put a provision in our Constitution that requires us to balance our budget.

Otherwise, sometimes maybe the Congress, the administration, do not have the will to do it. So that is one of the points that we should be talking about tonight, and that is a constitutional requirement for a balanced budget. We had many votes on that prior to 2001, prior to the current administration coming in to office. We had many votes on the House floor to put in the Constitution a balanced budget.

But I do not think we have had any since 2001. So I look forward to the discussion tonight. I yield to the gentleman from Arkansas.

Mr. ROSS. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD), and I would encourage the gentleman to stay with us for the remainder of this hour. You helped write these 12 points. You have got a lot of expertise on ways that our Nation can once again return to a balanced budget.

And I hope you will be able to stay with us as we go through the 12 points. It is hard to believe now that from 1998 through 2001 this Nation had a balanced budget, because for the fifth year in a row, we have got the largest budget deficit ever, ever in our Nation's history. Again, our debt is \$8.137 trillion.

And that is why, as Members of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition, we are here to address this issue that is critical to our Nation, to our children, to our grandchildren, and certainly to their future.

At this time, I am pleased to yield to the gentleman from California, the co-chair of the Blue Dog Coalition, Mr. CARDOZA.

Mr. CARDOZA. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) for organizing this on behalf of the Blue Dog Coalition. It is truly an honor to be one of the cochairs of the Blue Dogs and to serve on that illustrious body with you.

I want to start off tonight talking about not our priorities, but what I heard one of our respected colleagues talk about just before we went on. Mr. PAUL talked about how he thinks that we are going in the wrong direction in the country.

I did not hear his whole presentation, but I thought it was an interesting indictment of his own side of the aisle, because he felt that we had not done the right thing by balancing the budget and going along. He does not like the direction of where we are going. I thought he spoke a lot of truth tonight. I just wanted to highlight that

and say, as Mr. BOYD did previously, that we really are about trying to figure out bipartisan solutions to making a new direction for our country and a better direction, where we pay as we go, where we do not build up these huge debts, and do not leave a huge legacy of debt to our children.

Two weeks ago on this floor, you and I had a colloquy with regard to the debt and the priorities of our country. Two weeks ago we talked about a reconciliation bill that actually, instead of reducing the national debt, increased the national debt by \$20 billion; but that is not even necessarily the worst part of this.

The worst part of it is when we are making the debt worse by what the Republican leadership is proposing, and we do not have the right priorities, the right family values, the right values for our Nation in the reconciliation package.

In fact, the Republican reconciliation package cuts out \$600 million for foster children, orphans, and abused children. They are taken out of their families and put in homes, cuts of \$600 million. We never have had more abused and orphaned children in this entire country. There are over half a million children in our country that are not living with their parents. They have been taken out of their parents' home either because their parents have gotten into trouble, cannot take care of them any longer, or have abused them. And they are living with someone else.

We are cutting the funds to provide programs for those children when we are giving tax cuts, or we are proposing tax cuts, we are not doing it, it is the other side of the aisle, tax cuts to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans, people who make over \$1 million a year.

Now, I do not believe in class warfare. I believe in a society in America where we can raise everyone's ship, and I hope those orphans some day make \$1 million a year. But we are not going to do it without education, without good homes for these children, without providing a way and a path for them to do better.

And as you said last time we spoke about this, Mr. ROSS, I know a little bit about this, because I have two wonderful children, Joey and Elaina, who my wife and I adopted out of foster care. They are wonderful children. They have done very well in our home. But it is because we gave them a chance. And the reality is too many children in America are not going to get a chance if the Republican priorities of reconciliation are left to stand.

And I have got to ask a simple question tonight. Out of a \$2 trillion budget, is it not possible for the Republicans to find a better place to cut than orphans and abused children right before Christmas? I have to ask the question: Is it not possible to find a place better to cut?

When I told my children that I adopted, my wife and I adopted, about these cuts, they said, Daddy, go back up

there and tell them not to do that. That is not the right thing. And if my children, who are 11 and 8, 12 and 8, I will get in trouble if I do not correct that because they are watching tonight, if they know at that age that there is a better place to cut, then certainly the adults in this Chamber should know there is a better place to cut than those folks.

I just have to say in this Christmas season, I certainly hope the ghost of Christmas past does not come and visit those Members who vote for this reconciliation package with that particular cut in it. You know, we can do better. We can have a new vision for America where we build up our educational system, where we take care of those who are most in need amongst us, and where we balance the Federal budget.

It is called the Blue Dog 12-step plan. I am just so proud to have been here with you tonight, my colleagues here, Mr. ROSS from Arkansas, Mr. TANNER from Tennessee, and Mr. BOYD from Florida. They are really the backbone of our organization. Mr. BOYD and Mr. TANNER have been leading this charge for a number of years.

I am just so proud to be in their company. I think if we get the chance, we will provide a better and more direct path for America. Thank you, Mr. ROSS, once again for leading this effort tonight. I am proud to be with you.

I have one last thing to say. There was a fellow from your district who became President, a man from Hope, Arkansas. When he left office, it was projected that we were going to have a \$5.4 trillion surplus. And, instead, the current leadership has giving us an \$8 trillion deficit.

That is a far cry from having a surplus and being on good financial footing. I just hope that you can help us lead the Nation, Mr. ROSS, from your little community of Hope, Arkansas, into a better path. Thank you for doing this tonight.

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Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from California for his comments.

Can the gentleman from California (Mr. CARDOZA) verify this for me now? We talked about the cuts to Medicaid, \$11.4 billion; the cuts to Federal student aid, \$14.3 billion; \$3 billion in cuts to our farm families, commodities, conservation, many other agriculture programs; \$700 million in cuts to food stamps.

But you are saying there are also cuts to orphans and foster care?

Mr. CARDOZA. That is exactly right.

Mr. ROSS. How much were these cuts?

Mr. CARDOZA. \$600 million.

Mr. ROSS. Now, these \$50 billion in cuts, including the \$600 million in cuts to orphans and foster care, went to help pay for a \$56 billion tax cut, which mostly benefited those earning over \$400,000 a year, 50 percent of which

went to those earning over \$1 million a year; is this correct?

Mr. CARDOZA. That is exactly right.

Mr. ROSS. I just wanted to confirm that with you.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, it seems like our country, or at least the Republican leadership and the leadership in the Senate and the White House, has totally turned what our priorities should be as a Nation on its ear. We are not balancing the budget. That is the first mistake. But the second mistake is we are cutting education. We are cutting those who are most vulnerable and who could build this country into something better. And it just seems to me that if we would just invest in education, invest in the future of America, try to make sure that these young kids who go into foster care do not go into gangs; it costs us over \$40,000 a year to incarcerate someone who goes astray, and so many foster kids go astray when they are put into so many different homes. The average number of homes that most foster kids go to is 12. I have talked to kids who have been in 24 different homes. They are placed, placed, placed because we do not have money in the system and people drop out, and it is no way to live one's life. Twenty-four homes.

One young lady was a valedictorian in her class. I do not know how she did it, but she managed to break out of that system. She was in 24 different foster homes over her period of time.

We can do better, Mr. Speaker. And I know Mr. Ross is for that, and I thank him for highlighting that fact.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I am certainly supportive of tax cuts, targeted tax cuts that help working families. But when we are borrowing money from foreigners, when we are borrowing money to fund a tax cut, that is nothing more than a tax increase on our children and grandchildren because they have got to pay that money back. And no one understands this issue any better than one of the founders of the Blue Dog Coalition, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER).

I will yield to the gentleman from Tennessee, and following the gentleman's remarks, we will go through these 12 points one by one until we run out of time this evening.

And for folks who happen to be seeing this this evening, do not be confused. This is not recorded. This is live. Congress is meeting on a Saturday night here in our Nation's Capital. And we are here on the floor to try to hold this government responsible and accountable and restore some common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's Government because this debt is out of control.

And with that, I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. Ross for yielding to me. And I am pleased to be with him here tonight and with Allen Boyd and Dennis Cardoza.

We all talked a little bit about our small town origins. I am from a small town in Tennessee. And I tell people, when they ask me where I am from, I say, well, let me put it like this: In the town I live in, you do not need a blinker signal on your car because the guy behind you knows where you are going to turn off.

So I think probably Prescott, Arkansas; Monticello, Florida; and Dennis lives out in California, but there are some small towns out there as well. I say that only to highlight the fact that a lot of the values that we hold dear in this country have been characterized from time to time as small-town values, where people know each other, where families live and so forth. And I think the Blue Dog Coalition reflects a lot of that commonsense philosophy. And we come here to Washington and we band together as the Blue Dog Democrats and try, as best we can, to project this message, this message of values, of small-town camaraderie and all the rest. And I know we are going to get to the 12-point plan, but I want to say just a couple of things very quickly.

It is very hard for me, and I know it is very hard for people who are listening to this discussion to relate to \$8-plus trillion. I mean, how much is that? It is mind boggling. And to give some idea how much it is, if one took \$1,000 bills and just stacked them like that, one after another, \$1 million would be about 1 foot high. That is 1,000 \$1,000 bills. One billion dollars would be as high as the Empire State Building. And \$1 trillion would be 1,000 times as high as the Empire State Building in New York City. That is how much money we are talking about.

And what has happened here in the last 4 or 5 years is we had the debt where it was static, it was not growing. As a matter of fact, we were actually paying some down. And as the economy grows and the debt stays static, it becomes much less of a drag on our economy. But we did not stay on that course, and in 2001, we embarked on an entirely different course, a financial course here, and so what has happened is the debt ceiling has been raised, the amount of money this government can borrow, almost \$3 trillion, and we have actually borrowed in hard money over \$1.3 trillion in a matter of about 48 months.

And what does this mean? If that was not bad enough, borrowing \$1.3 trillion, the interest rate that we now are having to pay every year at 4 percent on just the money we borrowed in the last 48 months is some \$50 billion a year.

If that was not bad enough, what is worse is 85 percent of this money that we borrowed in the last 48 months, 85 percent of it has been from foreign interest. So not only are we mortgaging our country, but we are mortgaging it to people who do not see the world as we do.

Primarily, the biggest gainer of the debt that we owe is China. Now, I say

that there are two problems here. One is the financial vulnerability that this country now has to people who do not see the world as we see it. It does not take a rocket scientist to realize that China has designs on taking Taiwan. The President said we will defend Taiwan. If China moved on Taiwan and we said, You cannot do that, it is not fantasy to think that China would not tell us to stay out of it, U.S., or we are going to roll the value of the dollar, and we can do it. We can make your interest rates go up. We can wreck havoc on your markets if we want to because we have your debt. And as my dad told me one time, he said it is easier to foreclose on a man's house than it is to shoot your way in the front door. And that is what we are talking about, a financial vulnerability of this country that is being created, as we speak here tonight, by the deliberate, intentional financial policy of this country as passed by this Congress and endorsed by the administration. A financial vulnerability that is every bit a national security matter. That is the first thing.

The second thing is when I was talking about this \$50 billion, we are eroding the tax base in this country by transferring moneys that come here that people pay taxes, hard-earned taxes; we are not spending it on human capital, investment in human capital in this country, and infrastructure, which they are paying their taxes for. We are transferring those taxes and that sort of spending to interest for which we get nothing. And 85 percent of the interest checks that we are writing now that we borrowed in the last 48 months have not even stayed in this country.

Human capital, investment in human capital, exactly what do I mean by that? I mean basically human beings, citizens of this country, who must be educated and healthy for this country to be strong, free and competitive in an increasingly globalized world marketplace. There has never been in all of recorded history a country that was strong and free that had a population that was uneducated and unhealthy. It has never existed. It never will. And by transferring the tax base that people send the money to Washington for interest rather than education and health care, we are absolutely forfeiting the people's right to have a country and a government that is interested in their welfare.

The second thing is infrastructure. We have a lot of crumbling infrastructure in this country. We are losing the ability to invest in that, and if you do not think that that is important, go to some country that has no infrastructure and see how many people are doing well. Nobody is.

And let me close with this: The Blue Dogs have endorsed a bill that we drafted earlier this year that basically does away with partisan political redistricting of the congressional seats. We did a lot of work on it. We have briefed

it through all of the legal pitfalls, and the Blue Dogs have endorsed this bill. And there was an article in the Wall Street Journal today, this morning, talking about it. What we are seeing in this country is an increasingly polarized House of Representatives that is rendering itself, in the opinion of the moderates here, the people who want to work across the aisle, it is rendering it impossible for this House of Representatives to address the real problems of the country because of this blind allegiance to party first and constituents second. We have seen just egregious examples of the abuse of that power by the professional politicians.

I am under no illusion. We are asking people to give up a lot of power because they really carve their own districts out now with computers and so forth. And we are asking them to give up a lot of power. But our country is losing the middle, and the middle is where the problems are solved, politically speaking, in our country. And I wish everybody would take a very serious look at this because if we can take it out of the hands of professional politicians and give the voice back to the people, I think, one, we will be able to respond better. But, secondly, if our House of Representatives becomes so polarized and so gerrymandered by the process that we are living under now that people at the ballot box cannot change the direction of the country when they want it to change, the majority want it to change, and they cannot at the ballot box, we will either wind up with a dictatorship or a revolt. I really believe it is that serious. So I wanted to mention that in passing. It is not one of our 12 points, but it certainly is part of our Blue Dog philosophy because the Blue Dogs have endorsed it, and I appreciate that very much.

So, again, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me, and we will go through the 12-point plan.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Tennessee for having founded the Blue Dog Coalition.

In the rest of this Special Order, we plan to go through, beginning right now, all 12 points of the Blue Dog plan. And as the gentleman from Tennessee mentioned, he talked about the problems with the professional politicians and a lot of the issues we face. And those of us who wrote these 12 points, I know I am a small business owner back home in Prescott; Mr. TANNER from Tennessee is a small businessman; Mr. CARDOZA from California is a small business owner; and Mr. BOYD was a small business owner, a veteran and a farmer.

Mr. TANNER. We all would like to be big business owners someday, but we are still small business owners.

Mr. ROSS. Number one, and it is kind of like David Letterman's top 10. This is the top 12, and I do not know if it is going to be as good as Letterman's top 10 or not, but it is very important.

Point number one to the 12-point reform plan is: Require a balanced budg-

et. And I think we all get that one. I mean, I was in the State senate for 10 years. Forty-nine States, including my home State of Arkansas, must live within its means. They constitutionally require a balanced budget. I know at the Ross home in Prescott, Arkansas, we sit around the kitchen table and we have to have a balanced budget. At the small town family pharmacy my wife and I own, we have to have a balanced budget. It should not be asking too much to ask this Congress and this government to also tighten its belt and learn to live within its means. And that is what we mean when we talk about requiring a balanced budget.

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The second point that I think is very important also, do not let Congress buy on credit. Now, back when Congress had a balanced budget in the Clinton administration from 1998 to 2001, they had a thing in the House called PAYGO rules, pay-as-you-go basically is what it meant, meaning if you are going to cut taxes, you got to cut spending, and if you are going to fund a new program, you got to cut another program. You have got to make it fit within your budget, like most of us do in our families at home and with our businesses and certainly like 49 States in this country are required to do. That, I believe, is something we must do in this House Chamber, is restore the pay-as-you-go rules.

The third point, I will yield to the gentleman from Florida. Anytime you all want to jump in on any of these points, please feel free to do so.

Mr. BOYD. I appreciate the gentleman yielding. Some of us were here when we put the 1997 Balanced Budget Act in place. I think you heard Mr. TANNER and the others talk about the economic model. You heard them talk about human capital, health for our citizens, and also education for our citizens.

The economic model that the U.S. has is the greatest experiment in democracy ever in the history of mankind. We are the richest nation in the history of the Earth. I tell my constituents that we have 5 percent of the world's population and control 25 percent of the world's wealth.

There is an underlying model, an infrastructure, human capital that Representative TANNER talked about. We have to get back to this notion of fiscal responsibility and make sure that economic model works. It does not work if we got to go into the markets every year and borrow \$350 billion or \$400 billion or \$500 million to run the government. You are borrowing much of that from overseas so it will not work. What do we do to get back to a balanced budget and to reduce the deficit spending?

One of the really key things is spending caps, and that is the third point of our 12 point plan. Put a lid on spending. We know that you cannot fix it all in one year, but you put in a long-term

plan, a long-term budget. Most of our small business people are used to doing that, a 5 or 3 or 10 year budget, or whatever it might be. That is what we did in 1997, and you cap your spending at certain levels and live within that, and then economically you can grow your revenue to a point where you get back into a balanced situation.

Let me just give you one example of what happened when we did this earlier during the nineties. The non-discretionary defense spending increases were 2.5 percent, the annual increase, during the Clinton years. During the nineties, 2.5 percent, non-defense, discretionary spending.

Under this administration they have been between 8 and 9 percent. We have an annual average growth in government spending between 2001 and 2003 of 16 percent. No wonder we have \$350 billion annual deficits. We have to get a handle on that spending.

So that is point number three.

Mr. ROSS. Number one, require a balanced budget; number two, do not let Congress buy on credit; number three, put a lid on spending.

Number four is something that I know I have heard the gentleman from Tennessee talk about quite often, and that is require agencies to put their fiscal houses in order. Require agencies to put their fiscal houses in order. By that we are talking about the fact that some of our Federal agencies, they have a problem keeping books. And with that, I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. TANNER. Thank you, Mr. ROSS.

The Government Accountability Office in a report this year revealed 16 of 23 major Federal agencies cannot produce a simple audit. In other words, they cannot tell the American people and the Congress what they did with the money that was appropriated to them for the purposes provided in the bill.

Now, it is unbelievable to imagine that going on in your business. If you went to your comptroller and said here is an expenditure of \$10,000, what happened to it, and the guy said I do not know, I cannot put my finger on that, nobody, no business person in this country would tolerate that, nor should they. Yet 16 of 23 Federal agencies cannot do that.

In our plan, in this plan, if they cannot, we do it very simple: They do not get the money next year. It is straightforward, it is common-sensical. People understand it. And, by gosh, when the Congress appropriates money to the administration, whatever administration it may be, and they cannot tell us what they did with it, then they ought not to get it next year.

I will tell you one other thing. Not only do we withhold money under our plan, which makes perfectly good sense, but there ought to be some accountability. What we have seen is I think a derivative of the gerrymandered districts that come here in this party allegiance first and the country second.

We now have a one-party government here in Washington. The Republicans have the White House, Senate and House. The people elected them. But what you have as a by-product of that is a compliant Congress, a friendly administration. And this Congress has totally abdicated its oversight of the Federal executive branch because they do not even ask them what they did with the money. They do not even have hearings and say what happened to the money we appropriated to you last year? If they did have a hearing, the administration could not tell them, or could not tell us, the American people.

So you have a bad by-product of one-party government here with a compliant Congress, a friendly administration, nobody wanting to embarrass each other. So, consequently, we have got a financial house that is not only not in order, but running amuck.

Mr. ROSS. Number four, require agencies to put their fiscal houses in order. Again, 16 of 23 major Federal agencies cannot issue a simple audit of their books. The Federal Government cannot account for \$24.5 billion it spent in 2003. The Blue Dogs propose a solution, to put a budget freeze for any Federal agency that cannot properly balance its books.

You are talking about waste. You are talking about a government agency that cannot get it together. If the gentleman will pause with me for just a second here, I want to point out something.

You know, all of us all across America, our hearts went out for the people when the hurricanes hit in places like Louisiana and Mississippi and I know the gentleman from Florida has experienced this in the past as well.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, has purchased over 20,000 manufactured homes, they are 14 feet wide, 60 foot long. You can see some of them right here.

For some reason, they are not getting them, FEMA is not getting these homes to the people who need them, the people who lost their home and everything that they owned. In fact, I was with Congressman GENE TAYLOR from Mississippi earlier tonight, and my heart goes out to him and his family. He has done all he knows how to do to help his constituents while also trying to rebuild his life. He even lost his own home in that horrible tragedy in August with Hurricane Katrina. But he was telling me tonight, I believe he is like living with his brother or something, but he was telling me there are people still living in tents, people living in small campers, people that do not have homes, people living in hotel rooms.

Yet FEMA has now moved 5,000 brand new unoccupied manufactured homes to an old Army World War II airport at Hope, Arkansas. They just showed up one day and told the mayor they wanted to give him \$25,000 a month for the next two years to use it as a "staging area," and then they have since deliv-

ered somewhere close to 5,000 homes. FEMA has told the mayor they may have as many as 12,000 homes. Yet these homes are not getting to the people. These are not even at the Hope airport.

They are running these homes down the interstate at well above the speed limit, I know, because they passed me before, with a sign they usually put right here on the back, a banner, that says "urgent FEMA delivery." I guess urgent for what? To get to a cow pasture in Hope, Arkansas, 450 miles from where they are needed?

If one shingle blows off in transit, they will not accept it at the FEMA designated staging area they opened down at Hope. So they have come back to Prescott, which is where I now live, a town of about 3,500 people, and they are renting this cow pasture. They did no site preparation. When we have a good rain these things are going to sink to the axle.

We have over 200 of them in Prescott. They filled up the pasture in Prescott now. There is a story from the Arkadelphia Siftings Herald on December 16, that was yesterday, they have now got 200 of them stacked up at truck stops in Gurdon, and I suspect that the folks in Arkadelphia in the next day or two are going to start seeing them there.

So my point, Madam Speaker, is this: To the acting director of FEMA, why cannot we get some 5,000 homes that FEMA has purchased, why cannot we get them moved from Hope and Prescott, Arkansas, 450 miles south to where they need them, where people tonight are going to bed in camper trailers and in tents? This is a good example of what we are talking about when we talk about wasteful spending and agencies that cannot get their act together.

At this time for point number five I recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. CARDOZA.

Mr. CARDOZA. Thank you, Mr. ROSS. You know, what you just spoke about is a matter of priorities. It is what I spoke about earlier when I was talking about the foster care system and was there not a better place to cut.

Number five on our planks of the 12 step program for Blue Dog fiscal responsibility is make Congress tell the taxpayers how they are spending our money. The American people want to know that their tax dollars are being spent on our national priorities.

I got to tell you, if you ask the folks around the country what our national priorities are, they are going to tell us they want to get those folks in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama back on their feet. That is a priority. Education is a priority. Fighting the war effort is a priority.

But what happens here in Congress is we pass these bills on voice votes. And today, just today in this House, on a voice vote they passed a continuing resolution for 30 days, until December 31, well, two weeks. And we are spending billions and billions of dollars on a

voice vote. I got to tell you, I know that if the American people knew all the money that is being spent in that continuing resolution, they would not be happy about it.

So the Blue Dogs have decided that we need to tell the American people what the priorities are. We need to tell the American people what we are spending their money on. We have proposed that no bill should pass Congress above the threshold of \$50 million, which is a significant amount of money in anybody's book, without a vote of Congress.

We need to tell the American people where we are spending their money. If we are going to spend billions, we have to take a vote. Today we should have had a vote. It should not have been a voice vote, just agreed upon. We should have had a vote on that continuing resolution.

Mr. ROSS. Where I come from, most people think we ought to have a vote if we are spending a dollar. We cannot even get the leadership here to give us a vote when we spend \$50 million. It is time for that to change.

I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. BOYD. I thank the gentleman from Arkansas. There are several other points. One is something that I think most of us understand. Set aside a rainy day fund. You know, I am sure Mr. ROSS, Mr. CARDOZA, Madam Speaker, I am sure you have rainy day funds in your businesses or even in your own personal home budgets. Most people understand that. We are not always able to have as big a rainy day fund as we want, and sometimes we have to spend our fund, but, if we do, we try to build it back up.

Congress never set aside a rainy day fund. That is one of the things we want to get Congress to do. That is part of our 12 point plan.

If I can, Mr. ROSS, I will go on to number seven, and that is one that really bugs me a lot. When you move from a \$5.6 trillion debt in 2001 when this administration came into office to a \$8.137 trillion debt, that is \$2.5 trillion of additional money that Congress had to borrow on behalf of the American people to pay our bills. That has to be authorized in statute. That has to be authorized. The Treasury cannot just go and borrow the money without the U.S. Congress authorizing it and the President signing it into law.

We have gotten into a bad habit around here in the last few years of raising that debt limit without a separate vote. You know, from time to time our listeners, our constituent, have to go and borrow money. Most of the time when they have to borrow money, they have to get a corporate resolution, some sort of authorization to go borrow that money. They have to have a meeting, have to have a vote of the board.

Mr. CARDOZA. You have to go see your banker and justify it.

Mr. BOYD. Guess what? Here, we stick it into some other bill that has to

be passed, or some self-executing rule or something like that, and never have a vote on the debt limit increase.

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I think that is the seventh point of our 12-point plan.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Florida for sharing the issue of the debt limit with us. He is right, and that is why it is one of the 12 points. We should have a vote any time we are going to raise the debt limit. I mean, the debt limit today is currently at \$8.184 trillion, so it will not be long before we raise it again. This number right here is increasing to the tune of about \$41 million an hour. In other words, in the time we have been speaking here on the floor of the United States House of Representatives this evening, the national debt has increased by about \$41 million because of this year's deficit. So it will not be long before we will be raising the debt limit here in the Congress. And unless we are able to get them to start allowing us to have a vote on it, they will just put it in some other bill and try to hide it from the public. We believe that is wrong, and we want to put a stop to that.

Number eight, justify spending for pet projects. I think that pretty much speaks for itself. We always from time to time pick up the paper and read about some outrageous project that is being funded with Federal funds. There are a lot of good projects that are funded across this Nation, but we are saying that you should have to justify a project. You should not get a project because of who you are. You ought to have to justify a project for your district.

Mr. BOYD. It is the American people's tax money, and we should justify if we are going to spend it.

Mr. ROSS. If we are going to spend the tax money, the people need a voice in it and we need to make sure that money is going to benefit them to create jobs, economic opportunities; and that is what we are trying to do here, and that is why we say justify spending for pet projects.

Number nine, ensure that Congress reads the bills it is voting on. That seems quite silly, but the reality is that many times they will bring bills to the floor of the House that are thousands of pages, thousands of pages thick and give us less than a day or less than an hour, in fact, at times, to actually read the bill we are voting on.

Our point is this, what we are proposing is a minimum of 3 days to have the final text of legislation made available before a vote. We cannot require Members of Congress to read a bill before they vote on it; but I can promise you this, if you give us less than an hour, if the leadership gives us less than an hour to read a 3,000-page bill, no one is going to be able to read that.

Mr. BOYD. The work we have done here the last 2 or 3 days, we are 8 days before Christmas, we are working real-

ly hard to try to get out of here and doing some work that has been put off that should have been done earlier in the fall, even earlier in the summer. But the work that has been done here in the last 2 or 3 days, all of it has been done under what we call a marshal law rule which allows bills to be brought to the floor without even 24 hours' notice. It really exacerbates this problem of having stuff going into the statutes that Members really do not have a chance, the American people do not have a chance to read and understand. I think this solves that problem.

Mr. ROSS. We have about 5 minutes left in the Special Order, as we come to the floor of our Nation's Capitol here, the floor of the United States House of Representatives, to discuss this overwhelming debt that is saddling our country and jeopardizing its future.

Mr. TANNER, if you would, number 10, require honest cost estimates for every bill that Congress votes on. The Medicare bill, there are a lot of bills that are good examples. The Congress, the people of this country need to know how their money is being spent. They need an honest cost estimate for every bill they vote on.

Mr. TANNER. Well, it is a shell game, somebody called it three card monty, when you low ball a bill that you know is going to cost more than that, but you do it to fit it into some preconceived notion of a budget so you can basically fool the American people to make them think you are being fiscally responsible and not doing something foolish financially, and yet you are. And we saw this and we saw the administration, the administration that we are under now, they knew better on the Medicare bill and told the Congress it was going to cost \$350 billion over time, and really they knew it was about \$750 or \$800 billion. That is the kind of thing we are talking about, because then people do not know what to believe.

Mr. CARDOZA said earlier, We can do better than this. This place is broken and our 12-point plan is our attempt to fix it.

Mr. BOYD. Honesty and integrity are basic character traits that our citizens warrant us to have. We see so much of that in all of government now, the dishonest statements, the misleading statements, people defrauding or bribing or taking bribes, those kinds of things. Corruption, it is a pattern of corruption. And this is what this is about.

We want honesty and integrity in our government. I think we should shoot straight and talk straight with the American citizens.

Mr. ROSS. Number 11, make sure that new bills fit the budget. Basically, we are proposing the Budget Committee strengthen its oversight role in preparing budget-compliant statements for every bill that is reported out of committee.

Does anyone want to add anything on number 11?

Mr. TANNER. I would say that we see time and again the rule resolution that comes to the floor and is passed basically on the party line; what you see is that in the rule, all points of order are waived, which means that the budget rules that we try to put in place are meaningless. Because if you are going to waive them on virtually every bill now that comes to the floor, we really do not have any enforceable mechanism, and this will change that. And we think that is a commonsense idea.

Mr. ROSS. Finally, number 12, Mr. CARDOZA, if you want to share that with us.

Mr. CARDOZA. I would be happy to, Mr. ROSS.

Number 12 is to make Congress do a better job keeping track on government programs that it passes.

As Mr. TANNER said earlier, we have basically abdicated our responsibility in this one-party form of government that we have right now. We are doing no oversight. We are not keeping tabs on the bills that we pass. In fact, the last four planks in the Blue Dog program all sort of relate to the same kind of thing. It is about accountability. It is about making sure that we read the bills, that we require honest cost estimates, that we make sure that the new bills fit the budget that we have already passed, and that we make sure that Congress does an adequate review on the bills that we have passed.

They are just basic commonsense tenets. If you look back at the Medicare Prescription Drug Bill, it is a perfect example of how this process has gone off the rails. And it has cost twice as much.

I remember Mr. DOOLEY had a competing bill, but I think it probably did more for seniors than the one that we passed. And he could not even get a score from the Congressional Budget Office to say how much his bill was going to cost. That is just wrong. A Member of the Congress should be able to get the score. We should all have the score. The American people should be able to get the lowdown on what a bill costs and have that up front 3 days at least before we pass it.

Mr. ROSS. We are out of time this evening. I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. CARDOZA), the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER), the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD) for coming to the floor of the United States House of Representatives with me this evening to discuss our Nation's debt and deficit and the Blue Dog Coalition's 12-point plan to restore some integrity, some common sense, and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BACA (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and December 18.

Mr. BECERRA (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. HYDE (at the request of Mr. BLUNT) for today and December 18 on account of illness in the family.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. WOOLSEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HOLT, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BISHOP of Utah) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. CULBERSON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SHIMKUS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HAYES, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE BILLS REFERRED

Bills of the Senate of the following titles were taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 435. An act to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate a segment of the Farmington River and Salmon Brook in the State of Connecticut for study for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 648. An act to amend the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991 to extend the authority for drought assistance; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 959. An act to establish the Star-Spangled Banner and War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Government Reform.

S. 1025. An act to amend the Act entitled "An Act to provide for the construction of the Cheney division, Wichita Federal reclamation project, Kansas, and for other purposes" to authorize the Equus Beds Division of the Wichita Project, to the Committee on Resources.

S. 1096. An act to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate portions of the Musconetcong River in the State of New Jersey as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 1165. An act to provide for the expansion of the James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge, Honolulu County, Hawaii; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 1496. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a pilot program under which up to 15 States may issue electronic Federal migratory bird hunting stamps; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 1552. An act to amend Public Law 97-435 to extend the authorization for the Secretary of the Interior to release certain conditions contained in a patent concerning certain land conveyed by the United States to Eastern Washington University until December 31, 2009; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 1869. An act to reauthorize the Coastal Barrier Resources Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 1312. An act to amend a provision relating to employees of the United States assigned to, or employed by, an Indian tribe, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Resources; in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Mrs. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled bills and a Joint Resolution of the House of the following titles, which were thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 3963. An act to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to extend the authorization of appropriations for Long Island Sound.

H.R. 4195. An act to authorize early repayment of obligations to the Bureau of Reclamation within Rogue River Valley Irrigation District or within Medford Irrigation District.

H.R. 4440. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax benefits for the Gulf Opportunity Zone and certain areas affected by Hurricanes Rita and Wilma, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4508. An act to commend the outstanding efforts in response to Hurricane Katrina by members and employees of the Coast Guard, to provide temporary relief to certain persons affected by such hurricane with respect to certain laws administered by the Coast Guard, and for other purposes.

H.J. Res. 38. Joint Resolution recognizing Commodore John Barry as the first flag officer of the United States Navy.

H.J. Res. 75. Joint Resolution making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2006, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BOYD. Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 55 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Sunday, December 18, 2005, at 1 p.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

5836. A letter from the Acting Director, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's final rule—Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement; Training for Contractor Personnel Interacting with Detainees [DFARS Case 2005-D007] received September 8, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Armed Services.

5837. A letter from the Acting Director, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's final rule—Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement; Restrictions on Totally Enclosed Lifeboat Survival Systems [DFARS Case 2004-D034] received September 8, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C.