

take action, despite the political perils, and be prepared to raise the national interest above their personal interests and reelection. It will not be easy, but it must be done.

For officials in Washington who are in search of a comeback story, I suggest the case of Puerto Rico. In January 2009, the U.S. territory stood on the brink of disaster. The new government had inherited a deficit of \$3.3 billion. As a percentage of revenue, this was the largest deficit of any U.S. administration. The new administration was even forced to take a loan to meet its first payroll. Major rating agencies had downgraded Puerto Rico's credit to near junk status. Simply put, the island's economy was about to implode.

Leaders in San Juan faced a stark choice. Like their predecessors, they could usher Puerto Rico down this unsustainable path, paralyzed by the fear that tough choices would antagonize voters; or they could place their responsibility to protect Puerto Rico's future above their desire to preserve their poll numbers.

Fortunately for Puerto Rico, the new leadership chose the right course. For 2-plus years, Governor Luis Fortuno and the island's legislature have taken decisive action to impose fiscal discipline and create a leaner, more responsible government. They have cut government spending by nearly 20 percent, sharply reducing the deficit as a percentage of revenue. Indeed, by this metric, the island has moved from last in the Nation to a fiscal position that is better than 30 States. The rating agencies have rewarded Puerto Rico's progress, with Moody's giving the island its highest rating in 35 years.

To achieve savings, the government cut expenses and political appointments and was compelled to reduce its payroll. In my experience, rational leaders do not lay off workers because they think this will play to their political advantage. To the contrary, few actions are likely to arouse greater public displeasure. After all, work does more than put bread on the family table. It gives men and women dignity and a sense of purpose. But the Government of Puerto Rico's actions were absolutely necessary and were taken despite serious political risks.

Measures were taken to cushion the blow for those workers who were let go, and layoffs did not include teachers or first responders. More importantly, the government factions prevented an economic disaster, which would have resulted in far greater suffering and job loss.

It is important to emphasize that these decisions were not partisan. Governor Fortuno is a Republican and I, as Puerto Rico's only Representative in Congress, am a proud Democrat, and I supported his policies. The island legislators who voted to advance this agenda are affiliated with both national parties. And unlike in some States, Puerto Rico's leaders did not politicize ARRA or other Federal funding which

served as a lifeline for the island. Rather, they have worked to put every dollar to good use.

So for leaders in Washington who say it will be impossible to achieve bipartisanship in the budget debate, the case of Puerto Rico should provide a measure of hope. As it nurses the economy back to health, the Puerto Rico Government is also advancing a long-term, pro-growth strategy. For example, the government has reduced individual and corporate tax rates and ensured that everyone contributes their fair share; boosted sales of housing and commercial properties through other incentives; and worked to address Puerto Rico's high energy costs and dependence on foreign oil, including through the development of a natural gas pipeline that will create thousands of jobs, lower carbon emissions and significantly reduce energy bills for individuals and companies on the island.

In closing, Puerto Rico's leadership has proven that it is possible to work across party lines to control spending and create growth. I urge my colleagues in this Chamber to work in this same spirit and to set aside partisan differences to secure the long-term fiscal health of the country we love.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 45 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. POE of Texas) at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Wallace Shepherd, Second Baptist Church, Santa Barbara, California, offered the following prayer:

Our Heavenly Father, we bless You, Lord, in this season, while our homeland faces difficult decisions and conflicts across many nations.

We bow before You this day, requesting Your mercy and Your grace. Grant this Congress Your guidance as they work collectively as one. We pray, dear Lord, as resolutions are prepared, that there will be a united commitment to the development of comprehensive laws.

Lead this Congress and Nation in the direction of tranquility that reflects the intent of our forefathers. Endow us as a Nation to be humble, as we transcend the norm, without forgetting those that are in need. Anchor our hearts with prudence, as we consider the development of our youth. Protect our troops, as they fight for democracy and freedom throughout the world.

Steer us on the path of righteousness with temperance. Bless our government, and bless this Nation.

In Jesus Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. ELLMERS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. ELLMERS led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING REVEREND WALLACE SHEPHERD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPs) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mrs. CAPPs. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a valued constituent and a good friend, Dr. Wallace Shepherd.

Dr. Shepherd came to the Second Baptist Church of Santa Barbara as pastor in 2006. Since then, Pastor Shepherd has reestablished Santa Barbara's Martin Luther King Day event as a capstone celebration on the central coast of California.

He is an active board member of the Endowment for Youth program, which supports the education of underprivileged children through tutoring and scholarships. Dr. Shepherd also helped to found Eco Faith, a nonprofit organization that promotes conservation of energy in churches and houses of worship.

He has been appointed evangelism director of the Central District of California, and also the vice president of the Third Sunday Fellowship for Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. But as our House has just witnessed, he is at the core a powerful presence and a humble servant in the name of his faith.

I am honored to welcome him here to Congress, and thank him for his invaluable service to our community and to our country.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

H.R. 1425

(Mrs. ELLMERS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. ELLMERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1425, the Creating Jobs Through Small Business Innovation Act. This bipartisan bill is being marked up today in the House Small Business Committee.

Our bill reauthorizes the SBIR and STTR programs, which have a proven track record of creating jobs, stimulating small business growth, and helping startups succeed by providing the impetus to start projects that otherwise would not have gotten off the ground. But, most importantly, our bill does not cost anything. This program simply requires that the Federal agencies slice out a portion of their overall budget for small firms to compete for research and development for new innovative ideas.

The SBIR program is set to expire on May 31. As chairwoman of the House Small Business Committee on Health and Technology, I believe it is vital that we expedite reauthorization of the SBIR program so that small businesses can continue to compete for the contracts that will springboard ideas, create jobs, and spur economic growth.

GAS PRICES

(Mr. CICILLINE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, for nearly 20 weeks this Chamber has been discussing ways to reduce our Nation's deficit, debating the merits of cutting one program or another, most times including important initiatives like job training funds, education, and health-related services.

The fact of the matter is that we have to cut spending. The issue is not whether to reduce the deficit, but how we do it.

If we really want to get serious about the deficit, we would stop handing out billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies to big oil companies which price gouge at the pumps.

Oil company profits are at a record high, and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are using high gas prices as an excuse to keep giving them billions in taxpayer handouts. Taxpayer-funded giveaways for big oil add to the deficit. My constituents gain nothing at the pumps, nor do Americans all across this country. Instead, we should be focusing on measures that would actually bring down the price of gas at the pump.

It is time to bring to the House floor measures which would release oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and legislation aimed at preventing big oil from engaging in price gouging schemes which drive up the price of oil. These measures could provide immediate relief to our constituents from the rising price of gasoline that truly

threatens our economic recovery and the well-being of hardworking middle class families.

JOBS

(Mr. ELLISON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, we've been here for about 5 months so far. It's easing up on June. It won't be long until it's summertime. Yet, Mr. Speaker, the Republican majority has not brought a single bill to create a single job.

I was very pleased to hear the gentlewoman from North Carolina say that they are marking up a bill on jobs. It would be the first one, if it ever gets here. That's a shame, because I think when people voted last November, they were thinking, hey, we've got to do something about some jobs. And yet the Republican majority has dallied away and done everything but work on jobs.

Yeah, they've tried to take away the Affordable Care Act and take away health care from people who really need it. Yeah, they've tried to do a whole lot of things, push a social agenda. They've done all these things, but they have yet to focus on the one thing that Americans need most, which is a job.

If you want to reduce the deficit, you've got to have people making some money, and that means getting some jobs. People pay taxes. People would love to pay taxes, but they would do it if they had work. But they don't have work because our Republican majority has got other things to do.

Remember, jobs are the key. I am looking forward to Republicans bringing a bill to the floor.

MEDICARE/GAS PRICES RELIEF

(Mr. BACA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, in 1965 this body voted to create Medicare and Medicaid to ensure that all seniors and disabled Americans would always have access to health coverage, and those today expect the same kind of coverage for themselves and their children.

But over the years, my Republican colleagues have tried to weaken the programs and privatize safety nets like Social Security. Sadly, history is repeating itself. Instead of focusing on priorities, like creating jobs and lowering gas prices, Republicans have put forward an agenda that ends Medicare as we know it.

So far this year, Republicans have voted—and we can't say they haven't. They have voted to eliminate guaranteed Medicare coverage for seniors, convert Medicare to a voucher program, reopen the prescription drug doughnut hole, and extend tax breaks for big oil companies that ship jobs overseas. Even worse, new data shows

the Republican budget will kick 44 million low-income Americans off Medicaid.

We must stop this insanity. Let's work together to preserve Medicare and lower the deficit.

□ 1210

STICKING IT TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, it's happened. Gas is over four bucks a gallon. It's killing our economic recovery, American families and small businesses.

Now, Goldman Sachs, not exactly a friend of the consumer, says that 60 to 85 cents per gallon is purely useless, speculative activity. And what are the Republicans running the House of Representatives going to do about that? Nothing. They're going to pretend that future possible leasing off Virginia 10 years from now will do something about today's prices. It won't.

But why are they like, bait-and-switch? Why are they passing these phony bills and not taking on the price gouging and the speculation? Because that would mean taking on Big Oil and Wall Street. And, guess what? They're always looking forward to the next campaign, and Big Oil and Wall Street have been so generous to the new majority that they don't want to upset them. So they want to pretend they stand with their constituents and consumers, but they're really standing behind Big Oil and Wall Street.

Congratulations, guys. You just stuck it to the American people and the economy.

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

(Mrs. NAPOLITANO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Madam Speaker, May is Mental Health Month, and as the cochair of the Mental Health Caucus, I bring to you information, especially on the military.

Since 2001 to current date, we have had 2,103 military service personnel die by suicide, suicide, my friends, in the Iraq and Afghan wars. In the Afghan war alone, it is over 1,000, more than some of the figures we have listened to recently.

One in five servicemembers suffer from major depression, posttraumatic syndrome, or traumatic brain injury, TBI. It affects the military and their families, their children. There's lots of divorce because of this and substance abuse that continues as they age.

We must expand mental health services to our military personnel and their families. Through their blood and their service they have earned it. We owe it to them. We've made some strides, but