

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, the 2010 census confirmed that Hispanics are a growing part of the American family. There are now more than 50 million Latinos in the United States, accounting for more than half of the Nation's population growth between 2000 and 2010. Today, one in six Americans is Hispanic.

This tremendous growth adds to our country's rich diversity, but it also brings challenges. The number of English language learners in our Nation's schools has increased by 50 percent over the past decade. English learners are found in States with traditionally large Hispanic populations, like Texas and New Mexico, and in States that have experienced a recent influx of immigrants, like Colorado and Indiana. And English learners are found in large numbers in the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico.

How well our schools educate those students will determine the future success of our Nation. And providing a quality education means ensuring that they graduate from high school with proficiency in English. The benefits of learning English are clear for students living in the 50 States where it is difficult to obtain most jobs without being fluent in the language.

But learning English is also vital for students in Puerto Rico. In my life I have visited many countries around the world; and everywhere I have traveled, I have seen young people studying English with passion and determination. Puerto Rico's sons and daughters, particularly as American citizens living in a U.S. territory, simply must be proficient in English to compete effectively in the modern globalized world.

Yet for too many years, some politicians in Puerto Rico sought to limit the teaching of English in our local schools in a misguided effort to influence the debate over Puerto Rico's political status. This cynical approach has harmed our children and our island. Regardless of one's views on Puerto Rico's status, there can be no question that proficiency in English, as well as in Spanish, is in the best interest of Puerto Rico's youth. To deny our children the opportunity to learn English is to deny them the countless opportunities that come with being bilingual.

Accordingly, since arriving in Congress, one of my primary goals has been to improve English language instruction in Puerto Rico schools. That is why I have introduced a bill to raise a cap that restricts the amount of Federal funds the island can receive to strengthen its English language programs. In order to ensure that the children of Puerto Rico have the same opportunities as children in the States, it is imperative that the island be treated fairly when it comes to allocating Federal funding for English language programs.

Moreover, our schools' success in teaching English learners in Puerto Rico and in the States will depend on

the number of well-prepared bilingual teachers available to instruct these students. In Puerto Rico the challenge has been to find enough teachers who are sufficiently proficient in English to effectively teach the language. At the same time, the increased number of English learners in the States has left school districts scrambling to find enough teachers who are fluent in foreign languages, such as Spanish and Mandarin, as well as in English.

In both cases, schools are asking themselves, How can I find an experienced teacher to meet this need? One answer: teacher exchanges.

I recently introduced legislation that would fund teacher exchanges between school districts in different regions of the United States. Under my bill, for example, a teacher in Puerto Rico could improve her English ability by spending a year in the States trading places with a native English-speaking instructor who seeks to improve her Spanish language skills. Through this exchange the teachers and, more importantly, the students in each community would benefit. No wonder that organizations representing English teachers, foreign language instructors, principals, and school boards have all endorsed my bill.

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As Congress works to reform the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, I urge my colleagues to address the needs of English language learners, whether those students are located in Santa Fe, San Antonio, or San Juan. Our goal should be as simple as it is ambitious: to ensure that every student in our Nation has the opportunity to graduate from high school as a fluent English speaker.

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, yesterday the House resoundingly rejected a so-called "clean" increase in the debt limit, as it should have. But different people are going to draw different conclusions from this vote. The Republicans will say this means unlimited spending cuts, that's how we'll balance the budget. And on my side of the aisle, there will be those who say this puts revenues back into play. Actually, both should be right.

There is no way, no way to deal with a \$1.7 trillion deficit—I guess we're down to \$1.4 trillion this year; money is coming in a little better than expected—to deal with that without dealing with both sides of the equation, that is, revenues and cuts in spending.

Now, unfortunately, around here it seems that coming together for the problems of the Nation is somewhat quaint and old fashioned. I've been here long enough to remember when we used to do those things, when we had the surtax on millionaires back when Bush

I was President and brought back some fiscal sanity, before my time when Ronald Reagan raised taxes three times because he realized that supply-side economics didn't work. Well, we're now back to supply-side economics over here. It doesn't work. And more tax cuts, they're proposing more tax cuts in the face of deficit. Absurd.

So how are we going to force that discussion? I believe we need a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. We actually passed one when I was here in 1995. I voted for it. It failed by one vote in the Senate. Now, just think, had that been in place when, in the last 2 years of the Clinton Presidency, we not only balanced the budget, we began to pay down debt for the first time since 1969. Then came Bush II, and he said we're going to give that money back to the people. And even when we went into deficit, he said, well, we need more tax cuts. That's what we need is more tax cuts, because we're running a deficit now and that's how you deal with deficits is to cut taxes because then people will—whatever. Somehow that creates more money. If we had had the balanced budget amendment to the Constitution in place, Bush couldn't have gotten away with that. He couldn't have launched an unnecessary war in Iraq and cut taxes at the same time; the first time our Nation has gone to war while cutting taxes. And he managed to double the debt in 8 short years, ending with the spectacular crash on Wall Street and the TARP bailout, which many forget was the Bush TARP bailout—I voted against that, too—not the Obama bailout; although Obama continued those same Wall Street friendly policies, to his discredit.

And then the Obama stimulus. Forty percent of that was Bush tax cuts. What is it? What is it we don't get that cutting taxes in the way that George Bush wanted to do and did do with trickle-down economics and piling up more debt does not put people back to work? It's not investment. It doesn't generate economic activity and jobs.

The theory is, oh, the rich people have so much money, they'll invest it in meaningful ways. Corporations are sitting on \$2 trillion in cash. Wall Street billionaire hedge fund managers pay a 15 percent rate of tax, half that of an Army captain. Are they investing in a meaningful way to put people back to work? No. They're speculating and driving up the price of gas and screwing the American people and depressing the economy.

It's time to get real around here. I believe a balanced budget amendment would focus the minds and deal with this deficit and debt in a way that is serious, both with dealing with revenues and dealing with spending cuts. I voted against extending all the Bush cuts in December—not just the ones on the rich people, all of them, a little bit of shared sacrifice. That would have cut the deficit in half—by \$5 trillion—over 10 years. Then we wouldn't have

been screaming in January after everybody—many people on that side of the aisle—voted for extending the Bush tax cuts. They were shocked, shocked, shocked that we had a record deficit this year. Huh? You just voted to reduce revenues by \$400 billion and you're shocked that that increased the deficit? And has it been putting people back to work? Not much that I've seen in my district, I'll tell you that.

Then comes the Ryan budget. A serious budget. Destroys Medicare. Ends Medicare as we know it. Cuts Medicaid. Most people just think that's for poor people. Well, actually, most of the money goes to either kids or seniors in nursing homes. So that's going to be kind of a tough one. So, huge, devastating cuts. More tax cuts. More of the joke economic policies. Let's cut taxes and that will help us deal with the deficit. More tax cuts for rich people and big corporations. And he doesn't balance the budget—even under his rosy scenario written by the Heritage Foundation—until 2040. That's a serious attempt at dealing with our debt and deficit? That's the Ryan budget. The Obama budget is even worse. I don't know if it gets there by 2050.

Neither side is dealing seriously with these issues. We need to focus people's minds, and a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution is the best way to do that.

RAISING THE DEBT LIMIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it's important to be able to discuss with my colleagues just what we're doing in this House and what is considered important and urgent and what is the impact on what we're doing.

As my friends, the Republicans on the other side of the aisle, are now spending time with the President, I hope they will have visions of President Ronald Reagan, because in 1983 Ronald Reagan begged and asked the Congress at that time to raise the debt limit. This is not a 2011, 21st century phenomenon never to be heard of in the history of this country. Raising the debt limit, my friends, is not evil or sin. It is an actuality that requires us to be responsible adults.

I want you to eye this picture and to continue to keep your eyes on it continuously as I explain to you what we are doing when we ask for the debt limit to be raised.

Does anyone care about our men and women on the front lines? Do we care about their families? Do we care about veterans? Oh, we wave the flag, and many of us emotionally were drawn to commemorate and honor those who had fallen this past Monday. We interrelated with families, some of whom came up to me and asked me why veterans are discriminated against and can't get work or disabled veterans are

chastised by their employer. And I made a commitment to them that we will work to have jobs and end the discrimination, and that the soldiers who are coming back to 10 percent unemployment—do you realize that, that there is a 10 percent unemployment among Iraq and Afghanistan returning soldiers, soldiers who are in their twenties and thirties or maybe forties, soldiers who may be disabled, who may have come back from a catastrophic injury but they want to work and support their families? These very men and women, do you know what the debt limit not being lifted will do?

And so, yes, this was put on the floor of the House to make a mockery and a joke, but I came here to be a serious legislator and I voted "yes" because it was a serious statement on behalf of my constituents and the American people, and I could not, within 24 hours of being around military families, abandon them with the frivolity and the foolishness of putting something up on the floor just to put it in the eye of the President.

Let me tell you why it partly was done as trickery. Listen to the words of a bond dealer: "I didn't even know they had a vote tonight, to be honest with you," a senior government bond strategist at CRT Capital Group in Stamford, Connecticut said. "The only real event that the market is focused on is the point at which they run out of money and have to shut down the government."

Well, let me tell you the reason why this was just a joke, since those of us who voted "yes" didn't take it as a joke. Because the Secretary of the Treasury has extended the time to August 2. But if we do not raise the debt limit, like Ronald Reagan asked and other Republican Presidents asked with no fanfare, let me tell you what will happen to our soldiers. It will be 20 percent unemployment.

What will happen to Medicare? We won't be making it solvent. We'll just end it and implode it like the Ryan budget wants to do. We will eliminate Medicare for disabled persons and children and seniors in nursing homes.

No, we won't have any veterans benefits, but our cities that now are grappling with disaster, that funding will dry up as well. And we are the rainy day umbrella for the American people.

But you know what else? Summer jobs for our young people who are struggling to get themselves back in school in the fall. In the city of Houston, how—I don't know—unthinking can you be when you close down city pools, the meager opportunity for recreation that a child has in the inner city area or maybe a rural area.

□ 1030

Summer pools totally closed down. And parks. So what are they supposed to do besides having one person that can monitor the pool? You just have them running the streets. What sense does that make?

Or the school districts in the State of Texas now losing \$4 billion. HISD, the Houston Independent School District, one of the largest in the Nation, \$200 million, or AISD, \$30 million.

It's time to wake up and understand that we must recognize the responsibility we have, Mr. Speaker. We can end the war in Afghanistan, bring them home from Iraq, and we can do our job and raise the debt ceiling. This is ridiculous, but I'm not going to be part of it.

DEBT LIMIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Lost in the hyperbolic statements and calls of doom—"if Congress does not raise the current debt ceiling"—is the real problem that our Nation faces: the out-of-control spending that has become epidemic here in Congress. No doubt a technical default in August surely would be problematic. But much worse would be the results if Republicans caved to Democrats and no significant spending reforms are implemented.

Today, my colleagues, 68 cents of every dollar is spent on entitlement programs. By the year 2025, the government will spend 100 percent of every dollar of revenues on entitlements.

The United States is over \$14 trillion in debt, and without spending cuts in the deficit, our national debt will continue to grow. We must begin to rein in spending and bring about the fiscal changes to protect our children from this growing burden of debt.

Mr. Speaker, importantly, markets understand the difference between a technical default in which investors may have to wait a short period of time for an interest payment and an actual default in which a country is unable to repay its debt. If Congress does not act appropriately now, very soon the country will not face merely a technical default, but instead a real default. Then the calls of doom will be appropriate.

Investors have every incentive to want Congress to balance its budget and get its house in order finally. If this means investors will have to wait a few days for an interest payment to be repaid, then so be it. Because fixing the real problem now guarantees to investors that this government can make its payments 10 years from now, a realization that will comfort investors much more than preventing a mild delay—particularly if that mild delay means future delays, future debt limit debates, and future possible defaults.

The best solution, of course, is no default at all, not technical and not actual. Congress must quickly come together and make some tough decisions that will forever affect the future of our country. But we will not be coerced into a position that fuels the spending addiction that has landed us in this situation where we stand today. We will