

then, I believe, will take it up and pass that repeal of ObamaCare. And send it where? Message it where?

□ 1340

I hope we message it out to the podium on the West Portico of the Capitol for January 20, 2013, where I hope to be at a good vantage point where I can see the next President of the United States, and tell him, Take the oath of office with pen in hand, and take the oath this way, Mr. Speaker:

"I do solemnly swear to the best of my ability to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, so help me God."

Then, before that new President shakes hands with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, I would like to see him take his hand down, with pen in it, and sign the repeal of ObamaCare right there during the swearing in ceremonies of the next President of the United States, which will set the tone for the new era that we will be working towards throughout 2011 and 2012.

So, when the Sun comes up on the morning of January 21, 2013, we will be free at last from the burden of socialized medicine, and the freest people in the world will have rejected dependency, will have stood up for independence, and will have stood up for the vitality of the American people.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the vision I have in mind, and I will work on that every day until that is accomplished. That is my pledge to you, Mr. Speaker, and the American people.

It is my privilege to address you here on the floor, and I thank you.

I yield back the balance of my time.

A TIME FOR SACRIFICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, "On a blistering evening in Phoenix recently, a group of prominent civic leaders met to talk about America. It didn't take long for the conversation to get around to the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

"That's what happens when smart Americans get to talking about politics these days.

"Topic A is the growing sense that our best days as a Nation are behind us, that our kids won't live as well as we did, that China is in the driver's seat."

Those were the opening words of an October 2010 Time magazine piece, authored by veteran reporter Joe Klein, who canvassed the country during the height of the campaign season.

Klein's assessment of the national mood was underscored by New York Times columnist David Brooks, who recently wrote: "The current sour mood is not just caused by high unemployment. It emerges from the fear that America's best days are behind it."

I believe this foreboding national anxiety is born of certain realities—ex-

ploding debts and deficits, shuttered factories, rising unemployment, bloated government, and an acrimonious tenor to our national discourse. People fear that America's influence is waning and our "shining city on a hill" is dimming.

I must admit to sharing these same anxieties as a father of five and grandfather of 15. I have never been more concerned about my country's future. Yet I do not believe that the realization of these fears is inevitable. We can walk back from the precipice. We have options. Sober-minded people believe that we must dramatically change course, especially as it relates to our ballooning national debt and deficit—and I agree.

Yet, are America and her leaders willing to make the tough decisions that are necessary?

The lyrics in Simon and Garfunkel's song "The Boxer"—"Man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest"—aptly describe the mood in Washington when it comes to addressing Federal spending.

Within days of the President's fiscal commission report on the dire consequences of the failure to address growing mandatory spending, it was business as usual with Congress passing and the Obama administration supporting a tax and spending bill with an \$857 billion price tag that included a yearlong "payroll tax holiday," raiding the Social Security trust fund at a cost of \$112 billion, without paying for it, thereby increasing the national debt.

So the question before us is: Will Washington summon the courage and the fortitude to make the tough decisions, to govern based on principle and not politics, to lead the country toward a brighter tomorrow even if it means sacrificing in the short term?

Historically, Americans are willing to sacrifice.

Many of our countrymen have made the ultimate sacrifice on our own shores and in distant lands, in places like Antietam, Normandy, Saigon, Kandahar, and Baghdad.

It is on their shoulders we stand—wobbly at times, but stand nonetheless. The Nation's future now falls to us. Will we step up to the plate or will we fail to act?

For too long, routinely increasing the amount of money that government can borrow without taking any action to stem the country's growing debt has been standard operating procedure; but the storm warning signs have been posted, and I am heeding their ominous call.

When Congress is asked to increase the statutory debt limit, which will likely happen in the next few months, I will vote "no" unless—and let me be completely clear here—there is a firm commitment to deal with the larger issue or the vote itself is tied to a plan to put America on a path to financial responsibility.

I have come to this decision based on a multitude of factors that I will ex-

plore in the remaining time. Consider these grim realities:

Our Nation is now more than \$14 trillion in debt. We have accumulated a \$1 trillion deficit every year. Just last Thursday, both Moody's Investment Service and Standard & Poor's again cautioned the U.S. that its coveted AAA credit rating is at risk if the country's deteriorating fiscal situation is not corrected.

The practical implications of a downgraded credit rating are severe. The cost to borrow money will rise. Everything from a home loan to a car loan to a student loan will increase. Interest on the debt was \$202 billion in 2010. That's nearly \$4 billion a week. In 2021, interest on the debt is projected to be \$1 trillion a year, or roughly \$2.7 billion a day.

Unsustainable debt in Europe and the resulting economic woes and austerity measures led to riots in the streets. Is it just a matter of time before we see that at home?

If we are on the same trajectory as these countries, their unemployment numbers should give us pause. Spain was at a whopping 19.8 percent in December.

Noted historian Niall Ferguson authored a piece in the April 2010 Foreign Affairs, exploring the theory that great empires often decline swiftly. From Rome to the Ming Dynasty to the British Empire, history is rife with examples of seemingly invincible world powers that collapse in a short period of time.

Ferguson adds that, while there are varied theories about why each of these empires declined in such short order, he said, "Most imperial falls are associated with fiscal crises."

If paying \$202 billion a year in interest alone isn't a fiscal crisis, I don't know what is. Is America heading off a cliff?

Consider that last year a report from the Congressional Budget Office revealed that for the first time in 25 years Social Security was taking in less in taxes than it was spending on benefits. In addition, recent reports found that as 2011 opens, the first of the baby boomers will turn 65 at the rate of 10,000 a day for the next 19 years. Or consider that just over the past decade foreign ownership of U.S. debt has increased significantly from 5 percent 40 years ago to 46 percent today.

If the U.S. does not begin to rein in spending, every penny of the Federal budget will go to interest on the debt and entitlement spending by 2028. This has grave implications for a host of national priorities.

Ferguson is not alone in his warnings.

In 2007, then-U.S. Comptroller General David Walker warned of "striking similarities" between America's current situation and the fall of the Roman Empire.

Respected business leader Norm Augustine, who chaired a National Academies' Commission on American Competitiveness that resulted in the landmark "Gathering Storm" report, captured well the situation in which America now finds itself when he said, "In the technology-driven economy in which we live, Americans have come to accept leadership as the natural and enduring state of affairs; but leadership is highly perishable. It must be constantly re-earned."

□ 1350

He went on to say, "Unless we do things dramatically different, including strengthening our investments in research and education, the 21st century will belong to China and India."

As America sinks deeper into debt, we seem satisfied to live utterly in the moment with no concern for the future. And as our own investments in the future lag, China is forging ahead, making critical gains in education while our children are left in the wake.

One woman in Arizona who spoke to Klein during his heartland travel said pointedly, "We seem to be mired in mediocrity while China is steaming ahead." Do we really want the 21st century, this century, to be the Chinese century? Do we really want to leave our children a country mired in mediocrity?

Last year, a 5-year followup report titled "Rising Above the Gathering Storm, Revisited" noted that "Almost one-third of U.S. manufacturing companies responding to a recent survey say they are suffering from some level of skills shortages." This failure to train the next generation of engineers and scientists has a direct bearing on our economy. The U.S. graduates only half the number—half the number—of physicists today than we did in 1956.

The Gathering Storm report determined that, for the first time in our Nation's history, the younger generation of Americans is less well educated than its parents, and warned that "the United States appears to be on a course that will lead to a declining standard of living for our children and our grandchildren."

Against this backdrop, roughly half of America's outstanding publicly held debt is now foreign owned, with China and Saudi Arabia among the largest holders. Saudi Arabia was home to many of the 9/11 terrorists. Saudi Arabia's radical Wahhabism is taught in some of the most extremist mosques and madrassas, including up on the Afghan-Pakistan border. Their textbooks are filled with hateful messages about minority faiths, including Christians and Jews.

A recent New York Times story reported that, "Saudi donors remain the chief financiers of Sunni militant groups like al Qaeda." Is this a country we want to be beholden to financially? Or what about Communist China? It is well documented by the U.S. intelligence community that China's at-

tempt to spy on U.S. agencies and businesses are the most aggressive of all foreign intelligence organizations and, according to the FBI, "pose a significant threat to the national security" and compromise U.S. critical national assets.

China also routinely violates the basic human rights of its own people. Even this week, as Chinese President Hu Jintao is afforded the pomp and circumstance of a White House state dinner, Catholic bishops, Protestant pastors, and Tibetan monks are in Chinese jails for practicing their faith.

I've seen how China plundered Tibet. China's abuses do not stop at home. They are a significant arms supplier to the genocidal regime in Khartoum, Sudan. Do we really want China to be our banker? All of these realities must prompt some soul-searching on the part of our Nation's leadership.

Almost 5 years ago, during the last Republican majority, I came to the floor of the House proposing an independent bipartisan commission to address unsustainable Federal spending. It would put everything on the table—entitlements, all other spending, and tax policy. The SAFE Commission—short for Securing America's Future Economy—would operate in a transparent way, holding public meetings across the country to hear from the American people and give them a vested interest in the outcome. Further, it would require Congress to vote on its recommendations.

I reintroduced this legislation with Congressman JIM COOPER in the 110th and 111th Congresses. Senators KENT CONRAD and Judd Gregg introduced a similar bill calling for a deficit commission that became the blueprint for the President's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, or the Simpson-Bowles Commission.

I give credit to the deficit commission. I certainly didn't agree with every part of its report, but the commission's work was an important step in moving the national conversation forward. It put forth serious ideas rather than just kicking the can down the road. And had I been appointed to the commission, while supporting some changes, I would have voted for its final report. I commend its members who voted yes, such as Senator TOM COBURN, Republican of Oklahoma, a champion of low taxes, for having the courage to do so.

The plan set forth by the Simpson-Bowles Commission—supported by a majority of the commission's 18 members—makes it clear that addressing the debt and the deficit isn't just a simple exercise in rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse. It is all well and good to eliminate earmarks, fraud, waste, and abuse and rein in discretionary spending, but these things alone do not come close to solving the debt and the deficit.

The infamous bank robber Willie Sutton reportedly said he robbed banks "because that's where the money is."

In our government, the money is in entitlements—Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. Let me say it again: If we do not deal with Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, we cannot solve this problem. We need to do it in a way that really fixes the problem for us and for the next generation. We need to do it in a way that strengthens America, creating economic growth and jobs. This will be difficult and at times controversial, but the longer we wait we can be certain that it will become more difficult and more controversial.

The commission's forthright assessment about what is necessary to put us in good fiscal standing was a step in the right direction. The success of any endeavor, however, is predicated on actively involving the American people and must require an up-or-down vote in Congress. The President's commission came up short in that regard.

We have a divided government, which necessitates a bipartisan solution, something that can be passed and be enacted into law, and the sooner the better. If we neglect to do this, America will decline, and it will decline on our watch. We will have failed our children and grandchildren. We will have broken faith with the Founding Fathers and past generations who have sacrificed greatly to make this Nation, our Nation, a shining city on a hill.

We can no longer ignore the albatross of debt around our collective necks. That is why, unless there is a firm commitment to deal with the larger financial crisis or the vote itself is tied to a possible debt solution, I will vote against the debt limit increase. And again, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to consider doing the same.

I don't say this lightly. I am fully aware of the implications. In a recent letter to congressional leadership, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner spoke in near apocalyptic terms about the consequences of default. Even if just a fraction of his analysis is accurate, it is clear that this isn't a decision to be made casually. It is precisely because the stakes are so high that I believe the debt limit vote can serve as a trigger to force congressional action that otherwise will not be taken.

The country does not currently have a credit card limit, and we need one in order to stop the mortgaging of our country's future. Failure to act now on fiscal problems will ensure that in the future there will be tax increases and drastic entitlement reductions, and no money for important discretionary spending such as infrastructure, national security, medical research, and education. The longer it takes to address this issue, the more draconian the options will be when the Nation is forced to change course, as it most assuredly will be.

If you are on Social Security or Medicare, you should insist that the Congress and the administration act. If you are a young adult, you should be worried that your generation will be

significantly less well off than your parents' generation.

□ 1400

If you care about America's global leadership, if you yearn for our country to have the resources to combat global scourges, if you hope for the day when there is a cure for cancer and Alzheimer's, you should press Congress and the administration to step up to the plate now.

We must all ask ourselves: Do we want to make a point or do we want to make a difference? If the answer is the latter, then it is clear that this is a conversation we need to be having today. We must not put it off.

At his 1796 farewell address, George Washington admonished his fellow countrymen, "We should avoid ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden of which we ourselves ought to bear." An apt charge for today's political leadership.

A brief word to America's faith community, who should be intimately concerned with the moral component of this crisis. If we say we care about the poor, we must speak up, for they will be the hardest hit if we fail to act. If we say we are passionate about justice, then we must not be complicit in committing a massive generational injustice.

Not only is our current course immoral, it is un-American. Generations past have always passed the torch of the American Dream to their children and their grandchildren. Presently, we're poised to hand off the struggling flicker of a flame.

The implications of an America on decline also has ripple effects the world over.

In a December 5 Washington Post Outlook piece, author Robert Kaplan hauntingly writes, "America's ability to bring a modicum of order to the world is simply fading in slow motion." A look at the daily headlines and we are reminded that the world is a much more dangerous place when our Nation is perceived as weak, or worse yet, when that perception becomes a reality.

Surely we can agree on the enormity of what is at stake. The precise blueprint for how to move forward may seem blurry at times, but the implications of doing nothing must propel us onward.

If we summon the courage to act, I believe we can see a rebirth in America marked by grand innovations in science and technology that are the wonders of the world, advances in medical research that save millions of lives, and further exploration into the remaining frontier of space and much more.

Columnist Tony Blankley wrote recently, "America has become a great Nation because we have been an optimistic people who insist on both success and liberty. America's can-do spirit has been the wonder of the ages. It has raised us from a handful of farmers

to the colossus of the planet. And if we can regain that spirit, there is not a reason in the world that the 21st century will not be the American century—just as the 20th century was."

I was reminded once again of that unique American spirit on Election Day when I stopped by the Snow White Grill in Winchester, Virginia. While I was there, one man said to me, "We are ready! We are prepared to sacrifice. We're ready to do what's right." And several others at the lunch counter echoed the same.

But the question remains: Are America's leaders prepared to sacrifice? Are America's leaders prepared to do what's right?

Battle lines have been drawn on both sides.

The MoveOn.orgs of the left and the Americans for Tax Reform of the right have wielded their political influence with remarkable effect, only to paralyze the Congress and the Obama administration on arguably the most important issue of our time. I am not prepared to continue to let that happen.

In 1787, on the final day of the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Franklin was said to have wept when he signed the document. James Madison wrote in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, "Whilst the last members were signing it," he said, "Dr. Franklin, looking towards the President's chair, at the back of which a rising sun happened to be painted, observed to a few members near him that painters had found it difficult to distinguish in their art a rising sun from a setting sun."

And then Dr. Franklin remarked that during the course of the session, "I have often looked at that picture . . . without being able to tell whether it was a rising or setting sun." And then Franklin continues, "Now . . . I have the happiness to know that it is indeed a rising, not a setting sun."

Every politician loves to say that the sun has barely begun to rise on America and that America's best days are yet ahead.

If we steel ourselves for tough decisions and commit to doing the right thing, if we work for economic and moral rebirth, then we will honestly be able to join the chorus of voices reaching back to our Nation's founding and echoing across the ages which enjoin us to believe that the sun has indeed barely begun to rise on our country and that America's best days are yet to come.

This is a call to action. We are Americans, and we can prevail.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business in the district.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legis-

lative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

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

Mr. HOYER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. DELAUNO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

The following Members (at their own request) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:

Ms. FOXX, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HURT, for 5 minutes, today.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 5 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, January 24, 2011, at noon for morning-hour debate and 2 p.m. for legislative business.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

149. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Health Protection and Readiness), Department of Defense, transmitting a report to Congress on pain care initiatives provided by the health care programs of the Department of Defense; to the Committee on Armed Services.

150. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting notification that effective November 7, 2010, the danger pay allowance of 20% for Haiti has been eliminated, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 5928; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

151. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting the Interagency Working Group on U.S. Government-Sponsored International Exchanges and Training FY 2010 Annual Report, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2460(f) and (g) Public Law 87-256, section Section 112(f) and (g); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

152. A letter from the Chairman, Broadcasting Board of Governors, transmitting a report on the information security program and practices of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, pursuant to Public Law 107-347; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

153. A letter from the Administrator, General Services Administration, transmitting Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Annual Financial Report; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

154. A letter from the Secretary, Department of the Interior, transmitting a report to Congress on a gift of land in Tulare and Kern Counties, California, from the Wilderness Land Trust, pursuant to Public Law 93-632; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

155. A letter from the Secretary, Department of the Interior, transmitting a report to Congress on a gift of land in Kern County,