

U.S. Senator Obama voted against a clean increase of \$781 billion. In each case, days, weeks, or months later a debt limit was ultimately enacted.

So again, it's not about the debate. We've seen this discussion many times over the last several decades. But it is about world markets losing confidence in our ability to implement those needed reforms and address our growing \$14 trillion debt.

Over the past 2 years, we have seen the largest budget deficits in the history of the United States. This, along with our structural deficits due to insolvent entitlement programs and the rising cost of health care, is the reason we face serious issues regarding the confidence in our ability to make good on our commitments. In April, the United States kept its AAA rating. Unfortunately, as S&P warned, if we fail to act on these reforms, this could happen.

Raising the debt ceiling without significant structural spending reforms would send a signal to the world that America lacks the political will to restore fiscal sanity and meet our obligations. Unfortunately, many of our Democratic colleagues have continued to ask for a clean up-or-down vote on raising the debt limit, including most recently when more than 100 Democrats sent a letter to House leadership requesting an up-or-down vote on the issue. Earlier this week, that request was granted, and the legislation's failure demonstrates that any plan to raise the debt limit without dramatic steps to reduce spending and reform the budget process is unacceptable to the American people.

With any hope, we sent a clear message that it's time to stop with the political pandering and get serious about bringing about real budgetary reforms. It's unfortunate, however, Mr. Speaker. The problem has been identified. While tough decisions must be made, the solution is in our reach. What we lack is the political will to lead and take action.

Mr. Speaker, if we don't act boldly now, the markets will act for us very soon. The world is watching, and we can no longer afford to kick this can down the road. Our Nation's debt crisis offers us the political will to act, for the greatest threat to our economy and our children's future is doing nothing.

MOMS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT INTRODUCTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, for 5 months this Congress has debated how best to address the looming crisis of our national deficit. While the debate has often been partisan and polarized, one thing we Democrats and Republicans agree on is that addressing our national health care expenditures is a critical part of the solution.

A major component of the escalating health care costs in this country is maternity care. The cost of maternity care for mother and child in the U.S. is more than double that of any country in the world. But despite the exorbitant amount of money we spend on maternity care, the U.S. ranks far behind nearly all developed countries in maternal and infant outcomes.

Sadly, childbirth continues to have significant risks for mothers and babies, especially in communities of color. Many factors contribute to these poor outcomes and high costs. The most disturbing by far is the fact that there is a vast body of knowledge regarding best evidence-based maternity care, yet current U.S. practice does not follow that research. This results in the widespread overuse of maternity procedures, including cesarean sections and scheduled inductions, which credible evidence tells us are beneficial only in limited situations.

Unfortunately, the overuse of these practices results in longer maternity hospital stays and multiple costly procedures that contribute to making combined mother and infant childbirth charges our most costly hospital and Medicaid expenditures.

To address these poor outcomes and high costs, today I am introducing the Maximizing Optimal Maternity Services for the 21st Century Act. The MOMS for the 21st Century Act will create a national focus on optimal maternity care by establishing an inter-agency coordinating committee to ensure Federal agencies are promoting the best evidence-based maternity practices in their programs.

□ 1040

The bill also authorizes an extensive media campaign to educate consumers on how to achieve the healthiest maternity outcomes, including the importance of maternity practices such as smoking cessation programs in pregnancy and group model prenatal care.

These and other noninvasive practices have been shown to produce considerable improvement in outcomes with no detrimental side effects but, regrettably, they are significantly underused in this country.

Furthermore, the bill will expand research on best maternity practices and will direct collection of data on maternity shortage areas. It will also facilitate the development of more interdisciplinary maternity care workforce by bringing together maternity care providers to develop core curricula across maternity professional disciplines, and it establishes a loan repayment program for maternity care providers who commit to work in underserved areas.

Finally, the MOMS for the 21st Century Act will support the education of a more culturally and linguistically diverse workforce by authorizing grant programs for maternity professional organizations to recruit and retain minority providers.

Mr. Speaker, we can and we must do better for mothers and newborns. As a country, we must reach beyond our self-imposed boundaries to embrace and prioritize an evidence-based model of maternity care that will save lives and save money.

I urge my colleagues to join me in this effort by cosponsoring and helping to pass the MOMS for the 21st Century Act.

HONORING PRIVATE JEREMY FAULKNER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this morning with sadness but with great pride to honor one of Georgia's proud sons who gave his life, the ultimate sacrifice, on March 29 in Kunar province, Afghanistan, in support of operation Enduring Freedom.

Private Jeremy Faulkner was a man known for having a huge heart and always sticking up for the underdog. Jeremy grew up in Stockbridge, Georgia, and joined the Army after attending Griffin High School. This is a time in life when many young men struggle with their future, but Private Faulkner answered the call and chose a life of service in the United States Army to make a difference in the world and to keep our Nation safe.

He gave up his red Dodge Ram for a new kind of vehicle with the U.S. Army 101st Airborne and learned a whole new meaning of the word "mudding" at basic training. Private Faulkner had already earned a combat ribbon, was an expert marksman, and had discussed with his mother, Judy, the possibility of making a career out of military service.

Private Faulkner was in his 11th month of deployment and days away from promotion to Private First Class when his unit was ambushed. Just a few short weeks before his anticipated return home, he had expressed a desire to join the Wings in the Wind Christian ministry upon his return as a way to share his testament from the seat of a motorcycle.

In perhaps a prophetic phone call to his stepfather, Private Faulkner mentioned to his stepfather, Tony Berry, his request that if anything should happen to him that the Wings in the Wind and Patriot Guard Riders would be present at his procession. No one expected just how soon that procession would be needed.

Through three counties, crowds of strangers lined the streets escorting Private Faulkner home as a testament to the community's support of Jeremy and his family. As Jeremy requested, the Wings in the Wind and Patriot Guard Riders roared to accompany dozens of police and fire department vehicles in an inspiring procession fit for such a young hero.

As former Rhodes scholar Elmer Davis put it so simply, "The Nation will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the brave."

Our Nation owes Private Jeremy Faulkner a debt of gratitude for his bravery, and I am proud to stand here and thank him for sacrificing his life for strangers like me and my family as well as the rest of the United States of America.

So to Jeremy's family and especially to Jeremy, thank you.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE IN SYRIA

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

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to stand shoulder to shoulder with the legitimate aims of Syrian people in their quest for freedom and democracy.

Ever since the Syrian people rose up to demand their rights and dignity from the Assad regime, they have faced brutal repression. Their nonviolent protest movement has been met with repressive force, and this has been a disgrace on the world scene.

The human rights abuses of the Assad regime are unthinkable, and they are historic and generational. It is torturing its own people at this time, including even children.

I was shocked and outraged by the story of Hamza al-Khatib. He was a 13-year-old boy who was killed and tortured and his body was returned to his family on May 25 with clear signs of torture and brutality. He had a broken hand; his genitals were cut off and severed. This young man, only 13 years old, will never see his family again because he has gone on.

But what happened to him the Syrian people can't forget, and his example has inspired people to stand up for democracy. Over the past 3 months, a familiar pattern has emerged. People organize public demonstrations to demand their God-given rights. Inevitably, the government forces overreact and kill peaceful protesters. Funerals for the deceased garner even larger demonstrations, which are then repressed ever more brutally by the government.

The emergency situation in Syria today reached a new level when tanks rolled into Daraa. Since that time, hundreds of peaceful demonstrators have been killed. Just this morning, this very morning, Syrian forces killed 15 people when they shelled the town of Rastan. Fifty-eight people have been killed there in the past 3 days alone. Over a thousand have been killed since democracy protests began.

Mr. Speaker, it's truly unfortunate that the Assad regime missed the historic opportunity that it had right before it to set a new pattern in the Arab Spring, a pattern that above all respects human rights. Instead, it chose to become an enemy of its own people.

By murdering its own people and violating their fundamental right to secu-

rity and liberty, the Assad regime has lost any and all legitimacy to govern. Legitimacy is gained through the consent of the governed, not brutal repressive crackdowns, jailings, and torturing.

While we don't know yet how events will ultimately unfold in Syria, I want to commend the activism of Syrian Americans. Syrian Americans are doing everything they can to support their friends and their families. For example, just last week the Syrian American Council organized a day of action to support freedom and democracy in Syria. Some 400-plus Syrian Americans came all across the country to come to Washington, D.C., to lobby their Representatives in Congress, to demonstrate at the Syrian Embassy, and to organize committees to plan future initiatives.

That's how democracy works, Mr. Speaker; people coming together with their common concerns to peaceably petition their government. That's what makes America great, and that's what sets us apart from places like Syria under the Assad regime. Syria could be a great bastion of liberty, but not with this illegitimate regime.

I stand with the patriotic Americans in steadfast opposition to the grotesque human rights abuses of the Assad regime and once and for all call upon it to respect the rights, dignity, and democratic aspirations of its people. The world will not forget Hamza al-Khatib, Mr. Speaker. We won't forget the legitimate yearnings for liberty and justice from the people of Syria or anywhere in the world.

□ 1050

AMERICANS HAVE SPENDING FATIGUE

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

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Quarterly today has a headline that says, "Some House Republicans Showing Signs of War Fatigue." Unfortunately, this headline comes just the day after the Appropriations Defense Subcommittee has approved another \$119 billion for our overseas wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. That's \$10 billion a month and \$2.3 billion each week.

By the most conservative estimates, we have now spent over \$2 trillion in direct and indirect costs in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of this money has gone into nation building rather than stopping or defending against any real threat. We have turned the Department of Defense into the Department of Foreign Aid, and the American people are tired of it. They want us to stop rebuilding Iraq and Afghanistan and start taking care of our own people. We are spending billions and billions that we do not have—that we are having to borrow—on people who do not appreciate it unless they are on our payroll.

Alfred Regnery, publisher of the conservative American Spectator magazine, wrote last October that "Afghanistan has little strategic value" and "the war is one of choice rather than necessity." He added that it has been "a wasteful and frustrating decade."

The American people do not want, nor can we afford, endless, permanent wars. Nor do they want 11 or 12-year wars that last about three times as long as World War II.

You can never satisfy governments' appetite for money or land. They always want more.

Every gigantic bureaucracy always wants to expand its mission so it can get more funding. Every government agency always exaggerates the threats or problems it is confronting so it can get more money.

The Pentagon is a gigantic bureaucracy that will do everything within its tremendous power to keep getting more and more money from the taxpayers. But there have to be limits somewhere, and fiscal conservatives should be the ones most horrified by all the hundreds of billions we have poured, and continued to pour, down these Iraqi, Afghan, Libyan rat holes.

The American people and conservative Republicans all over this country are saying enough is enough. They want us to stop rebuilding Iraq and Afghanistan and paying for a useless war in Libya and start rebuilding the United States of America.

We are almost \$14 trillion in debt and headed much, much higher very, very soon. Soon, we will be printing so much money that our Social Security and other pensions will be worth very little. We have got to get our fiscal house in order. We have got to stop spending hundreds of billions all over the world and start taking care of our own people.

Georgie Anne Geyer, the conservative foreign policy columnist, wrote a few months after the Iraqi war started many years ago that "Americans will inevitably come to a point where they have to choose between a government that provides services at home or one that seeks empire across the globe."

Mr. Speaker, the American people reached that point a long time ago. Hopefully, the Congress will soon follow their lead.

AMERICA'S HOUSING CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, in 2008, gas prices that rose above \$4 a gallon triggered the Wall Street meltdown and housing crisis that continue to plague our country. We're in the same boat today again with gas prices going over \$4 a gallon, so be prepared.

I rise today to talk about that housing crisis that is devaluing our housing stock across our country and destroying neighborhoods and communities across the Nation.