

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, later today we will vote on a resolution to reduce Federal non-security spending to the 2008 level or in some cases less. This is a very good first step if we follow through and abide by this resolution. However, we need to make sure that these cuts are real and not simply cuts that will be reinstated later in an end-of-the-year omnibus spending bill.

More importantly, I want to add my voice to the growing chorus that is saying loud and clear that nothing should be left off the table. There is waste in every Federal department and agency, and the waste in the Defense and Homeland Security Departments is huge. No department should be given a free pass and made exempt from cost savings and belt-tightening.

We have a national debt of over \$14 trillion, a mind-boggling incomprehensible figure. Even The Washington Post, which has usually supported every Federal spending program imaginable, editorialized recently, “It’s time to stop worrying about the deficit—and start panicking about the debt. The fiscal situation was serious before the recession. It is now dire.”

THE LEAVING ETHANOL AT EXISTING LEVELS ACT

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about legislation that I will reintroduce that will put a pause on the Environmental Protection Agency’s actions in moving forward with a waiver for an increase in the amount of ethanol in gasoline.

Currently, gasoline contains a 10 percent blend wall. In October of this past year, the EPA granted a waiver for the allowable amount of ethanol to increase to 15 percent.

I have questioned their decision to move forward with a waiver for E15. I was wholly dissatisfied with the response they gave in a briefing last fall. They deferred to the Department of Energy’s research. Does the EPA not employ its own scientists and experts? Is it the EPA’s position that it is incapable of doing its own research?

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the problems that occurred in 2008 with food-to-fuel diversion and the resultant increase in price in commodities. I don’t believe the EPA has done its due diligence. And certainly they haven’t provided information that would disprove any fears about the use of E15 causing mechanical failures and fires, particularly in smaller engines.

My bill will allow for a pause and allow for more assurances to be made that the increase in the blend wall for ethanol will be safe. The security of the public’s well-being should be paramount in this issue.

CALLING FOR A SPECIAL ENVOY ON RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH CENTRAL ASIA

(Mr. WOLF asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, last week the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission held a hearing on the plight of Christian minorities in Iraq and Egypt. In the wake of the devastating attacks targeting Christians in both countries, it is clear that religious minorities in the Middle East are facing a serious threat that must be addressed. This recent spate of violence has driven many Christians and other religious minorities to flee the lands they have inhabited for centuries and attempt to emigrate to the West. If the international community fails to speak out, the prospects for religious pluralism and tolerance in the region are bleak.

President Reagan once said that the U.S. Constitution is “a covenant that we have made not only with ourselves, but with all of mankind.” I believe the United States has an obligation to speak out for the voiceless around the world.

This week I will introduce, with other Members, a bill which would require the administration to appoint a Special Envoy for religious minorities in the Middle East and South Central Asia in order to make this issue a foreign policy priority, and I ask my colleagues to join me.

□ 1410

HONORING TODD BUCH

(Mr. FITZPATRICK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Middletown Community Foundation and to honor one of my constituents from Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Mr. Todd Buch.

Each year, the Middletown Community Foundation honors a local resident with the Humanitarian of the Year award. The Middletown Community Foundation is a nonprofit organization created to improve the quality of life for individuals who live and work in my hometown of Middletown Township, Bucks County.

This year it is the Humanitarian Award that is being presented to Mr. Todd Buch. Todd is the president of McCafferty Auto Group in Langhorne. Todd and his family have been generous and enthusiastic supporters of their community for decades, and his award from the Middletown Community Foundation is very fitting. Todd’s business achievements alone have been impressive, with his dealership sustaining hundreds of jobs in Bucks County. Todd’s contributions to the community have gone beyond his leadership in the business community.

Mr. Speaker, the time allotted to this speech today is frankly insufficient to list all of Todd’s achievements and contributions in this regard. Just a few recipients of Todd’s generosity have been the Neshaminy High School Choir, the Neshaminy High School Aloha Bowl Parade, Pennsbuy High School, Bristol Township High School, the United Way, Middletown Township, and countless others.

Mr. Speaker, during a month when we honored the service of Martin Luther King, I am reminded of the great civil rights leader’s quote that “anyone can be great because anyone can serve.” By this measure and countless others, Todd Buch is truly great; and I am proud to honor him today.

MEDICAID

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, most States, including my own State of Pennsylvania, are facing significant budget problems this fiscal year. The fiscal situation in some States eerily resembles Greece and Ireland.

Unfortunately, the Federal Government is adding fuel to the fire with new Medicaid mandates that could cost the States billions of dollars. ObamaCare burdens the States in two ways. First, it requires them to enroll millions more beneficiaries. While the Federal Government will at first pay for the benefits of these new enrollees, the States will gradually have to start picking up the tab. Second, the Federal Government will only help cover the cost of benefits, not the administrative costs associated with all these new enrollees. Since some States will be forced to nearly double their Medicaid rolls, this will certainly hit their budgets hard.

We cannot forget that 49 of 50 States are required to balance their budgets every year. They will face the grim choice of discontinuing their Medicaid program, raising taxes, or slashing other essential government services.

We have talked a lot about ObamaCare bankrupting the Federal Government, but we can’t forget that it could drive States over the cliff at the same time.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SMITH of Nebraska). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 2 o’clock and 12 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1715

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro

tempore (Mr. MACK) at 5 o'clock and 15 minutes p.m.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE RESOLUTION 38, REDUCING NON-SECURITY SPENDING TO FISCAL YEAR 2008 LEVELS OR LESS

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 43 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 43

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider in the House the resolution (H. Res. 38) to reduce spending through a transition to non-security spending at fiscal year 2008 levels. The amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Rules now printed in the resolution shall be considered as adopted. The resolution, as amended, shall be considered as read. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the resolution, as amended, to final adoption without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Rules or their respective designees; and (2) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield the customary 30 minutes to my good friend from Worcester (Mr. McGOVERN). All time yielded will be for debate purposes only.

Pending that, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, runaway Federal spending is one of the most significant issues that this Congress is facing. Our national debt has implications for nearly every major challenge that we must confront. It's tied to our economic recovery, it's tied to our national security, it's tied to our ability to deliver on our constitutional mandate for transparent, limited and responsive government.

The time to exercise our power of the purse with discipline and restraint is long overdue. Let me say that again: the time for us to exercise our power-of-the-purse restraint is long, long overdue. We must return to pre-bailout, pre-binge spending levels for funding the Federal Government.

We know that a great deal of hard work and tough decisions lie ahead for every single Member of this institution. We know that a great deal of hard work is there; and we're going to face some very difficult, tough, tough decisions. They are going to be difficult decisions; but, Mr. Speaker, they are decisions that we're going to have to make.

First and foremost, we must get our economy growing and our workforce

expanding again. Strong growth and job creation will increase tax revenues and provide greater resources that are needed; but, Mr. Speaker, that's only half of the equation. Economic growth is critically important. We need to do it so that we can enhance the flow of revenues to the Federal Treasury to deal with those essential items that are there, but it is half the equation.

We can't get back onto firm ground with sound fiscal standing unless we have a leaner Federal budget. Some of this can be accomplished by eliminating waste, fraud and abuse. Everybody is always in favor of eliminating waste, fraud and abuse. And what is the best way to do that? Robust oversight. Robust oversight will allow us to streamline Federal spending and make better use of taxpayer dollars, but we have to acknowledge up front that hard work and painful cuts lie ahead. We all know that this is not going to be an easy task, but it is absolutely essential.

Just as families and small businesses across this country have been forced to cut back during these difficult economic times, we here in this institution are going to have to do the same. That's the message that we got last November that brought people like my Rules Committee colleague, Mr. SCOTT, who is sitting next to me on the floor here, that's the message that has been carried here.

Some Federal programs, Mr. Speaker, are wasteful and duplicative and deserve to be cut. There will be others that have merit, but which we simply cannot afford at the current levels. We have to be honest about that. We have to engage in a responsible debate about what our priorities must be.

□ 1720

What we cannot do is allow this debate to degenerate into false accusations about the other side's intentions. And I'm going to repeat that, Mr. Speaker. We cannot let the kind of free-flowing, rigorous debate that we need to have degenerate into these accusations that we so often seem to hear around here.

There is no one in this body who wants to gut funding for key essential programs, like veterans' programs, or like education, child nutrition. No one wants to gut these programs. So I think it's important for us to state that. And there is no evidence that any proposal out there would undermine things like support for our Nation's veterans.

We are all entering into this debate with good faith, good intentions, and a commitment to responsibly address the need to implement fiscal discipline. We will have to make hard choices, but that process will not be served by unfair or disingenuous accusations.

We also recognize that this will be a lengthy process. We are just beginning what is going to be a 2-year process focused on this.

Today's underlying resolution, the measure that we're going to be consid-

ering through this rule and then on the floor tomorrow, is merely the first step in this ongoing effort to bring our Federal budget back into the black. Our committees will have to conduct extensive oversight, as I mentioned earlier, of Federal programs. We will have to dispense with fiscal year 2011 spending, which the last Congress failed to do, before we can even begin to deal with the coming fiscal year.

The underlying resolution that we have before us today lays down a marker for reducing spending and puts the House on record for its commitment to tackle this issue in a serious way. The hard work will follow.

As this process proceeds, rank and file Members of both political parties, Democrats and Republicans alike, will have the opportunity to participate in our effort to address these very tough decisions.

Through constructive debate, we can finally begin to impose real accountability and discipline in our Federal budget. In concert with pro-growth policies—and I said to me the most essential thing is implementing pro-growth economic policies—but going hand-in-hand with these pro-growth policies, Mr. Speaker, this effort will put us back onto the path of economic recovery and job creation.

Today's rule sets the stage for the start of that effort. I'm going to urge my colleagues to support this rule and demonstrate their resolve to tackle runaway Federal spending in a serious way.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the Rules Committee for yielding me the customary 30 minutes, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this closed rule. So much for an open process, and so much for a free flow of ideas. I also rise in strong opposition to the underlying resolution.

Once again, the Republican majority is choosing to ignore the single most important issue facing the American people: jobs. My Republican friends have instead brought forth a resolution, H. Res. 38, that they tout as some sort of spending reduction measure. In fact, the resolution doesn't cut a single dollar—not one dime—from the Federal budget.

If this were a good-faith effort, there would be some numbers in this resolution. Instead, the resolution says that we should “assume non-security spending at fiscal year 2008 levels or less” without defining “non-security” spending or specifying exactly what those levels might be. In other words, Mr. Speaker, this is a budget resolution without any numbers, which is why it is so meaningless.

We are told that the numbers are on their way, that the Congressional Budget Office will tell us on Wednesday of this week what the impact of this resolution would be if it were actually put into place. So why are we here