

asked to bear for our military occupations.

Ten billion dollars a month is a lot of money. That's the price tag for the privilege of continuing to wage a 10-year war against Afghanistan: \$10 billion a month. The American people who are writing that check have a right to ask and to get answers to some very important questions: Where is that money going, and what exactly is it accomplishing? What are we getting for our \$10 billion a month? Are we more secure here at home? Is the Afghanistan central government introducing the rule of law? Have we not already defeated al Qaeda? And so who are we fighting and why?

For \$10 billion a month, Mr. Speaker, our expectations as taxpayers, as Americans, and as Members of Congress, should be high. Is it too much to think that \$10 billion a month could buy a stable ally, an ally capable of standing on its own two feet, taking responsibility for its own security, and having respect for the rule of law? Instead, corruption and chaos are ruling the day in Kabul. Basic government institutions are failing to provide services. President Karzai has tried to establish a special court, in fact, for the purpose of stripping 62 members of Parliament of their seats. The financial system is teetering on the brink of collapse with the head of the central bank fleeing the country and accusing Karzai's regime of fraud and cronyism.

And just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, a brawl broke out on the floor of the Afghan Parliament with one member throwing a shoe at another member when a motion was proposed to impeach President Karzai. For \$10 billion a month, is it not too much to ask that the Afghan Parliament not look like an episode of the "Jerry Springer Show"?

There is so much we could do with \$10 billion a month right here at home, especially at a moment when so many of our people are struggling and so many of our communities so badly need public investment, especially at a moment when the clock is ticking toward a catastrophic default on the national debt. I'm not suggesting that we ignore or that we run away from Afghanistan's deep-seated problems, but I believe we cannot begin to address their needs with a military solution. It will never work. It is time to reinvest at pennies on the dollar in Smart Security efforts, humanitarian and civilian aid, aid that will promote democracy, and economic support to address poverty and to rebuild infrastructure in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, this is a moment and this is a time where we put our priorities in order, but it's not a job for our troops. They have served with unbelievable valor. Now it's time to bring them safely home and invest in a humanitarian way in Afghanistan.

DEBT CEILING SOLUTIONS

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

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, Congress has a very important decision to make very soon on whether or not to increase the national debt ceiling. Today, our national debt limit is a staggering \$14.3 trillion, and the President is seeking a \$2.2 trillion increase in our debt limit. An increase to our Nation's debt ceiling that is not accompanied by equal or larger spending reductions would be reckless and arrogant.

Speaker BOEHNER was right when he said, "It's true that allowing America to default would be irresponsible, but it would be more irresponsible to raise the debt ceiling without simultaneously taking dramatic steps to reduce spending and reform the budget process."

This debate is a unique opportunity to achieve significant and serious spending reforms in Washington and to prove to the American people that their employees, the Members of the United States Congress, are listening to them.

I believe this is our best chance for the foreseeable future to obtain substantial and credible long-term deficit reductions, to reform the way Washington spends taxpayer dollars, and save America from ruin.

Elections matter. Last fall changed the debate here in Washington. We may not be cutting spending as fast as some of us prefer, and quite frankly, I have been frustrated by the pace. But the discussion has shifted to how much should we cut, not how much should we spend. This distinction is critical to getting our Nation's fiscal house in order and one that has been driven by conservatives in the House.

House Republicans have developed a three-fold "cut, cap and balance" strategy that includes deep spending cuts, enforceable spending caps and a balanced budget amendment with strong protections against Federal tax increases. These proposals will ensure that the Federal Government adheres to the same parameters that families and businesses live with every single day.

The time for irresponsible Federal spending is over. With each passing day, our Nation's fiscal problems only compound, leaving our children and grandchildren with a larger legacy of debt. My colleagues on the other side have advocated an increase to our debt with no strings attached. They continue to stand for business as usual right here in Washington, DC. But we cannot ignore the problem, nor can we simply tax our way out of this mess.

Furthermore, in the event we fully reach the debt ceiling, we cannot trust the White House to prioritize our debt payments, nor can we trust the administration not to default on our obligations. The American people must remember that if we default on our debt, the executive branch would have full

control over what programs get cut, not Congress.

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Mr. Speaker, the only resolution to this problem is to secure trillions in spending cuts and put our Nation on a solid fiscal path to financial sanity, and ensure a strong and prosperous future for our children and our grandchildren.

IMPROVING FEDERAL GRANT SOLICITATION PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. PIERLUISI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, each year, 26 Federal agencies award over half a trillion dollars in grant funding. Earlier this year, Congress significantly changed the manner in which the Federal Government allocates funding. In the past, State and local governments and nonprofit organizations spent a great deal of time trying to persuade individuals Members of Congress to earmark funds to support local projects.

While debate will no doubt continue on the value of congressionally directed spending, the reality is that, at least for the time being, the days of earmarks are over. With a ban on earmarks, a greater emphasis will now be placed on competitive grants, whereby applicants from across the Nation compete for funding made available for different purposes.

In theory, a larger role for competitive grants in the Federal appropriations process holds promise. Under a well-administered grant competition, an application is judged on its merits. In practice, however, an increased emphasis on competitive grants will only improve the overall process if the Federal Government announces and publicizes grant opportunities in a clear and organized manner. Grant seeking will not be a true meritocracy if the process of identifying, applying for, and obtaining Federal grants is clouded in mystery and confusion and understood only by paid experts.

In 1999, Congress created a Web site, grants.gov, which allows applicants to search and apply for grants online. But much more needs to be done to make the grant solicitation process as transparent and user friendly as possible.

Many of my constituents have expressed frustration with the manner in which the Federal Government makes grant opportunities known. Often, a potential grantee will seek to apply for needed funding only to learn that the deadline for the most relevant grant passed days or weeks earlier. In other instances, prospective applicants will search grants.gov, but become frustrated upon finding that they need to scroll through pages and pages of grant listings, some of which are outdated or have not been funded by Congress.

To address these problems, I recently introduced H.R. 2393. This bipartisan

legislation would make two important changes to the Federal grant solicitation process. First, my bill would require each Federal agency, within 2 months of the start of any fiscal year, to submit a forecast of all grants solicitations that the agency expects to issue for that year. Such a forecast would allow prospective applicants to determine in advance which grant opportunities they wish to apply for.

The second improvement my bill would make is to require each grant solicitation forecast or listing to be organized by detailed subject area. Grants.gov currently organizes grant opportunities by agency and by very broad areas such as energy or housing. As a result, when an applicant seeks to search for health-related grants, for example, he or she must scroll through 30 pages of grant listings. My bill would require grants.gov, as well as all other Federal agencies, to organize grant opportunities by specific subject areas so that the applicants can more easily identify those grants that are most likely to address their needs.

Now, let me turn to Puerto Rico, which I represent in this Congress. And it pains me that some statements were made earlier on this floor regarding my beautiful island and its government. Puerto Rico shines because of its democracy. Every 4 years we have free elections, and our voters go out and express their will at the rate of 80 percent, which is something that we are very proud of.

We do have a police department in Puerto Rico, actually the second-largest in the Nation, and there is an ongoing civil rights investigation by the Department of Justice. But I am sure, and I can vouch, that the police department of Puerto Rico is doing everything it can so that any civil rights violations are corrected and are not repeated.

Again, I wish when we talk about Puerto Rico in this Congress, we talk about all of the positive things that are happening in that island, including our people's love of their American citizenship and their rights under the U.S. Constitution.

TOUGH DECISIONS TO SOLVE FISCAL PROBLEMS

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

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, let's think about something very quickly. What is the most basic job that we can do—in the House of Representatives or in the Senate of the United States—in government?

One of the most basic jobs we do is to pass a budget; to figure out where we are going to spend money and how we are going to spend money. Yet it has been 799 days today since the other Chamber has passed a budget out of the Senate. Since that day, we have added \$3.2 trillion in debt to our country and we have spent \$7.3 trillion.

Now we are finding ourselves bumping up against this debt ceiling, against the statutory limit of where we can spend and borrow money. We are on this record clip, this record pace to blow through this debt ceiling, and we are here.

In 2006, now-President Obama stood in front of the Senate and said that raising America's debt limit is a sign of leadership failure. Well, sounds like we are in that position today. Five years later, we are once again talking about an over \$2 trillion increase in our Nation's ability to borrow money, which we are tacking on to the responsibility of our kids and our grandkids. Once again, we're back.

We have an extreme failure of leadership in this country that is of epic proportions. We know, we look at our budget, we see over a trillion-and-a-half dollars this year that we are spending that we haven't taken in, and yet we are continuing to haggle about whether we need to just raise taxes or have spending cuts.

We have a spending problem in this country; we don't have a revenue problem in this country. We have a problem with how much money we are spending.

I am a new Member of Congress. I came here and was sworn in in January, and within a couple of days the President of the United States asked us to increase the debt limit without any corresponding cuts or anything along those lines. I actually thought it was a joke. I mean, really, we are going to add another \$2 trillion onto our debt and not even take seriously the fact that we are just piling on more and more interest.

I mean, we're spending more in interest right now than we do in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan combined. Think about that; two wars, and we are spending more in interest. And it is only going to increase every year.

I can tell you, the youth of America, the current generation that is in charge in America is all sitting around saying at some point the insanity has to end. You know, I travel around the 11th Congressional District in Illinois, which includes Joliet, places like Ottawa and Morris, Bloomington, Princeton, Peru. And you know what I hear from people? I don't hear them say, Congressman KINZINGER, boy, we sure have a revenue problem in this country; don't we? I hear them say, Congressman, we are spending too much money. We have a spending problem.

The President is asking us to increase the debt limit. We have to be willing to have at least as much as we are going to increase the debt limit or more in spending cuts for us to even consider it at this point. It has got to be done. And how best are we going to get out of debt? Yes, we have to have these spending cuts. And, yes, we have to get serious about our budget. But we have to get America back to work.

I think it was put well yesterday. Mr. President, where are the jobs? Where are the jobs? Mr. Speaker, I'm asking: Where are the jobs?

It is time that we get America back to work. We turn people then from tax recipients to taxpayers. And as much as I like to say "where are the jobs?," let me ask another question: Where is the leadership?

We've got to make tough decisions. It's time that we stand up and say I'm tired of kicking the can down the road. I wasn't sent to Washington, D.C., to kick the can down the road. I was sent here to be a leader and to make tough decisions. And I can tell you, House Republicans are ready to be leaders and make tough decisions, but we have to have willing partners on the other side.

I know 2012 is just around the corner. I get it. I understand that. But 2011 is still now. America can't afford to forget that 2011 still exists and to just focus on the next election. We have to focus long term on the next generation. Let's get our budgets in gear. Let's have a real serious discussion. And for goodness sake, let's put politics aside and make sure that we are still the strongest country in the world.

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IN RECOGNITION OF NCTC DIRECTOR MICHAEL E. LEITER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the distinguished efforts of the National Counterterrorism Center Director, Michael E. Leiter.

Following his exemplary service as the Assistant Director and Deputy General Counsel for the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the U.S. regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction, Mr. Leiter continued his public service as the Deputy Chief of Staff in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. He was very successful in organizing staffing and in establishing processes for this new but critical office.

As such, he was elected to become the Principal Deputy Director at the National Counterterrorism Center. Because of his superlative efforts, in June 2008, he was confirmed as the Director of NCTC where he has focused on counterterrorism, community development and mission execution. His focus has prepared the CT analysts of tomorrow to meet the challenges ahead, and his management style has encouraged information sharing and the free flow of ideas.

Director Leiter has always understood that results mattered and that a success rate of less than 100 percent meant lives lost. Some of the center's most noticeable accomplishments will remain largely secret; however, Director Leiter's strategic investments will pay dividends for many years to come. Under his leadership, the center vastly improved its processes for screening CT data and deployed a new database, better known as TIDE, that has yielded