

Bring Them Home. Let Them Live.” Mr. Snow is a well-known and respected correspondent in North Carolina.

“It seems we never run out of wars. It is as if one small country after another sends out engraved invitations reading: ‘We’re having a war. Please come.’”

“And Uncle Sam goes, lugging borrowed billions and thousands of young men and women to sacrifice on the altar of so-called ‘freedom’ or ‘nation-building.’”

Mr. Speaker, I go back to the two little girls in this picture. How many more children will be at the graveside of a loved one? How many more will have to know the pain of war?

I further quote from AC Snow’s article, which is quoted from the play *Les Misérables*: “He is young. He is only a boy. You can take. You can give. Let him be. Let him live. Bring him home. Bring him home. It’s way past time to stop playing politics with the lives of America’s youth. Bring them home. Let them live, not just 30,000 of them—all of them.”

I agree with Mr. Snow and many others across this Nation who are calling for our troops to come home. Bin Laden is dead, and there are fewer than 30 al Qaeda remaining in Afghanistan, according to intelligence reports. We have done our job. We have won. It is time to bring them home.

The reason I continue to come down here on the floor is because of a statement former Secretary of Defense Bob Gates made before the Armed Services Committee in February, and I sit on that committee:

“That is why we believe that, beginning in fiscal year 2015, the United States can, with minimal risk, begin reducing Army active duty end strength by 27,000 and the Marine Corps by somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000. These projections assume that the number of troops in Afghanistan would be significantly reduced by the end of 2014, in accordance with the President’s strategy.”

I share this because I believe we are still in a black hole even with the President withdrawing 10,000 troops this year. Let’s not wait until 2014 or 2015. Let’s not bring any more pain to our military families. Our job is done. Let’s bring them home.

Mr. Speaker, before closing, one more time, on the faces of these little girls is the face of pain, of a daddy they will never grow up to know. It is time to bring them home, Mr. Speaker. It is time to bring them home.

On behalf of Eden and Stephanie and all the children across this country who have lost loved ones, may God bless you and your families. May God bless our men and women in uniform, and may God continue to bless America.

JOBS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, as we go home to our districts, I am certain that no constituents have said they wake up in the morning wondering about what we’re going to do with the debt ceiling. In my district, most wonder how they’re going to get a job, how they’re going to take care of their families.

So many Americans have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. They didn’t commit any wrongdoing. They lost their savings. Many are homeless. They’ve lost their self-esteem. They’ve lost their health benefits, and they’re looking toward this Congress to kind of put America on the right track—to restore the middle class that made us such a great and successful Nation.

Instead of talking about jobs, we find ourselves holding the President hostage by saying, unlike other Presidents, we’re not going to increase the debt ceiling. This is a technical way of saying that we owe \$14.3 trillion to people whom we borrowed from for unnecessary wars, for tax cuts that shouldn’t have been there, and for a variety of things that unemployed people throughout the United States are just not responsible for. Instead of talking about jobs, they will tell you we have to cut spending.

□ 1020

So the people who have lost their jobs may lose their Medicaid, those who are poor enough to be eligible for it; the older people that soon will be or are entitled to Medicare and the hospitals and the doctors and the nurses; and, of course, Social Security that so many millions of Americans have come to depend on. Cutting these benefits are not just cutting benefits for the vulnerable, but we’re cutting jobs. You can’t cut benefits without cutting hospital workers, without cutting off nurses and doctors and those that provide the services for the vulnerable.

Is this the only way we can go? Of course not.

Pastors and rabbis and imams all over the country ask: Why are you picking just on the vulnerable? Why are you picking on the sick and the poor and the aged?

Is there another way that we can resolve this problem? You bet your life there is. Because, just as in biblical days, we have among us those who really God has blessed with riches that our parents and grandparents never thought could be accumulated. Are we asking them to pay just a little bit to ease the pain for those that are vulnerable?

I don’t know about you, but our pastors and rabbis have spoken out. And for those of you who don’t have pastors and don’t have rabbis or don’t have time to listen to our obligation morally, to the people that can’t speak for themselves, the people who have no lobbyists, I will place into the RECORD what 4,000 pastors have said is not just our legal and political obligation but,

more importantly, our moral obligation. I will place this into the RECORD for when we come back and try to decide what is our responsibility.

Some people have come to this Congress with a commitment not to raise taxes no matter what, whether we’re attacked, whether the revenue’s coming from obscene tax offenses, whether the Tax Code could be improved.

For those of you who remember kamikaze pilots, these were people who were prepared to lose their own lives in fighting our forces during World War II even if it meant that they were destroying somebody.

There are people here that are prepared to destroy the fiscal reputation of the United States of America so that they can go back home and say they fulfilled their commitment about not raising revenues and about slashing and cutting those people that made this great country the great country that it is.

So I see on television no one talking about the poor. But thank God we do have ministers, priests, rabbis, imams, and of all of the religions and people that have come together, most of whom from foreign lands, that say this land is my land and in this country a poor person can make it, and we never, never, never will forget where we’ve come from.

Some people have managed to get out of poverty. Others have enjoyed the middle class. Let’s hope that our kids and grandkids will be able to enjoy the benefits of doing the right thing.

[From Faith in Public Life and Sojourners, July 19, 2011]

AN OPEN LETTER TO CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT—LISTEN TO YOUR PASTORS

More than 4,000 of them believe the federal budget is not just a fiscal document, but a moral one.

We are local pastors. We work, pray, and do whatever we can to remain faithful to the responsibility of every Christian to help the poor. Still, we can’t meet the crushing needs by ourselves.

Programs like SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, and Head Start aren’t just abstract concepts to us; they serve the same people we serve. There are changes that can be made or efficiencies that can be found, but every day we see what government can do.

We have seen government support allow young people to be the first members of their families to get college degrees, ensure mothers can feed their children a healthy diet, enable those with disabilities to live fulfilling lives, give much needed medical care to those who can’t afford it, support seniors, provide housing for families, and help people in finding a job.

As Christians, we believe the moral measure of the debate is how the most poor and vulnerable people fare. We look at every budget proposal from the bottom up—how it treats those Jesus called the “least of these” (Matthew 25:45). They do not have powerful lobbies, but they have the most compelling claim on our consciences and common resources.

As Christian leaders, we are committed to fiscal responsibility and shared sacrifice. We want to support you in reducing the deficit. There is more need today than churches can meet by themselves. This is why we join in the “Circle of Protection” around programs

that meet the essential needs of hungry and poor people at home and abroad.

THE DEBT CEILING

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

Mr. LONG. Mr. Speaker, our debt ceiling is currently \$14.3 trillion—or more than \$45,000 for every American man, woman, and child. By the end of the year, our debt will be larger than the size of our entire economy, a significant amount of that owed to foreign countries. Oddly enough, even though we're driving faster and faster towards a cliff, instead of slowing down, President Obama is hitting the gas.

After President Bush's second term, the national debt was \$10 trillion. This was accrued over 43 Presidents. In just 2½ years, President Obama has managed to increase our Federal deficit by over \$4.3 trillion, 40 percent since he was sworn into office January 20 of 2009.

Let me say that again. In 2 years our government has borrowed nearly 40 percent of the debt that it took 200 years to accumulate. There is no word in the English language for this kind of recklessness.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Federal Government consumed about 6 to 8 percent of the gross domestic product. Back then America became the greatest industrial power and the wealthiest economy in the history of the world when the Federal Government spent just between 6 and 8 percent of GDP. Today, the Federal Government spends no less than 25 percent of GDP. And on top of that, the rest of the government, State and local, spends even more. Total, around 40 percent of GDP is consumed by government at all levels.

What have we gotten for this unprecedented level of Federal spending? Our infrastructure is crumbling, our economy is weak, and jobs are not being created. If government spending stimulated anything, then business should be booming. It turns out the only stimulus going on is the debt.

And despite all of that, despite common sense, the President is asking for even more credit. The President wants us to trust that government will live within its means this time. Giving a blank check to the government makes as much sense as investing with Bernie Madoff.

Democratic leaders think they can continue to spend as much money as they want whenever they want to. They are upset that Republicans are making a big deal about the debt ceiling increase because they want to be able to spend taxpayer dollars without ever having a check or balance to ask if that spending is necessary.

Enough is enough. It's time to end this irresponsible spending. Families in southwest Missouri cannot spend 42 percent more than they take in, and

neither should the Federal Government.

I came to Washington to stop the spending and abuse of government. That's why I will fight this debt ceiling increase without a serious plan to reduce our debt. And the people of southwest Missouri agree with me.

I have had hundreds of phone calls and emails and messages in my office about the debt ceiling. It is something that the people of the Seventh District feel very strongly about, and I want to share a few of their thoughts with you:

Fifty-one percent of the calls and letters to my office say don't raise the debt ceiling under any circumstances; 26 percent say raise it with substantial cuts; 10 percent are okay to raise it whatever; and 10 percent say you can raise it but do not increase taxes. The people have spoken.

There's an old saying that if you owe the bank a thousand dollars, that's your problem; but if you owe the bank a million dollars, that's the bank's problem. We're at a point where the financial community, our bank, is starting to fear that our problem is becoming their problem. Two major rating agencies, Moody's and Standard & Poor's, have publicly announced that they are going to reassess America's AAA credit rating.

The people have spoken. The business community has spoken. When will the President and the Democrats listen?

Every dollar we spend on political preferences is one more dollar American families cannot spend on their children, one more dollar that small business cannot spend hiring an employee, one more dollar that a worker can't save for his retirement. This time it's serious.

Cut, Cap, and Balance is the first step but by no means the last. We have to make immediate cuts to show the financial community that we're serious about being good on our promise to repay our debts. And the President needs to get serious. He refused to put his plan in writing but vows to veto our Cut, Cap, and Balance. A speech or a framework is not a plan.

Well, the first thing to do when you dig yourself into a hole is to stop digging. We need commonsense reforms that will make sure this will not happen again. We need spending caps, a balanced budget amendment, spending cuts which will balance our budget. But most of all, we need something that's not very common: common sense.

I would like to close with one of the hundreds of letters from one of my constituents:

"Dear Congressman LONG, do not budge. We put you in office to stop these big spenders. Go ahead and call his bluff. I am in tornado-ravaged Joplin and rebuilding my house. I'm glad you are covering my wallet in Washington."

VOTER ID SUPPRESSION LAWS

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

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia, BOBBY SCOTT.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I rise today in opposition to an unfortunate trend that seems to be creeping up all over the country: laws requiring voters to show some form of photo ID before voting. Currently, 29 States have laws on the books requiring all voters to show some form of identification before voting, and many of these require a photo ID.

Now, my home State of Virginia requires voter identification or a signature on an affirmation of identity form, which is a much better process.

□ 1030

This year, many other State legislatures are considering measures that would require voters to have an actual identification. While voter ID may seem like a good way to keep voter fraud at a minimum, this type of requirement has serious unintended consequences.

Mr. Speaker, requiring a photo ID will make it a little bit more difficult for some voters to exercise their right to vote. We should particularly be concerned that provisions like these have a disparate impact on minorities. One nationwide study of voting-age citizens found that African Americans are more than three times as likely as others to lack a government-issued photo ID. And these laws have unintended consequences, such as the situation where nuns were denied the right to vote because they couldn't produce a photo ID, even though they were personally known to the election officials.

It's obvious that voter ID laws will not prevent people from voting, but it creates another little barrier that will mean that a few potential voters will not get their paperwork in on time and will miss the voter registration deadlines. These few voters could make the difference in an election.

Mr. Speaker, these voter ID laws are a solution in search of a problem. There's no credible evidence that in-person voter fraud is a persistent problem. And the voters who will be denied the opportunity to vote under these processes will certainly outnumber any fraudulent votes that are prevented. Voting is not an arbitrary, inconsequential act.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we ensure that every eligible voter is given the opportunity to vote free from any unnecessary barriers.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. I now yield to the gentleman from Georgia, Congressman JOHN LEWIS, "Mr. Civil Rights."

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act made it possible for all of our citizens to become participants in the democratic process.

Mr. Speaker, voting rights are under attack in America. There's a deliberate