

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

and systematic attempt to prevent millions of elderly voters, young voters, students, minority, and low-income voters from exercising their constitutional right to engage in the democratic process. Voter ID laws are becoming all too common.

But make no mistake: Voter ID laws are a poll tax. People who struggle to pay for basic necessities cannot afford a voter ID.

The right to vote is precious and almost sacred and one of the most important blessings of our democracy. Today we must be strong in protecting that blessing. We should be making it easy, simple, and convenient for people to vote.

Before the Voting Rights Act of 1965, people stood in unmovable lines. Sometimes people were asked to count the number of bubbles in a bar of soap, the number of jelly beans in a jar. People were asked to pass a so-called literacy test. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, and college professors flunked the so-called literacy test. Before the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 46 years ago, many people were jailed, beaten, and some were even killed for trying to register and vote.

We must not step backward toward another dark period in our history. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have in a democratic society. We must fight back. We must speak up and speak out. We must never, ever go back.

We will not stand idly by while millions of Americans are denied their right to participate in the democratic process.

#### CUT, CAP, AND BALANCE

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

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Cut, Cap, and Balance Act.

The national debt has shattered confidence in our economy, has cost jobs, and is preventing our economic recovery. Working families across our Nation are living within their means during tough times. If the rest of America gets it, why doesn't Washington?

I recently did a Main Street-style walk-and-talk in my district where I met with a number of small business owners and their employees. They shared their concern about our out-of-control debt and frustration with Washington for enacting policies that hold down job creation and economic growth rather than fostering an environment that will enable them to thrive. But the comment I heard most often was, "What is Washington thinking?" I told them I really don't understand it either.

President Obama has spent his administration enacting policies that have added more debt to our Nation than the previous 43 Presidents combined. The tragic reality is that the President's big spending policies only

made things worse. Unemployment is at 9.2 percent, and that doesn't count the millions who have given up. The President merely fomented a cycle of debt and joblessness that defines the last 2½ years, which has placed us where we're at today.

Now, with the national debt at crisis levels, he is standing in the way of commonsense solutions; offering only lectures, not leadership. He has asked Congress to consent to continue business as usual without making serious spending reforms.

As a matter of conscience, this Congress cannot support allowing President Obama to continue to steer America's debt past the point of no return. Mr. Speaker, we will be judged harshly, and rightfully so, by future generations if we fail to act. The Cut, Cap, and Balance Act ends the era of rampant government spending. It immediately reduces spending by \$100 billion, cuts \$6 trillion over the next 10 years, and demands a strong balanced budget amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Cut, Cap, and Balance Act is what the American people want and what Washington desperately needs.

#### CONGRATULATING THE ELECTRIC BOAT WORKFORCE

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, in March of 2009, the USS *Hartford*, a 17-year-old Los Angeles-class submarine, was steaming into port in the Strait of Hormuz. Visibility was low, and they were riding at ocean surface level when, out of the blue, they were struck by the USS *San Antonio*, an LPD amphibious ship. When it violently collided with the *Hartford*, the *Hartford* rolled 85 degrees, throwing sailors, anything that wasn't tied down, flying into the air.

The good news is that the collision did not result in a breach of the submarine. There was no leak through the pressure hull. But the bad news is that the sail of the submarine was badly torn 20 to 25 degrees.

The ship limped home to its home port in Groton, Connecticut, which was a tough voyage going across the Atlantic, again riding at the surface, which, as many people who know submariners know, is the worst place to ride a submarine. But it made it back to port.

And then the challenge was before the shipyard about how to repair a ship that was 17 years old, that was built with totally different technology, hand-drawn prints, a workforce that had largely retired, and parts that really weren't in existence anymore. But the folks at Electric Boat, 450 strong, came together as a team and, calling back some of their retirees, were able, over a period of 18 months, to perform the most ultimate body shop repair job of a Los Angeles-class submarine.

And I'm happy to report to this House that the USS *Hartford* is now back underway, performing its missions, and will extend the life of, again, a submarine that this country invested close to \$1 billion 20 years ago when it was first constructed. Again, the replacement costs, if this work had not been done, would be close to \$2 billion. What the folks at EB were able to do, again, at a cost of about 5 percent of that, was to get the USS *Hartford* operating and at great savings to the U.S. taxpayer.

And I want to share this story because it demonstrates that when you invest in people, nuclear welders today, as Admiral Kevin McCoy testified before the House Armed Services Committee last week, have a value to the U.S. workforce almost as great as a surgeon in terms of the skills that they have.

□ 1040

When you invest in people, when you have those skills and when you have the kind of teamwork that we see at EB, this country can succeed in ways that no other country in the world can even touch us. The complexity of a nuclear submarine matches anything that a space shuttle entails in terms of the challenges to support human life in an environment where human life cannot exist. And the capabilities of one of these vessels, again, defy almost human imagination.

So congratulations to the workforce at Electric Boat for showing again that the United States of America is capable of almost taking on any challenge when it has the right combination of investment, skill and talent, something which, as we look at our challenges that we face as a Nation today, is something that we can both take inspiration from, but also learn valuable lessons about where the right priorities of this government should be. And investing in education, workforce skills again is the best investment to grow this economy and solve America's problem.

Mr. Speaker, I will include in the RECORD an article from The New London Day written by Jennifer McDermott, which again documents this amazing story of technological success.

[From TheDay.com, July 17, 2011]

ELECTRIC BOAT GETS USS HARTFORD BACK TO SEA

(By Jennifer McDermott)

REPAIRS TO DAMAGED SUB TOTAL \$120 MILLION

GROTON, CT.—Repairing a severely damaged 17-year-old submarine with the technology Electric Boat uses to build modern subs was like reconstructing a Ford Model T in a Lexus shop.

The Navy contracted with EB for about \$120 million worth of repairs to the USS *Hartford* after the Los Angeles-class submarine collided with a Navy amphibious ship in the Strait of Hormuz in 2009.

The Navy wanted the submarine back at sea as soon as possible—ideally, in one year.

The repair team at EB knew the *Hartford* (SSN 768) had rolled about 85 degrees and