

of Americans, and it is solvent, and it's important to know that America is not broke.

But the good work of the Ways and Means Committee and the good work of the Judiciary Committee, which is meeting right now—and I'll be heading on to that committee to talk about preventing corruption in business and making sure the American people get their fair share. It is important that we move on. And how do we move on? We do something that Americans have said by and large that they want us to do together, and that is to get past this debt ceiling, do something that has been done time after time after time.

Yes, we have grown as a Nation, and the reason is because in World War II we were not 300 million-plus people. We didn't have all the assets and responsibilities. In fact, the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan were longer than World War II, and all of those moneys were spent under the last administration. Tax cuts that for individuals who, by and large, have said, No, thank you, because they want to invest in America.

So I'm prepared to join with my many friends to work on moving this country forward, but let's move on. Let's move on beyond the impossible proposal given by Speaker BOEHNER that focuses on a two vote process for the debt ceiling increase and vote once then come back and fight it out again in 6 months. That is not the consistency and the evenness that is necessary for all of those who are seeking employment or all of those businesses or all of those in the arena of money making. They need an even pathway, they need consistency for the markets.

We need to get on with the ordinary business so that we can begin to talk about the growth of this country, education for the young people, making sure the doors of businesses stay open, talk about how do we fix a tax system where we all can benefit. But as long as we are wallowing in the ordinary work, the work that should just go on, we will never reach the point of sanity, which is to sit down at the table of reconciliation and compromise. I know we have it in us. We like each other. But it appears to the American people that we may not like them.

So I will just ask, we're nearing the resolution of the debt ceiling, again, to pay the bills that were built up between 2000 and 2008, billions of dollars spent in Afghanistan, billions lost in untoward contracts. We don't even know where the moneys have gone—Iraq, moneys lost; a war that was, in essence, a detour.

And let me just say, every time I say that, I always thank our soldiers and their families because they are not a detour. They accepted the call to duty, and we owe them a great deal of appreciation.

But the policymakers sent them into wars that are going on and on and on, and it caused this country to pay for these wars. At the same time, there are drastic draconian cuts in the revenue

coming into the United States bank account.

So here we are, President Clinton having left in 2000 with \$500 billion of surplus; we came out of 2008 in enormous debt. So what are we doing today? The debt ceiling is simply saying pay America's bills. And it's also saying to the many countries around the world—which we appreciate buying our Treasury notes. That is of value to the United States. The dollar has been stronger than any other currency, except the manipulation that goes on in China. But it's stronger than the euro.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is important to pass the debt ceiling, get past this frivolity of doing it twice. It is time to pass and move forward the Reid proposal which can bring all of us together. And that's what we should do, begin to do, and look at it on behalf of the American people. America should pay its bills.

POLITICAL GAME OF CHICKEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. HOCHUL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. HOCHUL. Less than 2 months on this job, I only have one question to ask: Is anyone in this body listening to the people who sent us here? I can only conclude at this point that the answer is "no," or we would not be teetering on the precipice of not just a government shutdown but an intentional economic shutdown, the likes of which we have never seen in this country. And I say "intentional" because there are high stakes in this game of chicken.

We all know the game of chicken. You've got a couple of crazy teenagers racing toward each other on a highway, and nobody's going to swerve. What happens when no one blinks, no one swerves, no one comes to their senses? Crash. Lives are lost. No survivors. It's not a pretty sight.

It didn't have to come to this. The American people who voted for us, put their faith in us, they don't want this to happen. They wonder if anyone in Washington is listening, and they're absolutely right in that assessment.

I will tell you, I was at a firemen's parade in the tiny, tiny village of Silver Springs in one of my most rural counties, Wyoming County. There are more Republicans than cows out there; and cows and Democrats, not a lot of people. But I'll tell you, we are all bound by the same feelings.

This frustrated senior at the firemen's parade in Wyoming County said to me, Why can't you guys get your act together? We send you there to do a job, and you guys aren't doing it.

You know, he was right; he was absolutely right, and I took that to heart. I came back here, and I want to do something to restore his faith in us.

He talked about the seniors. He said, We are so scared out here. I need my Social Security. I need my Medicare. Why are you guys talking about hurting us? We paid into these systems all

of our lives. We don't deserve this. I said, I'll go back. I'll do the best I can. I'll fight for you.

They have fear, uncertainty, and disgust, all directed at the ineptitude of Washington.

□ 1100

Well, it is wrong. It is plain wrong that we are even considering defaulting on America's obligations. It's doubly wrong that we'd consider defaulting on our obligations to our seniors, promises made 46 years ago this week with the advent of Medicare.

The integrity and willingness to uphold and honor our promises should be the hallmarks of this great institution. And yet what I've witnessed in such a short time is a willingness to renege on our promises to our debtors, our seniors and, ultimately, the American people.

Right now, it's not too late to avoid that highway collision where no one walks away. The American people deserve better than this. Our small businesses deserve better than this. Our middle class families deserve better than this.

I'll tell you, we need to get on with the business of the American people, and do it as soon as possible.

WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I want my colleagues to hear some of the things that I'm hearing from my constituents back home. People want to know why we cannot compromise. People want to know why we cannot work together. I don't know the answers to that because I think we should.

What I see happening here is something that I haven't seen in the 23 years that I've been here. It's that people do not seem to want to move to the center and to compromise.

I know some of my colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle, particularly the Tea Party-backed freshmen, have signed a pledge never to raise taxes. Well, I want to say what Senator COBURN said the other day. He said, what am I upholding my pledge to? I uphold my pledge to abide by the Constitution, not upholding my pledge to abide by what a special interest group wants.

People want us to meet in the middle. People don't understand why there seems to be intransigence.

You know, we have spent too much over these past decades. And you know what else? In order to get back to where we can balance our budget and pay our bills, we can't do it all with just spending cuts. It has to be three things. It has to be spending cuts, for sure. It also happens to be and should be closing tax loopholes for the very wealthy who get away with paying no

taxes at all, for large corporations who pay no taxes at all, for special subsidies to businesses that move their jobs overseas, to special subsidies for companies like Big Oil that don't need the subsidies.

We also need to make sure that those who can afford to pay a little bit more pay a little bit more, because that's how we get our budget back in balance. But if my Republican friends only say, you know, all we're going to do is cut, and we're not going to meet the Democrats halfway, then I'm afraid we're moving to fall off a cliff.

President Obama was absolutely right yesterday when he said that one side seems to be saying, my way or the highway; tax cuts forever, even if our budget is not balanced.

We, as Democrats, are saying let's do it a compromise way. Let us cut spending, let us close tax loopholes, and let those who can afford to pay a little more, millionaires and billionaires, pay a little more.

We are here because the American people sent us here. I know my constituents are concerned about Medicare and Medicaid, Social Security, and the New York Graduate Medical Education. I didn't come here to devastate those programs, and I want my constituents to know that I'm going to fight like crazy to preserve Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and GME. We cannot balance our budget on the backs of senior citizens.

I want to remind my colleagues that when President Clinton, the last Democratic president before President Obama left office, we had record surpluses. President Bush came in and we have red ink deficits as far as the eye can see.

And I want to remind my Republican colleagues that 6 of the 8 Bush years Republicans controlled both the House and the Senate, and had the presidency for 6 years. If they wanted a balanced budget amendment they could have had it. If they wanted to try to balance the budget they could have done it.

So I don't think lectures are important now. I think there's plenty of blame to go around on all sides. We had the Bush tax cuts, we had wars, and we had reckless spending. And it was done under President Bush with Republican majorities in the House. So we need to put our heads together and move to the sensible center in terms of what the American people want, to get us off this precipice that we're about to fall into.

I think there's one other thing the President should do. If he sees, in a few days, that there's no progress being made, and we are about to approach August 2 and we're about to have this train wreck, the President should invoke the 14th amendment. The 14th amendment says the public debt shall not be questioned and, in my estimation, gives the President the authority to raise the debt ceiling by himself. I think the President should do that if we cannot come to a compromise.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 7 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Miroslaus Stelmaszczyk, Holy Family Church, Creighton, Pennsylvania, offered the following prayer:

Almighty Father, we gather here this morning to ask for Your wisdom, charity, and humility. We continue the task of operating this great Nation with honesty and integrity. Grant us the wisdom to act for the greater good of all citizens. Keep us humble that we not forget who we are and why we are here.

We remember the Founding Fathers, who risked their reputations, their fortunes and their very lives to form a Nation that ensures the freedoms and opportunities that we enjoy today. We also remember those brave individuals who paid the ultimate price to protect and defend those freedoms and opportunities.

Father, keep us dedicated to the people we represent. Let us not allow partisanship to cause discord among our number and prevent us from completing our agenda. We depend upon Your grace and mercy to allow us to continue to serve this Nation with honor and integrity.

We ask this in Your name. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. BROOKS. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. BROOKS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS) come

forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. PITTS led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING REVEREND MIROSLAUS STELMASZCZYK

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, in the midst of one of the most contentious congressional debates in recent times, I knew just who to bring to Washington to help bring people together. It is my great honor to welcome Reverend Miroslaus Stelmaszczyk, who today serves as our guest chaplain for the U.S. House of Representatives.

Known simply as "Father Miro," he has led the Holy Family Parish in Creighton, Pennsylvania, for 12 of his 36 years in the priesthood. He has received numerous awards in recognition of his public service since he first came to the United States from Poland in 1986.

As testament to his popularity among his congregation, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to welcome the three dozen Holy Family parishioners who made the trip to Washington, along with Father Miro, and are now seated in the gallery to witness his opening prayer today.

Welcome to you all.

On behalf of my colleagues in the House, welcome, Father Miro, and congratulations on being chosen as today's guest chaplain for the U.S. House of Representatives.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YODER). The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

LET'S LEARN A LESSON FROM THE "GERMAN MIRACLE"

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on Friday, Dr. Milton Wolf in The Washington Times reported, in the last 2 years, over 2 million private sector jobs have been lost, that unemployment has increased by 1.5 percentage points, that the U.S. dollar is 12 percent weaker, and that the long-term unemployment is the worst ever on record—and sadly, the national debt has exploded by 40 percent.

At the same time the administration pushed the failed stimulus spending here, the President urged German Chancellor Angela Merkel to do the