

Now, those individuals in Mississippi that have a driver's license issued by our State can drive into Alabama or Tennessee or, for that matter, they can drive into Montana or Maine and their driver's license is recognized as being valid.

H.R. 822 applies that same principle to people with their concealed carry permits. This legislation does not require or authorize action by any Federal agency. New rules or regulations won't be needed to implement H.R. 822. It doesn't override any State or local law. A concealed carry permit holder would still be required to comply with the laws of the State he or she is in.

I support the National Right-to-Carry Reciprocity Act because it expands freedom for law-abiding gun owners, while respecting each State's right to set its own laws.

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Before I talk about my topic of protecting our children, I want to acknowledge, first of all, the coming Thanksgiving and the many people who are impoverished in this Nation that we need to pay attention to and, particularly, our children, which is the largest percentage of those impoverished are children in the United States.

For that reason, I think it is important that as we begin this discussion on the supercommittee and its responsibility, that we look at the responsibility to the American people. And if we cannot fairly bring in revenue and balance the cuts on the most vulnerable, we should go to regular order.

Let me also welcome our troops that will be coming home. And I will be initiating in Houston an idea that every single school will have a welcome home troops all over the community, and not one tree will be left undressed, if you will, to make sure that none of our soldiers walk down any block in a lonely way and not know that they are welcomed and loved.

Thirdly, I'd like to say that as they are coming home, are we preparing to use their many talents that they have learned, particularly those who understand homeland security, putting them to work for the Homeland Security Department.

I also want to create jobs. And one of my constituents is ExxonMobil, who has struck a contract with the Kurds dealing with oil and gas in Iraq. Lo and behold, the very country that we've shed blood for, no matter whether you were green energy or for or against fossil fuel, it is about jobs and about work here in the United States.

The audacity of the Iraqi Government to suggest they want to intrude on that contract and to have a say on that contract, well, when lives were lost, American lives were lost, they didn't have too much of a say. Ameri-

cans were willing to stand up and be counted. And I'd hope the Iraqis would allow a fair contract to go forward.

It seems that every time America's involved in helping the Iraqi people through the Iraqi Government there's always a negative response. Some of us are a little tired of that.

Mr. Speaker, I rise particularly today to talk about our children. As the co-chair and founder of the Congressional Children's Caucus, I noted already the disaster that children are experiencing. In my own home State, food stamps hit a record in Texas. We know that Governor Perry is running for President, but in his home State we're facing a crisis with the number of people on food stamps.

We're also facing a crisis because the policy agency for education, the Texas Education Agency, is deciding to go throughout the State of Texas and to save money on education by closing school districts, small school districts in particular. They're too fearful of closing the big ones. And I represent many of them, and I love them all and bring money to them and encourage them to educate their children. But there's something about school districts that are too big to fail.

But the North Forest Independent School District, where hundreds of community leaders and children and parents and teachers came out on Sunday to stand up against a so-called revocation notice that would close down this school district that has all the need to survive, 7,500 students, a high school that they are putting together and repairing and getting children to learn, 1,200 students in this high school; middle schools, elementary schools, a preschool that is renowned and respected by all.

But the TEA wants to cut the budget and save its own neck by cutting small school districts. And so my plea to my Governor, Governor Perry, join with me and the many citizens that you represent, and stand against the TEA to close a majority minority school district, the last remaining majority minority school district with great history in the North Forest Independent School District community, taxing themselves to ensure that their children have more resources, and are joined with the Houston Community College System so that their children are getting college preparatory credits.

They want to live. They want to survive. Don't belt tighten and save your necks and your jobs on the backs of our children. Don't disregard and discriminate against small school districts which are all over America on behalf of large school districts.

And Governor Perry, I think we can work together. As we worked together against the Confederate flag license plate, we can work together on this matter.

Let me close by focusing on an issue that has taken this country by storm. And as I read the indictment I don't want to point out one name versus an-

other, the alleged perpetrator in this Penn State fiasco. But I will say that this is a disgrace. I will be introducing legislation to have zero tolerance for sexual abuse of children and to stop any Federal funds going to anyone, any entity, any State that has a situation where children are sexually abused.

Mr. Speaker, it is a disgrace, and the Federal Government must stand up against it. I, for one, am going to do so. Enough is enough. We have to protect our children.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

GOVERNMENT MONEY ISN'T FREE

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

Mr. HECK. Mr. Speaker, Washington seems to have forgotten that government money isn't free, and it is the American taxpayers who support its spending habit. Simply put, the Federal Government doesn't respect your hard work, your discipline, your sacrifice or your unwavering commitment to self-reliance. We must change that.

The time to force accountability, leadership and respect is long past due, and the balanced budget amendment to the Constitution may be the only solution. A balanced budget amendment would force Washington politicians to exercise necessary fiscal restraint and better judgment when debating where and how to spend American taxpayer dollars.

The days of borrowing money and passing the debt on to our families and small businesses would be over, and Washington would be forced to live within its means, just like you and I.

The government should be doing a few things very well, instead of a lot of things poorly. It should help give people peace of mind. But its insatiable appetite for spending does exactly the opposite. Our small businesses face uncertainty created by a government that funds its misadventures with borrowed money and higher taxes.

Washington's spending habit will rot our economic foundation to the core and destroy the American Dream as we know it. The government can't spend its way out of a recession, but it can help create an environment of confidence and predictability that America's job creators, work force and families are seeking.

President Barack Obama has said that the Nation needs a balanced approach when addressing Washington's unsustainable spending. But one only has to ask, what's more balanced than a balanced budget amendment? Forty-nine of 50 States have balanced budget requirements, and a CNN poll shows that 74 percent of the American people support a balanced budget amendment.

This is not a partisan fight. This is a commonsense solution to an undeniable problem that is plaguing our economy.

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Still there are those who oppose a balanced budget amendment because they believe Washington ought to be able to hold the line on spending. I wish we could trust that to happen, but over the last decade, both parties have spent taxpayer dollars at unsustainable levels. It is time to change direction and move forward with an approach that will rescue our economy with real and lasting results.

With America's total debt exceeding the gross domestic product for the first time since World War II, we cannot afford to make this issue about politics. It must be about saving our economy and securing the future of our country for our children and our grandchildren.

The debate in Washington comes down to this: Should we hold the government accountable or not? We must seize this opportunity to change Washington's culture of deficit spending. We must pass a balanced budget amendment.

SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE MILITARY

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

Ms. SPEIER. I rise again today to draw attention to the epidemic in our military of rape and sexual assault. Nineteen thousand women and men each year are raped or sexually assaulted in the military. Shockingly, almost one-third of female veterans of all generations say they have been sexually assaulted or raped while in the military, and more than 70 percent say they experienced sexual harassment while serving.

In 2008 the Department of Veterans Affairs reported a total of 48,106 female veterans and 43,693 male veterans screened positively for military sexual trauma.

The prosecution rate of sexual assault is alarmingly low. Only 8 percent of sexual assailants were referred to courts-martial or military court compared with 40 percent of similar offenders in the civilian system. This travesty is not being addressed, and I will continue to speak out on this floor until it is. Survivors can email me at stopmilitaryrape@mail.house.gov if they would like to speak out.

Today, I would like to tell the story of one of the 8 percent that were prosecuted, the story of Colonel Michael Robertson, who commanded Fort Bliss' 31st Combat Support Hospital at Camp Dwyer, a military base and airfield in the Helmand River Valley in Afghanistan.

Last week, Colonel Robertson was convicted by a military judge of 14 charges, including having pornography on his government computer, sexually harassing three women, and assaulting five women. Eight women that served under his command testified at great cost to their careers and their privacy.

Colonel Robertson routinely touched them without permission on their breasts, thighs, and buttocks, and encouraged them to look at pornography on his computer. Some testified the harassment occurred daily. Sadly, the military careers of these eight women who bravely did the right thing are almost assuredly destroyed.

A major who filed a claim against Robertson said, "I don't know if my career was in jeopardy for doing the right thing. Who in the corps who supported you is going to trust you in the future?"

Despite repeated warnings, Colonel Robertson also emailed pornography to friends and female subordinates. A lieutenant colonel who was the chief nurse under Robertson's command said his command split the staff and created a toxic environment.

What makes the defense's answer to all of these actions? That all of these jokes and the touchings were attempts to boost morale. How much more outrageous must the excuses become before we do something about it?

So what is the punishment for someone in the military convicted of 14 counts of assaulting and harassing his subordinates who he was assigned to protect? Is he sent to prison for being a predator? Is he stripped of his standing in the military? Oh, no. Colonel Robertson was ordered to pay a \$30,000 fine over 3 months and spend 3 months in prison. Colonel Robertson will retire from the Army when he finishes his sentence. His conviction won't affect his Army retirement or his Federal health insurance, and he will not be required to register as a sex offender.

It doesn't take a military expert or a psychologist to figure out that sexual assault and harassment hurts not only the individual victim but undermines unit cohesion, morale, and overall effectiveness.

The absolute failure to address this behavior is hurting our military. Like Colonel Robertson, the majority of assailants are older and of higher rank than their victims. They abuse not only their authority but also the trust of those they are responsible for protecting.

The current military structure serves as a safe haven for sexual predators. They either are never brought to justice at all, or they receive a sentence like Colonel Robertson's that doesn't come close to matching their crime.

That's why this week I'll be introducing a bill that would fundamentally change how sexual assaults are handled in the military. My bill will take the prosecution, the reporting, the oversight, the investigation, and the victim care of sexual assaults out of the hands of the normal chain of command and place the jurisdiction in the hands of an impartial office staffed by experts, both military and civilian.

I've become painfully aware that if DOD continues to address this issue at its current pace, the epidemic of military assault will never end.

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

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

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I appreciate the time.

I'm coming to the floor today with joy in my heart, and candidly I would like to come to the floor every day Mr. Speaker, but I don't always get to. But today, I'm here because we're voting on a balanced budget amendment this week. The first time in 15 years.

Now, I'm a freshman in this House, Mr. Speaker. I've been watching the process for a long time, but I've only had a voting card for 10 months. And I came to this Congress to do the big things, not to argue about the petty things. And I tell folks, Mr. Speaker, that very rarely are we arguing about the petty things, that there's a constituent focus to absolutely everything that we do. But the big things. The big things that change the direction of this country that ensure that this experiment in democracy, that our Republic, survives for another generation.

Fifteen trillion dollars in debt, Mr. Speaker.

Do you remember, Mr. Speaker, you don't have the gray hair that I do, but back in the days of Ronald Reagan we were running \$200 billion and \$300 billion annual deficits. And folks thought the world might be coming to the end. Now, it put the Soviet Union out of business, but it was big money. Who'd of thought we would come to a day where we're actually running \$1.4 trillion, \$1.5 trillion, \$1.6 trillion deficits every year?

Mr. Speaker, as you know, in the people's House where the people's will gets done, we have choices here. In my district, for example, folks want to tax less and spend less. I hear it every day. Rob, tax less and spend less. I'm sure I've got some colleagues on the other side of the aisle whose constituencies want to tax more and spend more.

That is a legitimate debate for us to have in this House. We should have it. But we ought to be able to agree that spending money we don't have harms the future of this Republic. That spending money we don't have mortgages the future of everyone under the age of 20 and threatens the security of everyone over the age of 60.

A balanced budget amendment is one of those things that we can agree on, one of those issues that is not Republican, it's not Democrat, it's not conservative, it's not liberal—it is American.

Thomas Jefferson said if he could have added but one amendment to the Constitution, it would have been one to abolish the power of the government to borrow, because with that one amendment alone, he would be certain of the security of these United States.

Mr. Speaker, that chance is here with us this week for the first time in 15 years.

Now, I confess when I came to Congress, Mr. Speaker, I didn't expect to