

time we used the reconciliation process, we got ObamaCare. That's how they passed ObamaCare. Mr. Speaker, they used the reconciliation process to pass ObamaCare; and I have a feeling that what we're going to get out of this Gang of Six is a bill that they're going to ask us to vote for before we know what's in it.

□ 1120

Thirdly, if through this reconciliation process they come out with the cuts that are necessary to bring them within the amount that they allocate that we need to cut and save, then if that reconciliation process produces a supermajority in the Senate, only after they produce a supermajority of votes in the Senate will they move to shoring up our Social Security system.

What they should be doing is working on getting a supermajority so we can pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. What is so wrong with giving the American people the opportunity to speak, to say, Congress, you have been out of control. You need to balance your books like all of the American families in this country do.

In closing, I want to warn our Members in this Chamber that the Gang of Six proposal cedes the power of the House to the Senate. Now, I came here to uphold that Constitution. The power of the purse, article I, section 7, clause 1, gives the power of the purse to this House. Regardless of whether you are a Democrat or a Republican, you should care about that. Those committees in the Senate should not be dealing with our tax laws or they should only deal with them after we have had a chance to send it to them.

This is what the American people demand. They demand that our Constitution work. And for it to work, revenue and spending starts here in the House. Let's not cede the power of the House over to the Senate.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Byrd, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2055. An act making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendment to the bill (H.R. 2055) "An Act making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes" and requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. JOHNSON (SD), Mr. INOUE, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. REED (RI), Mr. NELSON (NE), Mr. PRYOR, Mr. TESTER, Mr. LEAHY, Mr.

KIRK, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. MCCONNELL, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. COATS, and Mr. COCHRAN to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

IMPACT OF CUTS ON POVERTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. CARSON) for 2 minutes.

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, it is very easy for some Members of Congress to blindly advocate across-the-board cuts to our investments in people. But I join those today to ask my colleagues to open their eyes to what these cuts really mean. They aren't abstract numbers. For the many people living in poverty, they mean lives irreparably damaged and critical opportunities lost.

My home State, the great Hoosier State of Indiana, suffers from an average unemployment rate of 10 percent. Among veterans, that number is higher. And for wounded vets and others with physical limitations, the numbers are staggeringly higher.

As a result of these economic times, Mr. Speaker, more families live in poverty and rely critically on your and my help. Valuable health care, education, housing, and job-training programs are necessary to provide them with the tools for survival.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, when most of our communities are struggling to recover, we must not turn our backs on the people who are trying to overcome extreme poverty.

I ask my colleagues to remember these vulnerable Americans. They're not burdens. They're our children, our working mothers, our police officers, our firefighters, our neighbors, our vets. They are our fellow Americans.

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT NATHAN BEYERS

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

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor a soldier who made the ultimate sacrifice and laid down his life for our freedoms, United States Army Sergeant Nathan Ryan Beyers.

Sergeant Beyers, a 2006 graduate of Thunder Ridge High School in Highlands Ranch, Colorado, volunteered to serve in the Idaho Army National Guard. In the Army, he served with the 145th Brigade Support Battalion of the 116th Cavalry Heavy Brigade Combat Team.

He deployed with his unit in support of Operation New Dawn in Iraq. On July 7, 2011, he gave his life in the line of duty on a convoy security mission.

Nathan is remembered not only for his heroics on the battlefield, but for the tremendous impact he had on his family, friends, and community.

He was absolutely devoted to his family and his fellow soldiers. As his

wife recalls, Nathan was proud of his job and serving our country. He died doing something he loved and was such a brave person.

Sergeant Nathan Ryan Beyers personifies the honor and selflessness of service as a citizen soldier. His bravery and dedication to duty will not be forgotten. As a Marine Corps combat veteran, my deepest sympathies go out to his family, his fellow soldiers, and all who knew him.

OUT OF POVERTY CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) for 2 minutes.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, let me just sort of set the record straight and explain things.

When President Obama came into office, we were in debt, and we were also involved in two wars. And when President Clinton left office, there was a surplus. So we need to make certain that we keep our facts in line.

So I stand here this morning with the Out of Poverty Caucus to voice my opposition to the Cut, Cap, and Balance Act passed by this body yesterday.

Furthermore, I'm very disturbed that many of the policies being promoted by some of my colleagues are unjust and they are just plain wrong. Cutting back on Medicare and Social Security is unfair to the senior citizens who have worked hard all of their lives and should not have to worry at this point whether they can afford to go to the doctor or buy the medicine that they need.

Let me add, I am baffled at times by the fact that many of my colleagues refuse to even consider how unjust their proposals are. Yes, we must reduce our debt burden. I agree with that. But it is unjust to balance the budget on the backs of the poor and most vulnerable citizens in our Nation.

The wealthy must join in the sacrifice. They must be included. According to a report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, two-thirds of the income gains in the United States from 2002 to 2007 went to the top 1 percent of the income earners. Many of my colleagues are saying give them more tax breaks. They're not even asking for more. But they're saying give them more.

Many of the Members of this body believe it's all right to balance the budget by taking food out of the mouths of babies, by cutting WIC programs. Imagine how terrible it must be for a mother or father to send their kid to bed hungry at night.

That is why I stand for the Out of Poverty Caucus and say enough is enough.

SLASHING MEDICARE AND MEDICAID

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) for 3 minutes.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, the Republican leadership has taken us to the brink of a default crisis by holding the debt ceiling and our ability to pay our bills hostage. Their latest slash, burn, and kill Medicare and Medicaid bill, otherwise known as Cut, Cap, and Balance, is putting the full faith and credit of our Nation at risk and threatening critical safety nets for our seniors, people with disabilities, and the poor, including our Nation's children.

Medicare covers over 4 million African Americans, over 4 million Latinos, and close to 2 million of other people of color—citizens with higher poverty rates who have some of the most serious health problems. Our seniors and people with disabilities rely on Medicaid for long-term care and there are 9 million dual eligibles, low-income seniors and younger persons with disabilities, who are enrolled in and rely on both Medicare and Medicaid.

□ 1130

Nearly three in every four poor or near-poor African Americans and Latinos are covered by Medicaid, but 64 percent of low-income black children and 63 percent of low-income Latino children are on Medicaid. Medicaid also provides critically important support to all Americans who lost their jobs as a result of the economic downturn.

In the Affordable Care Act, the Democrats strengthen Medicaid. And contrary to what you hear from our Republican colleagues, we use \$500 million in savings identified in Medicare to strengthen it, to extend its solvency, and to begin to close the doughnut hole.

In this risky standoff, it is clear that Medicare and Medicaid payments are at risk, and African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities, and the poor who are already underwater and who rely on them for coverage, will bear the overwhelming brunt of the cuts, as will the providers and facilities that care for them. This is unacceptable. Then the loss of the economic multiplier effect that States would experience as a result of Federal Medicaid cuts would be even much greater than the amount of the Medicaid cuts themselves.

We're calling on the Republican leadership to do what we all know must be done to release the debt ceiling and all of the people who are being held hostage with it, the poor, racial and ethnic minorities who we stand here on behalf of today with the Out of Poverty Caucus.

I quote Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said, "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane." We must avert the default crisis. Colleagues, let's lift the debt ceiling, let's pay our bills, and let's avoid an economic catastrophe that the good people of this country do not deserve and cannot withstand.

AMERICAN ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) for 2 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Whenever I hear a Member of Congress proposing austerity as a fix for any or all of our Nation's economic problems, whether the problems are real or perceived, my first reaction is "austerity for who?"

The fact is that in recent years we've been condemning more and more Americans to austerity then ever before while at the same time we continue to hand out tax breaks and fat government contracts for the wealthiest Americans, and the largest and wealthiest corporations. After getting bailed out, the profits at the largest financial institutions have recovered and then some—bonuses for their CEOs have recovered, and then some, but this Congress refuses to ask those institutions and those CEOs, and others like them, to give back just a little.

The latest census data dramatically shows how after African Americans had made significant gains in the 1950s and '60s, progress began to stall in the 1970s. Four decades after the civil rights movement, blacks still earn only 57 cents and Latinos earn 59 cents for each \$1 of white median family income in our country. The contrast is even starker for net worth. That is, the total value of investments, savings, homes, and other property, minus debt. Blacks hold only 10 cents of net wealth and Latinos 12 cents for every \$1 that whites hold.

Out of the 43.6 million Americans living below the poverty threshold, 9.9 million of those are African Americans. Meanwhile, the latest unemployment rates are, to say the least, grim. Overall, African American unemployment, 16.2 percent; African American men, 17 percent; black teenagers, about 40 percent—and this Congress can't find the votes to extend unemployment insurance. I say that our policies must reflect the needs of those who are most vulnerable. We must provide opportunity for the needy and not just the greedy.

When I see that the median annual Social Security benefit for a 65-year-old single African American woman is \$10,680 which puts the median benefit for African American women seniors just above the 2010 poverty line for individual seniors, an obscenely low \$10,458. And when I couple that with the knowledge that nearly half—45.6 percent—of non-married African American women aged 65 older rely on Social Security for all of their income and 54.1 percent rely on it for 90 percent of their income or more. And, worst of all when I recall that non-married African American women seniors already suffer from high rates of poverty and near-poverty, nearly half—47.8 percent—of African American women living alone have an income under 125 percent of poverty, and one-third—33 percent—have income below 100 percent of the poverty line . . .

Well, I just have to say to those who are talking of reducing Social Security benefits, or the annual Social Security COLAs, or raising

the age for collecting Social Security "austerity for who?"

When I pick up the paper every morning and have to read over and over that home foreclosures were two-and-a-half times above the 2001 rate by the end of 2010 and that some 3.7 million homes are in danger of foreclosure and this Congress, instead of addressing the epidemics of unemployment and foreclosure, plays politics with raising the debt ceiling;

I can't help but remember that, for all the hubbub about the size of government and Federal spending, the Bush tax cuts increased the deficit by \$1.7 trillion between 2001 and 2008 and the two wars begun by President Bush added another \$1 trillion to the deficit and Bush Administration's policy of deregulation of the financial markets led ultimately to the bursting of the housing bubble which triggered the Great Recession which not only sapped our federal budget, but have decimated state and local budgets in every corner of the nation. I have to demand of those risking default and tipping the nation into depression "austerity for who?"

I have to wonder why we aren't talking about the fact that since the recession officially ended in June 2009, private payrolls have increased by more than 1 million workers, still nowhere close to putting 14 million Americans back to work, but State and local government payrolls for teachers, fire-fighters, police officers, public health workers and other critical services have declined by 493,000—cutting the number of jobs created almost in half while the loss of those good jobs reverberate throughout the local economies. My obvious question is "austerity for who?"

I wonder if some Members of Congress just don't know that Medicaid covered half of all Black children in the United States and nearly two-thirds (64%) of low-income Black children. Medicaid covers over a third (35%) of African Americans in fair or poor health and 59% of African Americans living with HIV/AIDS. Shouldn't we expect and require of those who are proposing to slash Medicaid an answer to: "austerity for who?"

I am just as concerned about balancing the Federal budget as any Member of this Congress, but there are a lot of ways to do that. The Peoples' Budget proposed by the Progressive Caucus would get us to a balanced budget and would put us on the road to paying down the debt and lay the foundation for a healthy, sustainable and just economy.

I've reached the conclusion that we do need a Constitutional Amendment, not a Balanced Budget Amendment, but one that would require Members of Congress who glibly propose austerity as a quick and dirty solution to every challenge which comes over the horizon to explain to the American People, truthfully and fully, in each and every case, "austerity for who?"

CRASH, SLASH, AND TRASH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) for 2 minutes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Last year, John Carlson, a hedge fund manager, made about \$5 billion and paid taxes at a lower rate than most Americans. Right now, the 400 richest Americans in our