

talking to the wrong people—in particular, the people at Fix the Debt, who've been doing their best to muddle the issue. For example, in a new fund-raising letter Maya MacGuineas, the organization's public face, writes of the need to "make hard decisions when it comes to averting the 'fiscal cliff' and stabilizing our national debt"—even though the problem with the fiscal cliff is precisely that it stabilizes the debt too soon. Clearly, Ms. MacGuineas was trying to confuse readers on that point, and she apparently confused Mr. Schultz too.

More about Fix the Debt in a moment. Before I get there, however, let's move on to Mr. Schultz's misdiagnosis of the political problem we face.

Look, it's true that elected politicians have been unable to "come together and compromise." But saying that in generic form, and implying a symmetry between Republicans and Democrats, isn't just misleading, it's actively harmful.

The reality is that President Obama has made huge concessions. He has already cut spending sharply, and has now offered additional big spending cuts, including a cut in Social Security benefits, while signaling his willingness to retain many of the Bush tax cuts, even for people with very high incomes. Taken as a whole, the president's proposals are arguably to the right of those made by Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson, the co-chairmen of his deficit commission, in 2010.

In return, the Republicans have offered essentially nothing. Oh, they say they're willing to increase revenue by closing loopholes—but they've refused to specify a single loophole they're willing to close. So if there's a breakdown in negotiations, the blame rests entirely with one side of the political divide.

Given that reality, think about the effect when people like Mr. Schultz respond by blaming both sides equally. They may sound virtuously nonpartisan, but what they're actually doing is rewarding intransigence and extremism—which, in the current context, means siding with the G.O.P.

I'm willing to believe that Mr. Schultz doesn't know what he's doing. The same can't be said, however, about Fix the Debt.

You might not know it reading some credulous reporting, but Fix the Debt isn't some kind of new gathering of concerned citizens. On the contrary, it's just the latest addition to a group of deficit-scoold shops supported by billionaire Peter Peterson, a group ranging from think tanks like the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget to the newspaper *The Fiscal Times*. The main difference seems to be that this gathering of the usual suspects is backed by an impressive amount of corporate cash.

Like all the Peterson-funded groups, Fix the Debt seems much more concerned with cutting Social Security and Medicare than with fighting deficits in general—and also not nearly as nonpartisan as it pretends to be. In its list of "core principles," it actually calls for lower tax rates—a very peculiar position for people supposedly horrified by the budget deficit. True, the group calls for revenue increases via unspecified base broadening, that is, closing loopholes. But that's unrealistic. And it's also, as you may have noticed, the Republican position.

What's happening now is that all the Peterson-funded groups are trying to exploit the fiscal cliff to push a benefit-cutting agenda that has nothing to do with the current crisis, using artfully deceptive language—as in that MacGuineas letter—to hide the bait and switch.

Mr. Schultz apparently fell for the con. But the rest of us shouldn't.

HONORING VERNE D. RIDER

HON. MICHAEL G. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 31, 2012

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the service of a man I have had the distinct privilege of serving with during my time representing the people of Pennsylvania's 8th District, Verne D. Rider.

With the conclusion of this 112th Congress, Verne will be retiring for the fourth time, but I am sure it will not be his last.

Albert Einstein once claimed that "a life lived in service to others is worth living." If Mr. Einstein is correct, Verne Rider's continued life of service to his country is an example to each of us a life worth living.

When his country called him for the first time, Verne dedicated himself to decades of honorable service in the United States Air Force. During his proud military career, Verne flew missions over the fields of Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War and the deserts of the Middle East as part of operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

To this day, Verne always takes note of when he or one of his co-workers is dressed in their "Air Force Blue". A true patriot, Verne's service in the Air Force is just one example of his drive to serve others in any way he can.

Upon retiring from his time in the military, Verne recognized an opportunity to continue his service, this time in the name of his fellow veterans, including those who found themselves homeless and in need.

As a generation of military men and women reaches retirement age, some find themselves in need of assistance and guidance through a complex and often frustrating bureaucratic VA Benefits system.

When I began putting together my office staff for my first term in Congress I could think of no one better than Verne Rider to provide 8th District veterans with the help they needed. Whether that help comes in the form of a phone call to the VA, a letter to a federal agency, or often times just a shoulder to lean on, Verne is always ready and willing to do his best for his fellow veterans.

During those first two years, Verne became a staple of the veteran community in my home of Bucks County, and was known across the district as a true friend to veterans.

Between my terms in Congress, Verne insisted on continuing his service to his brothers in arms, and was able to fulfill a similar role for the late Senator Arlen Specter.

I was fortunate enough to have Verne return to office with me for the 112th Congress and everywhere I go, the veterans of my district remind me how lucky I am to have someone like Verne Rider on my staff.

While Verne's retirement from my office for the second time marks an immediate loss to our organization, I have no doubt that this will not be the last we see of Verne in service to our country.

I know this because I am able to share one of my proudest achievements as a member of Congress with Verne. Together, with the efforts of local leaders and allies in Washington, Verne and I were able to bring a national cemetery to Bucks County, providing our veterans with a final resting place on the historic

grounds of Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania.

Verne's continued work with the Guardians of the Washington Crossing National Cemetery will keep him firmly fixed in his position as a community leader.

After a lifetime of service to his country and its veterans, Verne will continue to dedicate himself fully to the most important role of his life as a loving husband, proud father and new grandfather.

On behalf of myself, my staff, and the people of Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional District, I extend my sincerest gratitude to Verne D. Rider for his decades of service to his country and to our community.

We are all looking forward to seeing where your drive to serve others takes you next.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

HON. MIKE QUIGLEY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 31, 2012

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because in the coming week, most of us will sit down to a holiday meal with our families, friends, and loved ones.

And most of us will take this meal for granted.

But for 46 million Americans who rely on nutrition assistance, this holiday meal is not a guarantee.

The vast majority—more than 85 percent—of these 46 million Americans are living in households making less than \$22,000 for a family of four.

And of those 46 million, half are children, and three-quarters are households that include an elderly person, a disabled person, or children.

For these millions of families, food is not a certainty, and they struggle each day to make ends meet.

Sadly, due to the recession, an increasing number of Americans have lost their jobs and been forced to turn to the supplemental nutrition assistance program, or SNAP.

As the number of unemployed Americans increased 94 percent between 2007 and 2011, SNAP increased as well, rising 70 percent to meet demand.

At the food pantries in my district, pantry visits have increased between 8 and 30 percent from last year. While the economy is improving, the number of individuals in need of assistance is still elevated.

Rather than cutting food assistance right now, we should be bolstering it.

Unfortunately, some members of this body have targeted food assistance, arguing it should be cut to balance the budget and avert cuts to defense.

The Ryan budget proposed cutting SNAP by \$133 billion.

A cut of this magnitude would cut almost 10 million people off from food aid, or would result in a benefit cut of \$90 per month for a family of four.

For a family with a net monthly income of \$338—the average for most SNAP households—a \$90 cut would be devastating.

I agree with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle: We must reduce the deficit.

And that means raising revenues and implementing cuts.

But both revenue increases and cuts must be strategic, not simple.

The tax code should be simplified, tax expenditures should be scrutinized, and tax increases should be progressive.

Similarly, spending reductions should be based on a reexamination of what we need to remain competitive in a global economy.

For instance, we should continue to invest in education, job training, infrastructure, and yes food assistance to keep Americans successful and competitive.

We should cut outdated spending on defense expenditures, such as our out-sized nuclear stockpile and permanent troops in Europe.

We should also reform our entitlements, such as Medicare, by paying providers for outcomes and quality, combating waste and fraud, and demanding higher rebates from drug companies.

The truth is, food assistance comprises just two percent of the federal budget.

And contrary to the claims by the some that food assistance is unsustainable—SNAP is expected to drop from .52 percent of GDP in 2011 to just .3 percent as the economy recovers. This is hardly an unsustainable trend.

In fact, according to Moody's Analytics every \$1 dollar invested in SNAP yields \$1.72 in economic benefit.

As we speak, negotiators are sitting down to determine what a final deficit reduction package will look like.

I hope that as they debate the final deal, and look forward to spending the holidays indulging with their families, they remember the millions of families that aren't as lucky.

I hope they remember the millions of children, parents, elderly, and disabled Americans who rely on SNAP to avoid going hungry.

I recently had the privilege of volunteering at the Greater Chicago Food Depository, which provides food to over half a million Chicagoans every year.

I met some of the folks who rely on SNAP and I heard their stories.

And I can tell you, they are not takers.

They are our friends and neighbors who have fallen on hard times and need our help.

I won't soon forget them, and I hope those crafting the deficit reduction package won't either.