

Pentagon, there in New York, those incredible heroes on the fourth flight that went down in a field in Pennsylvania, those heroes went running in, willing to lay down their lives to save others, as Ross did.

There at Arlington National Cemetery the Army chaplain did a wonderful job. Taps was played. It always gets me. It got everybody there. A 21-gun salute is an emotional thing at a funeral. And as everyone stood to turn to go, Sergeant Thomas came up, knelt down before the remains of Ross, put his hand on the remains of Ross McGinnis, bowed his head in prayer. He was followed by two others that Ross had saved. The fourth was still in Iraq. They put their hands on Ross's remains, bowed at the knee, bowed in prayer. And it was obvious what they were doing.

Whether it's on Memorial Day, Veterans Day, the 9/11 anniversary, there cannot be too many occasions when we as a Nation stop and do what those three soldiers did: thank those who have laid down their lives for the rest of us, for our liberties; thank those who have sacrificed life or limb or suffered terrible disability for us and our lives and our liberty. And then, to thank God for people who are still willing to lay down their lives for us.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS IN THE 112TH CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TONKO) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. TONKO. This evening we'll spend some time here in Special Order on the House floor to address a great bit of unfinished business that rests before the House. And we have just returned from what is a 5-week recess where Members of this House were back in their districts and addressing the events of this session. It has been labeled by many as a do-nothing Congress. This evening we're going to talk about that do-nothing agenda.

We have attempted in every which way to encourage the Congress, the House, to address legislation that speaks to job creation and economic recovery, continuing to build upon the achievements of the 111th Congress, and we're now serving in the 112th.

□ 2000

But for me, it's my second term in the House. The very first term for me, the 111th Congress, was deemed by several polls out there to be one of the most productive in decades where there were many things taken up by this House that responded to the needs of America, middle class Americans, Americans of all stripes, who required initiatives from this House.

We were in the midst of a very dark period, a recession that gripped this

economy that put 8.2 million people at risk by their losing a job through no fault of their own. We were losing as many as 800,000 jobs a month.

So the devastation of that impact on the American economy, bringing America's economy to its knees, needed a response from government.

The President acknowledged an agenda that would move us not only into a response against the recession but putting us at the cutting edge of a modern economy. Investing in research, investing in science and technology, investing in an ideas economy, investing in an innovation economy—that's the sort of priming of the pump, if you will. That's essential for us to respond in substantive terms for us to utilize government as a tool that is productive and enabling and empowering the middle class, empowering our small business community, empowering our entrepreneurs.

That was the hope-for. And it happened in the 111th Congress.

But something drastically happened with the change in leadership in the 112th Congress. We now have been ranked in single-digit percentage approval. Below 10 percent is the approval rating for this Congress, some of the lowest points achieved, or earned, by this Congress in its history as a House.

That is a very telling statement. How do we go from the most productive in decades to most unfavorable in the history of the House?

We have a reactionary response from those who want to destroy the essence of government. They do not weave any sort of government program activity into the fabric of response to a very difficult period in our economic history. It is one that is unpopular and unproductive. It is one that is being rejected by people out there.

When I go back to my district, I hear it from Republicans, Democrats, Independents alike: Why can't something get done? There's a paralysis here. And it's because there's a rejection. There is a sense of partisanship rather than partnership. There is an outright attempt to deny anything coming to the House as a request to get productive and progressive policy done.

So there are things that languish. There is this crush of big tasks that rest before the House, work to produce a jobs bill, work to produce a response to the ag crisis, the reauthorization of our ag bill, work to invest in the middle class.

It's been this House, when controlled by the Democrats, that spoke to the opportunities, the ladders of success, if you will. The Democratic conference in this House was all about, has always been about, in my tenure here, about producing ladders of success. You know, we believe in that American principle that you work hard, act with responsibility, play by the rules, and expect to taste success.

Well, we haven't seen that sort of cooperative spirit from the new Republican majority in the House.

You know, we believe, as Democrats, that you produce those ladders of opportunity. You allow people to climb toward their American Dream. We enable people to utilize their gifts, their talents, their passions, their skills to empower themselves, their families, the small businesses. And so we stand for this wonderful three-legged stool that speaks to the empowerment of small business, forever the pulse of American enterprise, that looks to create jobs that are then tethered very strongly with small business citizenship into the local community grain.

Then we talk about investing in entrepreneurs, those dreamers, the movers, the shakers, the builders of society that have forever been the American spirit, the pioneer spirit.

I represent a district in upstate New York that is the donor area to the Erie Canal. And that canal produced not only a port out of a little town called New York City but gave birth to a necklace of communities that became the epicenters of invention and innovation.

The empowerment of the entrepreneur—another strong underlying principle of the agenda of Democrats in the House.

Finally, a thriving middle class—making certain that we utilize the policies that can be created in this House that will empower with tax fairness, empower with investment in the worker, in education, higher education, apprenticeship programs to empower the middle class and small businesses.

We have measures that we have asked to be brought to the floor. There is a denial of any sort of single jobs bill before the House. We have requested over and over again to invest in that agenda the empowerment of America through small business, entrepreneurs, a thriving middle class. It's been rejected.

Tonight I'm joined by a colleague from the State of Connecticut, JOSEPH COURTNEY. JOE COURTNEY is a strong believer in this government process. He's a strong believer that when we can prime the pump and when we can utilize government to make a difference, when we can create programs that speak to the honest-to-goodness agenda for all strata of America, but utilizing that middle class strata—small business, farming as a small business—making certain we utilize every strength, every sector of our economy and not just relying on a service sector, especially the financial services that we did that brought us into a crisis situation—we can incorporate all of the sectors of the economy.

One of those prime sectors? Agriculture.

Representative COURTNEY, it is great to have you joining us this evening in this colloquy.

The agriculture industry from coast to coast is a heavy-duty important industry. You sit on the Ag Committee. As a representative from Connecticut,

you know the importance of agriculture to your State. I know the importance of agriculture in upstate New York, throughout New York.

Reauthorization of an ag bill is fundamental, is it not, to go forward and create opportunities?

Mr. COURTNEY. It is. Thank you for, again, taking the time tonight to speak on the floor of the House.

This is a place where the eyes not only of the country but the world are on us right now in terms of whether or not this body is going to have the strength of will to act and deal with, again, all of the ticking clocks which you've mentioned earlier: the fiscal cliff at the end of this year; sequestration; and at the end of this month, a farm bill reauthorization.

Again, for those watching tonight, I think it's important to have a little context here, which is that up until this year, every 5 years since the end of World War II, Congress has acted to enact a farm bill which is a 5-year policy bill that sets up all of the ground rules for a vast array of issues that surround producers in this country, the folks who get up every morning and milk the cows and plant the crops and harvest the crops.

It deals with issues of rural development. Small-town America depends on USDA rural development funds and programs to build everything from sewers, hospitals, health clinics. Again, all of the infrastructure, which again, small towns by themselves really don't have the financial means to create.

Conservation programs, forestry, food policy, nutrition policy.

Again, the farm bill is a profoundly important measure that sets up both producer and production policies and agriculture but also consumer ends in terms of food safety, food security, et cetera.

Incredibly, we are at a point right now where at the end of this month, at the end of September, the last farm bill will expire. If Congress does not act, then farm policy will revert to what the state of the law was in this country in 1949. Again, that statutory construct is so completely disconnected from the reality of what farms and agriculture is today in the 21st century that it defies, really, the powers of any Secretary of Agriculture to implement.

But, again, as you point out, when you look at the U.S. economy today, agriculture is leading the way in terms of growth, in terms of exports, in terms of renewed activity even in New England, which is not viewed as sort of a big farm State. But the fact is that specialty crops, which I'm sure in upper State New York we're seeing again growing farmers markets, are really the renaissance and movement towards making sure that foods that we serve our kids in cafeterias are on the dinner tables in American homes.

□ 2010

Again, people have just a heightened interest in terms of making sure it's

local and fresh, and the farm bill sets up the policies that make that movement continue to grow.

Well, where are we tonight? The Senate passed a farm bill. They passed a farm bill back in June. It was a bipartisan measure, hard-fought. It took 3 weeks to make its way to the Senate floor, getting through all the procedural hurdles. Yet Republicans and Democrats in the Senate came together with a farm bill which does great things in terms of reforming agriculture policy in this country. It eliminates direct payments to farmers, which saves the taxpayers \$23 billion over the next 5 years. So it actually helps the deficit in this country by passing the Senate farm bill. It reforms dairy price supports, which is critically important right now because, again, the structure that is in place today really was shown to not be adequate in 2009 when milk prices crashed during the recession. It sets up a new risk insurance program, which will allow dairy farmers to actually have some confidence and security about their future.

It does, again, a great job in terms of protecting and maintaining the network of food supply for Americans who are struggling to put food on the table. It's a good, solid, bipartisan measure that really addresses all of the challenges of the 21st century.

In the House, we actually reported out a farm bill out of the House Agriculture Committee with a strong, bipartisan vote. It has problems. Frankly, it cuts too deeply into nutrition. But this is an issue which, again, people who are close to it are very confident can be worked out in a conference committee if the House floor will take up a farm bill. And the Speaker, to this moment, has refused to even signal that he will schedule a vote for a farm bill to move the process along.

So, literally, as the clock ticks towards the end of September, farmers and producers all across America are, in horror, looking at this Chamber, looking at this Speaker, and saying: Are you kidding me? You won't even schedule a vote so that we can work through a bill on the floor and send it to conference committee so that we can actually get real movement and get a farm bill passed?

A couple of hours ago I was with the National Farmers Union just down the block here, where, again, we've got farmers from California to Maine who are gathering here in Washington, D.C., the American Farm Bureau, specific commodity crop producers who are flooding the Halls of Congress saying we need a farm bill.

This should not be a partisan issue that should gridlock, again, one of the most vibrant and critical components of America's economy. And yet to this moment we have still gotten no signal from Speaker BOEHNER and the Republican leadership that they will even schedule a vote. It's incredible. I mean,

the Agriculture Committee in the House produced a bipartisan bill. They did their work. Chairman LUCAS, Ranking Member PETERSON—I was there for the 13-plus-hour markup to get that bill through the floor—they did a great job in terms of navigating and getting a bill to the floor. This was done before the August recess. The Speaker refused to bring it up before we went home for 5 weeks. Five weeks have passed. Farmers all across America are demanding action. We're back in town, and yet nothing has been scheduled in this Chamber to bring up a farm bill that we can send to the conference committee and get some real action and results. Totally unacceptable.

Let me just finish before I throw the baton back to you. At the end of August, dairy price supports expired. Again, the last farm bill had a measure, it was called a Feed Adjuster Index, which would basically allow farmers who were facing high feed costs to get help and relief. Anybody who looks in the financial pages can see that corn prices are hitting record highs because of the drought out in the Midwest; feed costs have gone through the roof; fuel costs are going through the roof. All the input costs for running a dairy farm are at record highs, and yet, as of a couple of weeks ago or a week and a half ago, the dairy farmers of America had basically the rug pulled out from under them because this Chamber did not move and do its job back in July and get a farm bill passed out of this Chamber and sent to conference committee.

So they were sort of the first wave of victims of Republican inaction in this House to move a farm bill. At the end of this month, it will be the rest of American agriculture that will have the rug pulled out from under it and revert back a statutory structure to 1949, which is the state of the law, if we don't move forward and get a farm bill done.

So I'm glad you scheduled this session tonight, Congressman TONKO, because I think the American people need to hear that Democrats stand ready to roll up their sleeves, get to work on this floor, pass a farm bill, send it to the conference committee, work with the bipartisan majority in the Senate to pass a farm bill, and help the American farmers and producers who every single day are making sure that the system of food production and supply works. It is a very fragile system, as we're seeing with the drought out in Iowa, and people in this Chamber are treating it with just, in my opinion, outrageous neglect by not really doing their constitutional duty, showing some leadership, and bringing a farm bill up for a vote in this Chamber.

Mr. TONKO. Representative COURTNEY, you're a great friend. You're a great friend not only to me, but to this House, to the district you represent, and to the State of Connecticut. And you're such a good friend because of the academics that you put into the

job. I have watched you in action, and I know that you are about building consensus.

But what we have here, you talk about, doesn't this become even more urgent an item with the drought situation that we've had across this country? Grain prices are going to rise. So to have some stability and security—predictability—into the ag outcomes for many sectors of agriculture, it becomes even more critical. And to go back, to revert to a 1949 formula, is sinful. It's immoral.

People talk about the lack of sensitivity, the lack of productivity, but we're talking about immoral outcomes here that don't enable people to do their work. I mean, this is a small business—in many places large business—but agriculture runs that gamut. For many, it's small business, it's family business, it's a way of life, and we're denying that very fabric of this country.

I know groups have come together in atypical fashion—outside groups that are putting pressure here—they have come in partnership to say: Hey, look, get this done, as you're suggesting, get it done. You've done some of the basics. Why are you ignoring this number one industry for many States?

Mr. COURTNEY. And just to follow up on that point, again, the Senate farm bill included within it disaster relief assistance—not just for a short period of time, but for 5 years. Again, the House did bring up a so-called “disaster relief” bill right before the August break—something which the American Farm Bureau dismissed as inadequate in terms of actual agricultural policy in this country—used as a pay-for taking money out of conservation, which, again, as critical a priority as almost anything else in the farm bill. Again, it was just an almost pathetic attempt to provide political cover for people who knew that, again, with the catastrophe happening out in the Midwest, they couldn't possibly leave town without at least trying to make some small gesture towards acknowledging that that was actually happening.

But, again, the Senate measure includes a full disaster relief. The House committee bill which came out has full disaster relief. That's what, really, the American agriculture community is looking for.

Tomorrow, on the steps of the Capitol, there will be a huge rally with farm groups from all across America gathering on the steps. Senator STABENOW and Congressman COLLIN PETERSON from Minnesota are going to be out there leading the charge. We understand that some Republican Members are going to show some courage and get out there on those steps and join those farmers in saying we need a farm bill now to be voted on in the House of Representatives. And it's time for the Republican leadership to listen to the people who, again, are out there busting their tail every single day making sure that there's food on the table for this country.

Mr. TONKO. You know, I listen to you, and your State was tremendously impacted by Irene and Lee last summer. My State was tremendously impacted. We reached for those very pots—that we've emptied with the Republican solution—that served our communities so very well with disaster funds. We can't tamper with some of those legitimate set-asides because they're there, they're required by acts of Mother Nature or by manmade situations where we need to have disaster dollars available.

But you can't help but quantify. I mean, you just imagine the extrapolating out of jobs, the impact of jobs if you don't get this done, the ripple effect into those ancillary businesses that feed into the needs of agriculture. It is a tremendous opportunity for us to grow stability in the economy. And to not do this, this do-nothing Republican Congress is devastating the economy. We could have made major strides, we could have gone forward with a lot of attempts to do good.

Now, what I sense here, from what you've talked about with these poison pills that have been adopted or placed into their solutions, or the ignoring of agreed-upon legislation in committee, this is a recurring theme. I mean, we saw the FAA, the Federal Aeronautics Administration, impacted again by delays, games that were being played because they need the full loaf or they want it their way. There is no sense of consensus that is driving these outcomes. And so we delayed for months the FAA outcome, which challenged, put at risk hundreds of projects, tens of thousands of construction jobs that were going to speak to safety at our airports.

We saw it with student loans. You were so actively involved with that. You were outspoken in your criticism of perhaps doubling our students' interest on their loans. And they, again, inserted poison pills. We waited until the midnight hour to get something done—with a lot of unpredictability again.

□ 2020

We saw it with the payroll tax relief that we were trying to do for middle-income America and small businesses. Couldn't get it done. Waited till the last minute. Poison pills that delayed progress.

This is a recurring theme, is it not?

Mr. COURTNEY. It is of course. And again, another example of a measure that really is just teed up and ready for action in the House is the postal reform. We have a postal system right now which is both technically and substantively in bankruptcy. The obligations of the postal system in terms of its expenses and pension costs now exceed the revenue that's coming in.

And once again we have a situation where the Senate has already acted. They passed a bipartisan postal reform bill. My colleague from Connecticut, JOE LIEBERMAN, Senator JOE LIEBERMAN is the chair of the committee that

put together, again, a significant bipartisan coalition to get a postal reform bill through which would provide stability in the finances of this system, which, again, is in bankruptcy.

Nothing has happened on this side of the campus, of the Capitol in terms of any action in terms of bringing a bill to the floor to make sure that, again, the postal system, which goes back to the birth of our country, is not going to capsize into hopeless bankruptcy. I mean, just totally inexcusable to have an issue like this, which, I challenge anyone to point to any time in American history where the postal service has become sort of a partisan political football. Yet this Republican leadership has done nothing to bring a postal reform bill to the floor.

Violence Against Women Act, again, a measure which is really a law enforcement measure in terms of giving our police and court systems and victim advocates the tools they need to eliminate the scourge of domestic violence in this country. My wife is involved, actually, in multidisciplinary teams back in Hartford, Connecticut, in terms of dealing with this issue as a pediatric nurse practitioner.

Again, the Senate passed a good, strong bipartisan bill. We had a partisan measure that just turned the clock back in terms of protecting victims who, again, are here on temporary visas, again, as some kind of statement, I guess, about immigration. And yet this is a measure which has not been sent to conference by this side of the Chamber, and we have a situation, a priority such as domestic violence which has traditionally been completely nonpartisan since it was first enacted back in the 1990s, and no action is being taken by this Republican leadership who seems intent on going home pretty soon and just basically leaving town until election time.

I mean, it's just stunning that, you know, farm bill, postal reform bill, violence against women, we should be able to do these things tonight and give this country some confidence.

Mr. TONKO. Representative COURTNEY, you talk about the reducing of VAWA, the Violence Against Women Act. If the spirit and letter of that law has been to protect women, why would you weaken certain protections?

There's this order of meanness and selectiveness and insensitivity that has abounded in this House, where they reduce efforts that have been championed over the decades, hard-fought efforts, bipartisan efforts, bicameral efforts, the executive branch working with the legislative branch, making certain that the heart and soul of this reform through the ages has been about making America stronger.

You know, it's we, the people, working toward a more perfect Union, a more perfect Union. We've made such wonderful progress. We have acknowledged the needs of women, where they were ignored in legislative or statutory concepts. We go forward. And now it's

like, as you suggest, rolling the clock back, being insensitive to so many needs out there and reducing the fabric of our government. It's like trying to speak to an archaic sort of quality that's driven by extreme thinking. It's the tail wagging the dog in the conference where this extreme thinking has taken over the majority and this do-nothing Republican Congress is not responding, not stepping up to the plate at a time that it's very, very critical.

We saw this economy challenged more greatly than perhaps the Depression of the past that really was a prime test, but in many of the lives of today's working Americans, this is the first-time greatest experience, a challenge before us. And when we should step up and be the champions, the fairness and justice and resolve to move forward with progressive policy, we're getting almost the reverse. It's the antithesis of what's required here.

Mr. COURTNEY. And I would just say that the inaction of this leadership—today we received an ominous warning from Moody's Investor Services which warned that basically that Congress's failure to strike a deal on the fiscal cliff some time within the next 6 months or so will lead to a downgrade of this country's financial rating. Again, Moody's preserved the Triple A status last August when we had the last self-induced crisis by the Republican majority on the default issue. And so the warning is out there. Incredibly, the Speaker, when he was asked about this later in the day today, basically said he has no confidence that we can strike a deal to avoid the fiscal cliff.

I mean, again, we're talking—it is September 11, a day when we should be coming together and reflecting on our unity as American people. And to have that kind of negativity at a time when we've been, the same day we were warned that the country could capsize into a downgrade, and just basically throw up his arms and say, well, he has no confidence we can put that deal together, I'm reminded of the old military saying, which is, you know, lead, follow, or get out of the way.

And really, for a Speaker to basically say, at this early stage, that he has no confidence that this body, which has gone through world wars, depressions, a civil war, and has always been able to really show that the genius of the Founding Fathers to create a structure where decisions can be made is somehow incapable of dealing with the issue that we're confronted with today is just a, really, just shocking admission of abdication of leadership. And really, it just—it signals that, you know, we need to have a change here in this Chamber, one way or another if we're going to deal with the problems that are looming on the horizon, which was your opening comments.

Mr. TONKO. And I agree with you. I think that the brinkmanship that was utilized in the debate and the develop-

ment of a response to the debt ceiling crisis was an attachment of bells and whistles and all sorts of extraneous materials that were being applied in an inappropriate way. We needed to move forward and address an order of crisis. America knows that, they understand they play by the rules and you pay your bills.

But it was this attempt to weaken a process, and it was an attempt to stall and delay and make a political statement at the expense of having our then credit rating downgraded by S&P. So the outcome here was a devastating one.

And, you know, it is really unfortunate that we're not heeding the need out there. I believe the American public has been stating emphatically they want solutions. They want us to come up with a response to an economic crisis. They want to know how we're going to move forward with this idea economy, innovation economy, clean energy economy. They want to see us move toward energy independence. They want to see us addressing transformation of the economy. They want advanced manufacturing that requires training of workers that begins with education investments, all of these things. They want us to develop solutions.

They don't want paralysis. They don't want this divide, this great divide. They don't want the partisanship.

They want partnership. They want solutions.

We saw what happened when you can advance solutions in this House. You and I enjoyed the 111th Congress and the productivity of that Congress. And to have moved to this sort of paralysis is unacceptable.

And the do-nothing Republican Congress is being watched very carefully here, and I believe that this coming election will be a very telling statement about rejecting the sort of delay, the rejecting of the games being played, a rejecting of the disinvestment, a rejecting of the defunding and the dismissiveness of a role that government could and should play in very important areas.

You ask these other economies out there with which our American business is competing. We're in an international race on innovation. You know, much like the race, global race on space in the sixties, when this country came together in resolve after a Sputnik moment, when they dusted off their backside and said, Never again, and we're going to move forward and we're going to be the Nation to stake that flag on the Moon.

We won because we resolved to do it. We did it with great passion. We did it with intellect. We did it coming together as a people of all sorts of political stripes, and we worked together as one Nation.

□ 2030

You're right, on this given day of 9/11, when we reflect upon those trage-

dies and when our virtues as a Nation—our liberties, our freedoms, our opportunities—were challenged and threatened and numbered us for a moment, we came back with great resolve. Let's show the passion here that we did in the sixties to win that global race in space. Let's invest. Let's go forward. Let's make certain we don't tie the hands of America behind her back. Let's move forward and invest in an economy, in a race that is important to our efforts to maintain our leadership on the international scale.

Mr. COURTNEY. I think, as Moody's indicated, with the fiscal cliff at the end of this year and with the sequestration on January 1, there really is only one place where this can get resolved, and it's right here in this room. There are ideas that are on the table which, I think, clearly show a middle ground—in fact, more than a middle ground—as a way of solving these problems.

The President has put on the table an extension of the Bush tax cuts for 98 percent of Americans that would entirely protect their present tax status with no increase in taxes. Obviously, the cliff will cause middle class families all across America to pay more if there is no action in this Chamber. In fact, it provides for 100 percent of all Americans the extension of the Bush tax cuts on incomes up to \$250,000. Any income above that would revert back to the Clinton era rates. That change would provide about \$1 trillion of deficit reduction for our country at a time when the structural deficit that the Bush tax cuts created is obviously scaring investor services like Moody's.

This is a proposal which is not a 50/50 deal. It's a 98 percent deal in terms of protecting those existing tax cuts, and it's a 100 percent deal in terms of protecting people's taxes up to \$250,000.

Mr. TONKO. A point oftentimes lost. Even millionaires and billionaires would get their tax breaks on a first order of income, \$250,000.

Do you know what stands in the way? If we have to be totally frank here, they want to make certain that millionaires and billionaires continue to get their bonanza of a tax break. Well, do you know what? We know what got us into the economic crisis. We had a tax cut for millionaires and billionaires primarily that was never paid for. We fought two wars off line, off budget. So one of the first orders of business that the President wanted to address was putting together an honest budget. You didn't have the mechanism, the payment mechanism, for the millionaire-billionaire tax cut, and you have to bring that cost of the war into the budget.

We need to move forward with a sound and reasonable approach to economic relief. The middle class has taken it on the chin, and it's their turn. They need to be relieved, and we need to invest in those orders of comeback that will empower our middle class. What I think is, with the efforts

that have been made here in the House, the requests made in the House are very legit: Do what you can afford. Keep the economy going. To me, it's about aggregate demand for goods and services. So, if you relieve the middle class, if you strengthen their purchasing power, if we had that thriving middle class, someone needs to buy your product; someone needs to make your product. If you empower that middle class, it's a formula for success.

As you point out, Representative COURTNEY, it is 98 percent of the general public that will enjoy that empowerment and 97 percent of the small business community. There is a way to go forward with a reasonable approach that really speaks to that strata that needs the most assistance today.

Mr. COURTNEY. Six nights ago, we saw someone get on the floor of the convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, and very methodically and with great clarity explain exactly the points that we're talking about here tonight.

President Bill Clinton, someone who today enjoys a 69 percent approval rating, got on the floor of that convention. While he was President, the public finances of this country came into balance for the first time in over a generation, and 22 million new jobs were created under his watch. If anyone has credibility in terms of a perspective on economic and fiscal policy in this country, it's President Bill Clinton.

What we have talked about here tonight is about reverting to the Clinton era rates on incomes above \$250,000. We know as a Nation that that does not smother and punish success. It will not smother and punish our economy. Those rates were in place when 22 million jobs were created in the U.S. economy in the 1990s.

Today, what's interesting is that Mr. Romney, the Republican Presidential candidate, is very careful not to criticize President Clinton. In fact, he tries indirectly sometimes to even embrace him. Well, he ought to embrace his positions on fiscal policy because, if he did, we could pass a bill on this floor in no time flat, solve the fiscal cliff, defuse sequestration, and get this country back on track with more than just policies: with a new infusion of confidence, both within our country and, frankly, in financial markets around the world, that this place is capable of actually making some decisions and that this place is actually capable of action.

The former President's comments in Charlotte obviously got a rock star reception all across the country because that's what people are hungry for—reasonable solutions coming from people who have demonstrated that they actually can administer and be good stewards of the U.S. economy. I think that, for the Republican leadership of this Chamber to ignore that type of compromise and reasonable approach to solving the fiscal problems we face today is politically very dangerous.

Again, if you really look closely at the Romney campaign, they are loath

to even say anything negative about Bill Clinton or his time in the White House. Do you know what? They're very careful also to avoid talking about his policies, which basically President Obama and the minority here, even with some significant modifications to accommodate the other side, are prepared to move forward on. Let's really, I think, heed the advice that he gave this country six nights ago and move forward with these policies.

Mr. TONKO. Representative COURTNEY, you talk about that event. When he made his presentation, he did that long-term review and a rather shorter focus over the last couple of years—the first term of President Obama's. Yet, when he talked about the track record over the last decade, he talked about 28 years of Republican leadership versus 24 years of Democratic leadership. He talked about the outcome in jobs, and said, under the Republican watch, 22 million jobs, I believe, were created. Under the Democratic watch, there were 42. So, he said, let's look at the record. Let's check the scorecard. Then he did the short-term outcome of President Obama's administration. He was talking about the numbers of jobs created and gave a zero to what the Republicans were advancing in the House.

It's pretty obvious that there is this outcome of success. People constantly refer to the Clinton years now. What happened there? Well, we undid the surplus that was created. We spent down on a tax cut that wasn't paid for. We fought two wars that weren't on line with the budget. It's obvious we know what happened. Why would we give the keys back to someone who drove us into the ditch?

So this whole effort in this administration with 30 now consecutive months of private sector job growth and the President's asking for Congress to move forward with an agenda that has had obvious positive results and its being denied and held up, played with, entered in with poison pills is not what the American public wants. They want those solutions, and they are denying those solutions. I think the do-nothing Republican Congress has caused great pain and has denied progress for the comeback scenario that we so desperately require and that the middle class and all of America so rightfully deserve.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you for taking the time tonight to really set the record straight on a lot of these issues. I would note that Bloomberg News actually did a fact check of the Clinton speech the other night and basically came back and gave it a clean bill of health. Frankly, if you contrast that with the speeches that took place in Tampa and if you go to PolitiFact and go through some of the remarks that were analyzed by that Pulitzer Prize winning service and the number of pants-on-fire lies that they ascribed to some of the comments that were made on the floor of the Tampa convention, there is a sharp contrast.

Again, I just want to thank you for taking the time to remind the American people this evening about the fact that there are items that we can move forward on today. Literally, we could reconvene the House here at a quarter of nine on 9/11 and pass a farm bill, pass the postal reform bill, get moving on the Violence Against Women Act, and we could deal with the fiscal cliff if people with reasonable and nonpartisan scorched Earth partisanship came forward and saw what is obvious, which is that the tools are there to fix these problems. Thank you for your leadership and for holding this session this evening.

Mr. TONKO. Thank you, Representative COURTNEY. I thank you for your outstanding leadership. You've been there on the student loan issue. You've been there on the ag reauthorization measure. You've been there on the American Jobs Act.

□ 2040

We know that there has been a formula for success driven by the President for the American Jobs Act. He has asked for Congress to move forward. The Senate has, in a bipartisan way, moved forward with efforts to address a middle class tax cut. The President has asked us to complement that with the American Jobs Act that enables us to move forward with investments in educators, allowing for teachers and class size to be addressed, making certain that our young people, our workforce of the future are able to enjoy that self-discovery, that sense of identity that they require in the classroom. What are their gifts, their passions, their skills, their talents? How can they best contribute their fabric to the American scene?

That is part of the American Dream. That is part of the investment that provides those underpinnings of support, that builds an economy with capital investment, physical investment, human infrastructure investment, all of which are required in order to have the holistic response. With the American Jobs Act formula, the President is saying, Look, we've grown 30 months of consecutive private sector job growth. We've enabled the economy to come back powerfully. We're investing in that order of business.

He's also asked that that public sector element which has been reduced, that has offset some of the progress, has reduced some of the progress because of pain at those State capitols putting together their budgets, he said, Look, let's from a big picture point of view. Invest in educators, in public safety, in police officers, in firefighters, in emergency personnel.

On a day like today where we humbly reflect upon the pain this Nation endured, the loss of lives, nearly 3,000 people impacted by the acts at the Pentagon, in a lonely field in Pennsylvania, and, yes, in metropolitan New York, we are reminded most humbly, most sensitively, most lovingly of that

dreadful moment. And we saw how important our public safety elements are, our first responders, critical to that situation. It showcased a very noble measure in a very painful and dark moment in our history what those role models are, who they are. That's their everyday work. It was showcased in a very magnified way. But every day we reach to their skills, their talents, their strengths.

The President is saying invest in that public safety element, invest in our firefighters, in our police officers, in our emergency responders. He's asking for that in the American Jobs Act. We've done pieces of it, but we need to do the entire package to have the strength that this economy requires for its comeback.

He talks about infrastructure improvements through an infrastructure bank that is part and parcel to the outcome, making certain that our infrastructure is strong and able to move our situation of a comeback. Commerce requires the shipping of freight. It needs the infrastructure. Our communities require that investment in infrastructure; otherwise, they go it the way of a property tax or a less progressive tax structure.

We know what needs to be done, and the denial here by the do-nothing Republican Congress is not acceptable. It's painful. It's immoral. It's insensitive. It's un-American. To put partisanship ahead of partnership is unacceptable.

We know that the American spirit requires better than that, so we need to respond to America's working families. We need to respond to the hope that ought to be delivered to the doorsteps of families across this great Nation. Our history is replete with investment, investment to take us to new ages, new elements of success, new impacts on the world scene.

Earlier, I had spoken of the mill towns that became epicenters of invention and innovation. It was their product delivery coming out of the mill towns, out of those 24-hour-a-day operations that impacted the quality of life, not just in these United States, but in nations around the world. People were lifted by discovery and product development in this Nation. And as we move forward, we need to advance our manufacturing agenda, we need to invest in the research, and we need to invest in the innovation.

I'm reminded of some of the incubator outcomes at campuses within the 21st Congressional District in upstate New York in the capital region of Mohawk Valley that I represent, incubators at public and private sector institutions, clean room science activity going on in lab formats at community colleges, working with our nanotechnology industry, our semiconductor industry, advanced battery manufacturing. All of this requires a plan, a holistic plan that allows for the unleashing of talent and opportunity from the American public. Someone before our times invested in our future.

Throughout our noble history, throughout our growth as a Nation, there were those who believed in America and invested in her people. We can ill afford to go back. We can only go forward, as was made mention by the President and many of his administration that were speaking at the convention, many legislators who appeared at the convention and spoke about the agenda to constantly move forward, embracing the American Dream in the process. That American Dream is what inspired so many to journey to this Nation.

We are, in major fashion, a compilation of journeys. Other than our Native American sisters and brothers, it's the immigrant population that traveled to these shores embracing that American Dream, believing in a brighter tomorrow, understanding that if they put their mind and heart and soul to work, that better opportunities would be there, that they could climb the ladders of success, that they would not pull up those ladders when they reached the mountaintop, but extend additional ladders to everyone to climb that ladder of success until they reached that American Dream.

That has been the saga of this great Nation. That has been the profoundness of this Nation, the greatness of this Nation. Why would we change course now? We saw what ill effects came of some bad policy or lack of sound stewardship of our resources. Let's learn from that history, but let's also learn from the history of greatness where America struggled through tough times, faced immense challenges, but powerfully spoke in a way that engaged that American spirit and put it into policy format, resource advocacy, and budgets that spoke to a soundness of a future for America.

Our best days lie ahead if we pursue that agenda that shows its belief and its promise in America's children and working families. The undeniable progress that we can make speaks boldly to us. We've seen an administration reach out to this Congress asking for a partnership, a bipartisan response, one that will allow all of us to share in the great success that can follow. We've seen what happens when we go forward with some of the measures of progressivity.

We have a grid system that was challenged as early as 2003, where we know there is a need for investing in the capacity of that system that was designed for regional utility matters, and now we're wheeling electrons from region to region within States to States to States and from nations to nations. We know that we have to step up to the plate and invest in that utility infrastructure. We know that there are deficiencies in our routine, traditional infrastructure that require our investment.

□ 2050

We know that there's a need for energy transformation so that we can

grow with the American intellect, that intellectual capacity that enables us to provide for the innovation, the American independence, the American security that can be dealt with through renewables, and energy efficiency as our fuel of choice and outstanding discoveries that can be made in a way that are most powerful, and research that equals jobs.

We see it happening all around us, and it's not like we have the luxury to decide not to do it. We're in the midst of an international competition.

And unlike the sixties, where it was U.S. versus U.S.S.R., we are now with many more competitors on the international scene. They are partnering with their governments. They are partnering in a way that provides research monies, incubator space, higher-ed communities that are growing in leaps and bounds while we languish with a do-nothing Republican Congress that wants to promote delay, insert poison pills, or just deny progress in a partisanship way that is not speaking to the American spirit that was imagined and planted by our Founding Parents.

You know, tonight, for this past hour, we as Democrats have enjoyed sharing our thoughts about what a productive Congress could be in terms of shaping our future, what a productive Congress could mean to fairness and justice and equitable opportunity for generations to come.

Our children are watching, they're measuring our actions much more than by our words, more so by the achievements that we can assess. They're watching carefully, and we need to move forward in a way that finds us working together to build consensus. When we insert the "we" in us, it is much more powerful than the "me" in us.

This House has had great moments when they've rolled up their sleeves as Members and have come to the table and said, America beckons. Her people need that sort of response. True leadership will move forward in a way that allows us to enjoy the taste of success.

You know, tonight, as we've talked about the paralysis that has gripped this House, as we talked about the denial that has been part of the outcome that has been demeaning and destructive at times, I reach to the assessment by very nonpartisan congressional scholars, in this case Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein. They have been, over the years, very much bipartisan in their criticism and critiquing of the behavior in Congress.

I just want to quote from their report:

In our past writings, we have criticized both parties when we believed it was warranted. Today, however, we have no choice but to acknowledge that the core of the problem lies with the Republican Party. The GOP has become an insurgent outlier in American politics. It is ideologically extreme; scornful of compromise; unmoved by conventional understanding of facts, evidence and science; and dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition.

Tonight I will close with that statement because I think it's a challenge. It's a challenge to us to forget about the unproductive nature of the last several months and move forward with a newfound order of resolve that will enable us to acknowledge that some of the greatest moments in American history came with some of her darkest hours where with that regard, that true American spirit we're able to rise to the occasion, reach to the best intellect and the best temperament of this Nation as she came together in an order of consensus and where our best days followed that sort of agreement.

We can build upon success. We can learn from history, the soundness of history that saw us respond and rise to the crushing situations that gripped this Nation and move forward with a sense of greatness, a sense of accomplishment, a sense of fairness and empowerment and, most importantly, a delivery of hope to the doorsteps of individuals and families across this great Nation. America's greatest moments are truly lying ahead if we can embark upon that challenge before us.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mrs. NAPOLITANO (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 55 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, September 12, 2012, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

7543. A letter from the Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter on the approved retirement of General Craig R. McKinley, Air National Guard of the United States, and his advancement to the grade of general on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

7544. A letter from the Deputy Director for Policy, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting the Corporation's final rule — Benefits Payable in Terminated Single-Employer Plans; Interest Assumptions for Paying Benefits received August 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

7545. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Department of Energy, transmitting the Department's semi-annual Implementation Report on Energy Conservation Standards Activities, pursuant to Section 141 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

7546. A letter from the Acting Director, International Cooperation, Department of

Defense, transmitting Pursuant to Section 27(f) of the Arms Export Control Act and Section 1(f) of Executive Order 11958, Transmittal No. 9-12 informing of an intent to sign the Memorandum of Understanding with Israel; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

7547. A letter from the Acting Director, International Cooperation, Department of Defense, transmitting Pursuant to Section 27(f) of the Arms Export Control Act and Section 1(f) of Executive Order 11958, Transmittal No. 8-12 informing of an intent to sign the Memorandum of Understanding with Israel; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

7548. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting notification that effective July 29, 2012, the danger pay allowance for Mali was established based on civil insurrection and terrorism; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

7549. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 3(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, certification regarding the proposed transfer of major defense equipment (Transmittal No. RSAT-12-2992); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

7550. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a report pursuant to Section 804 of the PLO Commitments Compliance Act of 1989 (title VIII, Foreign Relations Authorization Act, FY 1990 and 1991 (Pub. L. 101-246)), and Sections 603-604 (Middle East Peace Commitments Act of 2002) and 699 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, FY 2003 (Pub. L. 107-228), the functions of which have been delegated to the Department of State; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

7551. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting the Department's semiannual report from the office of the Inspector General for the period October 1, 2011 through March 31, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. app. (Insp. Gen. Act) section 5(b); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

7552. A letter from the Senior Counsel for Regulatory Affairs, Department of the Treasury, transmitting the Department's final rule — Department of the Treasury Acquisition Regulation; Internet Payment Platform (RIN: 1505-AC41) received August 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

7553. A letter from the Chairman, National Transportation Safety Board, transmitting the Board's annual report for FY 2011, amended, prepared in accordance with Section 203 of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act), Public Law 107-174; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

7554. A letter from the General Counsel, Office of Management and Budget, transmitting four reports pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

7555. A letter from the Director, Office of Personnel Management, transmitting the Office's semiannual report from the office of the Inspector General and the Management Response for the period October 1, 2011 through March 31, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. app. (Insp. Gen. Act) section 5(b); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

7556. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's determination on a petition on behalf of workers from the Winchester Engineering and Analytical Center

in Winchester, Massachusetts, to be added to the Special Exposure Cohort (SEC), pursuant to the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000 (EEOICPA); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

7557. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's determination on a petition on behalf of workers from the Medina Modification Center in San Antonio, Texas, to be added to the Special Exposure Cohort (SEC), pursuant to the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000 (EEOICPA); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

7558. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's determination on a petition on behalf of workers from the Hanford Engineer Works in Richland, Washington, to be added to the Special Exposure Cohort (SEC), pursuant to the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000 (EEOICPA); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

7559. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's determination on a petition on behalf of workers from Titanium Alloys Manufacturing, to be added to the Special Exposure Cohort (SEC), pursuant to the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000 (EEOICPA); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

7560. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Airworthiness Directives; Eurocopter France Helicopters [Docket No.: FAA-2012-0766; Directorate Identifier 2012-SW-056-AD; Amendment 39-17133; AD 2012-15-04] (RIN: 2120-AA64) received August 28, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

7561. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Airworthiness Directives; Honeywell International, Inc. Turbofan Engines [Docket No.: FAA-2012-0195; Directorate Identifier 2012-NE-08-AD; Amendment 39-17070; AD 2012-11-07] (RIN: 2120-AA64) received August 28, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

7562. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes [Docket No.: FAA-2011-1165; Directorate Identifier 2011-NM-002-AD; Amendment 39-17030; AD 2012-08-13] (RIN: 2120-AA64) received August 28, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

7563. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Airworthiness Directives; Eurocopter Deutschland GmbH Helicopters [Docket No.: FAA-2012-0566; Directorate Identifier 2011-SW-008-AD; Amendment 39-17065; AD 2012-11-02] (RIN: 2120-AA64) received August 28, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

7564. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Airplanes [Docket No.: FAA-2011-1066; Directorate Identifier 2011-NM-050-AD; Amendment 39-16917; AD 2012-01-05] (RIN: 2120-AA64) received August 28, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

7565. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting