

this country and across the world. Farming's risky, but because growing our food is in the interest of our national security, we provide a safety net that keeps our farmers on the land in good times and in bad times.

As you can see from these maps that I have here with me today, we are suffering through one of those tough times right now. Farmers can't control Mother Nature. Our farmers are facing one of the worst droughts that we've seen in decades. You just have to talk to a veteran farmer today to say that they haven't seen an instance like this since probably the thirties where we had such widespread, long-standing drought that they are suffering through. It has a real impact on folks in rural America, and the rest of America relies on that food to feed their families.

I want my colleagues to get a picture of just how important the farm bill is to this country and to people in the real world. While it may be easy to ignore the drought if you're in Washington, D.C. or in other parts of the country, when I go home every weekend, and when I was home and traveling all across our State throughout August, it was everywhere around me.

Just yesterday I had the chance to sit down with a couple of producers from South Dakota. Brent and Barb were here from Houghton, South Dakota, and it was evident to me that when I visited with them that their concern was more for the next generation than for getting through a couple of tough days right now.

They spoke of their sons, the love they have for their land, and the responsibility that they feel in feeding this country and making sure that we have a future where the United States can grow its own food to provide for its own people.

They wrote me a letter about what the farm bill means to them, and I wanted to read part of that letter to you:

I know you share our feelings on the importance of the bill. It is not only necessary to us now, but also for our three sons who want to continue our farming operation which has been in our family for four generations. We are so thankful and proud that they want to return to the farm and we want to do all we can to provide them with the same opportunities we have had. The crop insurance portion of the farm bill has truly helped us in the past as we have struggled with wet conditions over parts of the last 20 years. Because of excess moisture, there have been years when we farmed less than half of our total cropland. Now, the tables have turned and we are experiencing drought conditions in some areas of South Dakota and we will again be relying on crop insurance. It is so important to our family farming operation as a business. It has allowed us to stay in business through the tough years.

The safety net this farm bill would provide is crucial to not only rural farmers like us, but our State and country as a whole.

Brent and Barb and other producers across America are in town this week. They were asking this House to take action on a farm bill to give them the

certainty that they need to have confidence to plant next year's crop. It will support both rural America but also every single family that's out there buying groceries today.

Later this morning, I'm going to be joining them at a rally that's called the Farm Bill Now rally. And I'll be asking my colleagues to take action to pass a farm bill. We need to get that farm bill done to know what the policies are going to be in the next 5 years. It's right for our producers, it's right for our ranchers and farmers, it's right for this country, and for every family out there who's wanting to put food on the table that they can afford through these tough times.

□ 1030

LIBYA

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

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, back in 2009, my good friend and the cochair of the House Democracy Partnership, DAVID PRICE of North Carolina, and I had the opportunity to visit former General—and at that time, U.S. Ambassador—Karl Eikenberry, Ambassador to Afghanistan.

We were at the Ambassador's residence in Kabul, and I was struck with a statement that was made by General Ambassador Eikenberry. He said we have a tendency, as Americans, to express appreciation to men and women in uniform, those men and women who served in our Nation's Armed Forces around the world, but too rarely do we extend our appreciation to the men and women who represent the United States of America in the Foreign Service as diplomats around the world, and General Eikenberry encouraged us to do that. And Mr. PRICE and I have consistently done that in the visits of the House Democracy Partnership to the 17 countries with which we've partnered over the past 7 years.

I have to say that 3 years later, just a few months ago, Mr. PRICE and I were leading a delegation to Afghanistan and we recounted that story to our great diplomat, Ryan Crocker, the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan. Ambassador Crocker, when we shared the story with him, reminded us that more U.S. Ambassadors have been killed since the Vietnam War than generals or admirals. We know that down at the Harry S. Truman Building, there is a plaque that lists the names of the 231 U.S. diplomats who have been killed since the first death in 1780. And, Madam Speaker, I have to say that the news that we have of the tragic death of Ambassador Chris Stevens in Benghazi, the U.S. consulate in Libya, is very sad news for all of us.

Now, the upheaval in the Arab world has brought about many great things. For the first time in millennia, there are individuals who have been able to participate in elections and make deci-

sions. But then we get the sad and tragic news that Ambassador Stevens and, according to the early reports, two marines, maybe another Foreign Service officer, were killed in this tragic attack.

I would like to say that we have spent time there. We were just in Libya, Mr. PRICE and I, just a few weeks before Ambassador Stevens arrived, and Libya is a place that has held out great promise. I am determined, as I know Mr. PRICE is, to ensure that the promise that we saw several weeks ago in Libya will not be shattered by the tragic death of Ambassador Stevens.

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to be joined by my dear friend and colleague, Mr. PRICE, and would like to yield to him at this point.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. I thank my colleague for yielding.

Mr. DREIER and I have partnered for many years in the work of the House Democracy Partnership, which we and many others in this body believe in very deeply—that we need to be good colleagues, not just nationally, but internationally. And we need to reach out in ways that can strengthen democracy, strengthen representative institutions, in countries that are friends of our country. We can help encourage and strengthen those parliaments. That's exactly why we visited Libya back in the spring, a delegation led by Mr. DREIER. We were there a few weeks before Ambassador Stevens arrived.

We were struck by the promise of Libya. Of course they've had 42 years of dictatorial rule. The country has been liberated through the efforts of NATO allies. There are still major challenges—obviously, security challenges, as we are learning in a tragic way today—but the country is gradually being secured. Constituent assembly elections have been held and parliamentary elections are on the way. So we have great hope for Libya. We have been and we will be a friend to Libya in helping to realize the promise of the Arab Spring.

Our solemn purpose here today is to mark this tragic loss, the eighth Ambassador in U.S. history to be killed in the line of duty. Our personnel in Libya are dedicated personnel, the best that the U.S. has to offer. The work that they're doing there is challenging and dangerous. The work promotes our national interest and is very, very valuable to Libya and to us. This horrible tragedy is one that we want to mark in this House here today, as we honor the victims of this attack and those who continue to serve.

Mr. DREIER. I thank my friend for his contribution.

Madam Speaker, if I may simply extend condolences to the loved ones of Ambassador Stevens and to say that we need to ensure that those who are responsible for this tragic death are brought to justice. And we need to do everything that we can to continue to encourage the development of the rule

of law, self-determination, political pluralism, and, as Mr. PRICE has just said, the development of democratic institutions around the world. It's a universal right, and the United States of America is the single best model for that.

So our thoughts and prayers, again, are with the loved ones of Ambassador Stevens.

WE FIDDLE WHILE THE FISCAL FIRES BURN

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

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, first I want to, of course, associate myself with the remarks from Mr. DREIER and Mr. PRICE, who have done such terrific work on the spread of democracy, but also to lament the tragic loss of life and the courage displayed by our men and women in our Foreign Service who are deployed abroad to represent the United States, its democracy, and its principles.

Madam Speaker, I regretfully rise, however, to talk about another unhappy subject. Our fiscal house is burning, and in Washington we continue to play and fiddle. We have another 8, perhaps 13, days left, or less than that. I don't know whether we're going to be here in October, but I do know that we're going to be here for a very short time—this week, frankly, doing message bills.

The middle class tax cut which passed the Senate lays fallow somewhere, not brought to this floor, to assure that our middle class citizens would understand that they weren't going to get a tax increase on January 1, give them confidence, give our economy confidence, to help grow our economy.

We have not assured our doctors that the payments for Medicare services to patients will in fact be available. We have not taken substantive action to set aside the sequester with a balanced plan.

There will be a bill on sequester. That will be largely opposed on our side of the aisle because it does not provide for balance. It simply says set aside the sequester, which is the direct result of Republican policies. In fact, the Republicans have offered two bills on the floor which say that sequester is the option of choice if you don't meet certain numbers. They did that in their Cut, Cap and Balance bill, which was enforced how? Through sequestration.

We understand that sequestration is an irrational act. Why is it an irrational act? Because it is as if you have a food budget and a movie budget at home and you have tight finances that week, that month, that year. You don't cut your food budget exactly the same as you cut your movie budget. You say, We're going to forego a movie and make sure we have healthy food on the table. That's what we ought to do.

We ought to have a strategic way and a balanced way to get this deficit that

is out of control and needs to be handled under control, and the best way to turn off the sequester is a balanced plan. But what we will see offered on this floor is not a balanced plan, but a plan which says, Do it our way or no way.

Now, very frankly, that's been the history of this Congress. I've served in 16 Congresses. This is the least productive Congress in which I've served. Now, that view is shared by two scholars, Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein, who wrote in a book and wrote in an op-ed:

We've been studying Washington politics in Congress for more than 40 years and never have we seen them—meaning the Congress of the United States—as dysfunctional.

The American public share that view, of course, and our poll numbers reflect it; properly so.

Mr. Mann and Mr. Ornstein go on:

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.

They went on to say:

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 the political opposition and, therefore, unwilling to compromise.

That's what our gridlock is caused by, an unwillingness to compromise.

The Senate has passed a farm bill. The Senate has passed a farm bill which would help farmers threatened by drought. As a matter of fact, their own committee has reported out a farm bill, but that farm bill has not been brought to the floor because, apparently, the majority of Republicans aren't for a farm bill. So even their own bill is not brought to the floor, much less a bipartisan-passed farm bill in the United States Senate which could be passed and would get a significant number of Democratic votes—not because we believe it's exactly what we want, but because we believe it is a compromise that will work for America and America's farmers.

□ 1040

Ladies and gentlemen, Madam Speaker, the American public ought to know that in the next few days we're not going to be doing much of anything; not on jobs for Americans, not on the fiscal cliff that confronts us, not on farm bills, not on the Violence Against Women Act, which also passed the United States Senate in a bipartisan, overwhelming fashion. No, we fiddle. We fiddle while the fiscal fires burn.

I would urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, my Democratic colleagues and my Republican colleagues—I don't think we're going to get anything done before November 6. I think it's going to be politics, politics as usual. The American public and America will suffer for that. But I think that's what's going to happen.

But I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and Madam Speaker, I would urge the American people to demand of us that we not perceive the lame duck session as simply a time to further fiddle. It ought to be a time, my colleagues, when we act, we come together, we adopt a balanced, fair plan to get the fiscal house of America in order, to put ourselves on a fiscally sustainable path that is credible, that people believe in, so that the rating agencies, which are now talking about perhaps downgrading the United States of America, the most creditworthy Nation on Earth—why? Not because we don't have the resources to solve our fiscal problems but because they do not perceive that we have the political will and willingness to do so or the courage.

My colleagues, Americans expect more of us. We ought to expect more of ourselves. We have an obligation, a responsibility. We swore an oath to protect and defend not only the Constitution but the welfare of this country.

Putting our country on a fiscally sustainable path is absolutely essential. I don't think we're going to do it before November 6, but I would hope every one of us, every one of us who comes back here the second week in November, or the end of the second week of November, will pledge ourselves to work together, as Americans, not as Democrats, not as Republicans, not as conservatives, not as liberals or moderates, but as Americans, understanding that the only way every commission that's reported has said we're going to get our house in order is to come together and do so in a balanced way.

And yes, ladies and gentlemen, that means making sure that we deal with revenues. We pay for what we buy. That's what revenues are about. We pay for what we buy. And then we deal with the spiraling cost of health care. Everybody's talked about that. We have to do it. President Clinton talked about that. PAUL RYAN talks about that. We have to do it.

But we can keep the guarantee of Medicare, we can keep the guarantee of Social Security in the process, while getting our fiscal house in order on the entitlement side.

Ladies and gentlemen of this House, we owe it to the American people. The American people expect us to act responsibly. We are fiddling while the fiscal house of America burns.

Let us summon the courage, the judgment, and the personal responsibility each one of us has, that when we return here after the election and, hopefully, the politics are behind us, those 30-second, 60-second ads which misinterpret, misinform, and dissemble are behind us, and we say to all of our citizens who we represent, we are prepared to exercise the courage and judgment to put our country on a fiscally sustainable path that is credible. Not only will rating agencies believe in it, our citizens will believe in it, our businesses will believe in it, and the international community will as well.