

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.

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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.

HONORING THE LIFE OF NEIL ARMSTRONG

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

Mr. OLSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a true American hero, Neil Armstrong, a space pioneer who profoundly influenced world history.

I can still remember wearing my most prized possession, a blue Fly Me to the Moon T-shirt with the Apollo 11 mission insignia on it. I remember the feeling of seeing those grainy images of Neil on the Sea of Tranquility and, as he put his left foot down on lunar soil, his famous "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

That historical moment changed America forever, and the world changed with us. And Neil Armstrong's quiet heroism helped catapult America to be the global leader. His legacy of American exceptionalism inspired generations of young people to take up science and space exploration.

In the 43 years since his Moon mission, Armstrong believed deeply that America should continue to explore new worlds. Upon learning the Obama administration had canceled NASA's plans to return to the Moon, Neil Armstrong, a very private man, became a vocal critic of this failure and the willingness to allow other nations to surpass America's space leadership. The state of NASA's human space exploration plans, he told Congress last fall, is "lamentably embarrassing and unacceptable."

One of the highlights of my life will always be shaking the hand of my childhood hero. Neil and I were united in our opposition to President Obama's plan to cancel the Constellation program and diminish the priority of human spaceflight in his 2010 budget and National Space Policy documents.

It was humbling to work with Mr. Armstrong and several other Apollo astronauts like Gene Cernan and Jim Lovell to fight to restore a strong NASA budget and develop a comprehensive human space exploration program worthy of America's greatness as explorers.

America needs a clear and purposeful mission worthy of our Nation's continued investment to regain our leading role and remain the dominant human space country in the world.

Our Nation suffers a great loss with Neil Armstrong's passing, but his courage and commitment to greatness live on in the next generation of explorers to come.

For the rest of my time on this planet, I will continue to honor his contributions to American exceptionalism and his legacy by pushing for a strong human space exploration program that will take America to the Moon, to Mars, and beyond.

My thoughts and prayers are with Neil Armstrong's family and the entire NASA family as we cope with this tremendous loss. America mourns with you as we remember Neil's amazing journey.

Neil's philosophy about life is captured best by advice given by one of Neil's Moon-walking brothers, Gene Cernan, when he spoke to a group of students at Sartartia Middle School in my hometown of Sugar Land, Texas. Gene told the kids, "Always shoot for the Moon, because if you miss, you'll see the stars."

Neil Armstrong gave us the Moon so we can look to the heavens and see the stars. Thank you, Neil.

God bless.

ANGELS IN ADOPTION

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

Mr. NUNNELEE. Madam Speaker, this week, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption is recognizing the individuals and families from around the country who've enriched the lives of children through foster care and adoption. I rise this morning to share the story of a couple who have dedicated their lives to providing not just a home for children, but a family.

Pat and Sandra Nunnelee, from Tupelo, Mississippi, had lived the American Dream. They married in their teens, and over the next 14 years had four children born into their family. When they married, Pat was working in a low-paying manufacturing job.

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But he soon entered the profession of life insurance sales. He possessed a good personality and a strong work ethic. Because of that, he was a natural for the business, and his career advanced quickly both in income and in prestige.

Sandra had a love of infants and a desire to be a nurse. However, she decided to forgo her nursing education and her career in order to get married and then raise a family. Later, she did enter into nursing school. In fact, she graduated from nursing school the same year her oldest child graduated from high school.

By 1980, they were in their mid-forties, and they were enjoying the fruits of their labors together. Pat had become vice president of one of the largest life insurance companies in his State. Sandra was enjoying the love of her life—taking care of newborn babies as an intensive care nurse. They were enjoying a standard of living that neither of them had ever thought possible. In addition, empty nest was in sight. Two of their children were in college, and two others weren't far behind. In short, life was good. They'd worked hard, and they were nearing a stage of life when they could really begin to enjoy it.

But any plans they may have made changed in November of 1980 when a little girl was born prematurely. That month, while America was preparing to celebrate Thanksgiving, we were watching the peaceful transition of

power begin in the White House, and we were watching an international hostage crisis. So, when the world is watching Presidents and Ayatollahs, who cares when a little premature girl is born? Thank God somebody did.

This little girl was born with numerous health problems, and the pediatrician's quick diagnosis was that this infant wouldn't live through the night and that medical staff should make her short time on Earth as peaceful as possible. At the conclusion of the shift, Sandra left her patient with the belief that this little girl would not be alive when she got back to work the next morning.

Much to her surprise, when she arrived the next morning for work, the little girl was still alive. She'd proven to have a strong will to live, but she'd been abandoned by her parents. So, after 3 months in the intensive care unit, her pediatrician observed to Sandra one day, "We've done miracles for this child, but the one thing we've not been able to give her is a home. She has never had anyone to hold her, to rock her, or to sing to her. Over the next few days, Pat and Sandra became foster parents. She left her job, and the child entered their home."

Child number five.

Three years later, Sunday lunch was interrupted by a desperate knock at the door. Sandra had taken a leave of absence from her job to take care of this little girl, and she volunteered to offer child care to a single mom from the hospital where she worked. That young woman was having a great deal of difficulty coping with the many demands of being a single mom.

She desperately asked, "Ms. Nunnelee, would you please take my baby?"

Thinking there must be some kind of temporary crisis, the Nunnelees replied, "Yes, we'll be glad to take care of your child for a couple of days."

The young mom responded, "I don't want you to take him for a couple of days. I want you to take him forever."

Child number six.

Four years after that was another desperate contact, this one a phone call from the County Department of Human Services. An infant boy had been born with very severe heart problems. The doctor's prognosis was that he wouldn't live beyond age 10 or 12. His parents didn't want to keep such a sick child. There were no available foster parents with the medical expertise or the willingness to adopt such a child in that condition.

The desperate social worker said, "You've done more than any family should be asked to do, but there is nobody else."

Child number seven.

That child has lived more than a decade beyond the doctor's initial prognosis, and while he still has some health problems, he has recently completed school, and he has moved out on his own. For the first time in 54 years, Pat and Sandra Nunnelee don't have a child in their home. Oh, holidays,