

friend so eloquently said, the economic strength of the United States that is exemplified in every American who is working in whatever capacity at all to see our economy grow. Because we're the only complete superpower left in the world today, the only complete superpower. By virtue of that, I mean militarily, economically, and geopolitically. And we have to step up to the plate and continue to exercise that strong leadership role; and passage of permanent normal trade relations, taking this step will go a long way towards doing just that.

Mr. Speaker, I thank all of my friends who participated. And I know, as I've asked for general leave, others who wanted to be here who were unable to are going to be joining in submitting statements for the RECORD.

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

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to underscore the importance of immediate approval legislation to repeal Jackson-Vanik establish U.S. permanent normal trade relations with Russia.

There is demonstrated and widespread bipartisan support for Russian PNTR among our colleagues in the House, as well as in the Senate. And we cannot and should not wait to pass this legislation which will greatly benefit American business and their employees as they seek entré into the expanding Russian market.

We all share serious concerns with the ongoing human and political rights situation in the Russian Federation, but the maintenance Jackson-Vanik does nothing to address those concerns.

What it does do is deny the United States and our business the ability to fully take advantage of the benefits of Russian accession to the WTO both in terms of market access and trade enforcement.

PNTR will provide the United States with important benefits at no cost to us.

With PNTR, American companies will be able to take full advantage of lower Russian tariffs, stronger IP protections, and other market-opening concessions that the Russians agreed to as part of joining the World Trade Organization.

Last month's WTO accession promises to open that country large and growing consumer market to exporters around the world.

Unfortunately, because we have yet to establish PNTR with Russia, all the members of the WTO except the United States are now fully benefiting from increased access to the growing Russian market, which is the world's 9th largest economy.

Unlike the United States, other countries also have the ability to use the WTO's dispute settlement process to help ensure Russia honors its new WTO commitments. This is particularly important in a market such as Russia's which is relatively new to market capitalism and continues to present serious problems for foreign businesses.

Anders Aslund and Gary Hufbauer from the Peterson Institute for International Economics predict that U.S. exports to Russia should double within 5 years after accession to the WTO. Evidence from countries that joined the WTO between 2000 and 2010 suggest this statistic to be true, and maybe even a con-

servative estimation. If Exports to Russia grow at the same rate as they did for exports to Ukraine and the Baltics, exports could triple, approaching \$30 billion. This would place Russia among America's large second tier-markets, such as Australia, India and France.

Every day we have not passed PNTR is a day where we put this opportunity in jeopardy by according a competitive advantage to non-American companies doing business in Russia.

We have the opportunity now to pass bipartisan legislation that advances American economic interests, which should not dither and continue to allow the partisan politics of election season to prevent us from grasping that opportunity.

PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

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

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, my name is KEITH ELLISON. I'm the cochair of the Progressive Caucus. Tonight, I come before the people on the floor of the House of Representatives to discuss important issues facing our economy and the huge challenges that our Nation is facing, particularly with regard to the events that are going to take shape right after the election.

The Progressive Caucus has come together, Mr. Speaker, and thought very carefully about what a deal would look like and should look like. I want to talk about that tonight. I want to go into what we call the Deal for All and to elaborate on some of the complexities that are facing our country and how this is a time where we really need to focus on the real core of what is important to make sure that as all these fiscal matters come together, the United States and the people of America, particularly the working people, come out on top and in the right space.

Before I dive into that, Mr. Speaker, I do want to yield just for a moment to talk about the great service of Ambassador Chris Stevens. Ambassador Stevens was a dedicated public servant, and he and the individuals who lost their lives in Benghazi recently have to be remembered for the dedicated service that they lent to our country. It's important to note that Chris Stevens loved Libya, loved Libyans; and it's not any accident that Libyans took to the streets not to attack America, but really Libyans came to the street holding up placards apologizing for the act of these terrorists who killed Americans and Libyans when they assaulted the consulate in Benghazi, and many of them held up placards extolling the great virtues of Chris Stevens. And it's important to point out that as Americans are watching these things unfold across the Middle East, that the last thing Chris Stevens would want would be for us to withdraw or pull out of Libya.

This horrible incident that occurred in Benghazi was not done by the Liby-

an people. It was done by terrorists who have nothing but contempt for the democracy in Libya, which is unfolding; and that is why they would take their action against the consulate as they did do. But it's important to note that there were about seven Libyans who died. The numbers are yet coming in. Of course, they're subject to being revised. But there were a number of Libyans who lost their lives trying to defend that consulate. And I think Americans should keep that in mind. They also should keep in mind that as the outbreak of these protests across the Middle East—you have one in Yemen, you have them in Libya, you have them in Egypt—it is important to point out that leaders of these countries have apologized for these things, particularly Yemen and Libya. And Egypt eventually got there.

And it's important to point out that Americans should know that this is not representative of certainly the will of the Libyan people. And there are a lot of people across the region who support the United States and support a good relationship with the United States. We should not allow ourselves to be confused by these events. I could easily see how people could be; but when you see dedicated public servants risking their lives to build bridges, the last thing we want to do is withdraw and abandon these relationships that have been fought hard for and now have been paid for in the blood of our heroes, Ambassador Chris Stevens being one of them.

So I do want to just wrap up this section of my discussion tonight and just point out Chris Stevens, a dedicated servant of the United States, a dedicated and committed man who has gone and offered the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of his country to build bridges between people and particularly to help build democracy in the weak state of Libya, a state that threw off a dictator.

Chris Stevens went there to help the people and to help them build a democracy, and he must be remembered for his great sacrifice and also that of the individuals who lost their lives with him, four Americans and several Libyans. And as the names come forward and as their names are released, we'll come back to this microphone and share the information with the people.

□ 1940

So now let's talk about the business we're here to talk about, Madam Speaker. Tonight, we're talking about the Progressive Caucus message. The Congressional Progressive Caucus is the organization in Congress dedicated to talking about what's good for the average working American, making sure that the average American's interests are looked out and regarded highly as we move forward.

I want to talk a little bit about the Budget For All, and not only the Budget For All, but also the Deal For All.

I want to get right to the point. Everybody is talking about the fiscal

cliff. The sequestration cuts are going to come into effect. These are significant cuts both in military and non-military domestic discretionary spending, which will be devastating to important programs like transportation, like health care, like research, like education. They'll put significant cuts in these important programs, lay off a lot of people, perhaps even exacerbating our already too-high unemployment rate.

But not only that, we see that the Bush tax cuts will expire, the payroll tax will expire, the so-called doc fix will expire, the AMT will expire. There's a number of things coming together, and many people who watch the news know that after this election, we're going to see a significant amount of activity around how we Members of Congress will be able to pull our fiscal situation back together in a way that hopefully avoids big cuts to important programs, hopefully avoids great pain that working class people might suffer if we don't come together and come up with some deal.

You've heard a lot of discussion about a grand bargain. But if we do any deal, the core values of the deal, we need to say first and upfront what this deal must include.

The first thing this deal must include, and I'll start with this poster here, Madam Speaker, is protection for America's social safety net. Let me start with a quote from President Roosevelt where he says: "Every man, woman, and child is a partner." In 2012, these words come to life when we see that more than 58 million people rely on Medicaid. That's a lot of people, Madam Speaker; 48 million rely on Medicare; more than 61 million rely on Social Security.

So with the idea in mind that everybody is included, everybody counts, everybody is contemplated in our American life, it's important to point out that as we move forward with this Deal For All, or any deal that we might have, that it's important to maintain the social safety net, particularly in very difficult economic times. If you slice Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, you are going to literally be harming the interests of millions and millions of Americans. Therefore, a key feature of any deal will be preservation of benefits for the people who need them most—Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security.

Madam Speaker, the next slide, the next poster here is a poster that talks about how we need to move our Nation's military towards the ability to deal with 21st-century threats. That will mean that we need to do some changes, some adjustments; and Cold War-era weapons systems are just not what this particular moment calls for.

So the second feature of the Deal For All will be that the military, which has seen its budget literally double since 2001, will have to share and do some paring down, but not just paring down, literally advancing. But some of these

old Cold War-era weapons systems and some of these things that are fit for dealing with the Soviet Union just aren't necessary any more. They're expensive, cost a lot of money, and they don't help us meet the threats we're facing right now.

So the second feature of the Deal For All would be moving our military to a position where it's dealing with 21st-century threats, not simply maintaining old expensive programs that we don't really need.

The third feature of the Deal For All would be that we would ask Americans who have been well-to-do Americans, people who have benefited tremendously under the Bush tax cuts, to do a little more. Now, I know my friends in the Republican caucus and some conservatives often say that taxes, why would you want to punish somebody for being successful. Well, we think that America has done so much for so many that to help pay a little bit more to this country that you love is not a punishment. In fact, it's actually something that we would expect people to do. And there's a lot of very well-to-do people who agree with that point of view.

We actually have a piece of an idea called the Buffett rule because a very rich man says that, hey, a rich man like Warren Buffett should not be paying a lower tax rate than his secretary, which he does.

So Americans of various economic classes agree taxes are not a punishment. They are the cost of funding a civilized society; and if we're going to meet the budget challenges facing our Nation, we're going to have to get some revenue, and it might well come from the people who have benefited so much under the Bush-era tax cuts.

Then, finally, but perhaps most importantly, Madam Speaker, we need to get Americans to work. This is a key feature of what any Deal For All must include.

So tonight, we're talking about the Deal For All, and we're talking about the fiscal cliff, and we're talking about what any fair agreement would have to include. This is not bargaining chips, Madam Speaker. All four of these things are key. In order to have a safe, sound budget fix or grand bargain, we're going to have to have something to get Americans back to work, and we're talking about an infrastructure bank, a longer-term transportation bill, various things I'm going to talk about tonight.

But putting Americans back to work, asking the military to share in the cuts, and to revamp our military for a 21st-century world.

Three, asking the top 2 percent to pay a little bit more by allowing the Bush-era tax cuts to expire for the top echelon. It would only mean that the top rates would go from 35 to 39½ percent.

Finally, we're going to protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid because these programs are essential and

vital, particularly in times where people are truly having tough economic times.

□ 1950

So that's where we start the conversation tonight, focused on dealing with a proper resolution to these huge budget fights that we are about to have because so many important features of our fiscal reality are coming to expiration on December 31.

So I want to say that this deal that I think that we should have, we should work on, Mr. Speaker, and this Budget for All, this Deal for All as well, it's something that I think we can reach, we should reach. The American people need us to try to work toward a solution. This is why the Progressive Caucus has come together and said this is what we should do:

We should have a deal. The deal will be comprehensive, a deal that could help us avoid the harsh realities of sequestration, that could avoid the complete expiration of all the Bush tax cuts or the extension of all the Bush tax cuts, a deal that will help us do the doc fix and do all the things we need to do.

We do need some kind of agreement, but the agreement has to have some key benchmarks. I've laid them out to you, and I'll just repeat:

Ask the richest to help pay the freight for America;

Ask the military to share in the cuts; good, safe, sound cuts that will help position us for the 21st century are available;

We need to make sure that we protect those who benefit from Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid;

And, most importantly, we need to grow the economy by investing in jobs.

But we have had some difficulty getting together, and I'm not surprised. Colleagues on the other side of the aisle, on the Republican side of the aisle, have been, Mr. Speaker, slow to try to come together and work out the deals that we need, but we do extend our hand. Hopefully, we will be able to come together and work out these problems because the American people depend upon us to do that.

But I do want to say that we have seen some real challenges over the course of the year just in terms of getting things done. So I think this is the time when we really need to come together and focus on what's needed. But in order to be fair, Mr. Speaker, I think the people should know what some of the real serious challenges that we've been facing are.

I just want to make note right now that we have had a Congress where obstruction has been the norm. It doesn't have to stay that way—and I urge colleagues on all sides of the aisle to work together. But I'll never forget being in this Chamber just about a year ago, a little more than a year ago, when, because of obstructionism, we could not come together. The Republican caucus refused to vote to raise the debt ceiling, something that had been done literally dozens of times both under

Democrats and Republicans. But they refused to do it, and this political rancor resulted in the downgrade of America's bond rating.

This was a tragic moment that happened a year ago, but it marks the obstruction that we've seen. Hopefully, this kind of obstruction will not be what we see going forward.

But I think it's important that much of the obstruction that we began to see had to do with the budgetary position that we saw starting with the Congress from the very beginning. The bottom line is that it started with the idea that we could only have massive cuts and no revenue. Our colleagues even continue to this day to talk about how terrible the economy continues to be, but their only prescription for fixing it is to take, as President Obama said, two tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans and call us in the morning. That's funny, but it's, sadly, true as well. Tax cuts seems to be their only prescription for all problems facing the American economy.

We started out this Congress with a budget being laid out. It was talked about as the Ryan budget, but really it was the Republican budget. He may have been the author of it, but they all voted for it, embraced it. But this budget, where we started out with massive cuts, didn't balance for a long, long time. The budget never really added up, and it still doesn't.

So in order to get to a deal or some kind of grand bargain to deal with our fiscal challenges that are coming right up soon, we need a new spirit of cooperation, and it cannot be based on the budget that was offered by PAUL RYAN and backed by the Republican Congress. Like I said, it didn't add up.

The fact is that my Republican friends think that businesses always want a tax cut. I owned a small business myself. I was a lawyer. I had a law firm. I had staff that I had to pay. I had machines I had to purchase. I had rent that I had to pay. I had a payroll that I had to make. What I needed was clients coming through the door so that would justify me adding and hiring more people. But just tax cuts alone is not what small business people need. What they really need is greater demand, which is what we're not addressing if we don't deal with the key feature in the Deal for All, which is to invest in jobs.

If people can't buy, Mr. Speaker, then stores can't sell; if stores can't sell, they can't hire; and if they can't hire, people can't buy. This is the heart of the problem: slack demand, high unemployment, people who do have jobs nervous about making purchases. This is the heart of the problem and what we've got to address. Misunderstanding these simple ideas about the importance of the American consumer having enough wherewithal to buy things that they need is really part of the heart of this problem that we're in right now.

This idea of thinking that, oh, yeah, just a tax cut will solve the problem,

or, oh, yeah, and get rid of all the health and safety regulations, too, these two things could never bring America prosperity. But making sure that Americans are working and optimistic about their economic future will absolutely help this economy, and it's what we've got to do. I think through the Deal for All, any bargain we come to will put us on the right footing as long as we keep those key features in place.

So here's the thing: We've got to get to the point where we're working together. The key to that is to scrap this budget, this Ryan budget the Republicans have adopted. We've got to scrap that idea that we can't raise any taxes, that raising taxes is bad, that taxes are wrong, and that taxes are always a problem and that they're a punishment. We've got to scrap that idea. We know better than that.

So many of our colleagues even signed pledges that they wouldn't raise taxes, and this, of course, has been a problem. The only pledge I say around here is the Pledge of Allegiance.

But the fact is that we've got to scrap this idea so that when we face this real serious fiscal cliff, some people are calling, that we are able to negotiate. This means letting go of some of our long-held attachments, starting with the so-called Ryan Republican budget and these no-tax pledges. If we were able to do that, we could solve our problems.

Again, it's not all tax raising. It's going to be cuts, too. We have some ideas about where we can cut in a way that makes our country stronger, but there will have to be a mixture of both of these things.

I just want to talk a little bit about the Ryan Republican budget and just to help dramatize what some of the key problems are with it and why it's not workable and why we need to reject it as we move into this fiscal time. We're going to have to deal with this fiscal cliff, as has been named.

One of the key features of why it's not going to work and why it's wrong is that it ends the Medicare guarantee. It replaces it with vouchers. Some people around here like to talk about ObamaCare. Well, I far prefer ObamaCare to voucher care. And it makes it dangerously more expensive for seniors and the disabled. We don't want to put seniors in a more precarious financial situation, which is what the Ryan voucher care idea would do.

The Ryan budget, adopted by the Republicans, would also cut Medicaid funding by 34 percent. It cuts away tens of millions of needy people and turns the program into an underfunded block grant program. This is a sad way to treat some of our most vulnerable citizens. And you should know, Mr. Speaker, that Medicaid actually impacts seniors, too, because so much of the money that funds nursing home care is from Medicaid. So it's not just Medicare. Medicaid cuts, 34 percent, would be very harmful.

The Ryan budget also cuts transportation by 25 percent. Now, transportation is a job creator. Transportation puts Americans to work—building roads, bridges, transit, helping people get from here to there. I can imagine high-speed railcars.

I'm from Minnesota. I'd love to see us have a high-speed train from Duluth to Minneapolis to Chicago. It would be a great thing. It would put lots of people back to work, and it would improve productivity. It would allow people, after it's built, to get from here to there faster so they can get to meetings, so they can do what they need to do, and stop the bottleneck, cut down on carbon emissions and move people around, not just cars.

□ 2000

Transportation, a huge job creator, cut 25 percent in the Ryan budget.

Cuts education by 40 percent, 45 percent. Now, if there's one engine of economic development, having smarter, better-trained people has got to be the core of that, and yet education is cut by 45 percent in the Ryan budget.

So the bottom line is, these are some of the key things that are wrong with this budget. There are many more. I plan on talking about them.

But I want to just return to my theme a little bit, Madam Speaker, to say that we are facing a fiscal cliff. Americans do need to focus on it and do need to call their Members of Congress and say focus on the job at hand. We need you to focus your attention. We do know all these things are expiring. What are you people in Congress going to do about it?

What we're saying we've got to do about it in the Progressive Caucus is that we do need to come together and have a deal, but the deal has to have four pieces. And I'll repeat, Madam Speaker.

We need to make sure the military shares in the cuts by being more efficient. We need to make sure that we protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. And we need to make sure that we are putting jobs up front and investing in American jobs to a very large degree. And we need to ask the wealthiest among us to contribute a little bit more so we can meet our budgetary challenges. That's what the Progressive Caucus says we need to do.

We've had difficulty coming together because, well, quite frankly, obstruction, Republican obstruction has made it difficult to move forward and do anything.

Why did we have the obstruction?

Because we started out with signing pledges that we won't raise taxes, and we had a Ryan budget that imposed significant and deep cuts that have already resulted in a number of public sector workers being laid off and Federal employees having a reduction in their health care. And so these things, this sort of obstructive nature and insisting on cuts only, has been the source of the problem.

In order to get to a solution, we need people to come off these rigid positions so that we can do the people's business.

I mean, just to sort of like think about the level of obstruction, I already mentioned, Madam Speaker, last August, how dramatic it was when the Republican majority refused to raise the debt ceiling and caused us to have a downgrade in our bond rating. That was a sad moment.

But we've also wasted a lot of time. For example, we voted 32 times to repeal ObamaCare. And I do call it ObamaCare because Obama does care, which is more than I can say for some. But in this time, we had time for cutting or voting to repeal ObamaCare 32 times, but we didn't have any time to offer serious fixes to the economy.

And I just want to mention that President Obama, to his credit, has done, I think, great and excellent work in offering solutions. They just simply, Madam Speaker, have been ignored. I mean, it's really kind of sad when you think about the fact that the President has offered real serious and important solutions to the problems of the Nation and yet, they really, really have not been seriously addressed.

For example, the President called us all here and talked about the American Jobs Act. This is a great piece of legislation. But, do you know, Madam Speaker, we've never even had a vote on it. We never even had an opportunity to say who wants the American Jobs Act. It was simply something that the Republican majority in the House wouldn't even address.

The fact is that there were great ideas in this bill, and I just want to talk a little bit about those ideas because I think that they would really do a lot of good.

It includes a national infrastructure bank bill, a proposal that we would be able to fund by the Federal Government putting some seed money and then leveraging that money, that public money, with some private sector bonds. We would then have a fund of money that we could then use to make investment in important infrastructure that would be a key and important element of the program.

We would be able to make investments in the transmission lines that would help take wind energy from the western part of my State in Minnesota and bring it to where the population centers are.

We would be able to improve our grid and have a smart grid that would make energy use much more efficient and much more effective. And we would be able to use this infrastructure bank bill to be able to fund programs all over the United States where we wouldn't only build things that we need, we would improve them.

The American Society of Civil Engineers has addressed this issue, Madam Speaker, and what they said is about \$2.3 trillion of infrastructure maintenance needs to be done. You know, I come from the city of Minneapolis and

in my city, about 5 years ago we had a bridge fall into the Mississippi River.

Maintenance in this country is critical. We have bridges that are old and deteriorating all over this country. We have bridges that are in need of repair, roads as well.

And we also have other projects that need to be taken care of in terms of our grid, in terms of wastewater treatment, in terms of all types of important infrastructure tools, but we are not investing in them. In fact, we're relying on the things that our grandparents gave us. We're relying on Eisenhower-era infrastructure because we haven't, in our age, focused on the needs of the American people to have an infrastructure bill.

You know, just to talk a little bit more about the American Jobs Act, it would also extend cutting payroll taxes in half for 98 percent of businesses. It would also offer a complete payroll tax holiday for added workers or increased wages. It would extend 100 percent expensing throughout this year, and if we were to pass it, maybe even longer. And this continues to be an effective way to incentivize new investment.

And also, it would address and reform regulatory reductions to help entrepreneurs and small businesses access capital. We do need to help small business people be able to get the money they need to do investment in their company, and that means access to capital.

The American Jobs Act would also have a returning heroes hiring tax credit for veterans. This is something we addressed already, which is a great thing, but it would move on from there, and it would prevent up to 280,000 teacher layoffs.

Madam Speaker, you should know, we have had, now, about 30 months of private sector growth. But we have had also significant number of months of public sector layoffs, mostly teachers. This is because of these draconian cuts that the Federal Government has made, and State governments have been affected by and, therefore, city and local governments. But we would be able to address these massive public sector worker layoffs, which are really hurting our economy. And of course, teachers have been some of the most negatively impacted of all.

We also would move from that idea to another great one: modernizing at least 35,000 public schools across the country. You know, our public schools across this Nation, our kids go there, they spend hours and hours a day trying to learn there. But many of them are in very bad repair. Some 35,000 public schools need help. We can support new science labs, Internet-ready classrooms, and renovations to schools across the country in rural and urban America.

The American Jobs Act, with all these great ideas, never got a shot in this Congress. It would, as I said, call for infrastructure investment with a national infrastructure bank, which I've talked about already.

I didn't mention airport improvements. I did mention waterways. But it would put literally thousands of workers back on the job.

And also, we need to wire up this country. We would expand access to high speed wireless, as part of a plan for freeing up the Nation's spectrum.

□ 2010

Now, I want to just remind you, Madam Speaker, that our Nation at one time didn't have the entire country on the electrical grid. There was a program called Rural Electrification, which was a program under the Roosevelt administration by which our Nation just decided that you would not have to leave the countryside, the rural areas, to take advantage of electric lights, but we would wire the whole country—and we did.

The new wiring, the new Rural Electrification program, is connecting all of America with high-speed wireless. This is a project we should embark on. It's worthy, and it would help improve economic activity. It would help revitalize rural communities, and people wouldn't have to move to the urban centers for work. It would be a great thing.

The American Jobs Act also included pathways back to work for Americans looking for work. Of course, we have a serious unemployment problem, and we see some of our friends on the Republican side of the aisle shaking their fingers, criticizing. Well, where are the jobs? I remember Speaker BOEHNER asking, Where are the jobs? Often, when I hear that from my colleagues, I think to myself, well, the jobs are in the American Jobs Act. Can we take it up? Can we have a vote on it?

There is something we can do for Americans who are looking for work. One of the most innovative reforms to the unemployment insurance program in 40 years is a program which is part of an extension of the unemployment insurance to prevent 5 million Americans who are looking for work from losing their benefits.

The President's plan would include innovative work-based reforms to prevent layoffs and give States greater flexibility to use unemployment insurance benefits to fund and support job seekers, including things like, one, work sharing, unemployment insurance for workers whose employers choose work sharing over layoffs; two, a new bridge-to-work program, a plan that builds on and improves innovative State programs and where those displaced workers take temporary voluntary work and pursue on-the-job training; three, innovative entrepreneurship and wage insurance programs. States could also be empowered to implement wage insurance to help reemploy older workers in programs that make it easier for the unemployed workers to start their own businesses.

So these are a number of things contained in the American Jobs Act which we have never had a shot at, and it's a

key feature of what we propose in the Deal For All: get to work. We've got a country to rebuild. This is absolutely the case, but if the Republican majority would allow us to take up the American Jobs Act, I am confident there is something in there that my colleagues would like.

Maybe they'd like the \$4,000 tax credit to employers for hiring long-term unemployed workers. That would be a great benefit to workers and employers.

They might like another feature of the American Jobs Act, that of prohibiting employers from discriminating against unemployed workers when hiring. We know now that many workers who have been out of work and out of the market for a while are asked, Do you have a job? No. Have you been unemployed? If the answer is—yes, for a certain amount of time—well, we're not going to hire you, which simply prolongs the problem. These are valuable workers with good skills, and they should have a shot in getting back into the workforce.

We might also find support for expanding job opportunities for low-income youth and adults through a fund for successful approaches for subsidized employment, innovative training programs and summer and year-round jobs for youth. One of the groups of people that has been really hard hit during this recession is young people. The American Jobs Act proposed by President Obama addresses youth employment; yet we haven't had a chance to deal with it because of Republican obstructionism.

I want to encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to let go of their attachments. Let go of the pledges. Let go of the Ryan budget. Let's come together to solve our problems. Many of them can be found in the American Jobs Act.

For example, there is a whole section in there on tax relief for every American worker and family. Now, I don't think we need to extend tax cuts for the richest folks, because they don't need them; but when people do need them, Democrats are happy to cut taxes, and we have. We cut payroll taxes for about 160 million workers. We could extend that if the President's plan will expand the payroll tax cut passed last year. Another thing is allowing more Americans to refinance their mortgages at today's near 4 percent interest rates. It would put nearly \$2,000 a year in a family's pocket.

But the American Jobs Act—an excellent vehicle for putting Americans back to work—never really had a shot because, as the minority leader in the Senate said, the number one priority for the Republican caucus was to make President Obama a one-term President. Is it right to make getting rid of Obama your top priority when we have so many Americans out of work and when we have an economy that really has never come back? I think that is not a good thing, and I wish we could

move away from that and start focusing on the things that people really, really, really need.

In fact, I go back to the Deal For All, which is the Progressive Caucus' idea for how we negotiate what the basic foundation of any deal needs to be. It's simple the way things are shaping up. After all the dust has settled from the 2012 election, an average middle class family could face tax increases of \$2,000 unless Congress acts. That's how important it is for us to do something and to act. This fiscal cliff they talk about is an opportunity to address the budget in a responsible way that grows our economy and puts Americans back to work.

We talked about the American Jobs Act. There are other great ideas, as well; but too many folks in Washington and too many folks here in the Capitol would rather cut Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, which are benefits that millions of Americans depend on.

As I said, this particular chart shows it all. When you see the huge numbers of people who rely on Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, rather than getting together and working on a problem, they'd rather cut Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security benefits that millions of Americans depend on and raise taxes on middle class Americans to protect tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires. It's as simple as that.

So let's just take a look at what's at risk, Madam Speaker. One in every four families depends on our Social Security system—61 million folks, including 36 million retired Americans. It's important for people to remember that Social Security also cares for people with disabilities and survivor benefits for people who have parents who pass on. So many children in this country today are surviving on those benefits which some of us in Congress are trying to protect and others are trying to cut. Nearly every American senior can depend on Medicare to cover health care costs.

Turning Medicare into a voucher system, as the Republicans have proposed, would not only make seniors pay thousands more for Medicare—about \$6,000 more estimated—but it would leave as many 65- and 66-year-olds without any health care coverage at all, which would be a shame. It would return our Nation to a time when seniors were in desperate and bad shape.

So that's why the Progressive Caucus is proposing the Deal For All. They are commonsense proposals that would solve our deficit problems and protect the American middle class.

The Deal For All says that any plan cannot slash benefits for millions of America's seniors, children and disabled Americans who depend on Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

The Deal For All says we must make and ask and expect that the wealthiest 2 percent pay their fair share of taxes and close loopholes that let companies ship jobs overseas.

The Deal For All makes smart cuts to defense spending—not just any old cuts, smart cuts, efficient cuts—to focus our Armed Forces on combating 21st-century risks.

The Deal For All also calls for any plan to invest in America's future by putting Americans back to work.

Yes, we are facing a fiscal cliff, as some call it, but that doesn't mean the middle class should get pushed over the edge of that cliff.

□ 2020

If working and middle class people are going to take a hit in tough times, it shouldn't be to pay for tax breaks for rich folks and millionaires and billionaires and oil companies. It's time for all Americans of every economic situation to step up and do what's right for this country, and it's time we had a deal in Washington that reflects our values.

I just want to elaborate on this a little bit by telling you, Madam Speaker, about how the Progressive Caucus has been bringing experts together to study this issue. This is not just something we've thought up. We've brought experts from the field, economists, people who really focus hard and have expertise in Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, jobs, how to reduce the military budget in a wise way. We've brought folks together to discuss this.

In fact, yesterday was one of the hearings that we've had, and the Progressive Caucus was hard at work holding a hearing. We're going to put some of it online so people can see it. We had these experts from across the political spectrum—some conservatives—to detail the best ways to avoid the fiscal cliff and to rejuvenate the economy without harming essential protections for the middle class. The pending fiscal cliff is an enormous opportunity to address our jobs crisis. I say "jobs" first, Madam Speaker, and then we need to put our country on the path to fiscal health.

The Progressive Caucus is laying the groundwork to make sure that any agreement reflects these core values. Our bipartisan panel yesterday confirmed that the best way to grow our economy is from the middle out, not from the top down. No trickle down. We also cannot expect to put Americans back to work unless we protect Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and ask the wealthiest to contribute their fair share.

We had Larry Korb come in, and he is a person with an extensive background, a very wise gentleman, is politically on the conservative side, but has done a lot of important research on how we can reduce our military footprint in a smart way. Mr. Larry Korb was a very well-prepared witness and shared his views and was really a big help as he laid out his presentation.

I just want to share with you a little bit about what he had to say, Madam Speaker, because it really was fascinating. I would urge people to check

out Mr. Korb's presentation online. He had a number of things that would really provoke a lot of important thought, and they're online. You can go to the Progressive Caucus Web site and see some of that.

Let me talk a little bit about what he said. Mr. Larry Korb was asked how best to summarize his take on the current defense budget, and he pointed to our poster, this one right here. Mr. Korb made himself very clear when he said, Don't pay for a 20th-century military in the 21st century, which I think sums it up. I'll elaborate more on what he had to say, but we had another expert who I think I would like to direct people to listen to, Ms. Maya Rockeymoore. She is the chair of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare. She said, "Changes to programs must be based on what is best for the beneficiaries, not on what is expedient for reducing America's debt." She also went on to add that Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are vital to the economic and health security of millions of senior Americans.

Chad Stone was also there, and he talked about the jobs picture. He actually referenced our poster right here, as well. Chad Stone, he is the chief economist for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. He said that piling tax cuts on will only lead to Draconian cuts in programs that millions of Americans rely on. So we can't go with this cuts-only approach. We've got to have some jobs, and we've got to have some investment.

Steve Wamhoff from the Citizens for Tax Justice put it best. He said:

I think all of us here agree that the most important job for Congress right now is to help the economy to create jobs. Tax cuts are one of the least effective tools to accomplish this goal.

We had a great lineup. I urge folks to go on our Web site and study what they had to say. But I do want to go back for a moment to just talk about the ideas Larry Korb had to share. He mentioned sequestration. He said that sequestration is certainly not a smart way to cut the defense budget because it's just an across-the-board cut, but close analysis and careful cuts and strategic ones could help a lot. He talked about how the Pentagon actually is pretty well endowed. He talked about how if the automatic sequestration defense cuts were to go into effect the fiscal year of 2013, non-war expenditures of the 2013 base, he said the budget will be reduced by about \$55 billion down to what is about \$500 billion and remain at that level in real terms for quite a while. He said that this will result in total reduction of about \$500 billion over a decade from the projected levels in defense spending. He also went on to note that it also means that the Pentagon will still be spending more in 2013 after sequestration than it did in 2006. So they're not going to be poor by any means.

At the height of the Iraq war in 2006, we still would have been spending more

than that if sequestration goes into effect, but he's not just saying do sequestration. He's actually promoting a strategic and smart way to do some cuts. He says that the United States military can do well, defend our Nation, and protect our country for about \$500 billion, and that seems to make sense to me. We'd still be spending so much more than any other country in the world.

He went on to also note that in short the military really doesn't have a resource problem. They have what they need to defend the country. He noted that if sequestration goes into effect, it would not be ideal to just do across-the-board cuts, but there are a number of weapon systems that could be retired and a number of strategies for reducing the military budget that would not hurt national security, but would really put our country in a position where we are dealing with our financial problems in a forthright way. I think that it makes sense to really look carefully at these ideas.

Maya Rockeymoore went on to note, when she talked about Social Security, that it does not contribute to our Nation's deficit. If you look at Social Security, it actually runs a surplus, and we don't need to cut Social Security. What we need to do is to recognize that this important program is a program that has been one of the most successful in the history of the United States; and if we abandon our commitment to our seniors and the disabled, we will be abandoning a core principle of our country.

Mr. Chad Stone was important in his testimony, as well. As we wrapped up, I was most impressed that it's not just about cuts, that we also need to grow our way out of this recession. That means investing in jobs. I think the American Jobs Act and many other things would put us farther down the line if we were to make those proper investments.

That's what I want to say about the economy tonight. I'd like to urge people, Madam Speaker, to focus their attention on the so-called "fiscal cliff." It is coming up. We will see expiration of the Bush tax cuts. We will see expiration of the payroll tax. We will see expiration of the doc fix. We will see expiration of the AMT. There will be a number of things coming together all at the same time. There will be budgetary negotiations.

But no matter what they are, they've got to include protection of our social safety net: Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. The military must share in the cuts. The wealthiest Americans must help us get some revenue. Finally, we've got to put jobs up front and center and grow this economy.

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

□ 2030

ADMINISTRATION IN REVIEW

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. NOEM). Under the Speaker's announced

policy of January 5, 2011, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, in the summer of 1973, it was a real honor for me to be selected to go on an exchange program. Of course I had to borrow the money to go and had to pay that back by working hard to take care of the loan, but I went on an exchange program to the Soviet Union, 1973, that summer. It was quite an eye-opener for me.

Despite how wonderful the country was made to sound and how great it was that the government, they proclaimed, was the safety net for everybody in the country, they were proclaiming because the government was in charge of everything and in charge of everybody's business, there was 100 percent employment. They talked about how wonderful their socialized medicine was.

There were eight Americans on this program that were allowed into the Soviet Union that summer, and we all had very different backgrounds, had different political views. There were a lot of big hearts in the group on both ends of the political spectrum.

But, for me, a kid growing up in east Texas, it was an extraordinary education. Because even though people talked about how wonderful it was to have socialized medicine, everybody had a safety net because the government was the safety net, that country's economic system was rotting from within.

I went to a medical school. It reminded me of pictures of American medical schools from 40 to 50 years before. We went to an economic exhibition, kind of like a world's fair in Moscow, at one point. It reminded me of the pictures from a 1940 or early 1950s world's fair, you know, things like tractors sitting out there with people oohing and aahing over tractors. I'm going, good grief, because I knew we didn't need a world's fair to see tractors like that. You could go to any used tractor dealer and find tractors that nice in the U.S., but everybody was told how wonderful it was.

During the course of the summer, during the course of my time down in the Ukraine, I got to be good friends with a few of the students there. They were very standoffish at first. I spoke some Russian back in those days, and they spoke better English than I did Russian. But one guy in particular, he'd bring his dictionary with him and translate, because both of us—you know, it's amazing. You take a language course—I had two years of Russian at Texas A&M. You know, you're taught to converse about, "I'm going to the library" and "I have a dog" and these kinds of things, but when you want to talk about really serious life issues, we weren't prepared for those things. We needed a dictionary so we could get our ideas across.

At one point he said, "You seem surprised that our country wouldn't want