

table to work out immigration reform as soon as possible.

I have suggested that President Obama set up that big table at Camp David and invite leaders from both parties to discuss how we forge the coalition to pass comprehensive immigration reform. I think after the Election Day wake-up call, there are more and more of us willing to come to that table and negotiate, including friends in the Republican Party.

We have heard from Republican leaders who want to be at that table. I know some Republicans want to come to the table because they want the immigration issue off the table. They want it off the table because they are worried about Democrats running the table in statewide and national elections for the foreseeable future.

But listen, whatever your reason for coming to the table, please come. Together, we can fight for justice for immigrants. Together, we can reestablish the rule of law. Together, we can make immigration one of the greatest and most defining aspects of American society instead of something that divides us. Together, we can make Americans see that we can work together—Republicans and Democrats—as Americans first. So, please, join us and do what's right for this great Nation of ours.

THANKSGIVING

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

Mr. AKIN. Mr. Speaker, in just about a week or so, we're going to be sitting down at tables celebrating Thanksgiving and eating turkey and getting a little sleepy maybe afterwards. But as we think about Thanksgiving and we think about the holiday of Thanksgiving Day, it may be interesting and it may add a little richness to that holiday if we remember how it came about and what we have to be thankful for.

There were originally a group of people that came to this country on the Mayflower, and a number of them on board had the dream of building a new kind of country, something that Europe had never seen before. They believed that they would take principles that they found in the Bible and that they would apply them in a new way and create a new structure of what a country could look like.

So they came to America. And after landing, within the first 4 months, half of them had died. And you would think they would pretty much give up on a dream at that point. The Mayflower had stayed to give them some protection and shelter, so it was in the early springtime that this group of the people that were left—about 55 of the Pilgrims—had to make a decision. You could think of it as actually voting, only voting with their feet.

They were approached by the captain of the Mayflower, and the captain of the Mayflower said, 'Things aren't going so well. I've lost half my crew,

and half of you are dead, and we are going to be heading back to England. And I recommend that you get on the Mayflower because you don't have adequate supplies, and you don't have really a knowledge of how you're going to be able to deal with the wilderness that you are living in.'

So it was that the Mayflower's captain gave the commands, the old seaweed-covered anchor cable was hauled onboard, the yardarms were trimmed to the wind, and first large and then small, the Mayflower disappears over the horizon. The wind is blowing through the trees, and 55 courageous men, women, and children stood on the beach.

Why did they stay? They stayed because they believed in the dream that they had in their hearts, of making a new nation. And by staying, they gave us some things that we should be thankful for, not just the Thanksgiving turkey.

First of all, they came with the idea that civil government and church government were separate types of governments, and the civil government shouldn't run the church or the other way around.

□ 1020

So they were what was called in those days "separatists" because they wanted to separate from the King of England who was running the Church.

So the first thing they gave us was the concept of separating civil and church governments. But the second thing that happened was, when they arrived in Massachusetts, they were blown off course by the storms; and so they had no government. So a group of free people, under God, wrote a document called the Mayflower Compact. It starts: "In the name of God," and it goes on to say to frame just and equal laws.

So what happened was a group of free people, under God, created a civil government, and that of course was the foundation of our Declaration of Independence. And all of American civil government we can trace back to these courageous 55 people who stayed on the beach.

So as you're having your turkey, think about how they gave us the idea of separating civil and church governments, and also how it was that they gave us the idea that our Creator gives us life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Have a great Thanksgiving. God bless you.

OLD REPUBLICAN REFRAIN

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, the Republican refrain is quite familiar: these tax increases will cause economic devastation, a recession, millions of lost jobs. Is that today's fiscal cliff? No. Actually, that's the Republicans in oppos-

ing the Clinton-era tax increases, 1993, opposed by every Republican.

Did their predicted doom and gloom come true? Well, kind of not, actually. We balanced the budget, we paid down debt, and we had 3.8 percent unemployment while the millionaires and billionaires were paying a slightly higher rate of taxes.

Fast forward to today's debate: restore the Clinton-era tax rates to millionaires and billionaires. Republicans have dusted off the nineties rhetoric—economic collapse, devastation, at least 700,000 jobs. The job-creator millionaires and billionaires, they're living on the edge. They have no discretionary income. Any modest increase in taxes to them will stop them from making productive, job-creating investments, like the hundreds of millions of dollars they spent on super PACs in the last election to try and elect a President and a Congress that will bend to their will and lower their taxes even further while cutting middle-income families' programs that are essential, like Social Security and student financial aid.

Now, after their impassioned defense of tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires, Republicans do have a second priority—they're not a one-note party, so you've got to give them credit for that—and that is to somehow kill Social Security, which they've never supported. They think it makes people lazy. Well, there are millionaires and billionaires that don't ever expect they will need it, so they don't care.

And under the guise of deficit reduction, the Republicans are saying, well, we've either got to privatize Social Security, got to increase the retirement age, or we've got to reduce the already inadequate COLA that seniors get. Let's chain the CPI. That's their refrain: we must cut entitlements. Well, guess what, Social Security has never contributed one penny to the deficit or the debt of the United States of America. It is a program which pays for itself.

So why this single-minded focus on cutting Social Security? Yeah, it does have a projected problem of about 23 percent to pay full benefits starting in 2036. So, yeah, there's a long-term problem; but, actually, that's quite easily fixed. All we have to do is close the tax loophole. And maybe we agree there.

Here's a loophole I'd like to close: Why does a millionaire pay one-tenth the rate of taxes to Social Security of a cop on the beat, or a soldier in the field, or a teacher in the classroom? I don't know. That's what the law says. Well, how about we lift the cap and have the millionaires and billionaires pay the same percent of their income to Social Security as cops and teachers and soldiers in the military. Seems fair to me. There's a loophole we could close. And that would give Social Security assets adequate to pay 100 percent of benefits for at least 75 years into the future, as far as the actuaries will

guarantee. So there's a loophole we can agree on closing, hopefully.

But they are going to have to give up on this lame argument that somehow making millionaires and billionaires pay taxes at the rate of the Clinton era, when we had record low unemployment, will hurt our economy.

GRANTING PERMANENT NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS TO RUSSIA

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

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, as the Representative of a district that recorded more than \$2 billion in exports last year, I know full well the significance of expanding market access for American companies and ensuring that our businesses are competing on a level playing field. That's why I believe it's important to support passage of H.R. 6156, which will grant permanent normal trade relations to Russia.

This past August, Russia joined the World Trade Organization, giving its members full access to Russia's rapidly growing market, reduced tariffs, and ensured transparency when implementing trade measures. However, while foreign competitors are currently benefiting, the U.S. will not receive any of these benefits until Congress authorizes the President to grant Russia permanent normal trade relations. Simply put, American companies, workers, and farmers are being put at a competitive disadvantage.

Last year, my home State of Michigan exported \$225 million worth of goods to Russia, despite many of its best products facing tough competition from foreign competitors. With this agreement in place, farmers and producers in my district will be assured of more predictable market access for their crops and agricultural goods, while manufacturers will enjoy reduced tariff rates for Michigan-made vehicles and equipment.

As a World Trade Organization member, Russia has agreed to comply with the rule of law. Though these reforms won't happen overnight, Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization requires their compliance with all of the organization's rules and duties. This includes addressing discriminatory practices, enforcing intellectual property rights, and increasing transparency. If it does not comply, members can enforce them through dispute mechanisms.

Of further importance, this legislation includes critical human rights provisions which will hold foreign officials accountable for gross human rights abuses and prevent them from entering the U.S. or accessing our financial systems.

House Republicans have worked tirelessly during the 112th Congress to advance pro-growth legislation which provides greater certainty for American companies and helps our Nation's businesses hire more American work-

ers. We've made great gains in advancing trade interests for the U.S. and promoting new market opportunities for our companies.

An ambitious trade agenda must continue for us to successfully lower the unemployment rate and restore our place as the global economic leader, and I'm glad we have the opportunity to pass another part of that plan today. If we're going to jump-start our economy and get Americans back to work, we have to find ways to increase global market access for American companies and to advance economic freedom.

I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation today.

CALLING FOR AN END TO WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues here in Congress from both sides of the aisle to call for an end to the war in Afghanistan. After more than a decade of war, with now more than 2,000 lives lost and hundreds of billions of American tax dollars spent, it's time for our troops to come home to their families.

I represent the military communities of Travis Air Force Base, and come January I will represent the community of Beale Air Force Base as well. I can tell you from firsthand experience that the men and women who serve in our Nation's military and their families are America's finest. They are not afraid of sacrifice. They joined the armed forces because they love our country and they are willing to give everything to keep our Nation safe, but their sacrifice must be for a reason. If we're going to ask them to risk life and limb on the other side of the world, it must be for a mission that is vital to our Nation's security. We can no longer say that about the mission in Afghanistan.

Our brave soldiers are continuing to die in Afghanistan for what is now a war of choice. We sent them to eliminate the terrorists responsible for the terrible 9/11 tragedy, and they did it with remarkable courage and competence. The al Qaeda training camps have long been eliminated; most of al Qaeda's top leaders have been killed or captured; Osama bin Laden is long dead.

□ 1030

Terrorism remains a global threat, and we must combat it. But keeping tens of thousands of troops in a country the size of Texas is no way to achieve this objective. Rather, we must continue to use our superb intelligence capabilities and our special operation forces to root out the terrorist networks and destroy their leaderships wherever they may be.

When we do bring our troops home, we must ensure that our returning he-

roes receive the support that is their due when they get back. We must make sure that they have access to housing, medical care, employment, educational opportunities that they deserve, and we must take care of all of our veterans.

The war in Afghanistan has lasted 11 long years, and it must not last another. It's time to bring our troops home. And as we do so, we must turn our attention to rebuild America's economy. One way to do this is to focus on enhancing our green energy sector.

The American wind energy industry is in jeopardy. The production tax credit will end December 31, 2012. It must be extended or else 30,000 jobs will be lost and 450 manufacturing businesses will close.

Two additional measures must also be considered. First, we could apply the master limited partnership and the real estate investment tax programs to the green energy sector and, thereby, bring significant financing opportunities along with the production tax credit.

AVOIDING THE FISCAL CLIFF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, while the President returned from the campaign trail last week with a slightly more conciliatory tone, his insistence on a year-end tax hike on small businesses is unchanged, and frankly, that is completely unacceptable.

It is unacceptable for more than 23 million Americans struggling for work right now. It's unacceptable for millions of middle class Americans struggling to support their families with rising gas prices and higher health insurance costs. And it's unacceptable because it will destroy jobs and hurt our economy.

Yesterday, the President said that his reelection victory is a mandate to help the middle class. He can start with helping the middle class by stopping his job-killing tax hike on small businesses.

The President continues to call for increased tax rates for the top two brackets, which hit more than 1 million small businesses and 53 percent of all small business income. That's a big problem, considering that small businesses create two out of every three jobs in America.

According to the Ernst & Young report, the President's plan will result in the elimination of 700,000 jobs.

The position of the congressional Republicans on extending current income tax rates for all Americans is far from extreme. It is actually the same exact position that President Obama espoused 2 years ago when he agreed to extend all Bush-era tax rates for 2 years on the basis that raising tax rates would hurt our weak economy.

That logic still stands. In fact, our economy is even weaker today than it