

was in 2010. GDP growth is lower than in 2010, in large part due to the looming cost of the President's health care law and his administration's dramatic increase in regulations.

With more than 23 million Americans struggling to find work, that is not the time to be raising taxes on anyone, period.

We must also find common ground on the defense sequester to ensure that spending cuts are implemented, but in a way that does not weaken our military or threaten our national security.

Both the tax and spending issues we face in lame duck are a microcosm of our Nation's massive fiscal and economic long-term challenges. Entitlement reform and comprehensive, pro-growth tax reform in the 113th Congress are key to addressing our Nation's greatest challenges.

The policy outcome and the narrative that transpire from this lame duck session will set the stage for what is possible in 2013 and beyond. We have a critical opportunity right now to avert the fiscal cliff and lay the groundwork for bipartisanship with policies that reflect our economic and our fiscal realities.

DELIVERING ON VOTERS' DEMAND FOR BOTH PARTIES TO COMPROMISE

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Those of you watching on C-SPAN just heard from my friend from Tennessee the unwillingness of the Republican side of the aisle to even recognize that elections have consequences, that, in fact, the President won reelection decisively. Democrats made gains in the Senate and gains here in the House.

It's time to put aside the talking points. It's time to come together for this country.

Mr. Speaker, Speaker BOEHNER actually said it well. He said the mandate from the election of last week is "for us to find a way to work together on solutions to the challenges we face as a Nation."

I can't agree more. Elections have consequences, and our ability to avert the fiscal cliff, in which expiring tax cuts and across-the-board spending cuts are on a collision course to derail this economy, requires us to respect that directive from voters.

Yet, once again, lines are being drawn—you just heard it—over what types of revenue will be considered or what cuts are considered too steep. I hope I was not the only one astounded by the comments of the CEO of the American Petroleum Institute, who recently said, "the oil and gas industry will not be singled out for punitive treatment."

How fascinating. Perhaps I could introduce him to the Federal workforce, our Federal employees who are, so far, the only group to be singled out for pu-

nitive treatment, to the tune of \$75 billion of deficit reduction. They understand the principle of shared sacrifice and have patiently been waiting for everybody else to actually share in it.

Mr. Speaker, our chances for success in fending off the fiscal cliff become even slimmer if we start removing options from the table, as my friend from Tennessee just did, before we've even sat down at that table. America voted for and deserves a divided government that actually works.

The last time I checked, divided government doesn't mean it's going to be my way or the highway, or your way or the highway, or Grover Norquist's way or the highway. Divided government can and has succeeded in the past when leaders have done that thing which we have not been able to achieve very often in these last 2 years: compromise.

That is the singular message from our voters this year, compromise. Work together to move the economy, our families, and our Nation forward. I've repeatedly heard that mantra from across my community, whether it's from seniors, teachers, small businesses or my own neighbors.

And now the Nation's business leaders are starting to echo that call. In fact, the head of the Business Roundtable, the former Republican Governor of Michigan, and other top CEOs are asking Congress to do just that, compromise.

In addition, the Task Force of American Innovation, comprised of our Nation's top technology companies, is urging us to preserve Federal investments in education and R&D, which are the bedrock of future innovation and competitiveness. And this week even the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said it was open to a compromise that included revenue.

These are the constructive voices I hope my colleagues listen to as we approach negotiations on the fiscal cliff. Politics is the art of compromise and, working together, we can reduce our Nation's deficit and preserve strategic investments in those programs that fuel economic growth and competitiveness.

Even in the midst of the Civil War, President Lincoln and the 38th Congress authorized the Transcontinental Railroad, the Homestead Act, and the land grant college and university system. They understood we had to invest in the future, while also dealing with the crisis of the present.

No doubt, we all have something to lose if we do not succeed. So perhaps, by each of us giving a little, we can revive this economic recovery, restore faith in our ability to govern responsibly, and deliver on that mandate we just got last week from the voters.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair and not to a perceived viewing audience.

□ 1040

POISONOUS PARTISANSHIP

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

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I rarely come to the floor to make such comments is that it is so troublesome to me that we will have fact-free debates. One of the problems is that we are talking in a parallel universe. There are small businesses that will pay more taxes, but I think it is important to say to you that the top hedge fund managers last year earned \$22 billion and then paid a 15 percent tax rate as small businesses. So I am troubled when we are not being accurate and factual with the American public.

Mr. Speaker, my concern today—and I believe it is the concern of many Americans—is the situation in which we find ourselves. The American people have elected a government wherein only cooperation can bring progress. We have a House of Representatives that is predominantly Republican, and we have a Democratically controlled Senate. It would not take a 3-year-old a great deal of time to figure out that the only way we can do the work of the American people is if we stop this ridiculous partisanship—this poisonous partisanship—that is damaging the country and creating a level of anger. There are State legislators in at least 13 States who have introduced legislation for secession from the Union based on the fact that they didn't particularly like the President who was elected. One of the reasons, I think, is that we are exporting hate. If it's not hate, it's certainly anger, and "anger" is just one letter short of "danger."

The American people gave us a mandate to do the simple things, and that is to lead. We understand that the challenge before Congress in the coming weeks is no simple task. I would be wrong if I said that what we need to do is simple. We have some major challenges:

The Postal Service is losing \$25 million a week, and we are running around here acting as if the most important thing in the world is remaining faithful to our ideology. Ideology, tragically, has trumped logic in this place, and that cannot continue. Right now, we are facing hundreds of billions of dollars in expiring tax cuts. It might be important, Mr. Speaker, for all of us to keep in mind that, if we fail to deal with the sequestration issue, 90 percent of the people in this country will have their taxes raised.

But there is another problem.

We have three major credit rating agencies in this country—actually, for the world, essentially—Standard & Poor's, Moody's and then Fitch. We have been warned as a Congress and as a Nation that if we walk up to this precipice again as we did two Augusts ago that we will suffer another downgrading of our credit rating. The

United States of America—the most technologically powerful and economically powerful Nation on the planet—will have a credit downgrading.

This should cause every American to be angry enough to put aside petty partisanship and understand that this body will not function and that our government will not function unless we work together. We've got to come to the conclusion that compromise does not equal capitulation.

POVERTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE of California. As the founder of the Congressional Out of Poverty Caucus, I rise today to continue talking about the ongoing crisis of poverty in our country.

Yesterday, unfortunately, with the supplemental poverty report, we learned that poverty continues to impact nearly 50 million Americans, including 16 million children all across our country and in every congressional district. My home State of California tops the list, followed by our Nation's capital—the District of Columbia—Arizona, Florida, and Georgia.

On this election day, low-income Americans, the working poor, middle-income Americans—every American—spoke loudly and clearly. They voted for strengthening the middle class and for putting people back to work, and they voted for Congress to get back to doing the work of the American people: to strengthen our economy for all Americans and to create economic opportunities that will lift millions of families out of poverty and into the middle class. Most importantly, the American people voted to reject job-killing cuts and a tax on Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

What they don't want is for our country to be rushed into urgent budget decisions by the false threat of a so-called “fiscal cliff.” Mr. Speaker, I don't buy it, and the American people don't believe it either.

This economic and political gridlock is just another political cliff created by the hostage-taking obstructionism of the Tea Party-controlled Congress. The real cliff that anyone is facing today is a human cliff, and far too many American families are standing on the edge as I speak. If we don't strengthen our economy for all Americans, millions will be cut off from the only lifeline keeping them from falling off that human cliff and into poverty—unemployment compensation. Far too many people will be cut off from vital programs like employment insurance, the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit if this Congress fails to act.

It is long past time to come together, to work to find a balanced approach and, as Chairman CLEAVER just said, to get past the partisan obstructionism that has kept us from moving our econ-

omy and our country forward. We have got to stop this. Just 10 years ago, in the year 2000, our Nation had a balanced budget, projected surpluses, and a robust economy. The passage of a serious tax cut rapidly ended those surpluses and began to, quite frankly, explode the debt. The Bush-era tax cuts have already cost over \$2.2 trillion in Federal revenue since they were enacted, and we cannot afford to allow them to be made permanent. Let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, that this Congress has already voted to cut \$1.5 trillion in discretionary spending enacted through the 2011 Budget Control Act.

Low-income Americans are already hurting from multiple rounds of cuts to programs and benefits that they rely on. Our middle class and our working poor have already done their part, and we cannot continue to attempt to balance the budget on the backs of the most vulnerable Americans—our poor, our seniors, our children, and our disabled.

So I hope all Members of Congress will follow the President's lead and support his call for ending the Bush tax cuts above \$250,000, ending the billions in subsidies for Big Oil, and closing the countless loopholes that allow huge corporations and the super rich to avoid paying what they owe. In addition, we can find billions in additional savings by making smart and targeted cuts to our defense budgets. Our military leaders have already outlined cuts that will not put at risk our brave men and women in harm's way or weaken the national security of our Nation. We know that there are billions in waste, fraud, and abuse in the defense budgets that can be saved if we can just account for the hundreds of billions in spending by ensuring the Pentagon can pass an audit.

□ 1050

Mr. Speaker, we face many challenges, but we must not allow our political crisis to create an economic crisis for millions of Americans who are struggling. Now is not the time to turn our backs on struggling families just to preserve tax giveaways to millionaires and billionaires. We must come together to wage a war on poverty and end the war on the poor.

Finally, as 350 economists have said, we need jobs first. With recovery, deficit reduction will come by its own accord thanks to increased revenues in an improving economy. They went on to say that public outlay for jobs and recovery come first, growth is restored, and revenues follow. Budget cuts only lead to a deeper slump.

CENSUS: FULLER POVERTY PICTURE FINDS 49.7M ARE POOR, FACTORING IN MEDICAL AND WORK EXPENSES

(By Associated Press, November 14, 2012)

WASHINGTON—The ranks of America's poor edged up last year to a high of 49.7 million, based on a new census measure that takes into account medical costs and work-related expenses.

The numbers released Wednesday by the Census Bureau are part of a newly developed

supplemental poverty measure. Devised a year ago, this measure provides a fuller picture of poverty that the government believes can be used to assess safety-net programs by factoring in living expenses and taxpayer-provided benefits that the official formula leaves out.

Based on the revised formula, the number of poor people exceeded the 49 million, or 16 percent of the population, who were living below the poverty line in 2010. That came as more people in the slowly improving economy picked up low-wage jobs last year but still struggled to pay living expenses. The revised poverty rate of 16.1 percent also is higher than the record 46.2 million, or 15 percent, that the government's official estimate reported in September.

Due to medical expenses, higher living costs and limited immigrant access to government programs, people 65 or older, Hispanics and urbanites were more likely to be struggling economically under the alternative formula. Also spiking higher in 2011 was poverty among full-time and part-time workers.

As a result, the portrait of poverty broken down by state notably changes. California tops the list, hurt by high housing costs, large numbers of immigrants as well as less generous tax credits and food stamp programs to buoy low-income families. It is followed by the District of Columbia, Arizona, Florida and Georgia.

In the official census tally, it was rural states that were more likely to be near the top of the list, led by Mississippi, New Mexico, Arizona and Louisiana.

“We're seeing a very slow recovery, with increases in poverty among workers due to more new jobs which are low-wage,” said Timothy Smeeding, a University of Wisconsin-Madison economist who specializes in poverty. “As a whole, the safety net is holding many people up, while California is struggling more because it's relatively harder there to qualify for food stamps and other benefits.”

Broken down by group, poverty was disproportionately affecting people 65 and older—about 15.1 percent, or nearly double the 8.7 percent rate calculated under the official formula. That's because they have higher medical expenses, such as Medicare premiums, deductibles and drug costs, that aren't factored into the official rate.

While poverty rates for older Americans as a whole are higher, the new measure does show improvement in their income levels—about 15.1 percent were poor last year, down from 15.8 percent in 2010. Smeeding attributes that to a wave of more affluent, still-working baby boomers in dual-income households who are beginning to turn 65 and, as a result, are slowly raising overall income levels for seniors.

Working-age adults ages 18-64 saw an increase in poverty from 13.7 percent based on the official calculation to 15.5 percent, due mostly to commuting and child care costs.

In contrast, the new measure showed declines in poverty for children, from 22.3 percent under the official formula to 18.1 percent. Still, they remained the age group most likely to be economically struggling by any measure.

“These new numbers only reinforce what AARP and AARP Foundation hear from real people every day: older Americans are struggling to make ends meet,” said Deb Whitman, executive vice president of AARP, an advocacy group. “Policymakers need to understand that not every senior is well off and the critically important role Social Security or Medicare plays as providing a safety net to keep even more older Americans out of poverty. As Washington debates what should happen during the lame duck, we cannot afford to undermine the current safety net that allows many to live with dignity.”