

WHAT IS THE FISCAL CLIFF?

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

Mr. LANKFORD. Well, in a few days, we're going to have to resolve the fiscal cliff—ironically enough, something that the House of Representatives passed last May. In April, we set out a tax plan. In May, we set out a sequestration plan, passed it through the House, sent it to the Senate who said, We will see you during the lame duck time period.

We are in the lame duck now, and this has to be resolved. We have to solve the problem. But quite frankly, the first thing we need to do is to be able to define what the problem even is. It seems that one group is talking about how the real problem is the fiscal cliff, and the other group is talking about how the real problem is the debt and the deficit. Well, what is the problem? The issue is, we have \$16.3 trillion in debt as a Nation, \$1 trillion or more in overspending each year for the last 4 years.

Let me set the example of what this really means: in 2007, our tax revenue—how much we are bringing into the Treasury—was almost exactly what it is in 2012. From 2007 to 2012, the revenue is almost identical. The difference is, our spending has gone up \$1 trillion a year from 2007 to 2012, so now that's \$1 trillion total over the course of that time that's slowly built up. But each year, we've been over \$1 trillion in spending. While our revenue has stayed consistent, basically, from 2007 to 2012, that dramatic spending increase has happened.

We seem to identify that as the real problem. We're overspending. And until you deal with that issue, you cannot raise taxes enough to be able to keep up with \$1 trillion of accelerated spending.

So what is the cliff? And I have to tell you, I have so many people from my district and other places that catch me, pull me aside quietly and say, We hear about the fiscal cliff. We're not even 100 percent sure of what it is. Well, it's really the combination of three things:

The first of them is, the ObamaCare taxes begin January 1 of next year. Those taxes will hit the middle class and the upper brackets. Those taxes, when they kick in, will raise the rates on people making \$200,000 or more and will also remove deductions from the middle class, things like the flexible spending accounts. For those that have high medical bills, their taxes will now go up. For people that have high medical bills and are able to offset some of the taxes they pay because they pay more than 7.5 percent of their own income in medical bills, they will now have their taxes go up. So people like diabetics, heart patients, stroke patients, people with special needs children, their taxes all go up January 1, as well as people making \$200,000 or more,

their tax rates will also go up on January 1. That's the first part of the fiscal cliff.

The second part of it is the spending decrease that this Congress and the President agreed to last summer. We have dramatically increased spending; we have to reduce that spending. That spending decrease that was agreed to had a deadline by the end of this year. If it didn't, there would be across-the-board cuts. The House passed all of our spending decreases in May. The Senate has yet to pass any. So with that, we're stuck with across-the-board cuts that kick in early January.

The third part of that is the expiration of the tax rates for all Americans. In 2001, in 2003, and then extended during the lame duck of 2010, every American's tax rates were extended out to expire the 31st of December. Every tax rate from the lowest to the highest is set to go up.

Now some people see that the problem is that we're not taxing enough, and so that solves the problem—to just go off the fiscal cliff, and everyone will be taxed more. Some people see that we don't take enough from one group and give to another group, so we can solve that. Some people have even said, Let's go back to the Clinton tax rates; with the Clinton tax rates, we had a booming economy, and we were creating more jobs. Well, to that, I would say, well, if increasing taxes increases economic activity, why don't we go to a 95 percent tax rate, and then we'll really have a booming economy. The reason that no one proposes that is because no one really believes that. That is why the accelerated tax rate that is being recommended by the White House is also being proposed with a stimulus plan, another spending plan to offset the damage that's going to be done with the tax increases.

Here is the example that I can talk about with this: when people talk about, just raise taxes on the upper 2 percent, well, let me give you an example of what's being proposed by the President. Capital gains will go from 15 percent to 23.8 percent next year. Dividends would go from 15 percent to 43.4 percent.

Now I have a lot of people that will say to me, just raise it on the upper brackets. But when I tell them, can I tell you what that means—their taxes go from 15 percent to 43.4 percent—I have yet to have anyone stop me and say, Oh, that sounds fair. It doesn't. It just sounds so much easier to say, raise it on someone else, not on us.

We have to solve the problem. Just raising taxes doesn't solve the problem. We're spending \$1 trillion more than what we did 5 years ago with a tax revenue the same. If we do not focus on spending, we will never solve the problem.

□ 1040

SAVING THE 911TH AIRLIFT WING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from

Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Speaking of saving money, here is an interesting story.

Just 2 weeks after Texans in Randall County voted for Republican Barry Goldwater over their native son, Lyndon Johnson, in the Presidential race in the 1960s, the Pentagon announced Randall County's Air Force base was closing. Folks were “flabbergasted” said an Amarillo newspaper columnist. The Air Force had just made millions in investments at the base, but now airmen and equipment were moving to a nearby county that supported Johnson.

It was this kind of abuse of executive power that led Congress to write a new law ensuring we had proper oversight over base closures. In my Pennsylvania's 18th Congressional District, we're finding out why that law must be strengthened. Last week, I learned the Air Force is again attempting to shut down the 911th Airlift Wing, an Air Force Reserve base, for a reason that has nothing do with cost or military strategy. In fact, the 911th is one of the most lean and cost-effective bases in the country.

How and why they can do this without congressional approval is interesting. The Air Force claims inaccurately there are fewer than 300 civilian employees authorized to be employed at the 911th, allowing the Pentagon to close the base without congressional review. The Pentagon, however, has invested over \$50 million in improvements in the base, including new buildings in the last 5 years. The 911th, however, has lower overhead costs because emergency responses like fire and safety, air traffic control, security, runway maintenance, and land are provided by Pittsburgh International Airport for free. Hence, if the 911th were forced to in-source those activities, the number of authorized personnel would be hundreds more, and would far exceed the 300-person threshold. Thus, the Pentagon would be prevented from unilaterally closing it. Further, the Air Force Reserve would have to invest millions more in equipment and training if it was not provided for free, but the Air Force did not look at any of these numbers, and they did not review the cost of the space.

The Pentagon is trying to close the base because they can, not because they should. In their haste to come up with a quick cut, it will cost the taxpayers over \$100 million in coming years, and that is why Congress needs to have oversight.

The House has passed a defense bill to prevent a suboptimal decision like this one in the future. The House bill includes language requiring the Pentagon to notify Congress about any base closure or transfer of troops impacting more than 1,000 uniform personnel. Unlike the way the Air Force is operating now, the Defense Department would have to include a justification for the reduction, an evaluation of

the costs and benefits, and an evaluation of the local, economic, environmental, strategic, and operational consequences. By requiring significant reductions in uniform personnel to be included in the budget request, Congress will have two opportunities to review, block, or approve a base closure in the annual defense authorization bill and the defense appropriations bill.

The Senate is nearing completion of its version of the defense bill today, and it's my hope that both Chambers will work to restore Congress' proper oversight authority. The issue facing Congress is not a new one. Since the 1960s, the executive branch has tried repeatedly to close bases for reasons other than the best interests of taxpayers or the military. The necessity of a strong base closure law giving Congress oversight of these decisions was perhaps best expressed in 1985 by Senator CARL LEVIN. He said:

These protections against untrammelled executive power to close bases came because Members of this Senate and this Congress felt that the power to close bases had been abused and had been used as a club over Members of Congress.

Today, it is the 911th, but tomorrow it could be a base in any Member's district. I urge my colleagues to support efforts to strengthen the base closure law.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 43 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Dr. Glen Bohannon, College Acres Baptist Church, Wilmington, North Carolina, offered the following prayer:

Our Father in Heaven, who desires that all people breathe the fresh air of freedom, enable us to walk worthy of all rights sacrificially handed down to us by patriots past and present.

So lead us that we will not take for granted the blessings of our Constitution, our laws, and all institutions that help make these United States an instrument of peace and purpose.

Strengthen our resolve not to confuse liberty with license, restraint with weakness, and half error with full truth.

Empower and motivate us to cultivate a spirit of goodness and a high sense of honor. Deepen our desire to practice virtues of conduct to help

make our Nation strong and deserving to endure.

Our eternal God, open our eyes today to see that our Nation's greatest threat is not all external, but the inner thought that we can afford to live without dependence upon You. This I pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays. The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

POSTPONING CALL OF PRIVATE CALENDAR

The SPEAKER. This is the day for the call of the Private Calendar.

Without objection, the Private Calendar will be called after 1-minute speeches today.

There was no objection.

WELCOMING REVEREND DR. GLEN DALE BOHANNON

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CULBERSON) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to have with us today as our guest chaplain, Dr. Glen Dale Bohannon, who now pastors a church in North Carolina, but who understands clearly the importance of this great institution that it's our privilege to represent. I think Dr. Bohannon's prayer was appropriate to strengthen these great institutions that were created for the sole purpose of protecting our liberty.

Dr. Bohannon was married to Jo Ann Summers on October 26, 1957, was saved on February 2, 1959, and became an ordained pastor on November 20, 1960. Dr. Bo is a graduate of Southeast Missouri University and received his master's of divinity from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1972 and his doctorate of ministry in 1985.

Glen and his wife, Jo Ann, have three children: Lisa, John, and Glen, Jr. John and his wife, Jody, have three children, Glen and Jo's grandchildren: Summer, Levi, and Joelle.

Dr. Bohannon has served churches in Missouri, Virginia, and North Carolina. He retired from full-time pastorate in 1996 after serving at Central Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia, for 10½ years. He received his intentional interim training from 1996-1997, and has since served as an intentional interim pastor and as an interim pastor in several churches in Virginia and North Carolina.

Dr. Bohannon currently serves as the interim senior pastor at College Acres Baptist Church in Wilmington, North Carolina. He recently completed an intentional interim at Memorial Baptist Church in Arlington, Virginia, where my family attends when we're in the D.C. area. We're honored to have our good friend, Dr. Glen Bohannon, here as the pastor of the House for the day.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YODER). The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

DR. HARRY ROSENBERG

(Mr. HECK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HECK. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to recognize Dr. Harry Rosenberg, founding president of Roseman University of Health Sciences.

In 1999, Dr. Rosenberg rented a small office space in Henderson, Nevada, believing he could establish a pharmacy school that would produce highly skilled graduates ready to be recruited for work across the country.

His innovative approach to education led him to develop a block format curriculum that emphasizes a student-centered active learning environment, allowing students to participate in experiential education from the very beginning of their studies and complete their doctoral degree in just 3 years instead of the traditional 4 years, making Roseman one of the most affordable pharmacy schools in the Nation.

During his tenure, Dr. Rosenberg helped transform Roseman from a local school of 38 students to a regional institution with over 1,000 and offering an array of quality programs in nursing, dentistry, and business administration.