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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

FISCAL CLIFF UPDATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, last week, Republicans made a serious offer to avert the fiscal cliff, and most of it was based on testimony given last year by President Clinton's former Chief of Staff, Erskine Bowles. As Mr. Bowles himself said on Sunday: "We have to cut spending." Well, he's right. Washington has a spending problem. Let's be honest: we're broke. The plan that we have offered is consistent with the President's call for a "balanced approach."

A lot of people know that the President and I met on Sunday. It was a nice meeting, it was cordial; but we're still waiting for the White House to identify what spending cuts the President is willing to make as part of the "balanced approach" that he promised the American people. Where are the President's spending cuts? The longer the White House slow-walks this process, the closer our economy gets to the fiscal cliff.

But here's what we do know: we know that the President wants more

stimulus spending and an increase in the debt limit without any cuts or reforms. That's not fixing our problem. Frankly, it's making it worse. On top of that, the President wants to raise tax rates on many small business owners. Now, even if we did exactly what the President wants, we would see red ink for as far as the eye can see. That's not fixing our problem either; it's making it worse and it's hurting our economy.

I think the Members know that I'm an optimist. I'm hopeful that we can reach an agreement. This is a serious issue, and there's a lot at stake. The American people sent us here to work together towards the best possible solution, and that means cutting spending.

Now, if the President doesn't agree with our approach, he's got an obligation to put forward a plan that can pass both Chambers of Congress. Because right now the American people have to be scratching their heads and wondering: When is the President going to get serious?

RECOGNIZING VICTOR DICARLO

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Victor DiCarlo for receiving the National Order of the French Legion of Honor, the highest decoration that France bestows for meritorious service. I also want to commend Mr. DiCarlo for his unwavering service to his country during World War II. It's truly a privilege to be able to honor a constituent who so exemplifies patriotism and the American spirit.

Established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, the National Order of the French Legion of Honor is a merit-based distinction awarded for excep-

tional civilian or military service. The Order's motto, "Honor and Fatherland," reaffirms a celebration of patriotism and service for its recipients.

Victor DiCarlo was drafted into the Army 2 months after he graduated from Pittsburgh's Schenley High School in 1944. He arrived in France in 1945 and was assigned the responsibility of aiding the Allied Forces in reversing gains made by the German Army. He first saw combat in the Moselle region, helping the Allied Forces by breaking through the heavily fortified infamous Siegfried Line, a 390-mile defense system set up by the German Army along the country's western border that contained a series of tank traps and manned bunkers.

After successfully breaking through the Siegfried Line, Victor headed north in order to provide assistance to the undermanned and underequipped Allied Forces during the famous Battle of the Bulge. He also saw combat in the Rhineland region and all around central Europe throughout the duration of World War II. His division also helped to liberate two concentration camps, one in Austria and one in Germany.

Upon receiving an honorable discharge from the service, Victor was awarded the Bronze Star by the United States for his committed, meritorious service to his country during World War II, a fitting honor for a patriot of Victor's caliber. This year, on September 27, 2012, Victor added another decoration when he was awarded the French Legion of Honor during a ceremony here in Washington, D.C. at the French Embassy. He was given the honor for his military service in helping to secure the liberation of France.

The determination, bravery, and selflessness of Victor DiCarlo and so many like him is why we consider his generation the greatest. After the war, Victor returned home, earned an engineering degree from Tri-State College in Indiana, and worked as an engineer until

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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his retirement from Westinghouse in 1989. He and his wife have five children, 13 grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating an individual who is emblematic of the greatest armed forces in the world. World War II is filled with stories of heroism, triumph, and patriotism; and it is truly an honor to share Victor's story with my colleagues today.

I again want to commend Victor DiCarlo for his commitment to his country and join with his family in congratulating him for being awarded the prestigious National Order of the French Legion of Honor.

BIDDING FAREWELL TO OUTGOING OHIO MEMBERS

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

Mr. TURNER of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to extend my sincere and best wishes as five of my fellow Ohioans will be leaving the House at the adjournment of this Congress.

Ohioans have benefited greatly from the dedication and service of Representative STEVE LATOURETTE, who occupies the Speaker's chair today; Representatives DENNIS KUCINICH; JEAN SCHMIDT; BETTY SUTTON; and STEVE AUSTRIA. On a personal note, I want to thank Representative STEVE LATOURETTE for both his mentorship and his guidance and leadership in Congress.

I've had the privilege of working across the aisle with each of these lawmakers in support of our fellow Buckeyes and Americans. Their service to our home State of Ohio and to our Nation will not end with this Congress. Their innovative ideas and selfless service will be felt long after they leave the people's House.

I look forward to their future roles as Ohioans, committed to advancing the interests of our communities, our State, and our great country.

AT LAST, FISCAL CLIFF DEBATE

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

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor very pleased that our Speaker of the House, Mr. BOEHNER, has brought the discussion of our fiscal challenges to this floor. Indeed, it is long overdue. We have been calling upon the Speaker to bring forth a middle-income tax cut now for a very long time—in fact, since last summer when it passed the United States Senate. The President stands ready and poised with his pen to sign it.

Democrats in the House have a discharge petition to bring that bill to the floor. What stands in the way is an act on the part of the Republican majority to bring a middle-income tax cut to the floor of the House, which across the country has almost universal support

and which I think in this body, given the right to vote for it, would have overwhelming support.

Up until now, everybody in the country—in fact, in the world—has been talking about what's going to happen—those who pay attention to such matters—what's going to happen in the budget debate in the Congress and with the President. At last, that subject comes to the floor.

□ 1210

What I would do to respond to what the Speaker has said, though, is to set the record straight. The fact is that the President has, and Democrats agree with him, agreed to around \$1.6 trillion in cuts in the Budget Control Act and other acts of Congress in this particular Congress, \$1.6 trillion in cuts. Where are the cuts? They're in bills that you, Mr. Speaker, have voted for.

Secondly, on the issue of the entitlements with the Affordable Care Act and with legislation, suggestions and provisions in the President's budget, it amounts to over \$1 trillion in savings in Medicare, over \$1 trillion in savings which have been redirected to prolonging the life of Medicare, making it stronger for nearly a decade while increasing benefits for our seniors and those who depend on Medicare—not reducing but increasing benefits. There's been a massive misrepresentation about what that is, so I want to set the record straight. So in terms of spending cuts, we are on the record having voted for about \$1.6 trillion.

In terms of entitlement reform, there is over \$1 trillion already and more savings to be gained in further discussions on the subject by a strong down payment.

What is missing are two elements that the President has put forth in his budget: growth, investments in infrastructure—yes, the President has called for investments in infrastructure to build the infrastructure of America and to create jobs to grow our economy; and, where are the revenues? Where are the revenues? Regardless of the cuts or the changes in entitlements, more is demanded in terms of what seniors would have to pay into Medicare and at what age that would happen, while the Republicans refuse to touch one hair on the head of the wealthiest people in our country.

The public overwhelmingly, 2-1, supports the President's initiative for extending the middle-income tax cuts whereby 100 percent—100 percent—of U.S. taxpayers get a tax cut. Above 250—the people making more than \$250,000 a year would be asked to pay a little more to contribute to the fiscal soundness of our country, to pay our bills, the defense of our country, the support of our troops, the pillars of security for our seniors, the education of our children and the safety of our neighborhoods.

This is just asking them to pay a little bit more while they continue to get

the same tax cut that everyone does. So it is 100 percent of the American people get a tax cut, the upper 2 percent are asked to pay a little bit more.

So I thank the Speaker for finally at least uttering the words on the floor of the House about what the decisions are that need to be made. Again, we have committed to the cuts, we have acted upon the entitlements, the President has more in his budget, all of this would be a down payment for as we go forward into the next session of Congress to talk about tax simplification and fairness, how we can perhaps lower rates while plugging up loopholes and having a Tax Code that encourages growth in our economy.

But that is a longer discussion as we address the issue of how we strengthen our entitlements not by diminishing benefits but by getting more for what we are spending. So if it's Social Security, any changes in Social Security should be left to strengthen Social Security. If it's Medicare, any changes should be there to strengthen Medicare, not to underwrite and subsidize tax cuts for the wealthiest people in our country.

So, again, I welcome the Speaker's statement that he wants to solve the problem. The President has put forth his budget, which has his initiative in it. He has said that he's willing to make some changes. But it's really important that any changes not hurt the middle class. It comes right down to this. Again, I've said, it's not about the price of the high-end tax cut, it's about the money that it generates. You can find the money another way at the high end. Let's see what that discussion is. But it is not to burden the middle income in order to have bigger tax cuts at the high end.

Those high-end tax cuts only increase the deficit. They have not created jobs. It's simply unfair, and it doesn't work. So hopefully the clock is ticking, we're getting closer to the holidays, and that means closer to the end of the year, which is fraught with meaning in terms of time and the rest of this. I don't think there's any reason for us not to come to the table to make an agreement to give confidence to consumers in this holiday season and to the markets at their end of year decisions so that we will have the growth—the growth, the jobs that produce revenue. That approach is the way to create jobs to reduce the deficit.

We want to fix the deficit, grow the economy, and do so in a way that makes responsible cuts and strong investments for our seniors and the pillars of economic security for them and for their family. It is not a time to inject even more uncertainty into the lives of the American people and the economy of our country—and what that means globally. It simply isn't the time. Many of these ideas are bad at any time, but they're particularly harmful at this time.

So, again, I thank the Speaker for bringing the issue finally to the floor