

These six principles can be our bridge forward.

HONORING NEW MEXICO SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE BEN LUJÁN

(Mr. HEINRICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor one of New Mexico's great leaders, New Mexico Speaker of the House Ben Luján, who passed away Tuesday night after his battle with lung cancer. Speaker Luján is the father of our colleague, and my friend, Congressman BEN RAY LUJÁN.

First elected to the State legislature in 1974, Ben Luján served as speaker of the house from 2001 until 2012. Throughout his tenure in the House, Speaker Luján showed that he was a champion for working families, a tireless advocate for his constituents, and an absolute master of legislative strategy.

At the beginning of this year, when Speaker Luján spoke to the legislature of his battle with cancer, he encouraged everyone to make their time on Earth worthwhile and to "make a difference for the children, our working families, and for the elderly." Speaker Luján has inspired me and so many New Mexicans to do just that. Our good thoughts and prayers are with his wife Carmen, with BEN RAY, and with the rest of the Luján family.

BALANCING THE BUDGET

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

Mr. DESJARLAIS. Mr. Speaker, it seems there are those who still fail to realize that we cannot continue down this road of fiscal insanity. It isn't politics; it's math. Our spending is simply unsustainable, yet we have not seen a serious proposal from the White House to address our trillion-dollar deficits.

The President thinks the answer is more taxes. But while the tax increases President Obama is calling for would hurt small businesses, they would have little effect in reducing our deficits. That is because our debt is being driven by spending, plain and simple. Therefore, to solve our problem, we must implement serious spending cuts and reforms.

The good news is this isn't hard to do; we just have to look at the amount of revenue coming in and not spend more than that. Rather than spending more than we can afford, we must prioritize our spending. Hundreds of millions of Americans do this every day. If my constituents in Tennessee can balance their budgets, so can Washington.

HONORING REPRESENTATIVE ELTON GALLEGLEY

(Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California asked and was given permission

to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, down here in the well sometimes when you hear what we all say to each other you might think that we are not a very friendly bunch towards each other, but I want to let people know today that we actually have a lot of friendships here on this floor. I'm going to take the time this week before we break for Christmas to say goodbye to some of my friends who are leaving from Congress—especially from the Democratic side, but I have a particularly good friend on the other side, Congressman ELTON GALLEGLEY.

He has had a congressional career here for 25 years. He's been a leader and a fierce defender of animal rights. With the successful passage of legislation that he recently sponsored, the creation and the sale of videos depicting the torture of animals is forever illegal. Animal lovers across the country are thankful for his leadership on that.

Though ELTON and I a lot of times disagree on a lot of things politically, we've become very close friends over the years. I have sought his guidance on many issues here, on foreign affairs, on transportation, and even on some outside things, outside of this, maybe even in my own personal life.

So I want to thank him for being a good friend. I wish him a lot of luck in his next chapter of his life, and I just want to tell him that I will miss him.

HONORING JAY PIERSON

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

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the distinguished career of someone who is a friend to me and my colleagues, and that's Jay Pierson.

For 34 years, Jay has been a mainstay of the House and the floor. He began his congressional career back in 1978 with then-Republican leader John Rhodes. Throughout his tenure, he has worked for Speakers Newt Gingrich, Dennis Hastert, and now JOHN BOEHNER.

Since I came to the House in 2003, I have known Jay to be a true student of this institution. He has helped me personally—and countless other Members—learn how this body works, and he has been quick to assist a Member with any question about the floor, or even a good book recommendation.

Mr. Speaker, what most people may not know about Jay is that, in addition to a bachelor's degree from Westmont College and a master's degree from California State University, he earned his Ph.D. from the University of Maryland.

In his upcoming retirement, I want to thank Jay for his service to this great institution. I wish he and his wife, JoAnne, all the best in their future endeavors. My friend, Jay Pierson.

PLAN B

(Ms. LEE of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to the Republican so-called "Plan B" bill. Not only would it not address the so-called fiscal cliff—it's really a human cliff—but it's a pure political gimmick to distract from the Republicans' failure to negotiate in good faith.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot grow our economy or reduce our deficits by making even more cuts on the backs of children, veterans, our seniors, our disabled, and the millions of Americans in poverty. Low-income and middle-income Americans have already been slammed by \$1.5 trillion in cuts to the safety net, mind you, that they rely on every day.

A fiscally responsible and balanced approach would be to immediately pass the \$1.5 trillion in new revenue to match the cuts that we've already made, while protecting middle class tax cuts.

Mr. Speaker, 98 percent of the American people have already paid their fair share; it's time for the wealthiest 2 percent to do the same. Let's not forget the over 2 million who will lose their unemployment benefits December 29. Mr. Speaker, please don't let them fall off this human cliff during this holiday season. We should extend this today.

□ 1220

THE FISCAL CLIFF

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

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, we've reached the fiscal cliff not because we tax too little, but because we spend too much. We are focusing on whom to raise taxes and by how much. This debate really should be about outrageous spending.

Many people believe that what's happening in Greece cannot happen in the United States. But think about it, Greece kept borrowing and spending until eventually they couldn't pay their public workers, take care of the elderly and the poor, or deliver any of the services they promised to its people. The United States is headed down the very same path.

We'll be right back here having this same debate very soon if we don't cut spending. Instead of discussing taxing the top 2 percent, the next time it will be the top 50 percent, and so on, until we are all being taxed—everyone—but spending so much that we still cannot meet our obligations.

This debate should be about spending, not taxes, so that we can give the American people what they want—a strong economy and a guarantee that programs like Social Security and Medicare will remain intact.

PLAN B HURTS EVERYBODY

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, as if the Speaker's Plan B were not bad enough—not extending unemployment benefits or fixing the SGR so seniors would continue to have their doctors, killing jobs, again threatening the full faith and credit of our country, and leaving the sequester cuts in place—last night the Republicans dug up the horrible reconciliation bill that they pushed through this House in May. They should have left it over in the Senate where it went to die a timely death.

The reconciliation bill they will put up with it for a revote today is like Plan B, just worse. It will cut food stamps, eliminate the social services block grants, and weaken the consumer protections that we put in place. They can't help themselves. They'll make one more attempt to roll back much of the Affordable Care Act, including repealing the public health fund and funding for the exchanges, cutting the children's health insurance program, and taking away all of the Medicaid funding that was provided for the territories.

Either way, these bills would hurt many people—poor, middle class Americans, children and seniors, all to save tax cuts for the wealthy. On November 6, Americans voted for us to work together to strengthen our country, not weaken it. These highly partisan bills will hurt our country, and no one should vote for either of them.

AVOIDING THE FISCAL CLIFF

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if anybody is listening. The message from the American people is loud and clear: extend the middle class tax cuts now. Republican leadership is holding hostage tax cuts for 98 percent of Americans and 97 percent of small businesses to give more tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans. Democratic Members of Congress have commonsense solutions, and we can't wait around any longer as real proposals languish while the House GOP gets its act together.

I, along with 181 of my colleagues, have signed the discharge petition to automatically bring to the House floor the Senate-passed middle class tax cuts which the President has said he will sign immediately. This could be an opportunity for us to work together, resolve some of our differences, and offer the American people the kind of Congress they want: working together.

TAXES

(Mrs. CAPPS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my disappointment that House leadership is again playing political games instead of getting our work done. With time running short, they've decided to prohibit a vote on extending the middle class tax cuts for families making up to \$250,000 per year. Instead, we will only be voting on the so-called Republican Plan B.

Plan B is yet another giveaway to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans and at the expense of middle class families. It forces middle class families to pay \$1,000 more a year in taxes in order to give millionaires a \$50,000 break. That's not what the American people voted for in November. They sent a clear message that they wanted us to put aside our differences and work together to pass a balanced plan that protects middle class families and ensures that everyone pays their fair share.

We agree. We all agree that families making up to \$250,000 should not see their taxes go up on January 1. We could pass that bill today and give millions of families across this country peace of mind, but we're not even getting to vote on that bill. Instead, we're taking a symbolic vote that solves nothing. My constituents—all of our constituents—deserve better.

HONORING THE LIFE OF LEONILA VEGA

(Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, today I come to the floor to honor Leonila Vega, a ferocious advocate for seniors and people with disabilities. In her role as the executive director of the Direct Care Alliance, I worked closely with her to improve the conditions of work for those who provide in-home care and, with it, the quality of care that they provide for others.

Although she lost her battle with cancer on November 19, the battle she waged for quality care and dignity for workers continues.

I cannot adequately describe all of her accomplishments in one short minute, so I'm submitting a longer statement for the RECORD. But I do hope that in honoring her today and talking about her passion, I hope that her passion for social justice is an inspiration to all of us.

RECOGNIZING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF SENATOR BARBARA A. MIKULSKI

(Mr. CUMMINGS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CUMMINGS. Today, I am incredibly pleased to congratulate my dear colleague, Senator BARBARA A. MIKUL-

SKI, for her ascension to the chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Senator MIKULSKI's commitment to our great State is undeniable. She has worked tirelessly throughout her prestigious career to serve her fellow Marylanders, first as a social worker, and now as one of the most influential Members of the United States Senate.

Senator MIKULSKI is a leader that Maryland and, truly, our Nation, can be proud of. She was the first woman elected to the Senate who was not preceded by her husband or father and has continued breaking barriers ever since. This trend continued yesterday when she became the very first female Senator in the history of our Nation to become the chair of the powerful Appropriations Committee.

I'm honored and proud to serve alongside her here in the United States Congress, and I look forward to continuing to work together with her for the betterment of our Nation.

NEWTOWN, CONNECTICUT, AND GUN SAFETY REFORMS

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

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, first of all, to express my deepest condolences to the families and friends of those killed in last week's tragic elementary school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut.

But this incomprehensible act of violence should compel us to address the larger context. It is a fact that over 10,000 Americans are murdered by gun violence each year. No other civilized nation on the planet experiences anything like this annual gun slaughter, but we have 5 percent of the population and own 50 percent of the world's guns.

Now, the needed reforms are not radical. Many, including closing the gun show loophole and requiring gun owners to report to police lost or stolen guns, are even supported by the vast majority of NRA members. It would be far too simplistic and self-serving, though, to lay the blame for this inaction on the most commonsense measures entirely at the feet of the NRA, which we're inclined to do because the truth is that we, as the representatives of the people, are the ones who are ultimately responsible for doing nothing to protect our constituents.

The fact is that if we don't take action now, we're all complicit in the next massacre of innocents.

□ 1230

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4310, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 840 and ask for its immediate consideration.