

staffed the Foreign Affairs Committee for me and the Oversight Subcommittee, and who has also been my chief of staff in the Washington office; Jim McHugh, who has been my district director and longtime friend and colleague in St. Louis; Suzanne Archer, who has been my deputy director; and Kathy Waltz from Sainte Genevieve, Missouri, a former mayor there but an invaluable part of our constituent outreach team. There are many other staff members, but I thank those in particular for their long and loyal service and for the difference they make in so many people's lives.

To the Missourians whom I've had the great honor to represent, I am gratified and humbled beyond belief to have been able to represent them in this U.S. House of Representatives for 8 years and to also have represented many in the State house of representatives for 4 years prior to that. In working with them and for them we've been able to get some great things done on big national issues but also on important local issues back home.

From ribbon cuttings and orange cones and construction signs all across the St. Louis region to investments in our infrastructure, which have created real jobs at home and have helped rebuild our region's roads, bridges, ports, lochs, dams, levees, flood walls, airports, high-speed rail, light rail, and our bus systems, those have made a real difference in people's lives. It was the reason I got on the Transportation Committee in the first place. We had two of the most deadly roads in America in Jefferson County, Missouri, and we got special funding to help rebuild those roads—to not only help their economy but to save lives. Recently, our firefighters were able to obtain a Federal grant for special patrol boats-rescue boats on the Mississippi River, which will serve the region for years to come.

These kinds of investments are important, and I want to urge this new Congress that will be taking over in just a few days to pass a major transportation bill. It's one of the best investments we can make in this country in order to continue to grow this economy.

We've seen after growing out of this Great Recession over the last few years the Recovery Act passed, the auto industry saved, major Wall Street reforms passed, health care reform passed, and stem cell research measures adopted in unprecedented bipartisan ways. I'll never forget the mothers with their young children who were sitting in my office the day that the health care bill was approved. There was not a dry eye in the room because all of their kids had preexisting conditions. Because of the new health care law, that cannot be the case anymore. I was also proud to serve on our House Foreign Affairs Committee and to chair the international organization's committee, so I just want to urge this Congress to take on the needed reforms

to make this Congress work better for the American people.

In closing, we recently greeted World War II veterans here at the monument built in their honor. They said that this Congress needed to take on the spirit they had in World War II—to put the country first and to put our differences aside—and that we could achieve great things.

□ 0930

FISCAL CLIFF

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

Mr. DOLD. Mr. Speaker, I want to first start off by thanking my friend from Missouri for his service and working with him on legislation in the past.

Just to pick up on what he said about our World War II heroes, we do need to put the country first. I think that certainly we're here on New Year's Eve and we're upon the fiscal cliff. What we do need to focus on is how do we find that common ground, because what we do know is I believe Democrats and Republicans alike want to put our country on a course to some fiscal discipline—we hope. Is there a course where we can find enough common ground to move it forward so that we don't have a downgrade, so that we don't spike unemployment, so that the markets don't go down.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a small business owner. I employ 100 people. For me, it's 100 families. I meet a budget and a payroll. What they're looking for when I talk to people back home, they're looking for some stability, they're looking for certainty, and what we're doing here is not providing any of those things. And yet I do believe that there is a spirit of comity that we want to find that common ground and move forward.

I'm sorry that we're here on New Year's Eve and that we haven't solved this problem long ago. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that the House did send a bill in August over to the United States Senate. Going back to my time as a small business owner, I can just tell you, if I'd given something to one of the people that I work with, marked it "urgent" and put it on their desk months ago and it sat for month after month after month, something would be wrong. Well, in essence, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we've done. We sent something over to the United States Senate months ago, marked it "urgent" because this is talking about the direction, the fiscal direction of our Nation, and yet nothing is coming back.

Unfortunately, Washington works on brinksmanship. We don't want brinksmanship; we want stability. The world is watching, and we need to focus on the common ground to move things forward. We want to make sure that we can keep tax rates low. We want to make sure that we can bring additional

revenue into the Federal Government. I believe that's going to be through growth. That's going to be sparking the American spirit, that entrepreneurial spirit across our country to bring more dollars into the Federal Treasury, to get more people back to work.

The thing that's amazing, Mr. Speaker, is there's a lack of leadership, a lack of leadership here in Washington, D.C., that's palpable. We need to move forward.

During the budget season, those on the other side of the aisle, myself, some of my colleagues on my side of the aisle, put forth a budget, the first bipartisan budget in a generation, based upon the Simpson-Bowles plan, talking about the need to bring additional revenue in, talking about the need to put spending cuts out there because Washington has this sense of spending, Mr. Speaker. Republicans have overspent; Democrats have overspent. I'm not here to point the finger. What I am looking for is a solution to the problems we face. My hope is that we can get those done today. The American people demand it, the American people need it, and the world is looking to America for leadership.

Mr. Speaker, on a different note, I want to rise today to recognize an extraordinary lady, a great American, one who raised four children and instilled in them a love of family and country, taught those around her the idea that your integrity determines your identity. In fact, she gave me that plaque, and it hangs in my room today.

I want to say it again, Mr. Speaker, because I think it is so very, very important: Your integrity determines your identity.

She also instilled a fantastic work ethic in those around her. A teacher, first of special needs children, then in English as a high school English teacher for a number of years, she left the teaching profession to have a family and then became an entrepreneur. She went into the private sector, helped people get jobs, put food on the table for families, and helped those families get an education.

Mr. Speaker, this great American lady celebrates a birthday today. I'm sorry that I'm not with her, but I am in spirit. Happy birthday, Mom.

BELARUS

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, it's good to come down for morning-hour, especially today, to hear my colleagues come down and thank staff and people who've been important in their lives, especially in their careers. JASON ALTMIRE, what a great job he did thanking his staff. My friend, RUSS CARNAHAN from across the Mississippi River, thanking family, wife, sons, and staff. For the work we do here, too frequently, many go unappreciated.

But, Mr. Speaker, I did break the code on why we're here so late today. I know a lot of people want to know. We can blame Jay Pierson for that. Jay is retiring today. This is his last day, and we wanted to make sure that we got the last ounce of flesh and blood from him. So if the American people want to know why we're here, it's Jay Pierson's fault.

Jay Pierson is Speaker BOEHNER's floor assistant. He obviously carries around a copy of Jefferson's Manual. He has been a servant of the House of Representatives for 34 years. He's a truly dedicated public servant. I thank him for his friendship and his support to this body and especially to me personally.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to take time out, as I do, to speak about democratic movements around the world, especially in the former captive nations of Eastern Europe, and remember those who are jailed just because they want political freedoms and liberties.

Two years ago after the brutal and bloody crackdown on peaceful demonstrations after the 2010 presidential elections, the human rights of ordinary Belarusian citizens continue to be violated by the Lukashenko government. One candidate who ran against Lukashenko during that election, Nikolai Statkevich, remains in jail. The other jailed candidate, Andrei Sannikov, was pardoned earlier this year and is in exile in Britain. Ales Byalyatski, the head of Viasna Human Rights Center, also remains imprisoned after being convicted to a 4½-year jail sentence for trumped-up charges of tax evasion. These are two of 12 political prisoners who today remain behind bars under deplorable prison conditions in Belarus.

The general human rights situation in Belarus has not improved since the events of 2010, despite international condemnation and sanctions on the regime. In its 2012 report, Freedom House ranked Belarus as "not free" in the categories of civil liberties and political rights, and Belarus ranked 193 out of 197 countries on Freedom House's 2012 press freedom index. The Reporters Without Borders press freedom index ranks Belarus 168 out of 179 countries.

Laws have passed that regulate demonstrations and political information, stifling freedom of assembly. Independent journalists and political activists are under a constant threat of intimidation and arbitrary detention.

Belarus held parliamentary elections on September 23, 2012. Unsurprisingly, the elections failed to meet international standards and were widely condemned as not free or fair. While some democratic opposition parties boycotted the elections, the candidates who did attempt to run were denied registration by election authorities, intimidated, and given unfair access to media resources. No opposition figures were elected to the 110-seat legislature. Official turnout was reported as 74.3 percent, although observers claim the

turnout was closer to 30 percent of eligible voters.

Belarus remains mired in its worst financial crisis since independence, which has put Lukashenko under increasing pressure. In the past month, he has reshuffled several top figures in his government and made some controversial economic decisions that have been met with criticism in the international community. This includes signing a presidential decree making it illegal for workers in Belarus' wood processing industry to quit their jobs, and announcing that Belarus would begin shifting its exporting business from ports in the Baltic to Russian ports. This will only strain the relationship between Belarus and its democratic neighbors and increase Russia's stronghold on key Belarusian markets.

□ 0940

Belarus already depends on Russia for nearly all its energy supplies. The United States and the European Union must remain united, impose economic sanctions, and have a single plan for action regarding the promotion of democratic process in Belarus.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this time coming down, and I wish everybody a Happy New Year.

FAREWELL TO THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say farewell to the House.

I first want to say thank you to the wonderful people of the South Carolina coast. From Myrtle Beach to my hometown of North Charleston to Hilton Head, your support over the last 3 years has truly humbled me and inspired me.

I also want to thank my friends, my colleagues, and the members of the South Carolina delegation: Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. WILSON, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. GOWDY, and Mr. MULVANEY. We have a great group who truly understands we are here to represent the great State of South Carolina and the citizens of America, and I thank them all for their friendship.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of my colleagues here in the House. We may not always agree on things, but we are here for a reason: to try and make this Nation better.

As I prepare to move to the United States Senate, it is that belief that makes me incredibly optimistic about our future. The battles of today will, in the future, be seen as a positive turning point for our Nation, where we got our fiscal house back in order and revitalized the American Dream for our children and our grandchildren.

I look forward to continuing to serve the residents of South Carolina, some

of the most passionate people in the Nation. And I will never forget my time here in the people's House, where we worked every single day to build a brighter future for our Nation.

Thank you.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 41 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1000

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. EMERSON) at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Loving God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

On this last day of 2012, forget not Your people. There are many differences plaguing our Nation's discourse. Please send wisdom upon the leaders serving in government and goodwill among all the principals in current negotiations.

We thank You for the service of so many who work every day in this building, whose labor provides the lubrication for the very public actions of the Members of this assembly. Though each deserves special mention, bless especially this day Jay Pierson, who works his last day of 34 years of faithful service on the floor of the House.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. HIGGINS 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests