

places the validity of the public debt beyond question.

The Government Accountability Office has consistently held that the Treasury Secretary already has “the authority to choose the order in which to pay obligations of the United States” in order to protect the Nation’s credit. This authority is inherent in the 1789 act that established the Treasury Department and entrusted it with the management of the revenue and the support of the public credit.

Even with record deficits, our revenues are roughly 10 times greater than our public debt service, so there’s no excuse for a debt default. And yet, when an impasse over the debt limit loomed 2 years ago, then-Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner insisted that his only option was to default on the Nation’s credit.

Now, whether this was a crude attempt to hold the Nation’s credit hostage to political demands for higher spending or whether it was the sincere misunderstanding of his powers and responsibilities is really immaterial.

In the future, this measure would order the Treasury Secretary to promptly and fully pay all principal and interest due on the national debt, even providing a temporary exemption from the debt limit in order to do so.

Now, most States have provisions in their laws or constitutions guaranteeing their debt. Last year in testimony to the Senate, Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke praised these State provisions for maintaining confidence in State and municipal markets, and he told the House Budget Committee that a similar measure at the Federal level would help protect the Nation’s credit.

Is this a tacit suggestion that we shouldn’t meet our other obligations? Well, does anyone suggest that all the States that have had similar provisions in their constitutions and statutes for hundreds of years have ever used them as an excuse not to pay their other bills? Of course not. On the contrary, providing clear and unambiguous mandates to protect their credit first, they actually support and maintain their ability to pay all of their other obligations.

For a Congress that’s borrowing nearly 40 cents on every dollar that it spends, the importance of this provision should be obvious. With the Nation carrying a total debt that exceeds its entire economy, it is imperative that credit markets be absolutely certain that the risk of an American default is nonexistent. Without this confidence, rising interest rates could rapidly consume vital government programs and make a mockery of the even modest budget savings wrought by the sequester.

Opponents charge that protecting the public credit above all other expenditures would subordinate many other essential obligations, like payments to troops or children’s nutrition, but they forget the public credit is what makes it possible to meet every other obligation of the government.

A prolonged impasse over the debt limit is something that is much to be avoided.

□ 1030

Postponing payment of any of the government’s bills would be dangerous and unprecedented. Although existing revenues could support critical government responsibilities for a while, distress to other Federal employees and contractors would be severe, would rapidly compound, and would eventually threaten core governmental functions.

Yet there is a worse fiscal outcome, and that is a failure to honor the Nation’s debt obligations. We should remember that if the full faith and credit of the United States is ever compromised, all programs are jeopardized.

We must recognize that today our country is divided over fiscal policy and that bitter fiscal disputes in Congress are likely to continue for some time. Financial markets ought to be confident that their Treasury bonds are safe regardless of what political storms are raging in Washington.

TRIBUTE TO MR. JOSEPH CARTER CORBIN, FOUNDER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT PINE BLUFF

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

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Mr. Joseph Carter Corbin, founder of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

As a proud graduate of Arkansas Mechanical and Normal College, now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the dedication of a headstone on the grave site of our founder and first president, Professor Joseph Carter Corbin.

The Bible says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish;” and all of us who revere and appreciate the history of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff owe a debt of gratitude to our fellow alumna, Ms. Gladys Turner Finney, who thought of the idea, did the research, and communicated with other alumni across the country and brought the idea to fruition. The final resting place of Joseph Carter was recently discovered in an unmarked grave in Forest Home Cemetery in Forest Park, Illinois, which I represent as a Member of Congress.

Professor Corbin died January 9, 1911, in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. He was interred at the Waldheim Cemetery in Forest Park near his wife, Mary Jane Corbin, and two sons, John W. Corbin and William H. Corbin. The cemetery, known at that time as Waldheim German Cemetery, is located at 863 South Des Plaines Avenue in Forest Park, Illinois.

Mr. Corbin was born in Chillicothe, Ohio, on March 26, 1833, to free parents, William and Susan Corbin. He entered

Ohio University at Athens, Ohio, in 1850, when he was 17, after having been home-schooled. He earned a bachelor’s degree in art. He also earned two master’s degrees from Ohio University in 1856 and 1889.

He later moved to Little Rock, Arkansas, joined the Republican Party, and became a leader. He quickly rose and became secretary of the State convention and was elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction, where he laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Branch Normal College. It finally started, and he became its founder and principal for 27 years, from 1875 to 1902.

A leader in the public education movement in Arkansas, Professor Corbin became the principal of Merrill High School in 1902. He and fellow educator, R.C. Childress, founded Teachers of Negro Youth in Arkansas, which became the first State colored teachers association. Professor Corbin was its first president.

Compared with educators Booker T. Washington and Horace Mann, Professor Corbin was thought to be one of the most highly educated individuals of his time as a scholarly graduate of Ohio University. During his tenure at Branch Normal, he worked tirelessly to maintain an adequate physical plant and academic program. The student population grew from 7 students to 241 students by 1894, when Arkansas graduated its first African American student.

As beneficiaries of his work, we hold Professor Corbin and his legacy in high esteem. An institution which started with 7 students is now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff offering master’s degrees, bachelor’s degrees, and doctorate degrees. We owe Joseph Carter Corbin, our first president and the founder of a now great institution, a debt of gratitude and thank him for his work.

PASS A RESPONSIBLE FARM BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the importance of getting a farm bill done this year. Growing up on a farm in South Dakota, I know how volatile the agriculture industry certainly is. Our producers will invest in seed; they will fertilize the land; and they will put it in the ground in the spring, oftentimes in unfavorable weather, in the hope that that fall they will come back and be able to pick something up and have something to show for it in the fall. The crops that are grown provide food not just for South Dakota, but for our Nation and for our world.

South Dakotans understand that our weather can be extreme and it can be unpredictable. It can also vary a lot from year to year. We have certainly seen that situation this year. Look at

what we have witnessed lately. We have gone from extreme droughts in the Midwest to now blizzards in April. For agriculture producers, these extremes are more than an inconvenience. Whether it is an extended drought that dries out crops or a blizzard that endangers a herd of cattle, weather disasters can mean the difference between a family operation that is able to make it through another year or a family operation that ends forever.

When faced with weather-related disasters, I know that it is essential for our farmers and ranchers to have immediate assistance to keep their operations running. We have a national security interest in being able to produce our own food in this country. The instance we depend on another country to feed our people is the instance that we completely let them control us and our future. A farm bill not only provides a safety net for us, it keeps us safe. We need to keep our farmers on the land in good times and in bad times.

Budgeting for these programs through the farm bill process is much more responsible than doing what has been done in the past, such as passing large, ad hoc disaster assistance packages, which is what Congress often ends up doing year after year if these programs are not in place and are not funded. Often these disaster programs could be spent at a deficit level rather than responsibly being budgeted for.

One of the situations we don't talk about very often is how the dynamics have changed in the farming industry. It is simply not possible for farmers and ranchers to continue to operate without having access to credit. The only way they have access to credit a lot of times is because of dependence on crop insurance and somewhat of a farm safety net.

Next week, the House Agriculture Committee plans to mark up the farm bill. We need this House to act. We need them to get a farm bill done, one that will support both rural and urban America. We cannot accept another extension this year. We must pass a long-term bill to give certainty to our producers and to guarantee our Nation's food supply.

MATTIE RIPKOWSKI—TEXAS MOTHER

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Sunday is Mother's Day where we honor our Nation's mothers. My mom is still alive. I got to know my grandmothers, both of them, until they died in their nineties, and my three daughters all have children.

But I want to talk about a mother that most Americans probably have never ever heard of. Her name was Mattie Ripkowski. Let me tell you a little bit about her and her family.

She was a first-generation American-born Polish immigrant. Back in the 1800s, the Polish community came into Texas through the Port of Galveston. They settled there while Texas was an independent country. In fact, some Poles fought at the Battle of San Jacinto where Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836.

□ 1040

Mattie Olbrich was born in 1896 in Texas. At the age of 17, she married Stash Ripkowski—both newlyweds—another small-town guy from New Waverly, Texas. They started raising a family, Mattie and Stash. And after several years, this was their family. Yes, Mattie Ripkowski had 16 children—4 daughters and 12 sons. They were all born by natural childbirth with a midwife, except one. This whole family lived in southeast Texas on a small, 200-acre farm near Dayton, Texas.

Mattie—the mother, the wife—made sure that during the Depression all the kids never went hungry. She taught them the basics of life: true grit, a work ethic, a belief in the Almighty. They worked hard, everything from picking cotton to tending to animals to hauling corn. And every child was expected to do their work on the farm, which was self-sufficient.

When two of the Ripkowski boys got to be in high school, they were excellent football players. And you know, Mr. Speaker, Texas is known for its football teams all the way back to the 1800s. Two of them were so good that the local high school football coach, who knew that they had to work on the farm, had the school hire two farmers to take the sons' place and work the farm. Then the two high school football stars could play for Dayton High School. Dayton is a small Texas town that loves football. The 5,500 people there that go to Friday night football, the stadium seats more than the entire town population.

But anyway, back to the Ripkowskis. They never missed a meal. In fact, Mattie was so adamant about family that they all ate together three times a day. Now, can you imagine preparing a table three times a day for 18 people—16 of them kids and 12 of them sons?

As the Depression ended, World War I came. And as World War II came, Mattie, having taught her kids service to America, all 12 of her sons joined the United States military. They served in all branches of the military. They served either in World War II or Korea, or both.

Every night, Mattie would write one of them a letter. She would say the Rosary every night for all 12. She would pray for all of her sons. Miraculously, all 12 of her sons who went to war for America came back. There has never been another family with that many sons from the same parents who joined the United States military. She instilled in them those important values

of country, God, and family. The Ripkowski family is quite a remarkable clan of Texans.

Mrs. Ripkowski—Mattie, as they called her—her kids grew up to all marry. She knew all of their spouses and many of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The fruits of Mattie Ripkowski's labor produced honest, hardworking, God-fearing patriots.

One test of motherhood, Mr. Speaker, is how a mother's kids turn out. Well, Mattie passed the test 16 times with her 16 children. They all turned out to be wonderful people. In fact, six of them are still alive. I had the opportunity recently at a dedication where we honored a Vietnam veteran who received the Medal of Honor by naming a post office for him. Some of her kids came to that ceremony. The youngest, Anna Lee Campbell, who is now 80, and I talked about her family, about Mattie, about growing up with this remarkable woman. And she showed me numerous photographs of their family.

I was also there with one of the sons, Mike, who talked about their family, Polish immigrants, and how they have all turned out to be successful and how they fought for America. Before the conversation was over with Mike I asked him, "What did you call your mother all those many years?" He said, "Well, of course I called her mama, and I also called her ma'am." No kidding.

Remarkable lady, Mattie Ripkowski. We honor her and all of America's mothers this Sunday for their lives and dedication to motherhood.

And that's just the way it is.

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 44 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

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Eternal God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

Once again we come to You to ask wisdom, patience, peace, and understanding for the Members of this people's House.

We ask discernment for the Members, that they might judge anew their adherence to principle, conviction, and commitment, lest they slide uncharitably toward an inability to listen to one another and work cooperatively to solve the important issues of our day.