

Congress earlier this year. The CBO now projects a deficit of \$642 billion, which is \$200 billion less than projected just 3 months ago, the lowest level since 2008. Just 4 years ago, the deficit was over 10 percent of our GDP. This year, it's projected to fall below 5 percent—half of what it was just 4 years ago.

Now, I understand that this news may not fit neatly within the narrative of our friends on the other side of the aisle, who, just as they did in the summer of 2011 unfortunately, tried just last week to manufacture yet another debt crisis where none exists.

I would note that it was only a few months ago that we worked together in a bipartisan fashion to suspend the debt limit. On the heels of our New Year's Day compromise on the tax portions of the fiscal cliff, my Republican colleagues recognized the dangers of yet another debt showdown on the markets and on the possibility of downgrading U.S. creditworthiness; but rather than build on that rare moment of bipartisan comity and work with Democrats on a balanced plan to put our Nation back on the path of fiscal responsibility, House Republicans doubled down. They pushed ahead with their "cut spending at any cost" agenda. They pushed through a continuing resolution that baked in the harmful cuts of sequestration, which is a self-inflicted wound on our economy.

Ironically, House Republicans just last week pushed through on a party-line vote a bill that claims to protect the full faith and credit of the United States when, in reality, it would only place it more at risk by suggesting we won't be good for our debt. Furthermore, many of my Republican colleagues have relied on this debt crisis research done by two economists, Messrs. Reinhart and Rogoff, who have suggested that high levels of public debt always lead to lower rates of economic growth. That research has been the foundation of Republican austerity proposals in America, including the last three versions of the Ryan budget, which decimate public investments in our communities and the economy in the name of deficit reduction. It turns out the researchers aggregated the data incorrectly. They couldn't even read the Excel sheets properly, and that dramatically shifted the findings to show growth for high debt countries was more than 2 percent higher than they said it was, and it turns out there is no magical threshold of 90 percent that always leads to, in fact, economic contraction. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

Raising the debt limit is not a license to spend more money. It simply ensures that America will be good for its current debts and obligations. We've been good for that since Alexander Hamilton established the U.S. Treasury in George Washington's first Cabinet. The bipartisan agreement to suspend the debt ceiling expires this weekend, but with this latest forecast, the

CBO now says that that limit probably won't be reached until October or November of this year. Most news reports suggest this will reduce the political pressure to achieve a bipartisan deal on further reducing the deficit in a balanced way. I'd argue the urgency still remains and that this window of time presents us with a perfect opportunity for bipartisan negotiations to resume without the specter of that sort of debt ceiling limit over our heads immediately.

I am dismayed that my Republican friends continue to shun their own party's heritage for making strategic investments in infrastructure and innovation in favor of a blind adherence to slashing government spending with no acknowledgment for the consequences. I've consistently said that Federal spending must be reduced, but I've also said that it must be done in tandem with maintaining strategic Federal investments in things that create jobs, like R&D, infrastructure, innovation. I would suggest that my Republican friends look no further than the GDP growth from the last two quarters, showing it's not the Federal debt but their meat-ax approach to cutting those Federal investments that, in fact, has created what drag there is on the U.S. economy.

The last time Republicans played games with the debt ceiling we registered the lowest monthly job growth in 3 years; the stock market tumbled; and the S&P, for the first time ever, downgraded U.S. debt. The latest jobs numbers show we've been adding 208,000 jobs a month on average since November, prompting a surge in confidence reflected by the market's climb to record levels.

I implore my friends on the other side of the aisle to use this time to work with us on a balanced approach to deficit reduction and economic growth.

□ 1020

LIGHTS OUT AT OUR MILITARY BASES

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

Mr. TURNER. Madam Speaker, it is literally "lights out" at our military bases.

Next to me is a photo that ran the other weekend in my hometown newspaper, which shows darkened hallways at the largest Air Force base in the world, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. There wasn't a lack of power at the base that day, but a lack of leadership here in Washington. The lights were out because the Senate and the President have failed to take up the issue of sequestration.

Sequestration is having a devastating effect on the readiness and the morale of our servicemembers and civilian workforce. Imagine going to work and the President feels that you

are so insignificant that you don't even deserve to have the lights on.

The President promised the American people during his reelection campaign that this would not happen, but it has. It's time for the President to come to the table with a solution to this issue before our military is irreparably impacted.

GUN VIOLENCE

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

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Madam Speaker, by now you've all heard of the terrible shooting that took place on Sunday during the Mother's Day parade in New Orleans. Like all Americans, I was saddened to once again see a joyous public event marred by gun violence.

Yet, as the Mother's Day shooting unfolded in New Orleans, I was struck by another lesser known story about the toll of gun violence that was playing out more than 100 miles away in Chicago. It is the story of love and loss told by the mothers of those killed by gun violence who were facing Mother's Day without their children, perhaps for the first time.

A group of these mothers gathered at a memorial outside a Chicago church to mourn and remember their children. As a mother who was blessed to spend the day with my children, their pain and anguish is unimaginable.

For every mass shooting that grabs the headlines, there are dozens more that take place on America's streets every day that are leaving a lost generation in their wake. And yet, in the national debate about gun violence, these everyday killings, this slow-motion massacre is often overlooked. And so are the mothers who are left behind.

Just as the mothers who wept for their children in Newtown, these Chicago mothers are also the faces of the aftermath of gun violence. Because whether your child is shot in the classroom or on a street corner or in a park, your hopes and dreams for them were the same, and so is the agony of your loss.

It is for these mothers—Clara Allen, Tanya Butler, Angela Blakely, and others like them—that I raise my voice and will continue to raise my voice in memory of their children to implore my colleagues in Congress to pass reasonable and responsible gun legislation. We must act now to end the senseless scourge of killings in our streets due to gun violence.

I know there are those who think that new gun laws are not the solution. I say they're looking at the wrong equation. Commonsense gun restrictions are part of a multipronged approach to stemming gun violence that should also include increased access to mental health services and better community and social supports. It will take a village to save these children, our children.

Passing commonsense gun legislation is a key step in the process by helping to keep guns out of the wrong hands. We must take a stand for these children and their mothers and send the message that we hear them, we care about them, and that their lives matter.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Madam Speaker, later on this afternoon, the House will vote for the 37th time to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives has already been on record saying that the Affordable Care Act is the law of the land. So it's just not clear to me why we are wasting the time and the treasure of the American people on another futile legislative fantasy.

In fact, it's a legislative fantasy that has cost the American people more than \$50 million. If, in fact, the Affordable Care Act were to be repealed, it would do even more damage, as independent economists have estimated that a repeal would add to the Federal deficit by more than \$100 billion.

It's often been said that the classic definition of "insanity" is doing the same thing over and over and over again but somehow expecting a different result.

Barack Obama was elected President in 2008. The Affordable Care Act was signed into law in 2010. The Supreme Court, with the Chief Justice voting in the majority, held that the Affordable Care Act was constitutional in 2012. A few months later, President Barack Obama was reelected in an electoral college landslide. Yet, later on this afternoon, we're voting to repeal the Affordable Care Act for the 37th time—over and over and over again. It's a classic definition of legislative insanity, as if the 37th vote is going to be any different, will yield any different results than the previous 36 where we've wasted the taxpayer dollars of the American people.

The Affordable Care Act is the law of the land, and that's a good thing. It's a good thing because over the next decade more than 30 million Americans who otherwise would not have had health care insurance will be insured. It seems to me that that's a good thing.

The Affordable Care Act makes sure that insurance companies cannot deny medical coverage for preexisting conditions. It seems to me that that's a good thing.

The Affordable Care Act provides small businesses with a 35 percent tax credit, which will enable these small businesses to continue to grow and to flourish. It seems to me that that's a good thing.

The Affordable Care Act allows young Americans who are just starting

out to remain on the insurance plan of their parents until the age of 26, giving them a real chance to get themselves started in their pursuit of the American Dream. I'm new, but it seems to me that that's a good thing.

Yet later on this afternoon, for the 37th time, we're engaging in another futile legislative fantasy.

There are a couple of other things that we could be doing. We could be dealing with the sequester, \$85 billion in random cuts that are costing the economy more than 500,000 jobs, but we're not.

We could be debating the American Jobs Act, trying to put the people of this great country back to work and stimulate the economy, but we're not.

We could be trying to get a budget, go to conference, create some certainty for industry and the American people, but we're not.

Madam Speaker, I'm hopeful that after this vote is taken, we can finally come to the reality that the Affordable Care Act is the law of the land, it's good for the American people, and we should get back to doing things that will advance prosperity in this great country.

□ 1030

REPEAL PRESIDENT'S HEALTH CARE LAW

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

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Madam Speaker, I rise this morning to speak about an issue that is of great concern to my constituents back home in Pennsylvania, and it's the matter of the implementation of the President's Affordable Care Act, the implementation which some members of the President's party have described as a coming train wreck. Madam Speaker, that train wreck has arrived. This massive undertaking of enacting such a broad, confusing law has only highlighted the concerns that I and many of my constituents back home have had with this law and what it means for our small businesses and families in Pennsylvania.

However, a new concern—possibly greater than the idea of government-run health care—has presented itself over the last several days with the revelation that the Internal Revenue Service has been targeting law-abiding Americans simply because of their beliefs. The IRS now wants to know what we think and what books we read.

Madam Speaker, the President's health care law is largely a tax bill. It contains at least 20 new or higher taxes on American families and businesses. That makes it the biggest change to an already-confusing Tax Code in over two decades. And with the implementation of this massive tax bill comes the IRS' new role in running it.

By putting politics ahead of fairness, the IRS has violated the trust of the

American people at a time when the administration is loading it up with more responsibility and more power. Under health care reform, the IRS will gather extensive information about the financial resources and health insurance status of all Americans. The expansion of the IRS' power will include hundreds of billions of dollars in new taxes, the hiring of thousands of enforcement agents, and a tower of new rules and regulations. I'm deeply concerned with the ability of the agency and the resolve of the agency to lawfully manage this significant undertaking with discretion and with accountability.

While the agency reported that new rules are in place to ensure that this type of situation never happens again, like many Americans, I question why this disturbing trend was ever allowed to happen in the first place. The President's health care law does too much to infringe on the rights of the American people and swells the size and scope of an already bloated Federal Government, which has once again proven incapable of acting responsibly.

Today, I urge Members of Congress to fully repeal the health care law and, in doing so, take the first step to replacing it with commonsense solutions for all Americans—like allowing people to purchase health coverage across State lines; stopping frivolous lawsuits against our doctors; clearing individuals to receive tax credits just like large businesses; and letting Americans keep control of the health care that works best for them.

RIGHT TO VOTE AMENDMENT

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

Mr. POCAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to talk about the most fundamental right we as Americans have as citizens of this great country, the right to vote. The right to vote is not just fundamental; it is the right that preserves all of our other liberties that we as Americans hold dear. In fact, this right is so fundamental that most Americans, understandably, assume it is already enshrined in the Constitution. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, most Americans would be wrong.

While the right to vote is inherent throughout our founding document, and there are amendments prohibiting discrimination, nothing in the Constitution explicitly guarantees our right to vote. We, as Americans, possess no affirmative right to vote.

Why is this important? Because without a constitutional provision, courts have upheld burdensome registration requirements, voter-identification laws, and reduced early voting opportunities in States across the country.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, just this year alone, more than 80 restrictive laws have been introduced in more than 30 States. From New York to Washington, legislation