

head—afflict us in this country and around the world.

By injecting additional partisanship in this way, Republicans would be taking a further step away from compromise. We need compromise. Each of us in this body understands we represent a certain segment of society, but not everybody agrees with everything we believe. Therefore, if we are to act on behalf of the country in a responsible, effective fashion, it's necessary to compromise.

Mr. Speaker, the sequester is real and is rapidly approaching. It is not a rational approach to deficit reduction. Even Republican Leader CANTOR, as I said, admitted on "Meet the Press" on Sunday about the sequester, and I quote the Republican leader:

I don't want to live with the sequester.

Let me repeat that.

I do not want to live with the sequester. I want reductions in spending that make sense.

These indiscriminate reductions don't make sense. That's what Mr. POMPEO was welcoming: indiscriminate cuts that do not make sense. We need serious action in Congress to deal with the sequester, and that action cannot wait. But there's been nothing on the floor in this Congress to deal with that sequester—nothing. Not a single piece of legislation has been brought forth by the majority.

I used to be the majority leader, Mr. Speaker, and I had the power to bring legislation forward, and I would do it. I'm no longer the majority leader. The majority leader, notwithstanding this quote that these indiscriminate reductions don't make sense, has not brought an alternative to this floor.

Democrats are ready to make tough choices, and we're ready to work with Republicans to do what is necessary to solve this problem of our deficits in a balanced way. We must reduce spending, but we also need to raise revenues. Every bipartisan commission, everyone has said the only way you're going to solve the arithmetic is to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to yield back the balance of my time so that my colleagues have an opportunity to say their piece, but I lament the fact that we're going home next week. We ought to be here working to avoid what the majority leader says are indiscriminate cuts that are not the way to do business. Yet, we rush headlong to do that.

□ 1010

I hope the Senate acts. I hope the Senate passes a bill that will be rational, will get us out of this conundrum of a sequester that nobody should want, and that when it does, Majority Leader CANTOR and Speaker BOEHNER will bring it to the floor and let us vote. And if you don't like it, vote against it. But let the American people know where we stand.

Let us avoid the sequester. Let us get ourselves on a fiscally balanced path, but let us do so responsibly.

NATIONAL CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as cochair of the bipartisan House Career and Technical Education Caucus in order to recognize February as National Career and Technical Education Month. Career and technical education programs continue to evolve in order to ensure that workers are prepared to hold jobs in high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand career fields like engineering, information technology, health care, and advanced manufacturing for the 21st century.

During this time of record-high unemployment, career and technical education programs provide a lifeline for the underemployed who look to begin new careers alongside young adults just starting out of high school in the rapidly evolving job market.

Career and technical education, while historically undervalued, helps tackle critical workforce shortages and provides an opportunity for America to remain globally competitive while also engaging students in practical, real-world applications of academics coupled with hands-on work experience.

Now, as we move toward fiscal year 2014, I join with a bipartisan group of my colleagues in not only recognizing the importance of maintaining these Federal investments for our country's future but also in saying thank you to the countless men and women who make these programs possible—the faculty, the teachers and the instructors within our career and technical education schools throughout this great Nation.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Career and Technical Education Month, I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me and my good friend, Representative LANGEVIN from Rhode Island, the cochair of the House Career and Technical Education Caucus, as we continue our work together of the bipartisan Career and Technical Education Caucus.

The goals of this caucus are to provide promising futures for individuals who are seeking opportunities for work within this great Nation, and for employers, many of whom are in situations, despite record high unemployment for the longest sustained time since the Great Depression, of having great-paying jobs that are sitting open and available where they can't find a qualified, trained workforce and, quite frankly, for America, whose competitiveness into the future will depend on how well we make these investments.

THE SEQUESTER AND AN OLIVE BRANCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. We had a historic occasion last evening, but I rise to comment on a number of issues. I first want to acknowledge and pay tribute to a Texan who was buried yesterday in a tragic incident, Chris Kyle, a Navy SEAL who had served this country, loved this country, and came back to his family and children and took as his cause to help serve troubled veterans. As he was doing so, along with his friend, Chad, one of those troubled veterans shot both him and his friend.

What a tragedy. I think it is important to note the thousands who mourned him and the procession that took him to his burial ground yesterday and to say thank you for not only serving this Nation, but coming home to care about those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

That leads me to bring up this whole question of sequester. In my own city of Houston, I was able to, some 4 years ago, establish the first post-traumatic stress disorder center in a hospital that was not a veterans hospital. The Riverside General Hospital for a period of years continued serving our post-traumatic stress disorder veterans in a small, attentive setting where they could sit with others who were troubled as well. I've become a champion of the needs and the purpose of post-traumatic stress disorder medical services and beg and cry to the Department of Veterans Affairs and to the Pentagon from where this grant came. We cannot abandon our soldiers who have served us well. And I would hope that the grant for this hospital will be continued because Texas has been known to have the largest number of returning Iraq and Afghanistan troops.

Mr. Speaker, that speaks loudly to the question of sequester. I'm delighted that the President last evening could not have offered more olive branches on economic reform and tax reform. His idea is that we can do this budget together, not a sequester and not a self-inflicted wound, which is what we did to ourselves, but, more importantly, to talk about innovation and growth. This is something that I've spoken about over and over again as a member formerly of the Science Committee and now Homeland Security.

Where is America's genius? Right outside the beltway. Why are we dividing ourselves along Democrats and Republicans, refusing to put revenue alongside of cuts? Mr. Speaker, we're at the bone, almost, and sequester that is across-the-board cuts will literally destroy us and put us in a recession. All the talking heads that are suggesting that the President was not bipartisan and how there was nothing that they heard, well, Mr. Speaker, may I ask them to take some cotton out of their ears. Because in actuality, the President extended his hand of friendship.

We want to get down to work. We can pass comprehensive immigration reform. We can pass in tribute and recognition of Sandy Hook, Hadiya, and

Aurora and our Congresswoman, our former colleague, Congresswoman Giffords, and Virginia Tech and many places, and Lone Star College in my district and the tragedy at the University of Maryland that just occurred in the last 24 hours. People are mourning. We have to stop gun violence. So I don't want to hear the fact that the President is divisive. The President is leading, and he has led well.

The American people are listening. When are our friends on the other side of the aisle going to listen? And when are the American people going to raise up beyond the maze of television commentary and see that your voices can be heard? If you raise up literally in the houses of worship and civic clubs and say that Congress must do its job for our soldiers who are coming home and for those children who are the future and for the opportunity for growth, you bring down the debt by growing the economy and innovating.

Congratulations, Mr. President, for the research and manufacturing centers—15. Let's do more of them. I hope that we can get summer youth jobs, a program of private and public cooperation. When does a youth take up a gun? They take it up when they don't have a summer job and when they don't have an opportunity. So I want to challenge this body to be the kind of Lincoln-esque attitude, as yesterday was the official birthday of President Lincoln, February 12. And although it was a tragic time in our history, I can assure you that it showed the greatest promise of America when people could come together and do something great. I stand here as a freed slave because this Congress came together. Are we going to be able to do it today to free America?

THE DEBT CEILING

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, last month we passed a bill that suspends the debt ceiling until May. I voted for that bill because I didn't want to plunge the credit rating of this country or have the economy plunge into another recession. But that vote was just a short-term fix in what has been a series of short-term fixes. And short-term fixes no longer cut it when it comes to running the world's biggest economy.

Instead of thoughtful, long-term planning, we have contented ourselves with political sideshows. We've budgeted with continuing resolutions and held endless partisan committee hearings aimed at dismantling so-called job-killing legislation like the Clean Air Act. We voted 33 times to repeal all or part of the President's health care plan, and we attempted to balance the Federal Government's budget by zeroing out Planned Parenthood. That's not careful planning. That's tired political dogma.

□ 1020

In a famous speech about the Vietnam war, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "We are confronted by the fierce urgency of now."

We again find ourselves in a conflict that threatens the political fabric of our Nation, the integrity of our institutions. We face a mountain of debt. We lack a comprehensive approach to climate change, energy, transportation, Medicare, Social Security, defense spending, immigration reform, gun violence, and even our postal system.

We need to find that urgency to get started on creating a sensible energy policy that confronts climate change and reduces our reliance on foreign oil.

We need that urgency to formulate a transportation plan so that States can address their crumbling infrastructure and local businesses can get back to work.

We need that urgency of now to reconfigure our security policy, making sensible cuts and fashioning a force that prepares us for conflicts of the future and not the past.

We need the urgency of now to make sensible changes to Social Security and Medicare to ensure the vitality of these programs for generations to come.

That urgency of now will reward us with more than a sensible energy policy, good roads, a smarter defense department, and sustainable social welfare system. We will be rewarded with a stable economy and reduced market volatility.

We cannot wait to act. We are borrowing 42 cents for every dollar we spend. We have to take sensible steps to begin reducing our debt without stepping on a fragile economic recovery. We have to take steps that are big, bold, and bipartisan. That's why I signed onto the Cooper-LaTourette bipartisan budget agreement that would have saved \$4 trillion over 10 years, and that's why my office authored a comprehensive plan to reinvent government and save taxpayers \$2 trillion over the next 10 years.

No, government is not perfect. But I believe we need to reinvent government, not eliminate it. Or, as Grover Norquist says, make "it small enough to drown in the bathtub."

Government is important. The heroes of 9/11 were government workers. Government teaches our kids; it protects us, keeps us safe, helps keep our air clean, and protects the less fortunate.

The Tea Party has this wrong. The objective should not be to destroy government through reactive draconian cuts; rather, we should collectively rethink and renew this institution that touches all of our lives.

I recognize that not everyone I serve would agree on how to cut defense and adjust social programs to make them sustainable over time. That's the whole point. You have to compromise. Sadly, that's not in vogue these days. My colleague from Chicago, Congressman BOBBY RUSH, said it best when he

observed, "In Congress, the view of compromise is that the other guy gives in."

It simply can't be that way. Until we end the bickering, political preening, and brinksmanship, the deadlock that has paralyzed our political process will continue.

As Lincoln said, "It is not can any of us imagine better, but can we do better?"

And those words are true today. We have to abandon the dogmas of yesterday to fulfill the promise of tomorrow.

"We cannot escape history," he said. "We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves."

Despite this immense challenge that confronts us, I believe we will prevail. If we can summon that urgency of now, if we can end the bitter partisanship and poor planning; we can solve our Nation's problems and make a brighter day for ourselves and generations to come.

FUTURE OF THE FMLA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I read with interest Majority Leader CANTOR's speech last week on the majority's latest relaunch of the House GOP's attempt to identify with the middle class.

Leader CANTOR said that the House will pursue an agenda of health, happiness, and prosperity for more Americans and their families. He went on to identify a very important problem for millions of Americans: how to balance work and family.

Unfortunately, that was the end of the relaunch. Because to address this problem, the majority leader proposed an old scheme that actually takes away workers' rights to overtime pay in exchange for employer-controlled comp time. This scheme has been bouncing around the Big Business wish list for decades. It's a twofer for Big Business: workers get less predictable schedules, and they earn less pay.

Leader CANTOR's prescription for what ails working families is to administer more poison. It's to give a working parent less control over her life and less money in her pocket. This plan does not give workers flexibility. This plan is about giving corporations another way to pay workers less.

That's how you help working families? I don't think so.

If the Republican majority party wants to seriously talk about healthy, prosperous, and happy American families, then they should help to create real opportunities to help families to be healthy, prosperous, and happy.

Here's one serious way to help working families: give workers real flexibility on the job and the ability to take advantage of paid time off.

Last week was the 20th anniversary of the Family and Medical Leave Act.