

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.

Back in 1993, this law was a big step forward for America. It guarantees workers job-protected leave when they need time off for family or health reasons, for a newborn child, to take care of a sick child or spouse. It's been used more than 100 million times over the last 20 years. Workers got to take off time to care for a newborn or sick spouse or to get an operation without fear of losing their job.

With the Family and Medical Leave Act, our country made it a priority to give workers the ability to balance the demands of work and family. It made the healthy development of babies, healthy families, and healthy workplaces a priority. It was a remarkable accomplishment at the time, but it was intended to be a first step, not the last.

Today, only half of all workers can take advantage of the Family and Medical Leave Act. The rest are ineligible because of their part-time status or who their employer is. Half of all workers don't have job protections to take time off to welcome a new baby to the family. They can't take time off to help an elderly parent without fear of losing their job.

Here's another serious idea to help working families: Extend the family and medical leave protection to all workers. And furthermore, let's guarantee paid leave under the law. The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act only guarantees unpaid job-protected leave. Too many families simply cannot afford to miss a day or two of work. That's why Congress should finally deliver on the paid leave that our Nation's workers deserve.

I recently heard from Matari Jones from San Antonio, Texas. While she said that the family and medical leave was a godsend when her children were born, taking unpaid time off to care for her newborns to heal from a complicated delivery was a significant financial struggle. Unfortunately, Matari was not alone. A working woman—or any worker, for that matter—shouldn't have to choose between family members they love or the paycheck they need.

California, the District of Columbia, Connecticut, Washington State, and New Jersey have taken steps for paid family and medical leave and sick leave. The policy is good for families, and it is good for business.

The least-paid workers in our society are also least likely to be able to afford a day off when they are sick. Many of those workers are behind the lunch counter or taking care of our older family members.

If Leader CANTOR and this House are truly serious about helping working families, then let's deliver on the full promise of workplace leave policies that properly value our Nation's families. Extend family and medical leave benefits to all workers, and look for ways to guarantee workers' access to paid family and medical leave and to sick leave.

There are other steps Congress should take to ensure that workers can

share the prosperity that they're helping to create. Let's make sure that women are paid based upon their worth by passing the Paycheck Fairness Act. Let's raise the minimum wage that will boost the economy by putting money into the pockets of millions of working people.

So I would say to my friend from Virginia, the majority leader, if he is serious about helping working families, then join with us and let's enact policies that put these families first in both the workplace and in their homes.

PRESERVING 6-DAY POSTAL SERVICE

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

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, the Postmaster General's announcement this past week that he intends to eliminate Saturday mail delivery is of great concern to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

Beyond the fact that such a move completely disregards congressional intent, it also sets the Postal Service on a downward spiral that will undercut any opportunity to revitalize it and put it in a more sound financial footing for future generations. Whether it's the financial documents for a small business, a prescription refill for an elderly resident, or a birthday card for a loved one, Saturday mail delivery is important to every person in every community in America.

The United States Postal Service is an American institution dating back to the founding of our Nation when it was enshrined in article I of the Constitution, and Saturday delivery has been part of that tradition for the past 150 years. The men and women who don the blue uniform of the USPS are visible in every street in every community.

□ 1030

As a recent Washington Post story recounted, mail carriers have been known to report crimes, detect gas leaks and check on the elderly. Many serve the same routes for years, taking note of the comings and goings in their neighborhoods and offering an extra set of watchful eyes. They are, in many ways, the first responders in many of these communities.

Eliminating Saturday mail service would result in the layoffs of more than 50,000 letter carriers. Job losses in the public sector have already been a drag on our economy for the past 2 years, and this only exacerbates that problem. The supposed savings would clearly be offset if these unemployed middle class workers would then need Federal assistance to make ends meet.

Upon closer inspection, the economic case for eliminating Saturday delivery is specious at best. The Postmaster General claims it will save \$2 billion, but that does not include the lost revenue or the broader economic ripple ef-

fect. A confidential report commissioned by the Postmaster General just last year showed that a 7.7 percent decline in mail volume, such as going from 6 to 5 days would trigger, would actually result in a \$5.2 billion loss in revenue. It's little wonder that he deep-sixed his own study.

Within the broader economy, 8.4 million jobs are supported by the private and public mailing industries. That represents 6 percent of all American jobs. For every job in the Postal Service, there are 10 in the private sector, and three out of four of those jobs are dependent on existing delivery infrastructure by the Postal Service, including 6-day mail. Last year, the combined industries supported \$1.3 trillion in sales revenue, or 8.6 percent of our entire economy.

While first-class mail volume has been trending downward for the past decade, the Postal Service is not maximizing those lines of business that are showing growth, such as package delivery. Growth in online retail sales, spurred by Cyber Monday, for example, pushed USPS package delivery revenue up by 4.7 percent, or \$154 million, in the first quarter of this year alone. The Postal Service has not been able to capitalize on those opportunities largely because Congress, itself, stifled innovation with the 2006 legislation that it passed. Unlike its international counterparts, the Postal Service is prohibited by law from co-locating with such comparable businesses as banks and coffee shops, which actually offer a lot of revenue in the European postal services. We even restrict how the Postal Service can competitively market its low-priced services.

Of course, the most egregious burden imposed on the Postal Service by Congress is the outrageous pre-funding requirement for future retiree health benefits. Under current law, it must pre-fund 75 years at 100 percent of those benefits in a 10-year window. No other entity on the planet has such an onerous requirement but the Postal Service, and we did it—Congress did it—in 2006. In fact, \$11.1 billion of the \$15 billion-plus loss last year for the Postal Service is directly attributable to that burden.

That brings us back to the audacity of last week's announcement by the Postmaster General. The Postal Service has routinely testified before Congress, requesting the authority to go from six to five, but congressional intent on the preservation of 6-day mail delivery has been clear for 30 years. Even the Presidential budget request recognizes the need for Congress proactively to grant such authority. It cannot be grabbed unilaterally. The Postmaster General acknowledged he was on shaky ground—and indeed he is—in making this announcement. I, along with Representative GRAVES, have asked him to provide what, if any, legal justification he relied on to make this momentous decision, and we've asked the Attorney General and the