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STOP DEVASTATING SEQUESTER

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, President Obama had a chance last night to lay out a plan for smart, strategic savings to replace his devastating sequester. We were all watching; we were all listening. We want to work together on this. But instead of laying out a vision for how government can avoid his sequester—his sequester—by living within its means, the President decided to make the impractical case for passing the buck onto taxpayers through even more taxes.

House Republicans have known all along the President's sequester was a terrible plan. We gave the Supercommittee a chance to do the right thing, and when they didn't, we led.

Twice since last summer we have passed legislation that would preserve savings while completely removing the threat sequester poses to American jobs and national security. The President didn't join the conversation until recently.

March 1 is coming. Will he or won't he put forth a credible plan to stop the damage of his sequester? Republicans have responded. He and our friends on the other side of the aisle have not.

OPPOSING SEQUESTRATION

(Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the huge education cuts that are in the sequester. Massive sequestration is an inefficient way to make spending decisions that affect millions of Americans. However, this is what we agreed to, and the House majority has not had an open and frank debate on how this Chamber can reduce our national deficit while helping our students and hardworking educational professionals succeed.

On education alone, sequestration will reduce funding for the Department of Education and Head Start by an estimated \$4.8 billion. Department of Education funding will return to pre-2003 levels, impacting between 8.9 million and 9.4 million students. Potential job losses in the education field are projected to be between 74,600 and 80,500. These cuts will come as schools and colleges enroll more students and the cost of services increases.

I call on Members on both sides of the aisle to join me in finding a better way to reduce our deficit while protecting our children, students, and educational professionals.

STRENGTHENING THE MIDDLE CLASS

(Mr. CICILLINE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CICILLINE. Madam Speaker, last night President Obama outlined a bold vision for his second term in office and spoke about the number one issue facing our country: jobs. The President understands that if we want to get our country back on the right track, we have to invest in those areas that are essential to growing our economy and strengthening the middle class.

With families all across America, and particularly in my home State of Rhode Island facing tremendous challenges, it's critical that our friends on the other side of the aisle put aside partisan gamesmanship and start working together on the commonsense goals that President Obama outlined: reinvigorating manufacturing; investing in our infrastructure; making education a priority; and developing new sources of clean energy, as well as a long-term strategy to deal with our debt.

It's true that Republicans and Democrats have a choice. We can either work to find common ground and move our country forward as a whole, or we can continue the partisan fighting that has created gridlock in Washington.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find common ground and real solutions so we can put our country back to work and address the serious challenges facing our Nation.

REPEAL AND REPLACE DANGEROUS SEQUESTER

(Mr. CARTWRIGHT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Madam Speaker, we have before us this question of allowing indiscriminate and harmful cuts to our armed services and other vital national governmental works.

I agree we must address the debt and the deficit, but it's not a new problem, and we have fixed it before. Right now, our national debt stands at about 105 percent of GDP, gross domestic product. In 1946, it was close to 122 percent, and we fixed it—not by austerity, not by slash and burn; we fixed it by investing in America. We built our national highway system. We made our armed services the envy of the world. We even rebuilt Europe and Japan. We went to the Moon, for heaven's sake.

By the 1960s, our economic growth was so great that it was impossible for anyone to complain about the Roosevelt debt with a straight face. That's what we need to do now. We need to believe in ourselves. We need to invest in the great engines of our economic recovery, our infrastructure, and our middle class.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge the Members, be bullish on America and repeal and replace this dangerous sequester.

AMERICANS NEED REAL SOLUTIONS

(Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KILDEE. Madam Speaker, last night at his State of the Union address, President Obama outlined a real job creation plan to grow our economy and strengthen America's middle class. However, sequestration is just 15 days away, threatening to stall our economic recovery.

Sequestration would be devastating for many programs and services that my constituents and all Americans rely on: Head Start; the Women, Infants and Children—WIC—nutrition plan; medical research funding; Indian Health Service; police officers; and food inspectors. Funding for all these crucial areas would be decimated.

Sequestration would also make our country less safe by implementing reckless, across-the-board defense cuts. We've already reduced the deficit by \$2.5 trillion, mostly through spending cuts. There's no question we can eliminate additional wasteful spending. However, we should be strategic in finding ways to reduce our deficit. With sequestration looming, Madam Speaker, Americans need real solutions, not another eleventh hour cliffhanger.

DEVASTATING SEQUESTRATION CUTS

(Ms. GABBARD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. GABBARD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about the devastating sequestration cuts that are set to take effect unless we, Congress, act by March 1. If these arbitrary across-the-board cuts are allowed to occur, our military, our national security, and our communities will suffer.

Hawaii is one of the top 10 States that will take the biggest hit. We've already seen these anticipated cuts playing out at the Pearl Harbor shipyard, where 133 apprentices will not be hired and 30 temporary workers will lose their jobs. This is affecting real people, their families, as well as our military's readiness.

Times are tough and we must all share in the sacrifice, but we cannot do so at the expense of our military readiness or on the backs of our middle class families, seniors, and children.

SEQUESTRATION MEANS STUPID

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Madam Speaker, sequestration. You know, it's inside-the-Beltway talk. What does it mean? It means stupid, across-the-board budget cuts.

Take a program of tremendous public import—whether it's a defense program, public safety program, student financial aid—and cut it 10 percent. Take a turkey, something we don't need anymore, something stupid, obsolete—registering kids for a draft that doesn't exist and will never exist—cut it 10 percent.

So instead of doing targeted cuts and getting rid of programs that we don't need anymore, that don't work anymore, and looking at reasonable revenues, we're going to cut everything 10 percent. It's going to have a real impact.

I was told yesterday by the Office of Management and Budget the first measurable impact is in my district, a 10 percent sequestration of payments to counties in my State from the Interior Department, which means in Douglas County, Oregon, the last 10 road deputies are gone. In another county, which is down to one road deputy, the last road deputy is gone. We're talking about counties the size of States here with no rural law enforcement. That's because of the stupid sequestration.

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SEQUESTER IS NOT THE ANSWER

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I join with my colleagues to say that sequester is not the answer. When I begin to look at my district and I see high school students and middle school students and elementary school students, I say sequester is not the answer.

Yes, we can look reasonably at how we improve reducing the debt, but not on the backs of seniors, not eliminating the social network.

And then, with respect to our children, do we tell them we close the doors on summer jobs, we close the doors on the best teachers, innovative teaching, science labs? Absolutely not.

So I join with the President to say that it's an inflicted wound we gave. Let's be better. Let's be adults.

And, finally, Madam Speaker, let's do our job on gun safety. Let's ensure universal background checks. Let's have registration of those guns that are owned by gun owners like we register a car. And let's make sure that, as my legislation introduced, that we secure the guns in our homes so that children or those who are disturbed cannot access your guns because you left them around.

I am not interested in coming into your home and taking your guns, but you have a responsibility to be able to secure them. That law was passed in the State of Texas, a State that prizes its guns.

Let's be a group, a Congress that can work together. We can do this.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on the motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the

yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Any record vote on the postponed question will be taken later.

FEDERAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE NONPROFIT FAIRNESS ACT OF 2013

Mr. BARLETTA. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 592) to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to clarify that houses of worship are eligible for certain disaster relief and emergency assistance on terms equal to other eligible private nonprofit facilities, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 592

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Federal Disaster Assistance Nonprofit Fairness Act of 2013".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Hurricane Sandy inflicted catastrophic damage in the Northeastern United States.

(2) Houses of worship across the Northeast's many faiths and denominations were among the private nonprofit facilities that sustained damage.

(3) Churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and other houses of worship throughout communities in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and elsewhere play an essential role in the daily lives of the communities.

(4) The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) public assistance program provides financial grants for the repair of various types of private nonprofit facilities.

(5) Among the types of nonprofits to which FEMA provides such grants are those in which citizens gather and engage in a variety of educational, enrichment, and social activities. These activities are essential to community building and occur in houses of worship.

(6) Under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.), FEMA's disaster relief program is a general government program under which assistance is provided in the wake of a natural disaster using criteria that are neutral with regard to religion.

(7) Congress has previously enacted legislation providing financial assistance to religious nonprofit institutions, including houses of worship, on terms equal to other eligible nonprofit institutions.

(8) Such legislation is consistent with recent precedents of the Supreme Court of the United States and legal opinions issued by the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice.

SEC. 3. INCLUSION OF HOUSES OF WORSHIP AS PRIVATE NONPROFIT FACILITIES ELIGIBLE FOR DISASTER RELIEF.

(a) DEFINITION OF PRIVATE NONPROFIT FACILITY.—Section 102(10)(B) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122(10)(B)) is amended to read as follows:

"(B) ADDITIONAL FACILITIES.—In addition to the facilities described in subparagraph (A), the term 'private nonprofit facility' includes any private nonprofit facility that provides essential services of a governmental nature to the general public (including mu-

seums, zoos, performing arts facilities, community arts centers, community centers, including houses of worship exempt from taxation under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, libraries, homeless shelters, senior citizen centers, rehabilitation facilities, shelter workshops, and facilities that provide health and safety services of a governmental nature), as defined by the President."

(b) REPAIR, RESTORATION, AND REPLACEMENT OF DAMAGED FACILITIES.—Section 406(a)(3) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5172(a)(3)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(C) HOUSES OF WORSHIP.—A church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or other house of worship, and a private nonprofit facility operated by a religious organization, shall be eligible for contributions under paragraph (1)(B), without regard to the religious character of the facility or the primary religious use of the facility."

(c) APPLICABILITY.—This section and the amendments made by this section shall apply to the provision of assistance in response to a major disaster or emergency declared on or after October 28, 2012.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BARLETTA. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 592.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. BARLETTA. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First, I want to acknowledge the work of the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for his leadership on this bipartisan legislation.

Currently, the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, also known as the Stafford Act, provides for assistance to nonprofit organizations to rebuild damaged facilities following a declared disaster.

Like other nonprofit organizations, religious-based organizations have seen significant damage to their facilities from disasters. Just last year, for example, we saw facilities owned by both religious and nonreligious organizations alike damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Sandy.

The administration is interpreting current law to allow some religious nonprofits to receive reconstruction assistance, while others do not. For example, parochial schools and religious hospitals receive funds, while a soup kitchen or a shelter may not, depending on how often it is used for purely religious purposes.

H.R. 592 clarifies that facilities owned by religious-based organizations qualify for certain types of disaster assistance.