

work the process to establish a consensus budget by having a conference committee? How are Democrats supposed to deal with the Republicans as they up the ante, seeking to damage the American people by cutting off vital services in a shutdown? How do you deal with Republicans who are willing to default on paying America's debt, breaking our moral and legal obligations, and risking not just America's, but the world's, economy?

Earth to my Republican friends: America pays its bills. Always has, always will. It is the height of hypocrisy to blame this on the President, the Affordable Care Act, or the Democrats.

We wait breathlessly to see if the Republicans can agree to have anything to be voted on today; but the American people should insist that if my Republican friends are serious, they should bring their own budgets to the floor, allow the process to work to have a conference committee between the House and the Senate to reconcile our differences. Then we can act like grownups, not children throwing tantrums, and we wouldn't need to threaten the global economy over the debt ceiling.

#### CONTINUING RESOLUTION

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

Mr. WILLIAMS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the President yet again chose to bash Congress and blame the House Republicans for the failure of America's economy. I have seen him make this argument on television many times, but he never shows up on Capitol Hill to actually engage in productive conversations. He does talk, however, to the Russians, the Chinese, and the Iranians. This is no surprise. This is the same man who spends more time with Hollywood stars than Members of Congress.

It is not Congress that will shut our government down—it's our President. I would argue that he already has shut the government down. Five years ago, unemployment was at 5 percent and the national poverty rate was at 12½ percent, and approximately 30 million Americans received food stamps. Today, unemployment sits at 7.6 percent, the poverty rate exceeds 15 percent, a staggering 47.8 million Americans are enrolled in the food stamp program, and 48 million people between the ages of 18 and 64 have not worked one day in the last 12 months.

The President's economic agenda is only pushing us further into danger, and it's a disaster. For more than four decades, I have owned my business and I can say with certainty that today's economy is the toughest economy our country has seen from a small business standpoint.

Everything from health care to taxes to regulations is killing businesses and forcing job creators to play defense. Rather than generating profits, busi-

nesses are saving profits. This isn't the sign of a rebounding economy.

Despite this, in his public address to the Nation, President Obama said the economy has gained traction and continued to place the blame on Congress. What the American people need to hear are solutions, not sound bites. As a business owner, I know what it takes to create jobs. I live it every single day.

First, we need true tax reform. Lower taxes mean more taxpayers and more income. More specifically, we need to cut taxes for all taxpayers across the board and quit picking winners and losers.

The first step in doing this is cutting the corporate tax rate, the personal tax rate, the capital gains tax, the dividends tax, and eliminate forever the inheritance tax.

The next step is to begin a dialogue on whether we should move to a fair or a flat tax. Either one of these is certainly better than what we have today.

Second, we need to change health care policy. With the addition of ObamaCare, the government now comprises one-sixth of the Nation's economy. This is a complete travesty, and the private sector must be given more control of health care, not the Federal Government.

Consumers should be able to shop across State lines, which will create more competition. As a result, premiums would go down and services go up. That's what competition does. Consumers also need to own their own health care, not their employer, and not the Federal Government. It needs to be tax deductible. It needs to be portable so you can take it with you if you retire, you lose your job, or move around.

Third, we need to energize the energy business and not penalize the energy business. Let's favor an all-American approach for all sources of energy and let the private sector drive our energy, not our government. We do this by reducing regulations, letting the industry drill, and promoting the advancement of safe nuclear and alternative energy sources. Let the private sector tell us where to go.

Developing our domestic energy sources will undoubtedly lower energy prices for families and businesses.

Finally, we need to ensure America remains the world's superpower with a strong and well-equipped military. Our men and women in uniform must have the best equipment and must have the best training to fight for our freedom and our liberty.

It shouldn't even be an option to balance our Nation's books on the backs of our military. Doing so diminishes our military's readiness and threatens our national security, and it simply shows weakness across the world.

These are real solutions. They will allow businesses big and small to invest, to take risks, and they also will be rewarded. They show that the Federal Government believes in the pri-

vate sector, believes in entrepreneurship, and believes in people getting checks and lets everyone feel good about themselves.

We should never accept 7.6 percent as the normal level for unemployment. We should never accept a 15 percent poverty rate. We should never accept \$2.5 billion in free cell phones. We should never accept 15 percent underemployment. We should never accept 52 percent of our college graduates who are either underemployed or can't get a job. And we should never accept an economy that creates more food stamps than jobs.

It is time to wake up, America. Big Government has taken a toll on our families, our businesses, and our budgets. Let's get back to regular order in Washington and start passing responsible budgets that give our Nation much-needed certainty and security. Businesses and families do it every single day.

There is no question that America is the greatest country in the world. In the unforgettable words of Abraham Lincoln:

America is the last best hope of Earth.

Let's keep it that way by believing in the people and not the Federal Government and not Big Government. Let's say good-bye to ObamaCare, the largest takeover of the people by the government we have ever seen in our history.

It is truly our generation's Valley Forge. Let's be shepherds and not sheep, and let's be patriots and not victims. In God we trust.

#### LET'S PASS A SOUND BUDGET

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

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I have one basic question: What are we doing here? I mean just that. What are we really doing here?

Each day we talk about problems, problems, the real problems that face our country that are fixable with compromise and clearheaded solutions. Each day, this Chamber does nothing to overcome those challenges in front of us. Each day, the American people think we can't sink any lower or be any more dysfunctional.

Right now, there's talk about passing a 1-week budget to simply provide the time for elected officials—people charged with running the government of this great Nation of ours—to get along for enough time to pass yet another extension. Say it isn't so. One week. There are lemonade stands with better budgeting practices than what we have seen in this body in the past 2 years.

This is unacceptable, this is absurd, and it certainly is not what the American people deserve from any layer of government, especially their Federal Government. Let's get this done. Let's pass a budget, a budget that cuts where

we can, that invests where we must, that grows jobs, and ends the painful consequences of sequestration.

The absolute misery here is that all of this dysfunction could have been avoided. We could have avoided the reach to yet another kicking of the can down the road if we would come together at the conference table and do a real budget. We could reach through a budget process; we could reach to regular order.

With many of my colleagues, I have urged them that the leadership in the House resort to naming the panelists who will sit at that conference table to realize regular order through a budget process, a real budget process. That request has been turned down time and time again. The statements made in the past were, Well, the Senate hasn't moved on a budget, or We haven't heard from this entity about what their plans are.

Well, the truth be told, this year, the United States Senate passed its version of a budget. This House passed its version of a budget. The President and his administration have advanced their fiscal blueprint for the coming fiscal year.

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The entities have spoken. The process needs to be addressed and respected. We need to bring those panelists to the conference table—those who will represent Republicans and Democrats in the House of Representatives and in the United States Senate—to come to terms, to develop the compromise in the spirit by which our Founding Parents developed this wonderful blueprint of a Republic, guided by the democracy.

Why are we rejecting that opportunity?

A sound budget could allow us to escape the terrible consequences of sequestration.

I have witnessed what that sequestration has meant in my own district. During our 5½-week district work period, I visited with many of those Head Start programs, with Early Intervention, with nutrition programs, with food banks that address the nutrition needs of the people of this great Nation. I have worked with the small business community to understand more fully what the impact of sequestration might mean to them—cuts to research, to programs that have furloughed my Federal employees if given the opportunity to serve this Nation through their workforce.

All of that consequential damage could be avoided if we would resort to the soundness of the tool called the “budget.” The sequestration issue is painful. It's a hidden attack. It's mindless, thoughtless, and it has pervaded itself into the fabric of our communities—into the quality of life of the people who place within us the trust to be their voice in Washington.

So we need to do better than this paralysis that has stalled the process

that finds us at the midnight hour, searching for answers in the most unusual format that will resort to yet another kicking of the can down the road, that would use the smoke and mirrors to balance a budget for some uncertain period of time, that doesn't provide the predictability to the business community or to the working families of this Nation. The partnership with their government should be real. It should be stated in terms that allow for the respect of businesses to invest and hire and be productive.

We have had a plan in this House coming from the Democrats. Representative VAN HOLLEN has introduced a plan that will reduce the deficit in greater fashion and will avoid the painful consequences of sequestration.

#### PROTECTING THE FINANCIAL SOLVENCY OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I want to begin my remarks with a couple of comments about the budget process. I think my colleagues could be a little bit confused on this.

I will remind my colleagues that it is this body that every single year meets our statutory duty and our constitutional duty to bring forward a budget that funds the operations of the United States of America. We do not miss our deadlines, and this year, we did it. I know that the White House did their Sweet 16 bracket before they did their budget, but we were still pleased to see that they were willing to participate in that process, and we were pleased that our friends in the Senate, for the first time in 5 years, decided they would enter into the budget process.

We were very disappointed, quite frankly, when they said they would not move to the conference table with us until we agreed to a tax increase. That is what they want—an agreement to a tax increase in this kind of economy and with about 8 percent unemployment and with 20 million Americans either un- or underemployed? They want more taxes—more control over people's lives? We were not willing to do that.

We are continuing to stand and fight for the American people—for responsible government, for getting this budget balanced within the next decade, and for getting this country back on the road to fiscal health.

I will also remind my colleagues that one of the things we continue to hear from this White House and this administration is that they want a government shutdown. Now, they try to blame us—we realize that—but I've got to tell you that I've got a titanium backbone. Let them blame. Let them talk. It's fine. They want a government shutdown. For my colleagues, I would direct their attention to the Congressional Research Service for the summary of what happens in a government shutdown.

For the interest of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, I will just walk through some of these points.

One of the reasons they want it is that the President wants control of the checkbook. Right now, the U.S. House of Representatives has that control, and we want to keep it. We don't want a government shutdown. We want to keep the government open and keep cutting it. We want to keep the government open so we can delay, defund, repeal, and replace ObamaCare. This budget process of going into a shutdown gives control to the administrative branch.

There is another little tidbit when you read this circular, and it directs you to the 2011 revision of Circular No. A-11. OMB's current instructions would have agency heads use the Department of Justice opinions. I can tell you the American people and a Republican-led House do not want Eric Holder and Barack Obama making the determination of who and what will be open in this Federal Government, what will be funded and what agencies are going to be working. We don't want to give them that responsibility. I know they want that. I know they're trying to get a government shutdown, but I have to tell you that that is not what we want.

What we are for, as I said, is of making certain that we protect the future and the financial solvency of this great Nation. One of the reasons we have worked so diligently on a budget for this body is that we know the cost and the impact that ObamaCare is going to have on the Nation's fiscal health, and we are very concerned about it. We see what is happening in our communities.

I just want to reference some of the correspondence and conversations I am having with my constituents in Tennessee.

Yesterday, I spoke with a gentleman who went to a check cashing store, borrowed \$400, started a retail business, now has 45 employees in five locations—a great business. What he is looking at is he can't expand. He can't hire anybody else. He is having to deal with all of the hoops that really weigh this business down, and it is because of ObamaCare.

#### COMPROMISE

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

Mr. HIMES. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be able to follow the rank, partisan remarks of Mrs. BLACKBURN's, because I wanted to speak this morning on the subject of compromise.

Compromise is not an easy subject to speak on because, of course, we all have it in our minds here that the right thing to do is to lead great ideological battles—to stand unbending by your principles, to stand up for what you think is right—and it is the right thing to do to stand up for what you think is right.

Compromise is a hard thing to discuss because, of course, those on the