

across-the-board spending cuts take effect. And here we are again, with an all-too-familiar manufactured crisis poised to strike our economy with another self-inflicted wound. Month to month, crisis to crisis, this is no way to run the world's largest economy.

Letting sequestration happen is not responsible government. The sequester was designed last year to scare Congress into responsibly reducing the deficit. It created a doomsday scenario: draconian damaging cuts—disliked by both parties—intended to force Democrats and Republicans to come up with a balanced alternative to reduce our deficit.

Sequestration cuts are not targeted to eliminate waste or unnecessary programs. Rather, they slash programs across the board, regardless of their effectiveness. This threatens our economic progress, jeopardizes our military readiness, and reduces funding for national priorities like education and medical research.

Mr. Speaker, sequestration would be devastating for Michigan and our Nation's economy. The sequester eliminates jobs at a time when Congress should be working to create them. Our country has been moving in the right direction: 35 straight months of private sector job growth; 6.1 million private sector jobs created. There's no doubt we can do more to grow our economy and the middle class, and letting sequestration happen is a giant step backward for our economy.

Economists across the political spectrum agree that letting sequestration happen will slow our economy. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that sequester would reduce our economic growth by a third this year alone.

Sequestration cuts affect the most vulnerable people: middle class families, seniors, students, people with disabilities, the unemployed, and those who may become unemployed if these cuts go into place. We can't pretend that these cuts are just numbers in a budget.

If sequester is allowed to happen, Michigan alone stands to lose 31,000 jobs in just 6 months. There will be 750,000 jobs lost nationally by October. Michigan schools would lose \$22 million in funding, eliminating 300 teachers and aides in the classroom. An additional \$20 million would be cut for educational support for children with disabilities. Head Start would be eliminated for 2,300 Michigan children. Almost 2,500 low-income students in my State would no longer receive aid to help them pay for college.

These cuts are real, Mr. Speaker. Just last week I cosponsored legislation with my Democratic colleagues to avoid the sequester, but Republicans won't even bring the bill to the floor for a vote.

The Democrats plan to avoid sequester through responsible spending cuts, increased revenues, and promoting economic growth. Our plan eliminates tax-

payer-funded subsidies for big oil companies. In a time of record oil profits and \$4-a-gallon gasoline, it baffles me that our country continues to subsidize companies like ExxonMobil and BP; yet Republicans are willing to pink-slip 750,000 American workers just to protect billions of dollars in handouts for these five big oil companies. It's time to end these subsidies.

There's no question that we need to cut the deficit, but we need to do it in a balanced way that protects the middle class. The Budget Control Act passed before I came to Congress reduced the deficit by more than \$2.5 trillion, mainly through spending cuts. There are certainly other areas that should be cut, but we should be strategic in cutting spending to reduce our deficit. Sequestration takes the exact opposite approach. It irrationally cuts programs that have proven to be effective and are worthwhile investments.

Congress needs to act immediately in order to avert the sequester. Republican inaction threatens to leave these indiscriminate cuts in place, killing jobs, undermining public safety and first responders, and injecting more uncertainty into our markets, harming our economy.

Our Nation cannot afford any more uncertainty, obstruction, and delay. Democrats are interested in real solutions, not sequesters.

Mr. Speaker, now is the time to act.

□ 1100

#### SEQUESTERATION

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

Ms. ESTY. Last week, I organized leaders from across Connecticut in small business, labor, government, health care, and social services to hear from them about the impact of sequestration. My constituents were pleased to also brief our House Democratic whip, STENY HOYER, at a roundtable in Farmington. The consequences of across-the-board cuts are frightening to say the least. People are scared, and people are extremely frustrated with Congress—and justifiably so.

In central and northwest Connecticut—and I know the same holds true across the country—manufacturers, small businesses, and working- and middle class families are doing things right. Having struggled through a tough economy, manufacturers like Ward Leonard in Thomaston and Marion Manufacturing in my hometown of Cheshire have been innovating and making strides.

Mr. Speaker, people are hopeful that we are finally on the verge of better days, but somehow Congress has missed every opportunity to avoid this very avoidable sequester, which would not only squander opportunities but would outright devastate our economy and hurt small businesses and families across the country.

At our roundtable, JoAnn Ryan, president of northwest Connecticut's Chamber of Commerce, said that local small business owners see "pockets of opportunity," but they have "no confidence whatsoever because of the inability of government to cooperate." My friend John Harrity, president of the Connecticut State Council of Machinists, put it perfectly when he said that, after all the progress our manufacturers have made, "to lose all that momentum just defies common sense."

That's not to mention what I heard from folks across the district about the devastating and reckless impact sequestration would have on social services, our seniors, and our children's education at every level. Let's not forget that folks in Connecticut and across the Northeast are still recovering from Hurricane Sandy and recent winter storms. Our constituents have had to wait far too long for emergency recovery funds, and they're still recovering and are trying to rebuild their lives, to rebuild their homes and their businesses.

Mr. Speaker, according to George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis, sequestration will directly and indirectly cost Connecticut almost 42,000 jobs. We need to remember that this isn't just a number. It's people's livelihoods, and it's their lives.

Letting the sequester happen will hurt Head Start students and their teachers in Danbury and New Britain, seniors in Meriden who rely on Meals on Wheels for their daily nutrition, manufacturers like Ansonia Copper & Brass in Waterbury, and small businesses throughout Torrington and the northwest corner, and employees and owners who are working hard to achieve the American Dream for themselves and to bring back the American economy.

What's maybe most troubling is that there is no reason businesses and families in Connecticut, or in any State, should be facing this catastrophe. It is entirely self-inflicted and avoidable if our colleagues would let us vote on an alternative. It's the result of a reckless game of chicken. Avoiding it is actually very simple, and the lack of urgency the House GOP leadership has shown in addressing this impending deadline is astounding.

Mr. Speaker, we can and should vote to remove this self-inflicted threat. We can and should remove the sequester. We already have a balanced replacement. Representative VAN HOLLEN's Stop the Sequester Job Loss Now Act would replace the sequester with commonsense, cost-cutting policies—repealing subsidies for Big Oil and Big Gas, refocusing subsidies for Big Agriculture and enacting a Buffett rule so that the wealthiest are paying their fair share. We should be allowed to vote on this bill.

Folks in Connecticut and across the country can't afford this gamesmanship. They need us to act. They need us to do our jobs so that they can keep doing theirs.

## SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, sequestration is a self-inflicted wound that really does not have to happen.

I hate to make my Tea Party friends uncomfortable by using a dirty word, but with a little compromise we can get this thing passed. If Tea Party Republicans choose not to compromise, sequestration will arbitrarily take \$85 billion out of our economy, lowering our GDP and harming our economic recovery.

We shouldn't sacrifice our economic well-being because Republicans are unwilling to vote for one penny in new contributions from their billionaire friends. Republicans continue to stand up for the billionaires. They continue to stand up for the oil companies and all of the other powerful interests out there that are making money hand over foot while middle class Americans are asked to shoulder the burden of the Tea Party obsession of cutting government.

Now, there is a big difference, ladies and gentlemen, between cutting government and cutting services that people need and depend on. There is a big difference between having a less costly government versus not having a government to do the things that people need to be done. Let's take, for instance, the Defense budget. Last week, at a constituents' meeting, Senator JOHN MCCAIN said that these sequester cuts could significantly undermine military programs.

"We are facing a situation where our national security is at risk," Senator MCCAIN said, adding that furloughs could affect as many as 49,000 military and defense jobs in Arizona.

I'll tell you, in Georgia, what's going to happen is that 37,000 civilian Department of Defense employees will be furloughed, reducing gross pay by \$190 million. Army base funding would be cut by \$233 million, and funding for Air Force operations would be cut by \$5 million. This is in the State of Georgia. This is for this current fiscal year. Can you imagine that much money coming out of the economy and its not having an impact on the overall economy? It certainly will.

Let's take all of those who travel. You go to the airport. You rely on the air traffic controllers to make sure that the planes are situated and are flying safely so that nobody is going to bump into each other up there in the sky. You're dependent on your TSA personnel to check and make sure that nobody is armed when one gets on the plane. All of those services that you take for granted will be cut if we continue to embark upon this self-inflicted wound of sequestration.

A balanced approach to deficit reduction will help support the American people through job creation, economic growth, and a strong middle class while

responsibly reducing our Nation's debt. House Democrats have proposed balanced solutions that reflect what the American people voted for in November. Instead of considering these or any other proposals, the Tea Party Republicans continue their strategy to obstruct the President so that they can blame him and the Democrats when the economy goes bad. They continue to play politics with this Nation's economy so that they can be well positioned in the upcoming midterm elections in 2014. This is very reckless behavior.

We have 3 more days before sequestration takes effect. Instead of dealing with the sequestration, instead of dealing with gun control, instead of dealing with immigration, instead of dealing with a budget resolution for next year, today, this House of Representatives is dealing with a resolution. So this do-nothing Congress continues, and the American people will suffer.

## RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 9 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

## AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

## PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Loving God, thank You for giving us another day.

Be with each of us that we might be our very best and prove ourselves worthy of Your love and Your grace. Be with the Members of this people's House in their work and deliberations this day, that they might merit the trust of the American people and manifest the strength of our democracy to the nations of the world.

Without You, O Lord, we can do nothing. With You and in You, we can establish a world of peace, goodness, and justice now and into the future.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

## THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

## PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. HIGGINS led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

## ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

## SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, we have just 3 days until the sequestration cuts take effect. Instead of being here in Washington working to reach an agreement, the President is off again on the campaign trail. Giving speeches in front of adoring crowds is not going to solve this problem.

In divided government, we don't reach compromise by talking past each other. We come to solutions when we sit down and talk to one another. Obviously, we can't do that when the President isn't even here.

We can find more sensible ways to save billions of dollars. In fact, tomorrow I'm chairing an Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee hearing looking at innovative solutions to combat waste and fraud in Medicare and Medicaid. GAO tells us these programs make \$65 billion in improper payments. Outside groups tell us it can be a nearly \$1 billion-a-year problem. We can also eliminate wasteful programs like the HHS Secretary's duplicative slush fund.

We must get our spending problem under control, but we'll never get a better plan than sequestration if we can't sit down and talk and work together.

## SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that we need to reduce the