

and the American people are looking to Congress for solutions, not spin. Thousands of dedicated Federal employees here, but more profusely around this country, continue to be furloughed without pay, all because a faction of Republicans insist on keeping government closed until we repeal the Affordable Care Act, a demand that has nothing to do with keeping our government open.

Debate about the Affordable Care Act is legitimate. There are people who disagree with it and people who agree with it. But holding ransom the people's government is and should be, as the previous speaker said, unacceptable.

Americans are tired, I am tired, I think most Members are tired of hearing the same rhetoric from politicians over and over. Instead, they want real solutions that can restore fiscal sanity, end the irrational sequester which HAL ROGERS, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, a conservative Republican from Kentucky, says does not work and cannot work, and break the cycle of manufactured crises that do nothing to help our economy and, in fact, are doing it great harm. So the question, Mr. Speaker, we must ask ourselves is: How do we reach a solution? How can this Congress achieve the big, balanced deal that our constituents expect from us?

First and foremost we must end the shutdown. Mr. Speaker, 200 Democrats—we have a vacancy—200 Democrats will vote this very day, this very hour, to open the government. That means, Mr. Speaker, we only need 18 Republicans. The previous speaker said it is unacceptable where we are. We can change it, and we can change it within the hour, with only 18 Republicans joining 200 Democrats to say let the people's government be open; let the people's government be serving them.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, we must end this shutdown and take action to prevent the United States from defaulting on its bills for the first time in history. A solvent nation should not be taken hostage to accomplish an objective. Once these immediate threats are removed, Congress should then vote to go to conference on the differences which are legitimate between our two budgets. Republicans have refused, for the last six months in the House and in the Senate, to go to conference.

The Speaker talks about negotiation. That is where you do it. That is the mechanism that is set up under our democracy to resolve differences. Go to conference. There we can have the opportunity to agree on a comprehensive, balanced plan to put our country on a fiscally sustainable path, not for the next week, the next month, the next 180 days, but for decades to come; and if we do that, our economy will explode, jobs will be created, and Americans will again feel good, not only about their country, but about their Congress.

The shutdown and the threat of default are standing in the way of a real

negotiation process for a long-term solution. Democrats, I say, Mr. Speaker, are ready to sit down and talk with our Republican colleagues about a long-term agreement. We know that will require tough decisions, but Republicans should not demand their own policies as ransom required to reopen the government and make sure America pays its bills.

Democrats have already made the difficult choice to accept the Republican's preferred budget level for the short-term funding bill. How do I know it is their preferred funding bill? Because they voted on it and sent it to the Senate, Mr. Speaker, and the Senate said, We will accept your number, and they sent it back here; and my Republican colleagues will not say "yes" to their own number.

A big and balanced agreement on a budget. After we take the Republican number to open up government, go to conference, have discussions, a big and balanced agreement on the budget and on getting our debt under control will require real compromise and difficult decisions. My colleagues, we should have the wisdom and, yes, the courage to make them; and if we do, future generations will thank us.

I continue to believe, Mr. Speaker, that there is a bipartisan majority of Members in this House who are ready to work in good faith towards achieving such an agreement. My observation, however, is, after 33 years in this body, that there is a small faction on the Republican side of the aisle—it may be 50, it may be 60—that is holding captive the 170 of their colleagues who want to make sense and move forward.

I hope that Speaker BOEHNER will take the important steps necessary to enable those negotiations to begin by allowing a vote on the Senate's bill at the House number to reopen government and another one on a clean measure to prevent an unthinkable and economically catastrophic default. Once those occur, Mr. Speaker, we will be able to resume work on achieving real and lasting results for the American people when it comes to our long-term fiscal health.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the majority leader, Mr. CANTOR, would bring the bill to open our government, the people's government, to the floor this day.

THREE CRISES

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

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, this October fiscal crisis is punctuated by three developments that are becoming increasingly obvious and disturbing. The first is the refusal of the Senate and the President to resolve their differences with the House through negotiation and compromise on the bill that would actually fund the government and end this shutdown. In recent

days, senior administration officials have said they don't care how long the shutdown lasts because they are winning politically and the President would rather the Nation default than negotiate with the House.

Our form of government cannot operate in such a manner. Congress is a bicameral legislature. That means two Houses that are specifically designed to have a different perspective on issues. The two Houses of Congress were designed to disagree. The only way a bicameral legislature can possibly function is through each House exercising its own best judgment on a given issue and then coming together and meeting to isolate their differences and resolve them through negotiation and compromise.

The conference process of Congress has evolved over centuries. It is very effective at resolving the differences between the two Houses; but it takes two Houses to operate it, and the Senate is refusing to do so. This malfunction is at the very heart of our stalemate.

The second development is the deliberate decision by the administration to amplify the public's suffering and inconvenience during this stalemate. This government has gone through 18 shutdowns now in the past 37 years, but never has a President barricaded open-air venues like national memorials. In fact, he has gone so far as to forbid the use of turnouts on public roads that offer passersby distant views of Mt. Rushmore and Yosemite. He has ordered people out of their own homes and ordered businesses to close just because they lease land from the Federal Government. He has even tried to close the Atlantic Ocean to Florida fishermen.

In the past, Presidents have done everything they could to minimize the impacts of shutdowns. This President is going to ridiculous extremes to maximize the suffering that people must endure. One park ranger told a reporter, "We've been told to make life as difficult for people as we can." And then he added, "It's disgusting." And when this House has passed stopgap measures to minimize these impacts, the President and the Senate have summarily rejected them.

The third development is the rapid unraveling of ObamaCare. As it has rolled out, millions of Americans have discovered that their health insurance rates have skyrocketed or they are losing their health plans entirely or that they are having their hours cut back at work. It is very clear that the public isn't buying these new government-brokered policies. One hundred and seventy thousand people visited the Maryland exchange looking for affordable insurance since it opened more than a week ago, but only 326 have actually bought these plans, less than 0.2 percent.

Now, imagine, you have got the biggest store in town. People are required by law to purchase your product. You

open for business, and 99.8 percent of the customers who walk into your store walk out again without buying your product. Do you think you have a problem? We can't pretend this isn't happening. Millions of Americans right now are losing their health plans and not finding affordable replacements. This matter must be resolved, and it must be resolved now.

This government only exists with the consent of the governed. When it deliberately goes out of its way to maximize the pain and suffering of the American people in this crisis, it jeopardizes that consent. This matter must be resolved, and it must be resolved now. And this government is simply not designed to function with one party refusing to talk to the other, with one House refusing to resolve the differences that divide it from the other. This simple failure is at the heart of our Nation's distress, and it, too, must be resolved, and it must be resolved now.

We are now 5 years into this administration. They have not been happy ones for our Nation. But now we have arrived at a crisis—or more precisely, at three crises: one that is costing millions of Americans the health plans they liked and were told they could keep, a second in the relationship of this government to the people, and a third in the basic function of our fundamental institutions.

Happily, the Constitution's Framers gave us all of the tools that are necessary to resolve these crises except for one, and that one is what Lincoln called the better angels of our nature. Only we can appeal to those angels, and we must do so before more harm befalls our country.

HOUSE GYM REMAINS OPEN FOR MEMBERS DURING SHUTDOWN

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today is the ninth day of the Republican shutdown, what started as a tantrum against the Affordable Care Act to defund it, then morphed into a demand to delay it for a year, but now is really an open assault on our system of government.

Unless a fanatic minority holding JOHN BOEHNER and the American people hostage get their way, they will continue to inflict unnecessary pain on hundreds of thousands of our employees and on the American public. Now they are poised to wreck the global economy by threatening that America will not pay its bills. If it works, they will do it all over again.

Make no mistake, this is an assault on our system of government unlike anything we have seen before. We must stop them now, united in the belief that there are some lines we are not going to cross. There will be no weapons on the floor of the House and no willful damage to the American people.

What if these fanatics had their tactics used against them? What if Democrats and Speaker PELOSI demanded that the disastrous war in Iraq stop and, if it didn't, we would wreck the American economy? that our deeply felt concerns about preparing for climate change and global warming were nonnegotiable? What if Senator CHRIS MURPHY, who had 26 innocent children and their teachers massacred in his district, what if he said, Enough. Unless we get background checks for purchasers of guns to make sure that unfit people can't get them, something that 90 percent of the American people agree with, unless I get that, I am going to shut down the government? Can you imagine the howls of outrage?

There is a tremendous disconnect here. One glaring symbol of the disconnect can be found in the sub-basement of the Rayburn office building, the House gym. Now, make no mistake, everywhere I have worked I have started fitness programs for our employees. They save money; they improve productivity; they can even save lives. I helped start a fitness program for our employees here on Capitol Hill. If anything, it may be more important for people in Congress who are leading a crazy, unhealthy lifestyle and can seldom get together and interact like human beings. For 17 years, this is where I have tried to start every single day, to exercise, to enjoy bipartisan camaraderie, an island in the storm of Capitol Hill. It is convenient to be able to shower there instead of at home. It is important. It is very important, but it is not essential.

I had somebody argue with me yesterday that it doesn't cost that much because we pay dues. We have an access key that lets us in and there aren't any staff members there now. Well, that is true. It doesn't cost very much, but it costs. The electricity, the hot water, the towels, they are not provided by gym fairies. They are provided by taxpayers. And the same is true for countless facilities across America, closed by the senseless Republican shutdown.

In fact, since we have decided that we are going to pay all the employees when it is over, we are paying them not to work. And it is costly not to collect fees. You can make a better argument for restoring those services than you can for the House gym. Some of the most fanatic about inflicting unnecessary pain on the American public are regulars, enjoying our House gym while the staff gym is closed.

Mr. Speaker, if you and the House Republicans are serious and not cynical about the shutdown, then shut down the House gym until this madness ends.

HOUSE REPUBLICANS PASSING BILLS TO REOPEN GOVERNMENT

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

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, like myself and many Americans, I am very frus-

trated over the inaction of Congress to get its work done; but let's look back at what has happened over the last week or so.

The House Republicans, we have sent bills over to the Democratically-controlled Senate to open the government, to run the government, to fund the government. We have sent, starting from delaying ObamaCare, which most Americans have serious problems with, to other bills, and I want to talk about the latter two that we sent.

One was to fund the government completely until December 15, but also with two exceptions. The one exception is that Members of Congress and the President would live by the same rules under ObamaCare that all Americans have to. The other exception is ObamaCare. We need to delay those rules, and let's move on.

The people that talk about the status quo in American history here, the status quo, if you vote for a clean CR, you want the status quo to remain the same. That means unemployment stays where it is, forcing Americans into part-time work. We need structural changes to the underlying problems. We need to address why our debt keeps going up.

The President, yesterday, in his news conference, talked about raising the debt ceiling doesn't increase the debt ceiling, doesn't increase spending. Well, I wish the President would answer to me: When he took office, the debt was \$10 trillion; now it is approaching \$17 trillion. How does raising the debt ceiling not increase the debt?

The President talks about it is unprecedented, talking about the debt ceiling and having negotiations would be unprecedented if we do that. Well, Ronald Reagan and Speaker Tip O'Neill did it. Bill Clinton did it. President Obama did it in 2011 under the Budget Control Act. It is not unprecedented. And, interestingly, the time the President has been forced to negotiate are times when we have had crises that we have had to address, and the President did that in 2011.

If ObamaCare is so good and it is the President's signature piece of legislation, he ought to be the first one to sign up for it. I believe the First Family ought to be the first in line to sign up for ObamaCare. But, you know what? The President of the United States is exempt from ObamaCare. It doesn't make sense. He ought to have to live by his own bills that he supported and pressed through.

We talk about compromise. I am sure the President doesn't watch FOX News, but I think Bill O'Reilly has a compromise that maybe makes some sense. The individual mandate—that was one of the things we put in there, in one of those bills—we said delay the individual mandate for 1 year. The President delayed the employer mandate for 1 year. It only makes sense, especially when you see so many people having trouble signing up, getting on and all the uncertainty. We are getting reports