

INVESTING IN AMERICA'S PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, let me, first of all, say good morning to my colleagues and start with a thank-you to President Obama for his invitation to the White House to all Members of Congress in quite a contrast to the representation of the President's lack of involvement.

In fact, over the last 4 or 5 years, this Congress has failed to pass a budget with a Republican majority in the House. That has constantly raised the question of how can we start growth in America.

So I thank the President, first of all, for his negotiating at the beginning of January 2013, in the tax negotiations, along with the acceptance of the very structured and restrictive and non-growth number of 986 for the budgeting of this particular Nation.

We are a growing Nation, we are a thriving Nation, we are the most powerful Nation in the world, and the way to go forward is to invest in America's people. So I thank the President. I thank the President for recognizing, as devastating as the sequester was, that he was willing to cede to a supercommittee that did not fulfill its responsibilities.

So we are here. And this is not about individual Members of Congress. It is about the American people. It is about the 29-year employee in the Dallas-Fort Worth area that spoke eloquently to the fact that, combined with military service, she desired to be at work. She enjoyed working with her young child and being at his school, but she wanted to help Americans. But she is not able to go to work.

It speaks to this question of the willy-nilly structure that the Republicans have constructed. I use the term "martial law." For those who want to understand it better, we were speaking of martial rule. So it is martial law on this floor. But a martial rule we are using means that whatever is thrown down on the floor, what Legos are thrown down on the floor to be picked up, that is how we are running this government.

So the word "clean bill" is not a naughty word. It means that we want to fulfill the ability to fund the entire government, not to leave out the SNAP and WIC programs or school food programs that are suffering, not to leave out rural development or the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the Centers for Disease Control that announced today there is a salmonella epidemic and because we don't have those staff persons, America suffers.

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I understand Senator MCCAIN's frustration on the floor of the United States Senate because I went to the floor yesterday in the early morning hours to express my pain for the families who have lost their loved ones in

Afghanistan. These are young men and young women; and because of our government shutdown, their memorial services benefits could not be had.

I planned the introduction of a bill, ceded to the bill that is now going to be on the floor, that now we are going to pick to be able to help them. I indicated yesterday in a letter to the Secretary that he should immediately provide them with their funds, that it was eligible under a particular law. We all come together around that issue, and we are pained because of the loss of those loved ones of those family members.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is not about us. I continue to say that we are not doing it the right way.

A Vietnam veteran in Houston, Mr. Richard Simon, who came to a veterans center, was turned away yesterday. Homeless veterans in Houston, who need the veterans service centers, were turned away as of Wednesday because all of these veterans centers are being closed down. A farmer in Iowa, John Gilbert, has 770 acres. He is working every day, but he can't get his agricultural resources because the Department of Agriculture has shut down. A family resource center that is dealing with domestic violence is no more because it cannot get its Federal dollars. Then, of course, the U.S. Attorney's Office has seen 4,000 U.S. Attorneys shut down. There have been 3,000 Lockheed employees laid off and 3,000 NASA employees laid off.

So I believe that it is important that we recognize that we are not here for ourselves, rather, that we are here for the families whose loved ones lay down their lives in Afghanistan. Whether we call it a clean bill—however we call it—it needs to be put on the floor of the House because we cannot run the government by playing Legos. We can't throw sticks on the ground. We can't be out on the corner playing those games, throwing things on the ground, and saying, Whatever happens, it will happen.

We have got to help Richard Simon. We have got to help the veterans who are going to these closed centers. We have got to make sure that we understand that a President should be judged for his leadership in this country and not on where he came from or what he looks like. We have to be able to work with all people in America—and all of the people are being harmed.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this one question as I go to my seat: Are we going to leave homeless veterans on the street, Mr. Speaker? I hope that we will answer that question and also pay the veterans or their families for the memorial services.

THE PRESIDENT'S REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE

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

Mr. STEWART. Mr. Speaker, politics is full of irony, and I believe that that

is a vast understatement compared to what is exhibited on this floor almost every day. Sometimes that irony bleeds over into the absurd, and that's what we are facing today when it comes to our President, who absolutely refuses to even sit down and negotiate over the debt ceiling limit or over the implementation of ObamaCare or over the continuing resolution or, frankly, over anything else.

Think about that.

The President of the United States is unwilling to even sit down to have any negotiations—to have even a conversation—with the Speaker of the House.

The President likes to say, I won the election, and he likes to remind us that elections have consequences; but I would remind the President that I won my election as well and so did 233 other House Republicans. I represent more than 700,000 people. Those 233 House Republicans represent more than 150 million people. They expect certain things of us. They expect us to represent them. They expect us to fight for those values that we promised that we would. I can't abandon those values. I owe it to my constituents. I owe it to my family. I owe it to my Nation. I owe it to myself to continue to fight for those values that, I think, help to make this Nation the great Nation that it is.

The President is the President of the United States. He is not just the President of the Democratic Party. He is not just the President of those States in which he won. He is the President of the United States, and he owes it to the Americans to be willing to sit down and to try to negotiate when we come into a conflict such as we have now.

Yes, we've got great challenges before us, but we can work through these. We always have before. We can find a way to work together. Republicans and Democrats have been working through their differences for generations, but we can only do that if we are willing to sit down and talk with each other. We can only do that if we are willing to be respectful of the deeply held positions that each of us holds. We can only do that if we are willing to work together for the betterment of this Nation, which brings me to the debt limit.

It is like a dark, looming cloud that hangs over us now. We can't ignore it. We can't pretend that it doesn't matter. We can't pretend that it's not important. So, like others, I would like to quote from one who is considered to be a great political leader of this century:

Increasing America's debt weakens us domestically and internationally. "Leadership" means that the buck stops here. Instead, Washington is shifting the burden of bad choices today onto the backs of our children and our grandchildren. America has a debt problem and a failure of leadership. Americans deserve better.

Mr. Speaker, of course I'm not quoting TED CRUZ or MITCH MCCONNELL or the Speaker of the House. I am quoting a young freshman Senator who is now the President of the United

States, who at least at one point in his career recognized the serious and the longstanding threat to this Nation that our rising debt is.

We have the opportunity to work together now to fix this problem; and if we can't fix it, at least we can take a meaningful step forward. I hope the President will work with us to address what he used to believe was a serious problem, but I believe it starts with one thing: sitting down together and talking in order to work it out.

The American citizens—all of us—deserve a President who is willing to lead. The American people deserve a President who is willing to talk. Yes, we live in a day in which there are policy and political differences, but that has always been the case. From the birth of our Nation, it has always been such. We are a Nation in which ideas and principles sometimes conflict, but the American people deserve a President who understands that negotiating is part of the process.

I pray that the President will sit down and talk with us now.

MR. SPEAKER, LET YOUR PEOPLE GO

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

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple message: let your people go.

The American people are very frustrated by what we are doing here. They want us to end this shutdown. In fact, some 70 percent of them do not like the way you or the Republican majority is handling this crisis. So, Mr. Speaker, if you will just let your people go and allow us to bring a clean continuing resolution to the floor, we can end this. Despite your claims to the contrary, it is clear to everyone that we have at least 17 votes required from your side of the aisle to pass the continuing resolution. So, Mr. Speaker, why don't you just let your people go?

I have a simple question for you: If you think to the contrary that their votes are not there, then why not put your cards on the table and allow a vote?

The American people cannot afford more rounds of betting their economic futures on politicians' betting on a pair and thinking they have a full house. The American people think it's time to call your bluff. Mr. Speaker, let your people go.

We can reopen the World War II Memorial and the VA today. We can ensure that all military families receive death benefits and can travel to Dover Air Force Base to receive their loved ones' remains. We can end what Senators on the other side of the aisle have declared "shameful and embarrassing."

We can end this today, Mr. Speaker, if you let your people go.

Holding back on a vote prevents the opening of lifesaving clinical trials at the NIH. It prevents the opening of na-

tional parks and museums for use by families everywhere. The shutdown is costing taxpayers \$12.5 million each and every hour you refuse to vote, and it is costing the American people already \$2.5 billion.

Don't listen to me. Listen to your own caucus Members: Enough is enough, said one Republican in the House. Let's get on with the business we were sent to do.

Another Republican agreed with him: The politics should be over, he said. It's time to legislate.

Another said: I'd vote for a clean CR because I don't think this strategy is working.

Many more echo these sentiments, Mr. Speaker: let your people go. Instead, you seem to be listening to a small faction in your caucus that says they want to "win at any cost." They say they won't be disrespected and that they need to get something out of this, but they don't know what it is.

Mr. Speaker, I hope you will see what is clear to everyone around the world who is watching this spectacle: there are no winners. Mr. Speaker, let your people go.

It's blackmail to shut down the government because you don't like the Affordable Care Act. Mr. Speaker, listen to those blunt assessments from your own caucus who call the followers of this strategy "lemmings with suicide vests."

Traditional allies of the GOP, like the Chamber of Commerce, have said this is "not in the best interest of the U.S. business community."

The Wall Street Journal has called it a kamikaze mission, and in fact, in their editorial headline, they said: Are the Republicans nuts?

Another Republican Senator said: This strategy isn't good for America.

This last comment really says it best, that this is not good for America. Mr. Speaker, let your people go, and bring a clean CR to a vote.

THE DEFINITION OF "FAIR"

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

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, 3 years ago, I was elected—and so were a lot of my classmates—in what we termed a very fair election. I think the issue that we all need to be concerned about right now is that it is truly unique in America that everybody is treated fairly. It doesn't matter what the color of your skin is; it doesn't matter how you worship; it doesn't matter if you even worship or don't worship—you are treated fairly. The President has said many times that this is a country in which everybody deserves a fair shot, in which everybody deserves a fair opportunity to rise to whatever level he can. Every single American deserves to be treated fairly. I hear that term. I hear it batted back and forth.

So what is the real definition of "fair"?

I went to Webster's Dictionary. It says "fair" is treating people in a way that does not favor some over others. It does not treat one person in a favorable way over somebody else.

That is truly, uniquely American because there are very few places in the world where everybody does get treated fairly.

When I look at the Affordable Care Act, or ObamaCare, I ask myself: Is this really fair?

If you look at this definition, it goes farther down and gives the antonym, or the opposite meaning. I would say that, if you were to look at what is not fair, the Affordable Care Act, or ObamaCare, would be one of those things that would be the direct opposite of what fair is.

Is it fair to give 1,200 waivers to some and not to others? Is it fair to say to employers, do you know what, this is a very complicated law, and it has grown so complicated that you need another year to give you a fair chance to understand what's in it, so we're going to give you a year's delay. Now, if you're an individual, no, you're not given that.

So my question is: Is it fair? Is it fair to give one group something and the individual not?

I don't know. I don't know that that meets anybody's definition of what fair is.

Also, I heard Secretary of Health and Human Services Sebelius asked that very same question by a journalist:

So, Secretary Sebelius, is it fair to go ahead and give employers 1 year to figure it out because it's so hard to understand that it's not really fair to put that kind of pressure on them; yet, with the individuals, they have to do it today?

She says: No, no, no. They can opt out if they're not ready to do that. Now, you have to pay a fine if you want to opt out. You have to pay a fine if you don't want to participate at all.

You are held to a different set of standards than another group, so I don't know how that fits under the definition of fair.

We can talk about this and go back and forth all day long, but this is a gift. This Affordable Care Act—this ObamaCare—is a gift that keeps giving. It's a law that, while it's giving, it's also taking. It is driving our debt to an unbelievable level. The President says it's going to reduce our debt over the long run. The truth of the matter is in 10 years it adds \$1.8 trillion, and that's a pretty fairly heavy debt for the people to absorb.

Now, back home—and I don't know if this lady is a Republican or a Democrat—Melissa had written to me from Hermitage, Pennsylvania. I want you to understand how this is. This is an individual. She has two degrees, one in criminal justice and one in teaching, but she couldn't get a job, so she started her own business.