

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Speaker, we now have only a matter of days to prevent serious damage to the U.S. economy by the so-called "sequester."

These mindless, across-the-board cuts will hurt the country and my home State of Nevada. There has been a lot of talk that these cuts won't be that bad, but let me tell you about just one school in my district that I visited last week, the Matt Kelly Elementary Empowerment School.

In terms of funding, over 50 percent of its school allocation is title I funding. It is a high-achieving, five-star school, where teachers are doing the best that they can with the little money that they receive, but the sequester would hit them hard. They would have to cut back on full-day kindergarten, fire teachers' aides, eliminate reading and math intervention programs for struggling students, reduce meals to hungry kids, and defund their family community center.

This is a model school that is working hard to improve our students' academic achievement. Now, as their reward, because some in this body can't come to agreement, Congress will take a sledgehammer to their budget.

The sequester is not fair to the children and families in my district. It is not about trimming fat. It is about the children, and that's who we should focus on today in this House.

#### THE SEQUESTER LOOMS

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

Mr. ENGEL. The sequester looms. Programs are going to be cut, and people are going to suffer—and what has this House done today under the Republican leadership? We've passed three bills. We've brought up three bills, one of which is a motion to adjourn, and the other one is a vote on the Journal. What a shame and what a disgrace.

I didn't vote for the sequester law. I thought it was not a good idea—but we have it. The only way we're going to get away from it is if we have a combination of cutting spending and raising revenues.

The President has been fair. He wants to sit down with Republicans and have a balanced bill and close the tax loopholes for Big Oil and other people who have these loopholes but who don't need them. Let the people who can afford to pay more pay a little more. It has got to be a combination.

The American people want us to reach out and meet in the middle. Unfortunately, the Republicans have refused to budge. This is not good for the American people. This is not something that we should be doing. Close the tax loopholes on Big Oil. The American people want to see a compromise.

I ask unanimous consent to bring up H.R. 699, a balanced bill to replace the

sequester with spending cuts and revenues.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. As the Chair previously advised, that request cannot be entertained absent appropriate clearance.

#### SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, we are just days away from an \$85 billion sequester that will result in arbitrary, devastating cuts to our Federal Government.

Despite the looming deadline, this House has not debated any alternative to protect programs that benefit this country's most vulnerable populations—our seniors, our students, and our middle class. Our fiscal house may be in disarray, but targeted decisions, not wholesale cuts, are needed.

This is the opportunity to come together—for both sides to roll up their sleeves and find a way forward. This is the moment to take a balanced, measured approach to deficit reduction that reduces spending thoughtfully and increases revenue responsibly. I know there is common ground between the sides; but it won't be found unless, together, Democrats and Republicans get to the table and prevent these across-the-board, irresponsible cuts. No two programs are the same, and no difficult decision should be made without thoughtful deliberation. There is no excuse for not sitting down and bridging the gap. Hardworking families everywhere are counting on it.

I ask unanimous consent to bring up H.R. 699, a balanced bill to replace the sequester with spending cuts and revenues.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. As the Chair previously advised, that request cannot be entertained absent appropriate clearance.

#### SEQUESTRATION

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

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Here we go again. Our Nation is on the brink of disaster because Congress has created another manmade disaster. Let me repeat—not Congress. House Republicans have created another manmade disaster. I haven't talked with anyone—from business leaders, to children's advocates, to AARP and senior citizen groups—who think Congress is doing a good job.

Just last year, the Republicans took \$115 billion and handed it over to 6,000 of the wealthiest Americans in the form of tax cuts. At the same time, they cut health care funding for needy children and their families. I have a list of cuts and how they're going to affect children, senior citizens, and the FAA.

Do you know what? You can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time.

In closing, I ask unanimous consent to bring up H.R. 699, a balanced bill to replace this cutting and spending disaster.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. As the Chair previously advised, that request cannot be entertained absent appropriate clearance.

#### SEQUESTRATION

(Mr. GALLEG0 asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GALLEG0. I rise today to speak out against this manufactured monster that we know as sequestration—across-the-board cuts that hurt our economy and jeopardize our families.

In small-town west Texas, when there is a fire, everyone works together to put the fire out, and no one focuses on how the fire started or who started the fire until after the fire is out. Here and now in Washington, many folks are more focused on who is to blame for the sequester than in trying to do anything about it or, worse, they use inflammatory rhetoric to add fuel to the fire.

Meanwhile, here is what Texas is facing: 159,000 jobs lost; more than 16,000 Air Force personnel furloughed, hurting Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio and Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio; 11,000 civilian employees at Fort Bliss, who could be furloughed in El Paso—and the biggest single threat to border security, that would be sequestration.

I represent the district with the largest border—Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Presidio, Fabens. Here, Border Patrol overtime is canceled, and workers are being furloughed. If you thought the lines of the border were long before, just wait.

Mr. Speaker, not having a vote this week is a decision by some in Congress for decreased border security, job loss and furloughs; and it devastates local communities and the State of Texas.

#### ELECTING CERTAIN MEMBERS TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. SOUTHERLAND. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Republican Conference, I offer a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 82

*Resolved*, That the following named Members be, and are hereby, elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE—Mr. Fincher, to rank immediately after Mr. Denham.

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS—Mr. Harris.

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET—Mr. Price of Georgia, to rank immediately after Mr. Cole; Mrs. Black, to rank immediately after Mr. Lankford; and Mr. Duffy.

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS—Mr. Renacci.

Mr. SOUTHERLAND (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be considered as read.

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

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1610

#### VOTING RIGHTS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to join in this Special Order, a bipartisan one, in which I thank my judiciary colleague and former chairman of the Judiciary Committee, JIM SENSENBRENNER of Wisconsin, for joining me in this discussion, as well as Congressman BOBBY SCOTT of Virginia, also a distinguished member of the Judiciary Committee and former chairman of the Subcommittee on Crime.

Members of the House, just days before the anniversary of the Edmund Pettus Bridge march from Montgomery to Selma—and by the way, our colleague, Congressman JOHN LEWIS, was the only Member of Congress who was in that march—the Supreme Court will review Congress' authority under the Constitution to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act, specifically section 5 of that act. I believe and I am confident the Supreme Court will and should uphold the constitutionality of Congress' authorization of section 5 for three reasons. The first: Protecting minority voting rights is a constitutional imperative that Congress is required to enforce.

When Congress acts under the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, it acts at the zenith of its constitutional authority. The Supreme Court has consistently upheld Congress' authority under the 15th Amendment. The 15th Amendment gives Congress a mandate to eliminate racial discrimination in voting by appropriate legislation. After almost a century of ineffective protection for minorities, and in the long wake of the Civil War, Congress took action to pass the 15th Amendment, and almost a hundred years later passed the Voting Rights Act, which included section 5. Protecting minority voting rights is something Congress can do, and this authority has been repeatedly affirmed by the United States Supreme Court.

For almost 50 years, the Supreme Court consistently affirmed Congress'

authority to protect minority voting rights under section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. Legal challenges to section 5 are nothing new to Congress, and are nothing new to the Court. Legal challenges to section 5 of the Voting Rights Act have routinely been made after Congress has reauthorized temporary provisions.

The Supreme Court first affirmed the constitutionality of section 5 in 1966. In the case of *South Carolina v. Katzenbach*, the Supreme Court upheld the Voting Rights Act, including section 5. The Court in that decision cited Congress' careful study and the voluminous legislative history underlying the Voting Rights Act as the basis for upholding it. During Congress' most recent authorization of section 5 in 2006, both the Senate and the House studied the continued need for section 5 by amassing an extensive record that totaled over 15,000 pages, spanned 20 hearings, and included testimony from a total of 96 witnesses representing interests ranging from Federal and State executive officials to civil rights leaders and others. Those 15,000 pages were amassed by the House Judiciary Committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee as well.

Congress paid careful attention to the Court's decisions throughout the reauthorization process and acted consistent with them to the extent of the law, and only after commencing the evidence, strongly suggested widespread violations of the 15th Amendment, which led to ample justification for congressional action.

The result, on July 13, 2006, was the largest bipartisan vote in Voting Rights Act history, with a vote of 390–33 in the House and unanimous passage in the Senate, 98–0.

Although dicta from the Court's *Namundo* decision in 2009 suggested that the burdens of section 5 may be unnecessary because times have changed, Congress found that the evidence strongly suggests otherwise.

While we have made progress, Congress continues to find that racial discrimination in voting is still present and remains concentrated in those places covered by section 5. Unfortunately, the methods of discrimination have also become more sophisticated. I believe that the Court will recognize what Congress found in 2006—that the work of section 5 is not yet complete.

The protections in section 5 don't solely impact our Federal voting processes, but rather the breadth of section 5 extends to the smallest cities and most centralized local governments. When a voting change discriminates against local citizens even at the local level, section 5 has the ability to halt the impact of discrimination. Without section 5's strength to arrest the discrimination at the outset, the burden of remedying the discrimination would be on these local citizens.

The facts in *Shelby County v. Holder* further magnify the importance of section 5 to protect the voting rights of

minorities. In the *Shelby* case, the Justice Department rejected an electoral map drawn by a city in Shelby County which would have decreased the number of black voters from 70.9 percent to 29.5 percent. In this instance, section 5 preserved the ability of the African American community in the city to elect their candidate of choice to the city council. Shelby County, along with many examples examined by Congress in 2006, highlights the importance of reauthorization of section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

The constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act is an important matter for the Court to consider and continue to review, and is important to the democratic ideals of this country.

We believe the Supreme Court owes much deference to the considered judgment of the people's elected representatives since Congress continues to find that racial discrimination in voting is present and remains concentrated in many of the places covered by section 5. We expect the United States Supreme Court to continue to declare that section 5 of the Voting Rights Act is critical to protecting minority voting rights—all voting rights—well into the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER).

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan for yielding.

I was the principal author of the Voting Rights Act extension in 2006, which did pass this House 390–33, and unanimously was passed by the Senate.

□ 1620

The *Shelby* County case concentrates on the constitutionality of section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, and that is the section that requires pre-clearance of electoral changes in covered jurisdictions. The plaintiffs in the *Shelby* County case allege that since things have changed since 1965, section 5 is no longer applicable. They're wrong.

When Congress considered, in 2006, the extension of the Voting Rights Act, including section 5, the Constitution Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee had probably the most extensive legislative record in the history of this Congress compiled, 12,000 pages on this side of the Capitol, numerous hearings, numerous witnesses, including those who were opposed to section 5, and even those who were opposed to the entire concept of the Voting Rights Act. So every viewpoint was heard; and the mountain of testimony, I don't think, can be equaled by any other issue that Congress has discussed, in my memory, and maybe in the history of the Republic.

I want to make two points. The first point is that all of that testimony very clearly shows that, even in the years immediately prior to 2006, there were attempts at discrimination made, mainly by local governments, to attempt to disenfranchise minority voters. And, in fact, over 700 requests for