

of the most successful lobbying experiments I've ever seen.

But now that we are just a few months away from full implementation of the Affordable Care Act, the health industry is launching what The Washington Post calls "an all-out, last-ditch effort to shield themselves from the blame" for the rate increases that they will impose. Unless they are allowed to charge significantly more money, they tell us, the whole system will collapse.

Now, this is perplexing. We made every effort to address the concerns of the industry when we developed this landmark legislation. It's also deeply troubling that the industry that will gain so much from health reform is now engaging in a misleading PR campaign against it. Despite unprecedented profits and surplus cash reserves, it is deliberately undermining the law. It already succeeded in shaping its benefits.

So let's take a careful look at their claims. For years, companies have offered healthy young adults junk health insurance at cut-rate prices: plans with sky-high deductibles and lifetime limits that didn't cover much. For \$100 a month, you could get a plan that offered practically no useful coverage.

Meanwhile, older people with escalating health care costs were stuck with crippling bills or locked out of the market altogether. Across the board, plans dropped consumers, coverage changed without warning, and people of all ages went without care. ObamaCare will finally put a stop to these abuses.

With better plans with real benefits costs, more than the meager plans marketed by the industry to young people, the stability and affordability will win out in the long run. There are no more games. Instead of avoiding risk, the industry will have to manage it.

ObamaCare will financially help the large majority of healthy young consumers. In fact, 90 percent of the currently uninsured adults under 30 will be eligible for subsidized coverage. Additionally, increased transparency and competition will force rates to drop further, along with the growing pool of young participants who are cheaper to cover. We did all this in my home State of Washington years ago, so I know it can be done.

For the first time, average Americans not insured through a job will get health insurance without having insurance that won't drop you when you're sick, insurance that won't discriminate against women, insurance that won't waste your money on excessive marketing, and will actually cover needed care. These are the crucial consumer protections we fought and got.

Which is the heavier price: an extra \$20 a month for a young person with a healthy income to have reliable insurance or bankrupting an uninsured family? Meeting the needs of the Nation and preserving the well-being of our population is healthiest for all.

So I'm calling on the health insurance industry to be team players and to be good corporate citizens. They have a lot riding on this roll-out, at least as much as the Obama administration and the Congress. We need to work together, not against each other. We have to make this advance work.

We don't need to have a scare campaign on television telling people that if ObamaCare goes in, your premiums are going to go up, and it's his fault. They're the ones with the profits, they're the ones with the reserves, they're the ones that are raising the prices.

They have to be faced with that, Madam Speaker, because otherwise the public is going to be confused. They tried to confuse people all through the establishment of the Affordable Care Act. They didn't succeed. And, in fact, when they used it in the campaign, the people said, do you know what, we like Obama, we like what he did, we want it to happen. So the insurance companies had to go back to the trenches and figure out a way to confuse the American people. Stop it, insurance industry.

SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. WILLIAMS. Madam Speaker, President Obama's sequester is bad for America. There's no getting around it. Good programs are going to be cut, good people are going to be furloughed; and bad leadership from President Obama is to blame. In the last four years, almost every important budget deadline has been met with impasse and little has been done to enact a responsible budget.

□ 1020

Systematic failure to perform the basic responsibilities of governing has led us to the catastrophic sequestration we see today.

President Obama came up with this idea for the sequester as a temporary solution for another fiscal crisis in 2011. As we've been saying for months, House Republicans are the only ones who have taken action to balance the budget. Last Congress, the House passed two bills, the Sequester Replacement Reconciliation Act and the Spending Reduction Act. However, in recent remarks at the White House, President Obama attempted to blame House Republicans—who control only one-half of one-third of the government—for the looming cuts.

If there's going to be a solution, President Obama is going to have to work with his own political party in the Senate and negotiate with the House. Yet all the President has done so far is call for higher taxes again. He got his higher taxes—\$600 billion from higher earners, with no corresponding spending cuts—at the end of 2012. It seems he will not stop until every single American has to hand over more of

their hard-earned money to the Federal Government—which, I might add, has a bad track record of spending it.

There is no denying that the government spends too much, but these blind cuts are irresponsible and will have a disastrous effect on our military. Yesterday, the Joint Chiefs of Staff testified at a hearing that our national security will be put at risk if they are forced to make deep reductions in spending for manpower, training, and equipment modernization programs.

This is no longer a debate between Congress and the White House to gain the upper hand. This is real, this is serious, and this is the time to take action. In fact, I sent a letter to the President this week urging him to act now to prevent the harmful fallout that the sequester will cause. I pray that he reads it.

While Friday does mark the sequester deadline, we have until March 27 to do the right thing on behalf of our men and women in uniform, as well as the hundreds of thousands of employees expected to be drastically impacted by the sequester.

If the President continues his unwillingness to stop campaigning and start helping the American people who elected him to lead, then at the very least we need to allow the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to operate under a budget rather than a continuing resolution. This would give them greater flexibility and put them in the best possible position to absorb these across-the-board cuts. By letting the DOD and VA operate under a budget, these agencies can prevent permanent damage from the arbitrary sequester cuts.

Madam Speaker, I represent Texas' 25th Congressional District, which includes a large portion of Fort Hood—one of the largest military installations in the world. The United States Army estimates \$291 million in cuts for Fort Hood, including nearly 600 civilian jobs and nearly 30,000 jobs statewide.

This is preventable. And quite frankly, it's totally unacceptable. We shouldn't have to move a third bill in the House before the Senate finally acts. It's time for President Obama to drop the politics and campaign speeches and do something. Putting our public safety, national security and economy at risk by letting the sequester pass without preventative action is reckless and destructive. Our troops, our businesses, and our families deserve better. Americans expect our President to lead.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, February 25, 2013.

Hon. BARACK H. OBAMA,

The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR PRESIDENT OBAMA: I am writing to express my outrage over the proposed cuts to the Department of Defense as part of the sequestration phase of the Budget Control Act of 2011. As commander-in-chief of the U.S. military, your inaction to prevent these cuts from happening to our military and their families is unconscionable.

In the 112th Congress, the House of Representatives passed two bills, H.R. 5652, the Sequester Replacement Reconciliation Act of 2012 and H.R. 6684, the Spending Reduction Act of 2012 which would have canceled the sequester of approximately \$98 billion in discretionary defense, discretionary non-defense, and mandatory defense FY2013 spending. Neither bill was even considered by the U.S. Senate. The House of Representatives shouldn't have to move a third bill before you or the Senate finally acts.

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta recently stated, "If sequester happens, it is going to badly damage the readiness of the United States of America. We have the most powerful military force on the face of the earth right now. It is important in terms of providing stability and peace in the world. If sequester goes into effect, and we have to do the kind of cuts that will go right at readiness, right at maintenance, right at training, we are going to weaken the United States. And make it much more difficult for us to respond to the crises in the world."

Gen. Martin Dempsey went further in recent testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee and stated that sequestration would put our military on a path where the "force is so degraded and so unready" that it would be "immoral to use the force."

Mr. President, I represent the 25th Congressional District of Texas which includes a large portion of Fort Hood—one of the largest military installations in the world. The United States Army estimates \$291 million in cuts for Fort Hood including nearly 600 civilian jobs, and nearly 30 thousand jobs statewide. This is preventable! Let's cut the nonsense—drop the politics, drop the campaign speeches, and do something.

We shouldn't put our national security, public safety, and the economy at risk by letting the sequester pass without preventative action. Our troops, our businesses, and our families deserve better. Mr. President, Americans expect you to lead.

Sincerely,

ROGER WILLIAMS,
Member of Congress.

SEQUESTER

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

Ms. SINEMA. Madam Speaker, my State, Arizona, has made tremendous sacrifices in the struggle to stand strong through our Nation's fiscal crisis. Today, Arizona is last in education funding, last in retail growth, and first in home foreclosures.

I'm proud to say, however, that Arizonans are resilient. We are tough. Our State was forged out of rugged frontierism—we're independent and we have deep respect for the traditions that make us Arizona. We've never shrunk from a tough fight and we've never been afraid to roll up our sleeves and work hard. Right now, we're working hard to climb out of the recession that we all face together. It hasn't been easy, but we're doing it.

Arizona is sixth in the Nation for defense sector jobs. Most of these are private sector jobs. Employers have come to Arizona because of our people and our work ethic. We innovate and compete alongside booming defense States like California, Texas, and Virginia.

Employers are hiring thousands of skilled workers from our communities. Our State is a vital resource to our Nation's military readiness. We were able to get there through hard work, innovative thought, and intense collaboration between community and industry partners.

In the greater Phoenix area, our economy is currently growing steadily at the rate of 3 percent, but the deep cuts, known as the sequester, would cut our growth in half. In fact, Arizona's potential job losses caused by sequestration rank 13th among all U.S. States. These losses will be felt by families working in Arizona's defense sector and military base operations. These are skilled, middle class jobs.

Of the nearly 50,000 jobs that we expect to lose in Arizona from the sequester, approximately 35,000 are linked to military readiness and base operations. Furloughs will affect 10,000 civilian workers, and Arizonans will experience a devastating \$52 million pay cut.

I come home each week and I talk about the work that we're doing in Congress, but most of the time I come home to listen. A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to listen to plant engineers at General Dynamics in Scottsdale. They showed me the high-tech and innovative defense products that were coming right out of our own community, built and programmed by our friends and neighbors. This type of innovation in our own backyard is the future of our State, and that future is in danger.

Last week, a bipartisan group of city elected officials, business leaders, and community advocates gave me a message to bring back to Congress. I'm proud of their joint effort, and I'm proud of their service to our community. I consider it a privilege to deliver their message.

In our State, we are concerned that Congress will turn the clock back on Arizona's hard work and progress. We are worried about hardworking families losing their jobs.

As the granddaughter of a World War II veteran and a proud sister of a gunner's mate in the U.S. Navy today, I remember every day that it is our moral duty to do right by the men and women in uniform who risk their lives to keep us safe.

Avoiding the sequestration should not be about partisanship or finger-pointing; it's about jobs. It's that simple. I stand with the dean of our State's delegation, Senator JOHN MCCAIN, when I say that this sequester will be devastating for Arizona. It's bad for hardworking Americans, and it turns a blind eye to my State's proud efforts and proven perseverance. I affirm my commitment to working with anybody who's willing to put our differences aside and put the people we serve first.

We still have time to stop this. Let's roll up our sleeves together and get the work done.

SEQUESTER

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today because we have to get our fiscal house in order, but sequestration is not the way to do it.

There is no question we need to address our unsustainable debt and deficit. Our debt remains above 73 percent of GDP—up from 36 percent just 6 years ago—and our deficit still hovers just below \$1 trillion. But the solution must be a big, balanced, and bipartisan deficit reduction plan modeled on plans like Cooper-LaTourette over a 10-year period, not the meat-ax approach of sequestration.

We can't pursue deficit reduction at all costs. The cure shouldn't be worse than the disease. The sequester will undermine our growing—but still fragile—economic recovery.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office predicts sequestration would halve economic growth for 2013. Another study projects job loss in 2013 alone would hit 2.1 million jobs, mostly from small businesses. We just went through this not more than 2 months ago, as we remember, the fiscal cliff. Sadly, we seem no wiser for that experience. We continue to bicker rather than plan; we posture rather than negotiate; we delay rather than decide. We go from one crisis to the next, thereby threatening our economy and further undermining the public's tenuous faith in its political institutions.

We lack a comprehensive approach to just about every challenge we face, including climate change, energy, transportation, health care, social insurance, defense spending, immigration reform and gun violence. It is management by paralysis. It's budgeting with a meat cleaver. It's absurd, and it has to end.

The sequester lops off \$1.2 trillion from the Federal budget over the next decade, cutting \$85 billion just this year.

□ 1030

Over the last week, I have met with dozens of groups for whom the sequester is not some abstract budgeting term. For these organizations and people back in my district, sequestration will have real, damaging effects.

I met with the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, which explained that under sequestration in Illinois, 125 AIDS-afflicted families will lose their housing. Another 613 people in Illinois won't receive their medication through the AIDS Drug Assistance program, which will be cut by \$3 million. I also met with the Illinois Partners for Human Service and heard from the Ounce of Prevention Fund. Both groups informed me that 4,000 children in Illinois won't receive Head Start services under sequestration. Thanks to sequestration, 4,100 college students in Illinois won't receive Federal work-study assistance.