

at the Point is just the beginning of a lifetime of selfless service. Indeed, scores of West Point graduates—recent West Point graduates—have made the ultimate sacrifice serving us in Iraq and Afghanistan.

While I was there, I had the opportunity, in fact, to walk among the graves of the heroes buried there on that beautiful plain high above the Hudson River. Many are buried by year with the classmates with whom they went to school.

Tomorrow, General Norman Schwarzkopf will be laid to rest in this cemetery; and in that very hour, we will be here facing a choice of whether we will ask more of those who love and serve West Point or whether we will look elsewhere.

□ 1040

If we do nothing, sequestration will clobber West Point with \$92 million in arbitrary cuts. In fact, West Point is taking the biggest cut of any Army institution in New York. Sequestration means that our cadets will continue to live and train in outdated facilities that are over 40 years old. It means that furloughs will happen for 1,300 employees working there.

The men and women who feed, instruct, and protect our Nation's next generation of military leaders shouldn't lose their jobs because this Congress can't do ours. Sequestration is a terrible idea. It is the dead hand of the last Congress reaching out to strangle economic activity. We are 2 days away from the deadline, and there are people here who actually think it's a good idea to let it happen.

I believe we need to cut spending. I believe we need to bring down our debt and start balancing our deficit. But we have choices: we can end lavish tax breaks to private jet owners before we ask the kids at West Point to do with less; we can stop giving tax breaks to companies that ship our jobs overseas before we weaken the Long Grey Line; and we can end massive tax cuts for oil companies before we weaken a great American institution like West Point.

This Congress has a clear choice. And for those colleagues who choose to do nothing, I ask you to head home to your district and explain to the kids whom you nominated to West Point that these are good ideas and necessary sacrifices, that it's better for them to sacrifice than for private jet owners, for big oil companies, or for companies that ship our jobs overseas.

The Army's motto is "This we'll defend." West Point is something that we should defend because the cadets there will continue to honorably serve all of us and our country.

Congress doing nothing is not a choice. It's not good for our cadets, and it's not good for our country. Let's stop this series of self-inflicted crises and work together to reach a balanced compromise to replace these across-the-board cuts with a smart, balanced approach that will address our fiscal challenges.

SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Madam Speaker, it just came over the newswire a few minutes ago that on Friday morning, March 1, there will be a meeting at the White House involving President Obama, the leadership of the House, Speaker BOEHNER, and the leadership of the Senate, Senate Majority Leader REID to begin a process of talking about resolving the issue that we're obviously confronting as a Nation a few hours away, which is an automatic mechanism put into effect by the Budget Control Act of 2011 to cut discretionary spending across the board.

I begin with that point because, in fact, that really should have been happening months ago. In fact, that was the intent of sequestration, which is a mechanism that was created in 1985 by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings legislation that set up the formula for sequestration that cut across defense and non-defense programs. And as Senator Phil Gramm, who was the inventor of sequestration, said in a speech a couple of years ago: It was never the objective of Gramm-Rudman to trigger sequester. The objective of Gramm-Rudman was to have the threat of sequester force compromise and action.

In other words, this was a mechanism that was designed to hurt. It was designed to create so much pain politically that the two sides, which again were in a similar point of gridlock in 1985, would begin the process of negotiation to deal with a structural deficit.

If you look at the history of what occurred from 1985 up until early 2000, that pressure actually did force Congress to face up to the fact that we could not continue to pile up deficits and burden our children and grandchildren with further debt. Unfortunately, in this present Congress, it's taken a little longer for the message to get through, but, nonetheless, the meeting that's scheduled on Friday morning hopefully is going to begin the process of having the two sides do what their predecessors did in the eighties and nineties and begin the process of a balanced plan to eliminate the structural deficit that our Nation confronts today.

Yesterday, President Obama was over in Newport News, Virginia, talking to shipyard workers about the fact that the Navy, which is obviously a critical part of our Federal Government, now has to hit spending cut targets over the next 7 months. We're 5 months into a fiscal year right now. They have begun the process of cancelling the refueling of the USS Lincoln, one of our 10 aircraft carriers which are so critical to force projection in this country. And he was absolutely right to be there. This is a program which, if it is cancelled or delayed, it's going to daisy-chain its way through our Navy's fleet

of 287 ships which must be repaired and maintained constantly to make sure that they're available for operations.

I represent southeastern Connecticut, the home of Electric Boat shipyard that builds and repairs nuclear submarines. We have the USS Providence slated to come in for a needed overhaul and repair later this fiscal year. The Navy has notified the shipyard that that work is going to be suspended. That's 200,000 man-hours for welders, for shipwrights, for machinists, for electricians that do amazing work with incredible skills to make sure that our fleet is capable of meeting the mission requests that are out there. The USS Miami, which is a submarine that was burned in an arsonist fire last year, is another repair job which EB was going to be on the road helping the shipyard workers in Kittery, Maine, to make sure that that critical vessel was going to be back in the fleet. That project has now been put on ice because of sequestration.

These are just totally irrational, destructive outcomes for a bill which was designed to force compromise. It was not to be a policy, not to be an outcome. When you look at Admiral Greenert, the CNO of the Navy, who is one of the most outstanding leaders in our country, he has cancelled the USS Harry Truman, which is a carrier strike force that was scheduled to go over to the Middle East to fly air-cover missions for our troops in Afghanistan, to keep the Strait of Hormuz open where 20 percent of the world's oil supply passes every single day. This is a policy or an outcome that threatens the military readiness of this country. Secretary Panetta at the Department of Defense and General Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, has made that crystal clear.

So the stakes could not be higher for our country to make sure that this process, which belatedly is starting on Friday morning, is going to result in smart, balanced ways to reduce the deficit.

I can offer one big idea that will get us to that point. I sit on the Agriculture Committee, which is a great bipartisan committee that's been working hard in terms of reforming ag policy in this country. It is time that the direct payment system to farms comes to an end. The good news is that Republicans and Democrats on that committee and Republicans and Democrats in this Chamber agree on that. We can help farmers deal with the vagaries of weather and unexpected events through risk insurance, which is far cheaper to the U.S. taxpayer than direct payments. That will save \$30 billion over the next 5 years. That is a huge step forward that we can use as a building block to avoid these horrible outcomes and make sure that Senator Gramm's warning to us is heeded by this Chamber and by this Congress.

SEQUESTRATION

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

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK. Madam Speaker, the voters sent us to Congress because they want solutions, but reckless, across-the-board cuts are not solutions. We are just 2 days away from the start of these cuts known as sequestration, 2 days away from hurting, rather than helping, the people who elected us.

Let me share with you some examples.

I represent Arizona's District One. This is a vast, beautiful, mostly rural district. It's larger than the State of Pennsylvania. My district includes one of the greatest natural resources of the world, the Grand Canyon, and many other national parks. The Grand Canyon is not only an environmental treasure; it is an economic driver. It brings \$700 million to our economy and creates 12,000 jobs annually.

If our national parks are forced to cut operating hours, cut services or even close facilities, we will be hurting the economy, not helping it. Thousands of jobs and small businesses are connected to the national parks in my district and across our Nation. Hurting our national parks is not a solution.

I'm also concerned about how sequestration will hurt education. Thousands of low-income students in Arizona would no longer receive aid to help cover the cost of college. Work study jobs would be eliminated, and Arizona is the largest recipient of impact aid funding in the Nation. Impact aid compensates local school districts for revenue they lost due to the presence of federally owned and, therefore, tax-exempt property.

□ 1050

It compensates local school districts for costs incurred due to federally connected students.

What are federally connected students?

These are students who are Native American, who have a parent in the military, or who live on Federal property.

In my district in 2012, for example, the Chinle Unified School District received more than \$22 million in impact aid. Sequestration cuts would deeply affect a district like Chinle's. It would hurt its capacity for everything from transportation to staffing and from construction to classroom size. Hurting our schools and our students is not a solution.

Madam Speaker, what about our tribal communities?

My district has 12 Native American tribes; 25 percent of my district is Native American. These are residents of some of our most remote and rural communities. The median household income is \$7,000 a year. These folks often struggle with access to the most basic medical care and resources. If se-

questration takes effect, their primary source of health care, the Indian Health Service, will take a major hit. Other Federal programs, such as Medicare, Medicaid and veterans benefits, are exempt from sequestration cuts. The Indian Health Service is not exempt. IHS may be cut by over \$200 million.

What does a cut like that mean to tribal communities in my district?

It would mean losing hundreds of jobs. It would mean cuts in primary health care. Nationwide, it's estimated that 3,000 fewer people would be admitted for inpatient care and that 800,000 fewer Native Americans would be able to receive outpatient visits.

Hurting our tribal communities is not a solution. The consequences of these cuts are not TV sound bites. They are real, and they hurt my district and our Nation. It will take both parties working together to find a responsible, thoughtful solution to our budget challenges. It will take both parties working together to put a stop to these reckless cuts of sequestration.

So let's work together, and let's show the American people that we are a Congress that can find solutions.

SEQUESTER

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

Ms. SCHWARTZ. There are just 2 days that are left for Congress to work together to avert these very deep, across-the-board, automatic cuts to our domestic priorities.

The Obama administration released a State-by-State report outlining the harmful impact these cuts would have on middle class families, on jobs and on economic growth. Yet Republicans continue to reject any balanced approach to deficit reduction presented by House and Senate Democrats, which includes spending cuts, additional revenues and economic growth. Moving from crisis to crisis does not move us any closer to finding a long-term solution to deficit reduction. Instead, these crises cause uncertainty, inhibit private sector investment, undermine consumer confidence, and slow economic growth.

In Pennsylvania, thousands of jobs in both the public and private sectors are at risk of elimination due to the inaction of House Republicans—from elementary school teachers to scientific researchers. Here are just a few examples:

Sharon Easterling, who is the executive director of the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children, said that Republican inaction would hurt Pennsylvania's children as "nearly 2,300 Head Start children will lose access to preschool almost immediately";

Holly Lange, who is the president of the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, said:

These cuts may force the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging to limit vital transpor-

tation services for our seniors, who depend on shared rides to remain independent in their homes;

Cinda Waldbuesser, the senior Pennsylvania program manager for the National Parks Conservation Center, said:

Every national park in the system would be affected, including treasured places like Gettysburg, Independence Hall and Valley Forge, and the local economies that depend on visitor spending would also suffer.

The President and House and Senate Democrats have put forth a balanced solution that would replace the across-the-board cuts with a plan that does cut spending but that raises revenues and builds economic opportunity for all of us in this Nation. Republicans have yet to offer a balanced plan or to be willing to engage in the serious discussions of a reasonable bipartisan alternative for our seniors, our children, our first responders, our teachers, our civilian workers in the Department of Defense, our law enforcement officers, our public health professionals, our qualified medical researchers—who research not only at NIH but at medical centers across our country—and business owners who are seeking loan guarantees.

I could go on and on. You've heard some of the examples, but the fact is that all Americans are counting on us to act. It is our responsibility to act, and we should.

I urge my Republican colleagues to reject their partisan, one-sided approach and to be willing to work with us to find common ground and to reach a solution to deficit reduction that takes a balanced approach; that respects our obligation to Americans, particularly our seniors and our children; that strengthens the middle class; that creates certainty for the business community and for our middle class consumers; and that creates opportunities for families and businesses across the country.

The meeting called this morning by the President is an opportunity to find that solution, and I encourage Republicans to take this moment seriously, to be willing to compromise in order to avert these cuts and to set us on a path to both deficit reduction and economic growth. It is not too late. It is increasingly almost too late, but let's get it done on behalf of the American people and our future.

PROTECTING SMALL BUSINESSES

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

Mr. BENTIVOLIO. Last quarter, the economy actually shrunk rather than grew. That's unacceptable. Something has to change.

As I've traveled throughout my district in Michigan, business leaders tell me the same thing over and over again: It's too hard to start or to expand my small business because I can hardly understand how to comply with the latest