

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

regulations that have come out of Washington.

It appears this is no longer a Nation of laws but of regulations—more than 80,000 pages at last estimation. And they're right. Over the last 4 years, the number of business regulations has skyrocketed, and the result has been the worst economic recovery in nearly a century. We've had such weak economic growth that I'm not even sure we can call it a recovery. The millions of people still out of work sure haven't recovered.

As many of you know, I own a small business. I understand what it's like to work hard in trying to build a business from the ground up. The small business owners I know back home are not trying to game the system, and they're not trying to manipulate the market to gain a competitive advantage. What they're trying to do is build lives for their families. They're trying to put food on their tables, send their kids to college, and put a little savings away for the future. They're good, honest, hardworking people who are trying to carve out a small slice of the American Dream.

These small business owners try to follow the rules, but it's becoming more difficult to do so. This may come as a surprise to bureaucrats here in Washington, but most small businesses don't have legal departments. They have their spouses, family members or friends who are trying to get them through all the red tape. These businessmen and women are too busy creating wealth and jobs to constantly stay up to date with the thousands of new regulations being thrown at them from the White House. The work of compliance is not done in a skyscraper downtown. It's done around a kitchen table after a hard day's work.

For example, a few weeks ago, a liberal writer for Slate.com wrote about the difficulties he faced when he tried to start his own small business and how surprised he was at his experience. After describing the problems he'd had, he concluded that red tape, long lines, inconvenient office hours, and other logistical hassles probably won't stop tomorrow's supergenius from launching the next great billion-dollar company, but it's a large and needless deterrent to the Nation of humble workaday firms that, for many people, are a path to autonomy and prosperity.

□ 1100

He also said:

Ideology aside, simply putting a little more thought into the process could make things much easier.

I agree. That's why I introduced the Protect Small Business Jobs Act of 2013.

For too many businesses, the central planners in the numerous agencies of this government have set up roadblocks to their success. My bill offers a simple correction. If found to be in violation of a Federal regulation, a small business, as defined by the Small Busi-

ness Administration, is given a 6-month grace period to correct the problem before being sanctioned. It allows for an extension of 3 more months if the business is making a good-faith effort to correct the problem, and if the problem is corrected, at the end of the grace period the fine is waived.

This allows small companies to have a chance at becoming compliant without being hit with devastating fines. It levels the playing field and keeps thousands, if not millions, of American workers in their jobs because over 60 percent of new work in America is created by small businesses. Giving companies a grace period may seem controversial, but I'd like to dispel some concerns I've heard since I've introduced this bill.

What about environmental issues? Contamination will only be covered if the small business can actually clean it up within 6 months. This gives more incentive to fix the problem because, if the choice is between closing up shop due to an oppressive penalty or cleaning up their mess and staying in business, the latter is going to be chosen. Furthermore, this bill gives a grace period for regulations, not law. Any breaking of property law will still be prohibited.

What if an accident occurs? Firstly, most violations that could cause harm to people are largely covered under an exception in the bill. Secondly, this bill does not prevent workers from suing for damages if their company fails to keep their work environment safe. This bill really only affects sanctions in issues of prior restraint.

SEQUESTRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I stand here today in absolute disappointment with this body and the total lack of Republican leadership. I can't even begin to express the disappointment I have with the GOP leaders who choose to play a game of chicken rather than do something to save 2 million American jobs.

After more than 20 years of watching my father serve the 10th Congressional District of New Jersey, the district that he loved, I came here to Washington to do the same. I came down here to get to work, to dig in, to get my hands dirty, and to help resolve the pressing issues that will ruin this country if ignored.

As we speak, people are terrified; and if they aren't terrified, it's because they've stopped listening to the partisan bickering. But make no mistake, these cuts will be unimaginable to people across the country and to people across New Jersey's 10th Congressional District.

So I ask my colleagues: why are we here again? Why? We've played this game before, heard this tune, danced this oppressing musical number before.

It's like I'm Bill Murray in the movie "Groundhog Day," where every morning I wake up hoping it is a new day, and every morning I wake up to the same maddening song. It's the song of a failed Republican leadership doing absolutely nothing—nothing all over again.

Talk about a do-nothing Congress. The 112th Congress passed just 283 bills, and 22 percent of them were bills to name post offices, courthouses, and other projects. So when you break it down, Congress really only voted to pass two bills a week—two bills a week. We can do better than this, but we need to work together.

When I speak to my fellow Democrat Members, there is a frustration. They are frustrated because we've seen the pain and fear in the people we speak to back home. There's frustration because we are ready to work. That's why I was sent here. That's what I was sent here to do.

So let's stop the nonsense and let's get to work. The effects of sequestration are real. Maybe people don't understand what the word "sequestration" means, but when they start to lose vital services that they need to live, it is going to devastate working families, the middle class, and the vulnerable in my district.

In New Jersey alone, more than 40,000 people could lose their jobs. New Jersey will lose \$17 million in funding for teachers, aids, and staff who help disabled children. Thirteen hundred children in New Jersey will be cut from Head Start. Eleven thousand civilian Department of Defense employees will be furloughed. Senior Meals on Wheels programs will lose nearly half a million in funding in New Jersey, possibly the only meal they have for the day. And funds will be slashed for victims of domestic violence, resulting in 700 victims not receiving the care that they need to survive.

Right now, Democrats have a plan on the table that will stop sequestration and start reducing the deficit in a balanced way. It's a plan that cuts spending responsibly, closes corporate tax loopholes, protects the most vulnerable, and ensures millionaires pay their fair share. And you know what? More than 76 percent of the American people support a balanced plan.

Including today, we have 3 days to go; and with \$85 billion in automatic deep spending cuts on the chopping block, it's time for Washington to stop playing games, stop pointing fingers and do what's right by the American people. That's what the American people expect, and, quite frankly, that's what they deserve.

Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to bring H.R. 699, the Stop the Sequester Job Loss Now Act, to the floor.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the House is in session solely for the purpose of conducting morning-hour debate. Therefore, the gentleman's request cannot be entertained.