

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.

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I'm deeply saddened for the American people that we are unable to bring this bill to the floor and stop the loss of 2 million American jobs.

SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. The sequester drama that we are watching play out this week is exactly why I voted against the New Year's Day budget package.

Two months ago, all of the forces were aligned to force a bigger agreement, but we set our sights too low. It generated too little revenue, and, most importantly, there was not a fundamental reform in the way that we do business.

We merely put off the fiscal cliff in order to have not one, not two, but three such dramas between now and next summer. Friday is the sequestration; March 27, the continuing resolution runs out; and sometime this summer, the Treasury Department is going to run out of capacity to keep juggling the national debt, and we face that drama all over again.

Actually, there's a fourth cliff if you count the so-called "dairy cliff" which will potentially double milk prices in September.

The path forward is to focus on areas of potential agreement between the right and the left. A great place to start is health care. Reform is taking place around the country. And, in fact, nowhere is it more exciting and promising than what is happening in Oregon where we are working in concert with the implementation of the Health Care Reform Act to squeeze out waste and inefficiency. We are working to reward value instead of volume, and the Federal Government has bet \$1.9 billion that we will be able to reduce health care inflation at least 2 percent a year and maintain quality.

□ 1110

Helping people stay well rather than paying people for disease and illness is a logical way to go. After all, the Affordable Care Act embedded every one of these major reforms that used to be bipartisan, that had been implemented by business, health care plans in red States and blue States, that had been advocated by Democratic and Republican Governors alike, and, indeed, supported by Members of the House and Senate in both parties. Instead of fighting health care reform, we ought to accelerate it. If we can deliver on the Oregon promise, it in and of itself will save more money nationally over the next 10 years than we're arguing about with the sequestration.

We also must address the huge budget challenges that are facing the Pentagon, in large measure because neither it nor Congress has insisted on

change and, indeed, in some cases, has institutionalized bad decisions.

We haven't scaled back our horribly expensive, outmoded, inefficient nuclear deterrent program, maintaining perhaps 8–10 times the warheads for what we need for actual deterrence today with three massive, expensive, redundant delivery systems that are out of sync with today's threats. We haven't used nuclear weapons for the last 68 years. We probably won't use them for the next 68 years, and there is no imaginable circumstance when we would use even a fraction of the weapons we have. And the cost for that conservatively is in excess of two-thirds of \$1 trillion over the next 10 years.

We've never come to grips with the cost of an all-volunteer Army. Our forces are significantly above what we had a decade earlier when we were supposedly staffed to fight two wars simultaneously. We need to scale that down, to refocus it, to supplement reductions in troop levels with beefed-up support to the National Guard, which is far more cost-effective and easier on our troops.

We need to reform our bloated, fossilized, outdated farm bill to spend less, help more farmers and the environment, and show that we can rise above politics and habits to have a farm program for this century, not 1949. The majority of farmers and ranchers in the United States get nothing. The majority of the support flows to the top 10 percent, who don't need it at all, and it distorts our international trade posture.

The final looming threat is the dysfunction, unfairness, and inefficiency of our tax system. It costs us huge sums to administer. It leaks hundreds of billions of dollars in tax avoidance, evasion, and mistakes, to say nothing of misplaced incentives, and it costs over \$160 billion a year to administer.

Now, clearly there's a need for more revenue in a growing and aging population, but fundamentally, we need a new broad base of support that will help us pay the transition necessary for a reformed system.

Madam Speaker, this is not rocket science. This is within our capacity. We ought to get started on it now.

SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. MAFFEI. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Since becoming central New York's new Representative, I have met with over a hundred business owners and development leaders in my community. I've visited universities, the hospitals, the factories, the public schools, and I've met with local leaders and law enforcement and public safety. The one message I keep hearing throughout my district is that we need to work together to grow and strengthen our middle class and create jobs. Work to-

gether. Now, more than ever, that's what Congress and the President needs to do. That's what the American people and my constituents overwhelmingly want.

If people do not come to the table and work together by March 1, this Friday, more than 70,000 jobs are at risk in my State alone. At Hancock Air Base, New York National Guard employees, 280 of them are at risk. Two hundred eighty National Guard employees at the 174th Attack Wing will be furloughed, notwithstanding the fact that this unit is flying missions in Afghanistan as we debate these issues.

Automatic spending cuts will force the FAA to cut air traffic controller shifts and potentially eliminate overnight shifts at the Syracuse Hancock International Airport and other upstate New York airports. Cuts will also force TSA to cut back on personnel, increasing wait times by an hour or more at many airports. This will have a chilling effect on a still-fragile economic recovery.

Seventy thousand New York college students will lose tuition assistance, and across the country, 70,000 deserving children will lose Head Start. Now, to keep America strong we are told that we need to make sure for our national security and our economy that we improve STEM education, science and technology. This is doing the opposite.

We need to take a balanced approach, trimming where necessary instead of these arbitrary sweeping cuts that hurt middle class families.

This is not a partisan issue. The Republicans on this floor have spoken about how bad these arbitrary cuts are and how damaging they might be. Our Nation needs to get its fiscal house in order, and we need to do it right away, not on the backs of our middle class and seniors, and not at the expense of thousands of jobs.

Now, there is a specific plan to do that. It balances cuts with revenue increases.

Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to bring up H.R. 699 with this balanced approach.

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.

Mr. MAFFEI. Well, Madam Speaker, I do understand that, but I do hope that the leadership of this House considers just doing a vote, a regular up-or-down vote, on this or any plan to avoid these arbitrary cuts.

We need to institute better programs and methods to root out waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used most efficiently. There's no question about that. We also need comprehensive tax reform that finds revenues in ways that don't hurt the middle class, like ending the tax loopholes for corporations that ship jobs overseas and ending the tax breaks for big oil and gas companies.