

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, we have two choices. We will be able to vote on this floor on a Senate version of the Violence Against Women Act. We will also have a House version that will try to be amended to that bill.

There are several reasons why the House version is not a good bill and ought to be opposed. In my district, the immigrant provisions left out of the House bill will have a profound impact on my constituents. Immigrant women are at risk of domestic violence more than any other women, and they are less likely to report their attackers due to fear of deportation. The Senate version offers protections that the House bill does not.

I have several college campuses in my district. The Senate bill would help combat violent crimes on college campuses; the House bill does not. The Senate version of the Violence Against Women Act also includes the reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims' Protection Act; the House bill does not.

Mr. Speaker, sadly, domestic violence affects the entire country. That is why it is absolutely a shame that the Republican leadership has brought up a House bill that will jeopardize the safety of millions of women by making it even harder to receive the services and programs that are available.

THE SEQUESTRATION MYTH

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

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I'm joined by some of our colleagues tonight here to talk about the sequester. We've heard a lot about it in the last, I guess, 10 or 12 1-minute speeches about the sequester and how bad it is and how it's going to wreck our economy.

We know that it is going to affect some people's lives, and we hate that. We much preferred a different way to do the cuts. We actually have passed two bills to address the cuts in the sequester that better address the needs of this country and our spending habits and didn't affect the many thousands of people that will either have to go to part-time work or no work due to these cuts.

It's been over 300 days since we passed the first bill out of this House; yet the Senate did not take it up. And so 2 months later we passed another one that the Senate has not taken up.

The President, over the past 3 weeks or so, has traveled a little over 5,000 miles, going down to North Carolina, to Georgia, to West Palm Beach, to Ohio, to Virginia, talking about the problems. Yet even though he's traveled that many miles, it's only 1.7 miles from the White House over to the Senate. So he could have cut down on

all those trips of the rhetoric and the campaign-type attitude that he's put towards governing just by traveling 1.7 miles down to the Senate Chamber and sitting down with the majority leader over there and the rest of his party and saying, look, we need to offer something back because we believe in regular order.

We think the best business that we can have and we think that our Founders and the way our Constitution is set up, that we work under regular orders. If the House passes a bill, we send it to the Senate. If the Senate doesn't agree with it, then they can either put their own bill, send it back over to us and we'll go to conference, or they can amend our bill and send it back. And then if we can't agree with that, we'll go to conference.

But that's not the way things have been operating over here.

It's been a failure, in my opinion, on the majority leader's part in the Senate that he just refuses to take them up. We're not going to do it. We're not going to debate it. It's either my way or the highway. I think the American people deserve better than that.

I'm going to give Mr. GOHMERT a few minutes, if he would like to take the time, before he has to make one of his dignified appearances, so I'll yield to him.

Mr. GOHMERT. I appreciate my friend from Georgia hosting this hour and also yielding. This is a very important topic, and people need to understand what's going on.

Now, as someone who was totally opposed to the deficit ceiling bill back in July, 1½ years ago, I told our conference the Democrats and the President are never going to allow the supercommittee to reach an agreement because they want to blame cuts to Medicare on Republicans, when the fact is that ObamaCare cuts \$700 billion from Medicare, and it has been and it's starting to be and it's going to get really much worse because of those cuts from ObamaCare.

To ourselves here in the House, over the last 2 years we have cut our own budgets—the Senate hasn't, but we've cut our own budgets here in the House over a 2-year period by over 11 percent, about 11.5 percent. This sequester is going to cut us another 11 percent. We're going to have cut nearly 23 percent of our own budgets. How did we do that? Did we lay off all our staffs and have a big press conference and talk about how terrible it was going to be? No. I know in my office we basically have what you'd call a hiring freeze. If we lost somebody, we haven't replaced them.

TOM COBURN first raised this point in a letter to the Deputy Director of Management for the White House, with all this gloom and doom about all the people that the President's going to have to fire because of the sequestration, because of a cut of about 2 percent of the budget, they're going to be firing all these people or furloughing all these

people. At the same time, you can go online, you can order books, and you can see all the Federal jobs that this administration is still offering.

So an easy suggestion is how about instead of firing and furloughing all these people, just hold up on hiring some folks for a while. Across America, people know how to do that in business. Instead of firing everybody that's been with you for years, that's counting on that salary, if you have to cut the budget, the first thing you do is you maybe wait to hire somebody for a bit. That would be more caring—unless of course this administration is more concerned with showing that they hired somebody instead of just maintaining what they have.

□ 1640

We will have cut our ourselves here in the House, our own budgets 23 percent, approximately, over a 3-year period. If we can do it and still get the job done, then I feel sure the people in the White House, the people in the executive departments and all those people at the EPA that are trying to shut down our own energy production and put those people out of work, heck, maybe if they just shut down EPA for a little bit and let the States continue, like Texas has, to get their water cleaner and their air cleaner, maybe the jobs would increase. The President could take credit for that just by slowing the amount of regulation this President has been throwing on the American economy.

Another thing we hear today is that the President is now saying that on Friday, after the sequestrations have started and the military is having all these massive layoffs—and actually, the truth be known, after the President will have gotten what he had been hoping and trying to get for years, even as a U.S. Senator, and that is big cuts to the Defense Department—after the Defense Department cuts kick in, then, and only then, is he going to sit down and talk to congressional leaders.

Well, that's not hard to figure out. What a great political ploy, what a great political plan. A year and a half ago, the President and the White House came up with the idea of this massive sequester, and the biggest loser would be the Defense Department. Reluctantly, some people like me said, let's don't do this, let's have other cuts, let's don't let the President's plan, with all his massive cuts to defense and basically 2 percent cuts to other entities, let's don't let that happen. Let's really cut departments, cut things we really don't need.

But we ended up going along with the President's idea for sequester. Then after he gets the cuts to defense that he's been pushing for years and years, going back to his days as a U.S. Senator, he gets to come forward and spend millions and millions of dollars running around on Air Force One condemning Republicans in the House for cutting defense.

What a great thing. He cuts defense as he's been wanting to do for years, forces the Republicans to go along with it, and a year and a half later blames the Republicans for cutting defense and says, I wouldn't have done that, but now that defense is cut, now let's talk about restoring some of that money to groups, the Acorn-like groups out there that are going to suffer because they're not going to have money to spend on electing Democrats in the next election if we don't return the sequestered money.

The thing is, it's about \$85 billion in cuts from a \$3.6-trillion budget—not that we've passed a budget. That's just how much money will likely be spent, approximately. And it doesn't have to be that way.

One of the things that The Wall Street Journal pointed out in an editorial February 19 was they said that Americans need to understand that Mr. Obama is threatening that if he doesn't get what he wants, he's ready to inflict maximum pain on everybody else. He won't force government agencies to shave spending on travel, conferences, excessive pay, and staffing. He won't demand that agencies cut the lowest priority spending, as any half-competent middle manager would do.

Then they go on to talk about things. One of the things we find out today is that the administration has released people charged with felonies and said, look, if you don't restore the money to my agencies that I'm demanding, then I'm going to end up releasing more criminals on the American public. That is incredible. But he knows the mainstream media will give him cover. I hope and pray the American people will not give him cover, that we will demand what we've been telling the American public we were going to do, we made cuts. The cuts will be made. Now let's look for better ways after this to make cuts to other programs that need it.

With that, I yield back to my friend from Georgia.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I want to now introduce somebody from New York. I believe he was the executive for Monroe County for 4 years. He took a county that was going bankrupt, or fixing to go bankrupt, and turned it around, \$125 million, I believe, in the rainy day, so to speak, fund. So he's got knowledge on how to do it. He's also been a very successful businessman. I think that all these agency and department heads that we have, if you can't manage to cut about 2.4 percent of your budget, you need to take a look if you're really capable of managing people and managing a department of that size.

So I would ask the gentleman from New York, one of our freshmen, a businessman, a great guy, Mr. COLLINS, to come up and try to enlighten us a little bit on what steps he took of running a government, actually turning it around and made it to where the citizens got something from the taxes that they were paying.

Mr. COLLINS of New York. I want to thank the gentleman from Georgia for that kind introduction.

I would put two words forward: when I came to my period of time as county executive in Erie County, the largest upstate county in the State of New York, and it's "common sense." Common sense is something that I think frustrates the American public; it's something that we don't see in U.S. Government.

I'd like to point to the sequester as a prime example of what's wrong with Washington. We have a broken government, and we all know it. As someone who ran for Congress to focus on improving our economy, Washington can be a very frustrating place.

We are now only 2 days away from sequestration taking effect. In typical Washington fashion, we're now staring at a deadline in the face with no answers for hardworking taxpayers.

The timing of this whole process should not be taking anyone by surprise, certainly not the President. President Obama is the one who proposed this sequester, and that is a fact. The President insisted that these arbitrary across-the-board spending cuts become law as part of the debt negotiations in 2011. Now, 2 days away from these cuts taking place, I'm very disappointed the President is not working with us to find a solution.

Instead, he is deliberately scaring the American people and attempting to convince them that the only way to avoid the pain is to raise taxes again. The President is threatening an apocalypse if he doesn't get his second tax hike in just 8 weeks. The hardworking families of New York's 27th District can't afford it.

And I believe the American public are seeing this sideshow for what it is: a blatant attempt to raise taxes again on American families and small businesses instead of addressing our spending addiction. Because if the President and the Senate didn't want to raise taxes again, they would have a plan. And they don't.

The House has twice passed a bill to replace the across-the-board sequester with responsible spending reductions and reforms. The House first passed this legislation 10 months ago to replace the President's sequester with smarter, more responsible, and commonsense spending cuts. The Senate and the President never addressed those bills; and they don't have a plan of their own, except raise taxes.

The good people of western New York and the Finger Lakes region know there are smarter, more bipartisan ways to cut government spending. They know that this country must reduce its spending and pay off its debt. They know that failing to do so will only mean a continued sluggish economy—and even worse, leaving our children and grandchildren with nothing but a bag of IOUs. And they know that before Washington politicians have the audacity to talk about raising taxes

again and cutting our military, there are millions of dollars in waste in the Federal Government around every corner. And they are waiting—not so patiently anymore—for us to cut that waste before we tell them to hand over even more of their paycheck to the bureaucrats in the Federal Government.

Here is a question: Why is the EPA doling out grants to foreign countries, including China, at the expense of \$100 million over the last decade? Why does the IRS need to run a TV studio that costs \$4 million a year? And why are we paying senior citizens to play video games so we can study the impact on their brains?

□ 1650

Now, I understand these three examples don't equal \$85 billion of sequester cuts, but these are just three examples of the waste. This is crazy.

Washington must do better because the American people deserve better. They deserve a Federal Government focused on balancing its budget, reducing its spending, paying off its debt, honoring its commitments to seniors, and making sure our younger generations can actually live the American Dream.

Mr. President, let's stop the scare tactics and let's get to work.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I want to thank the gentleman for participating.

Next I want to introduce another one of our bright young freshmen, the gentleman from California (Mr. VALADAO) of the 21st District, a dairy farmer, the son of Portuguese immigrants that has come here. He is a veteran legislator that has been with the California Assembly. We're excited about having him. He also represents a district that has been really hurt by some of the regulations and the environmental requirements that this administration has pushed.

Where he lives and where he farms, his neighbors have lost a great number of jobs due to the fact that we can't provide them any water that we promised them probably 40 or 50 years ago that had been coming to them and they really had the basket of the fruit and vegetables that we eat every day.

I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I agree, Congress needs to get serious about our Nation's irresponsible spending; however, broad-based, automatic spending cuts and tax increases are not the way to get our fiscal House in order.

This week, the administration warned of the devastating effects that sequestration will have on many essential services provided by the Federal Government. To be clear, while the Budget Control Act of 2011 defined the amount of sequestration cuts, implementation of these cuts is at the discretion of the administration. The administration has now threatened to cut crucial services, including laying off air traffic controllers and the inspectors that make our food safe. At the same time, our government is spending

\$1.7 billion operating unused Federal properties. There are numerous bipartisan alternatives to increase the Federal Government's efficiency and eliminate wasteful spending that do not include raising taxes or cutting the essential services my constituents depend on.

Ultimately, the real solution lies in reviving our struggling economy and giving our small businesses the tools to create jobs. In California's San Joaquin Valley, burdensome environmental regulations have resulted in the fallowing of 200,000 acres of land and the loss of countless jobs. This is a prime example of government ignoring the solution while creating a problem. At no cost to the taxpayers, we could provide certainty to our communities and to the farmers in my district that we can protect jobs and actually grow our economy.

With just 2 days until sequestration takes place, it's time for all of us to get serious about our Nation's spending problem and come together to do what's best for the American people.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I want to thank the gentleman for being here.

Next I want to allow one of my fellow Georgians some time to speak, who is another veteran legislator that came out of Georgia, who I've served with in the Georgia House, somebody from south Georgia who understands what it's about when you have to work hard and farm. He's a private business owner, an insurance agent, and a good friend.

I yield to the gentleman from Tifton, Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia. Thank you, Mr. WESTMORELAND. I certainly enjoyed serving with you in the Georgia House where we balanced the budget on an annual basis and made cuts certainly much larger than this on a percentage basis. Quite honestly, we did it on an annual or a semiannual basis when we were there.

I want to point out one thing that you talked about that's not being talked about much here, and that is that the total cut that we're talking about is a little less than 2.5 percent of Federal spending. The problem with the sequester is not that it's an unreasonable amount that's being cut; it's where it's being cut from.

So here we are less than 48 hours from the President's sequester, our Commander in Chief's sequester, that's going to go into effect and set into place \$1.2 trillion over the course, ladies and gentlemen, of 10 years. That's one of the things that needs to be pointed out. It's not \$1.2 trillion over the course of this year; it's over 10 years. So you're talking about \$100 billion a year out of a little better than a \$3 trillion annual budget.

Of this cut that our Commander in Chief has insisted on, over half of that is going to come from national defense and our men and women in uniform and our civilian workforce and taking its toll on them. Our Secretary of De-

fense, Leon Panetta, I thought did a great job when he actually explained it as hollowing out our military. He told the truth about that and just what the Commander in Chief's budget reductions were going to do to our military. Obviously, we have a new Secretary of Defense coming in now, and I can't help but wonder if Secretary Panetta speaking out about what those cuts were going to do to the military isn't one of the things that maybe led to his replacement.

On October 22—just to give you a couple of specifics—in his campaign for election as our Nation's Commander in Chief, the President promised that his sequestration “would not happen.” The President, the Commander in Chief, promised that it would not happen. He went to great lengths to assure Americans that are working in our military and on our military bases, our civilian workforce—I represent Robins Air Force Base—he told them this will not happen. He told our defense contractors to not comply with the law and actually issue the notices that were required under the law that furloughs and layoffs may be coming.

I personally think it was politically motivated, but that's just a personal stance of mine, Mr. Speaker.

On February 6, I asked the President for a solution. I sent a letter. I've got the letter right here. I'm sure that somebody at the White House got it. We have never gotten any response from any letter that we have sent to the White House as a Member of Congress. We simply asked him to give us a written proposal on what he would do given his choice of having it exactly his way and replacing the sequester. Again, no response, no action.

On February 15, he came to our State, Georgia, and didn't go to any of our military installations. We have seven major military installations and over a dozen major military communities in the State of Georgia. He went to a county and he talked about expanding the role of the Federal Government in public education as we were approaching the sequester. The men and women at Robins Air Force Base and the other bases were left wondering what was going to happen to their paycheck. He did not even address the issue while he was in Georgia with our seven major military installations and our 12 major military communities.

Mr. Speaker, I didn't vote for the sequester, but what I'll tell you is I'm reminded of what Teddy Roosevelt said when I look at the national debt and the things we're facing right now:

The best thing to do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing is nothing.

We have to cut Federal spending or we're going to rob the next generation of Americans of the American Dream.

So I would say that here we are as a House having passed two separate bills to undo the President's sequester and 48 hours prior to the sequester going

into action, and all we've heard from the President is just words. He hasn't had the guts to put a proposal in writing before this House for the American people to see. Here we are, Mr. Speaker, at the 11th hour with no action from the President, no response to my letter or any other Member's letter, to my knowledge, no plan to Congress, no plan to America. He's just a President, a Commander in Chief that's willing to let this happen to our military. Half the cuts are coming from our military. What kind of Commander in Chief do we have?

Congressman, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today and thank you so much for doing this.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, February 6, 2013.

DEAR PRESIDENT OBAMA: As the representative of the Eighth Congressional District of Georgia, home to Robins and Moody Air Force Bases and a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I am very concerned about the impact that sequestration will have on our national security. As you are aware, on March 1, 2013, \$500 billion in defense cuts will go into effect unless a law is enacted to prevent it. According to many of our nation's top military leaders, the indiscriminate cuts caused by sequestration would hollow out our forces and severely degrade our military capabilities.

On October 22, 2012, you promised that “sequestration will not happen.” You went to great lengths to reassure Americans that you would work to prevent it, and you even urged defense contractors not to issue layoff notifications required under law. Given your role as our nation's Commander in Chief, I believe that you share my concern over a hollowed military force. However, without your leadership I am fearful that a solution will not be reached.

We in the House of Representatives passed several bills during the 112th Congress, including H.R. 3662 and H.R. 5652, that would repeal the sequester. Based on your statements, you do not support these bills, yet have offered no alternative. Furthermore, representatives from your Administration were highly ambiguous in explaining your plan for preventing sequestration cuts. In a hearing on August 1, 2012 Acting OMB Director Zients testified that your plan to address sequestration was your 2013 budget proposal. Yet this is not a real proposal Congress could act upon, and your budget did not receive a single vote in either the House or the Senate.

We are running low on time to address sequestration and your administration's lack of meaningful action is concerning to many of my constituents. I urge you to take a more active role in resolving these senseless cuts to our national defense. I look forward to your response and to reviewing a detailed and concrete proposal that Congress can act on so that we can cooperate in a bipartisan manner to resolve sequestration.

Sincerely,

AUSTIN SCOTT,
Member of Congress.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I thank the gentleman.

Now I want to introduce another one of our freshmen, somebody that comes to us from Florida's Third Congressional District, a veterinarian. He is actually a small business guy. I think he's been in that business for about 30 years. He also understands the effect that this sequester will have on our

military because his oldest daughter, Katie, is an active Member of the United States Coast Guard. So I hope that the gentleman will express some of those things that he feels about these cuts that are coming to our military.

With that, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOH0).

□ 1700

Mr. YOH0. I thank the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my constituents in Florida's Third District to voice the concerns they have shared with me over the President's sequester that will go into effect on Friday.

Make no mistake: cuts need to be made. However, I know, and my constituents know, the sequester is not the answer.

We in the House have shown, and will continue to show, where responsible spending cuts can be made. In fact, the House has tried multiple times to address this issue and has passed legislation as recently as 6 weeks ago. However, the majority leader, Mr. REID, would not address these issues.

With a Federal Government of this size and magnitude, Washington bureaucracy can afford to bear the brunt of these cuts. Not our military, not communities like Lake City, or Mayo, or Newberry, or Middleburg, Florida.

I'm working with my friend from Georgia, Congressman DOUG COLLINS, on the new Freshman Regulatory Reform Working Group, to help show exactly where some of these cuts are and to help businesses do what they do best. They grow the economy and they create jobs, bringing in more revenues to our government.

We need to, and we will, show the President and the American people that we can cut wasteful spending without hurting kids, our seniors, and that we can make responsible cuts that do not put our national security at risk, and not add to the heavy tax burden of hardworking Americans that they're already carrying.

It is a shame that the President and the Senate have avoided working with the House in a real budgeting process. I look forward to working with all my colleagues on restoring faith to the American people and bringing order back to this process.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I thank the gentleman for being here and giving us those great comments.

Now I want to introduce another friend, our policy chairman in our Republican Conference, somebody that comes from the great State of Oklahoma, somebody that has great experience in managing people. I think he ran a youth camp, the largest youth camp in the United States, if not the world. I'm afraid to even tell you how many people. I'll let him do that. But I would like to recognize the gentleman from Oklahoma, our policy chair, Mr. LANKFORD.

Mr. LANKFORD. I thank the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. Speaker, it's an honor to be able to stand in front of this House today.

Let me talk about families that all across America right now are struggling with their own finances. They're sitting at a dinner table this evening, because they have run out of paycheck before they have run out of month, and they're struggling through just the basics of how they're going to do life, because they're in debt and they're struggling through day to day.

They will make decisions to be able to put their house in order and to be able to resolve where they're headed as a family, because they don't want to be a family that's going to live heavily in debt. Because once you're in debt as a family, everything is about money. Every day there's a new battle about money; every day there's a new battle about spending and who's going to spend and what bill are we going to pay and how are we going to handle day-to-day life.

The hard part is that's where we are as a Nation right now. The House and the Senate and the President, we continue to argue through things about money. And every week it seems like we're fighting a new fight about money. Because, guess what, we're \$16.5 trillion in debt.

For 5 years in a row, we've overspent the budget by \$1 trillion a year, and there's no end in sight. We've come to a day that we have to resolve how do we get out of this hole, how do we fix this.

Let me give a quick history of how we actually got here. In 2011, the House and the Senate and the White House all agreed if we're going to have a large debt plan to get us out—at that point a debt ceiling request of \$2.4 trillion—we had to have with that extension of the debt ceiling also a plan of how to reduce spending by that same amount or more so that we didn't just infinitely continue to increase debt.

So the plan was made to cut \$1.2 trillion over 10 years. And then there would be a second tranche of \$1.2 trillion again to reduce spending.

We couldn't come to an agreement on that. So Jack Lew, who was the President's chief of staff, came to HARRY REID and said, here's our suggestion, do a sequestration. HARRY REID rejected it initially. Then Jack Lew came back to him and said, what if we do half of it in defense spending? So an automatic across-the-board cut, if we can't find a way to reduce spending in other ways, we'll just do an across-the-board cut with half of it in defense and the other half of it from other parts of the budget.

HARRY REID agreed with Jack Lew, the President's chief of staff, and the President's plan then went to the Senate and came to the House where begrudgingly we all agreed, because none of us wanted to see this. I don't believe that the White House wanted to see sequestration as well.

But this plan that was put in place that the House, the Senate, and the White House all agreed to was to find some way to reduce spending by \$1.2 trillion in long-term spending.

The first option was the select committee, the supercommittee, as it was called. It obviously failed in its task.

Shortly after that, the House of Representatives said that the select committee has failed in its task, we cannot have sequestration. And so in May of last year, the House of Representatives passed a replacement plan for sequestration so that we would not get to this point. As Americans constantly talk about Congress waiting 'til the last minute, almost 300 days ago the House of Representatives passed a plan to avoid sequestration and to do cuts and waited for the Senate to respond so that we did not have a moment like this. The Senate never answered us back.

So in December of last year, the House again passed a plan to say here's how we can replace sequestration. And, again, the Senate has never responded to that.

We're at a point now, hours away from sequestration beginning, at a point none of us wanted to be here, facing the reality that if the Senate never responds to us, we're at a point that we will step into across-the-board cuts. When that occurs, half of those cuts being in defense and a very severe cut after there was already \$100 billion cut from defense 4 years ago, then \$500 billion cut from defense 2 years ago, now another \$500 billion cut in defense. Defense is carrying a very disproportionate number of cuts in this administration.

We've got to find a way to be able to stabilize all of our programs and to do smarter reductions of spending without having this huge hit. We've got to learn how to be able to plan ahead, both in the House and the Senate.

Why must this be done in the first place? That's the challenge. We have individuals that look at programs that are some of their favorite programs and say they're going to face an 8 percent reduction in that program this year. And there's going to be a spending cap so they don't have infinite growth over the next 10. And they look at it and say, why does it have to be that way?

Well, I can tell you why. Because we are facing a debt crisis that is not just something for the next generation. It's now.

Two weeks ago, the Congressional Budget Office released its report on the status of America and where we're headed on current law and what happens now. In that report, it detailed that right now we pay \$224 billion a year just in interest. CBO 2 weeks ago released a report and said on the current path we will pay in interest \$857 billion a year just 10 years from now.

So where we have said in the past, for our children they're going to have a

crushing debt, it is now this generation, because debt continues to accelerate; \$857 billion, ladies and gentlemen, is larger than what we paid for the entire war in Afghanistan. We will pay that each year just in interest payments just 10 years from now if we don't get a handle on this. That's larger than all defense for a single year, that's larger than all Medicare, that's larger than all Social Security. \$857 billion in interest alone is by definition unsustainable for us as a Nation. We cannot afford to do that. We have to deal with our spending.

So how do we get on top of that? Well, the President's proposal is, let's just raise taxes on a few people. Well, guess what, the President got his tax increase in January.

As of all the reports that are coming back in now, 2013 will bring in the largest amount of revenue in the history of the country to the Treasury. We will have no year in our history we will bring in more revenue than 2013, and yet the President's proposal is we need to raise taxes again to cover that.

Well, one of the tax increases that he recommends is to just raise taxes on the energy companies. Just find energy companies and raise taxes on that. His proposal raised another \$4 billion a year from energy companies.

Well, there are a couple of problems with that. One is, that's a great way to raise gas prices again, as this administration has done so many times in some of the regulatory schemes that have happened to watch gas prices continue to trickle up. It is one more shot to do that. And the second part of that is, it's \$4 billion. We have over \$1 trillion in deficit spending. That does not solve the problem.

□ 1710

We are overspending a trillion dollars a year, and we are spending more than a trillion dollars more than what we did just 5 years ago. It is obvious with the highest amount of revenue in the history of our country coming in, we're spending more than a trillion dollars more than we did just 5 years ago, this is a spending-driven crisis.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. We borrow about \$4 billion a day. We spend roughly \$10 billion and borrow about \$4 billion. So this energy tax would just keep us from borrowing for 1 day.

Mr. LANKFORD. Right. And it would drive up the cost of gasoline yet again for all Americans. It doesn't solve the problem; it continues to exacerbate the problem.

Our issue is we're facing a difficult moment. But this is not a moment that is manufactured by some sequestration event. This is a moment that has been created by overspending year after year after year. And now the acceleration of debt and deficit and interest payments each year is climbing so quickly that if we don't get on top of it soon, we will not be able to get on top of it in the days ahead.

This is not just a manufactured, short-term crisis. This is a serious eco-

nomics crisis for the United States. And if it is a serious crisis for us, it is a serious crisis worldwide. We have the responsibility as the largest economy on the planet to be responsible with our finances and to get our economy back on track so that the entire world's economy can begin to get back on track.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I thank the gentleman for bringing up that point because I think a lot of people may not realize that we're talking about \$85 billion here. As the gentleman stated, you know, we spend \$10 billion a day. So, I mean, this is 8½ days that we're saving.

My son-in-law was a DA, assistant DA, and I remember a couple of years ago, he was furloughed for 14 days, which is almost twice as much as we're talking about here. He didn't have to put his children in an orphanage or go hungry or anything else. They managed their bills. That's all we're saying. While we've all heard the sky is falling, I think it is something that we can deal with, especially if we have competent heads of these agencies.

So, you know, just looking at some of the other money that we're spending, \$268 million in executive branch conferences, whether it's for the Department of Defense, Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, \$268 million just for the conferences, I think we can cut those conferences out for a year. Or maybe cut them down, maybe not be quite as expensive or elaborate as they are.

You know, when I came to Congress, I came from a building, a construction background. I considered myself somebody capable of looking at a set of plans and giving an estimate of what it was going to cost and having a vision of what it was going to look like. I remember one time I had a customer come in who wanted a roof designed a certain way, and I tried to tell them it wasn't going to work. They had seen it somewhere else and had gotten somebody to draw it. The one thing I did learn in the building business is that somebody can draw something, but it doesn't necessarily mean that you can build what they draw. And so I tried to explain to them, I said, This isn't going to work; it's going to cause problems; it's going to look bad. But they still wanted to do it. Their house, I did it. The next thing I know, they come up complaining about it. And I said, Look, this was your idea; I did exactly what you said. And they didn't like it, but it was something that they had to live with or pay to get it changed.

The same thing has happened here with this administration. You know, this was their idea. This was something that they wanted to do. I think a lot of people said, No, this is a bad idea; we don't want to do this. But yet they were so desperate to come up with something to cut the spending of this country that they agreed to it. And now all of a sudden, the originator of the idea doesn't like it. And he says, Oh, no.

But rather than sitting down and talking to the people that could make a difference and make a change, he decided to go out and travel the country to talk to people who couldn't. And it's turned out it's going to be a bad outcome, but it is the only outcome that could come from the plan that was drawn.

Now, let me say this again about the spending. When you think about the fact that we spend \$10 billion a day—think about that, \$10 billion a day. And we borrow about half of it. About 42 percent of it we borrow from somebody else. And keep this in mind: the Federal Reserve buys, in combination with different things, they buy about \$85 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities every month—\$85 billion every month. They print the money to do that. So we've got bigger fish to fry.

As several people have said today, we've got to get serious about this. I'm accountable to 700,000 people—just like every Member of this body is—at home, but I'm also accountable to my children and my grandchildren and their children. And I want one day, when they sit in my lap or come up to me and say, Papa, couldn't you do something about this? I want to be able to tell them, I tried, baby. I tried to do it. We all tried to do it, but nobody wanted to cut. Nobody wanted to save. We just kept putting it on your charge card.

And so while this \$85 billion is going to be tough, it's going to be hard, it's going to hurt some families, it's going to cause some people to go to part-time employment rather than regular employment, but you know what, it's \$85 billion that's not going to go onto our children's credit cards. I think that's what we've got to remember. We keep kicking the can down the road. People my age and in my generation, we may not ever have to pay the tab for this, but my children, and for sure my grandchildren and my great grandchildren, are going to end up paying this tab. So we're not really doing that much other than shifting it from our responsibility and our burdens to the next generation and the next generation's burdens.

I see another one of our bright freshmen. Mr. Speaker, anybody out there who has been watching, they understand that we have a bright freshman class. This gentleman is from Illinois, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS. And so, Mr. DAVIS, I'm glad to yield you time.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. I thank the gentleman from Georgia.

I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to remind us all what President Kennedy told us. He said:

Let us not seek the Republican or Democratic answer, but the right answer. Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past, but let us accept our own responsibility for the future.

That's where we stand today with this looming sequestration. It's time to get beyond the party politics. It's time to stop the blaming and the finger-

pointing. The truth is, it took both parties, the House, the Senate, and the President, to approve sequestration. And it's going to take both parties, Republicans and Democrats, a House, a Senate, and the President, to resolve it. The decisions we will have to make won't be easy, and no one—no one—will get everything they want, but that's why we were elected. That's why our constituents entrusted us to serve in this body.

So let us take this opportunity to do the job that we were sent to Washington, D.C., to be in this House, the privilege of serving in this House, let's do our jobs, do what our constituents sent us to do. Let's put aside the partisan politics. Let's work together, compromise with principle, and govern, govern like statesmen. It is expected and, I will say, Mr. Speaker, it is demanded of us.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I thank the gentleman for those words.

I'll close by saying this. This job is not easy. It's not exactly what everybody might think it is, but it's something that we don't need to squander.

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It's an opportunity that everybody in this House has been given that probably less than 12,000 people have ever had since this country has been founded. We don't need to squander this opportunity.

And we need to honor those that have come before us, that have fought and died, the men and women right now that are in Afghanistan and other parts of the world that are putting their lives on the line and in danger every day, not for us to be running up the debt on them.

We've got less than 1 percent of the people in this country that protect the rest of us. And so, you know, why are we trying to do them harm?

We're trying to fix that, and I want them to know that, that we are trying to fix that, and we're going to try to fix it in the CR.

And for the young voters out there, I want y'all to know that this is not something that we're purposely doing to hurt you or your family. This is something that we're doing for your children, or trying to do for your children.

All we're asking is that you might encourage others to join us in this fight, to try to save this country from going down the road of debt and bankruptcy that we're headed on, and instead turn it around to the bright future that we all want to have for this country and for a better Republic, and something that will bring us back to the forefront, to be held in the same esteem that we've always been held in by the other countries in this world, not somebody that's continuing to dig a hole of debt for our future.

I yield back the balance of my time.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SALMON). The Chair would ask Mem-

bers to address their remarks to the Chair.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS HOUR: SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. POCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus to repeat and enhance the calls made by our colleagues today to put a stop to these disastrous spending cuts known as sequestration.

It's been interesting. For the last 45 minutes I've listened to people from the other side of the aisle talk very passionately about their concerns on government spending, on debt, on government waste. And yet, almost not a single one of those issues is covered by what we have before us in the next 48 hours, which is sequestration.

Sequestration is a thoughtless approach that makes irresponsible, indiscriminate cuts down virtually every single budget line. If you think there is waste with a \$4 million TV station in the IRS, as one speaker said, sequestration won't stop that. If you think we have too much debt, sequestration won't stop that. If you think we have too much fraud, abuse, and waste, sequestration won't stop that.

But what sequestration will do is have a real impact on the middle class families, not just in Wisconsin, where I come from, but across the country, and that's why so many of the people in the Progressive Caucus and Democrats have such a strong concern about what this country is facing, because of this House, this Chamber's inability to act in the next 48 hours.

You will hear from a number of people from different parts of the country this afternoon who are going to talk about the very real impact of sequestration on their States and on their districts, and the very impact that I think the middle class is feeling that doesn't really relate to what we heard for the last 45 minutes, but relates to the very issues that people care about—education, health care and so many other areas.

It's funny, last week I got a chance to be back home in my district, and as I talked to the people of south central Wisconsin, it's not at all what you hear talked about here in Washington, D.C. It's almost as if it was a different country, not just the District of Columbia, but a completely different country when we talk about sequestration.

And what people care about is, how do they make sure they've got a job? How do they make sure they've got enough money to pay for the food on their table, to support their children, to provide opportunities for their families?

But instead what we see is quite different with the sequestration cuts that

are going to happen. There's a real impact on the middle class, and it's pending and it's looming because we can't get the people in this room to sit down and get our jobs done.

I heard multiple stories over the last week, and just in the last 45 minutes, about how sequestration came about. I can tell you, people in Beloit and people in Barneveld and people in Baraboo and small communities across Wisconsin don't care about the finger-pointing of how it happened. They don't care that in 1985 this idea started, and it's been a bad idea. It was such a bad idea that it was agreed to last year because they thought absolutely no one would go for this idea, and now we have people arguing, don't worry; we'll fix it a month from now.

I can tell you, in Wisconsin, we're a little different. When our check oil comes on in Wisconsin, we check our oil, and if we have to we put oil in the engine. Here in Washington, D.C., we just keep running it until the car stops and the engine breaks down, and then we all decide that we're going to somehow fix the engine, which is a much more costly process. But I guess that Wisconsin common sense doesn't happen in Washington, D.C., and it's clearly not happening in this House as we deal with sequestration.

I have a couple of colleagues here who are going to share some stories, and then I'm going to come back and share some more stories from my area, some of the very cuts you're going to see in Wisconsin and nationwide. I'm going to share some real stories from people who, not just from my district but across the country, are talking about the impact on their lives.

I want to share a little bit about my experience. I spent 6 years on a budget-writing committee in the Wisconsin Legislature, and I chaired that committee. And we did things in a very different way and in a very bipartisan way, something that is a foreign concept to Washington, D.C.

First I would like to recognize one of my colleagues from the west coast. Representative MARK TAKANO is a fellow freshman. He represents the Riverside area of California. A teacher by profession for over 20 years, also a community college board member, so he's had a lot of experience and is recognized in our caucus as one of our foremost experts on education. But he knows the real-life impact that this is going to have on California and on his district.

I would like to yield some of my time, Mr. Speaker, to the gentleman from California.

Mr. TAKANO. I'd like to thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for yielding some time to me this evening.

Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a lot of talk from my friends on the other side of the aisle about whose idea the sequester was, instead of actually working to stop this from happening.

Make no mistake. If the House Republican leadership really wanted to