

Republicans, a plan guided by individual freedom of choice and open competition.

This will only happen if there is a massive change of heart by the congressional Democrats who imposed this nightmare on our country. Now is the time for all Americans whose lives have been upended by their folly to share their stories with their Representatives and to pray that they actually can touch some hearts and change some minds during this holiday season. Otherwise, I am afraid that New Year's Day will be nothing to celebrate.

CLOSING GUANTANAMO BAY

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

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, when it was first opened in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the Guantanamo Bay prison may have seemed a reasonable stopgap measure as a shocked Nation marshaled its resources and figured out how to dispose of detainees taken in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

But even in those early days, the problems we were creating with Guantanamo's patchwork of military rules and commissions were readily apparent. Since 2002, I have introduced numerous bills and amendments to try to bring Guantanamo into conformity with American and international law and to stop it from becoming a jihadi recruiting tool.

But reform of this prison system has been elusive and progress towards bringing its detainees to justice almost nonexistent, as U.S. courts have taken strong issue with its improvised legal process.

In one of his first acts as President, Barack Obama ordered the closing of Guantanamo, but the Congress almost immediately stepped in and erected a series of statutory barriers that have prevented the transfer of detainees to the United States and made transfer to third countries extremely difficult.

Today, there is a renewed push by the administration to shutter Guantanamo for good. Doing so will not be easy, but the cost of keeping the prison open—to our values, to our pocketbook, to our reputation, and to our security—have become too great to bear.

There are now 164 detainees at Guantanamo, 84 of whom have been cleared for transfer to their home country or another country willing to accept them. These detainees should be processed and transferred as soon as security considerations will allow.

This would leave 80 remaining detainees, who are roughly split into two groups. The first group, which includes Khalid Sheikh Mohamed and other key 9/11 plotters, consists of detainees slated for trial under the military commissions that were established by the Bush administration.

These proceedings have been mired in pre-trial wrangling; and the longer

they drag on, the less legitimate the overall system appears. Meanwhile, our civilian judicial system, which many congressional critics have derided as not up to the task of handling terrorism cases, has disposed of a long line of defendants—from Richard Reid, the Shoe Bomber, to Omar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Underwear Bomber, and Faisal Shaizhad, the Times Square Bomber—all successfully prosecuted in America's civilian courts, and none will ever be released again.

□ 1015

By lifting its restriction on transferring these detainees to the United States for trial, Congress could give the administration the flexibility to transfer many of those now in the military commission system to Article III courts for prosecution. These civilian courts can be more expeditious, more effective, and, in the eyes of the world, more just than military tribunals.

The remaining detainees—some 46 men—will be the most difficult cases. These are detainees considered too dangerous to release or transfer, but who cannot be prosecuted. For some, evidence cannot be presented without revealing critical sources of intelligence and methods. Others were tortured, or evidence against them was collected through torture or some other unlawful means. For still others, the evidence of past acts and future dangerousness, while not sufficient to prosecute, argues compellingly against any release or transfer.

The administration announced over the summer that it would begin a review of these cases, and as a result, others may be cleared for transfer or prosecution. It is likely that many, if not most, of the detainees in this final category will remain in American custody. But where?

Even if we ultimately decide to maintain these detainees in custody, that does not justify continued operation of Guantanamo Bay. Instead, they should be transferred to civilian or military confinement in the United States, an option currently blocked by Congress.

Every day that it remains open, Guantanamo Bay damages the United States. Because there are other, better options for prosecution and detention of these inmates, we are not safer for Guantanamo's existence. In fact, it makes us more vulnerable by drawing new generations to the jihad.

The Congress, the administration, and the military can work together to find a solution that protects our people even as we maintain our principles and devotion to the rule of law. The President has indicated that he would like to work with Congress to end the Guantanamo era. We should take him up on that important challenge.

SUPPORTING CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from

Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the Food Network recently broadcast an episode of their hit reality-based cooking television series, "Chopped." Aspiring teen chefs highlighted their culinary skills and competed for a scholarship that would be put towards a leading culinary school. Competition aside, these young chefs are ambassadors of career and technical education programs. They amazed professional judges and made the viewing public second-guess mom's cooking.

As cochair of the bipartisan Career and Technical Education Caucus, which I am proud to lead with my good friend, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN), I congratulate the Food Network and "Chopped" for promoting these young culinary professionals.

Mr. Speaker, inspiration is like lightning; it doesn't strike in the same place twice. With 2014 quickly approaching, we should do everything in our power in order to support the culinary arts and the entire range of other career and technical education programs and fields that offer aspiring young minds and transitioning adults a gateway to success in a rapidly evolving and dynamic job market. The future of America deserves as much.

RECOGNIZING LAWRENCE LIVERMORE NATIONAL LABORATORY FOR OUTSTANDING WORK

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

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory for its outstanding scientific work and the dedicated scientists who played a role in the effort that was recently awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize.

Yesterday, in Oslo, Norway, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, OPCW, received the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize for its work enforcing the global ban on chemical weapons. The OPCW received this prestigious award in part because of the contributions from over 21 scientific laboratories around the world. That work, in different capacities, led to identifying and destroying chemical weapons across the world. One of these laboratories is from the 15th Congressional District, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Over the past 13 years, Lawrence Livermore Forensic Science Center has worked closely with the OPCW to analyze samples and test for the possible presence of chemical weapons. The OPCW and Lawrence Livermore Laboratory were recognized specifically for actions that OPCW has recently taken in Syria—to identify, destroy, and dismantle the Assad regime's chemical weapons that they most recently used back in August on their own people.

I have been a sharp critic of proposed military action in Syria. I believed all along that there was a third way, that it was not a false choice between isolationism, not doing anything, and taking military action in Syria. The actions of OPCW and the United Nations have shown, in working in collaboration with the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, that diplomacy can work. We can go into Syria and identify these dangerous chemical weapons; we can dismantle them and make sure that a ruthless dictator never again can use them on his own people.

Together, the work of OPCW and Lawrence Livermore Laboratory has created a safer world. But they recognize that their work will not be complete until the world is free of chemical weapons.

I have been a tireless advocate for funding of both Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the other laboratory that is in my district, Sandia National Laboratory. The work that is being done right now with OPCW shows that the work being done at our national laboratories has value and that we cannot continue to chip away at Federal funding for our national laboratories.

Congratulations again to OPCW for receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, and I am very proud of the scientific community, the engineers at Lawrence Livermore for your work in support of OPCW and their efforts.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGING FISCAL ISSUES

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

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight a framework I have designed which will begin to address the challenging fiscal issues we face as a Nation. This proposal is to deal with the impending debt ceiling crisis that will be coming upon us in February or shortly thereafter.

I am pleased to hear recent news today of a budget agreement dealing with a potential government shutdown resolution that avoids governing by crisis, but we have the debt ceiling issue right behind. What I have put forth, Mr. Speaker, is an honest, sincere proposal consisting of three steps to reduce our spending on the Federal level, address our Nation's broken Tax Code, and ensure the solvency of Social Security and Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, I outlined the proposal in a letter sent to the President on November 15 of this year, and that letter reads:

Dear Mr. President,

It is time. As I have expressed before in writing to you and members of your administration, I am very interested in working with you in a bipartisan manner to implement long-term solutions to America's debt problems. Our impending debt crisis and threats to the solvency of Social Security and Medicare must be solved now before they reach catastrophic levels. I urge you to work

with Congress to achieve a long-term solution. As such, I would like to take you up on your public offer to discuss ideas and implement solutions that will no longer force us to govern through crises, cliffs, or shutdown deadlines.

On October 16, 2013, you stated you are "Willing to work with anybody . . . Democrat or Republican, House or Senate Members on any idea that will grow our economy, create new jobs, strengthen the middle class, and get our fiscal house in order for the long term." To that end, I submit the following honest proposal which I truly believe will take a small but significant step forward toward more responsible governance. Also, I hope it might change the culture of Washington, D.C., to an environment where good policy triumphs over politics.

As you can see, the honest proposal is a multistep vision and plan summarized as follows:

Step 1, raise the February 7, 2014, debt ceiling limit in an amount equal to the total CBO score of spending reductions, reforms, and removal of waste, fraud, and abuse within government operations that have already been identified and supported on a bipartisan basis. Attached, please find a list of \$573 billion of such government reforms and spending reductions already identified to date.

Step 2a, upon completion of step 1, we will then move to step 2. In step 2, what we would propose is votes in the House and Senate on their respective visions for comprehensive tax reform and also for reform of our entitlement programs to ensure their solvency for another generation would occur. If those votes occur in the House and Senate, there would be automatic relief of the debt ceiling cap for an additional year.

And then we would move to step 3, Mr. President. Step 3 would essentially say, if in the House or the Senate we enact either one of those long-term solutions through our Tax Code or through our entitlement crisis with our Social Security and Medicare insolvency coming down on us, we would immediately, in step 3, relieve the debt ceiling for an additional 2-year period of time. This would mean, Mr. President, the debt ceiling restraint would no longer impact your administration as it would be automatically extended beyond the end of your administration's term.

I kindly request you review this proposal and then meet to discuss how it can be improved and implemented. To me, this is an honest proposal which will put Americans first and begin to address the pressing issues of our day. We have major debt issues that cannot wait any longer. Our arcane Tax Code stifles economic growth, and the fiscal health of Social Security and Medicare is worsening beyond control. If we solve these two challenges, we will place our children and grandchildren and our Nation's finances in a far better position than where they are now projected to be. To me, this adheres to a fundamental rule that we must pass America on to our next generation in a better condition than which we found her.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts and working with you to prevent the dire consequences of failing to address these challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I have yet to receive a response from the President, not even a courtesy response so I know it was received and not lost in the mail between my office in the Longworth Building and the White House, less than 2 miles away.

So I take to the floor of the House today to have my proposal officially recorded and to lay out this framework

to get our Nation on a path of fiscal sustainability, to get our American fellow citizens back to work by fixing our Tax Code, and solving the entitlement crisis that is impending upon us.

With that, I ask us to join in this proposal and ask the President to join us in a bipartisan manner to address these concerns.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair and not to a perceived viewing audience.

FOOD INSECURITY

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Republican leadership has decided we will adjourn for the holidays. Notwithstanding the fact that we haven't done immigration reform, we haven't passed a jobs bill, we haven't extended unemployment insurance, they have all decided it is time to go home and enjoy the holidays. So on Friday, we will all leave and go back to our districts.

The one thing we will all have in common, Democrats and Republicans, is we will go back and we will enjoy the holidays, and we will partake in many celebrations. And the one thing that we will not have to worry about is whether or not we will have enough to eat. Our concern, quite frankly, will be overeating.

But the fact is, for millions of our fellow citizens, close to 50 million Americans, they will have to worry about whether they will have enough to eat for them and their families. Fifty million people in this country, the richest country in the history of the world, are hungry; 17 million are kids. All kinds of people fall in that category. Sadly, close to 1 million of our veterans rely on food assistance programs because they don't have enough to eat.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that so many people in the United States of America are hungry is a national disgrace. We should be outraged. There should be outrage in this Chamber. There should be a sense of urgency that we need to solve this problem. Yet what we see is indifference and, in some cases, outright hostility toward those Americans who happen to be poor.

The House of Representatives recently passed a farm bill that cut the SNAP program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which is designed to ensure people have enough to eat. They cut that program by \$40 billion. In the Senate version, they cut it by about \$4.5 billion. There is now a conference committee going on, and press reports say that maybe they will decide on an \$8 billion cut.

Eight billion dollars, what does that mean? That means that 850,000 families in this country will be impacted in a negative way by that cut; 1.7 million people.