

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.

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For those people who would be impacted by that \$8 billion cut, it is about a \$90 cut per month in the benefit that they get. Every single person on the SNAP program received a cut. That cut that happened on November 1 for an average family of three would be about a \$30 cut. So you add the \$30 plus the \$90 that we are now talking about, that is now a \$120 cut per month for these families. That is a lot of money.

The fact of the matter is the SNAP benefit, as it stands, is not overly generous. In fact, I would say it is too stingy. It doesn't provide enough for people to be able to afford food, never mind nutritious food. A lot of the people who show up at our food banks and our food pantries are on the SNAP program. But to cut an average family of three's benefits by about \$120 per month is outrageous. We don't have to worry. No one in this Chamber has to worry about whether or not they can afford to put food on the table for their families. Why aren't we more concerned with the fact that there are so many people in this country who are food insecure and who are outright hungry? We need to do something about this.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard my colleagues say, Well, we are not really trying to cut people's benefits; all we are trying to do is reform the program. We are trying to combat a culture of dependency. When you cut this program that provides food to poor people, what you do is you don't deal with an issue of a culture of dependency. What you do is make their lives more miserable. The fact of the matter is the majority of people on SNAP are children, senior citizens, and disabled people. Of those who can work, a majority of them work. There are people who work full time and still are so poor they qualify for SNAP assistance.

And the response of this Congress is going to be to make their lives more miserable? I ask my colleagues who support these cuts, is that what you came here for, to make the lives of the most vulnerable in this country more miserable? Is that what you are here for? Is that the purpose of your service in the United States Congress? Give me a break. We need to solve these problems.

The fact of the matter is that increasing hunger in America costs us a great deal. Hungry kids don't learn in school. Senior citizens who can't afford their food and their medication and take their medication on an empty stomach end up in our emergency rooms. There is a cost to hunger. In fact, it is more expensive to tolerate the hunger in America than it is to solve the problem. We were elected to solve problems, to lift people up, and not put people down.

I would just finally close, Mr. Speaker, by saying I urge the White House to get more involved in this issue, to get involved in this fight. There are some things worth fighting for. Ending pov-

erty and ending hunger in America is worth fighting for.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to reject cuts in the SNAP program that will increase hunger in America.

COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, to kick off this year's annual Computer Science Education Week taking place from December 9 to December 15, I had the pleasure of visiting with students at Capital High School in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

We took part in the global Hour of Code campaign organized by Computing in the Core and code.org that offers introductory coding activities and tutorials.

I also engaged with students about the importance of computer science by hosting a panel of industry professionals to highlight how diverse and exciting a career in computer science can truly be.

It is conversations like these that can be useful in helping young people navigate toward careers in computer science and STEM. In today's world, a degree in computer science translates into high-paying, in-demand jobs.

At a time when people are struggling to find work in our recovering economy, the computer science industry is growing, and New Mexico is predicted to add 15,360 computing jobs by 2018.

It has become increasingly essential for students to learn the language of code, the same way that they learn reading, writing, and mathematics. If we are to remain economically competitive and have a highly skilled workforce, access to computer science curricula and coding instruction must be a priority.

However, nationwide, only one in 10 schools offers computer science, and there is a great lack of diversity in those that do. Just 4 percent of students enrolled are female and 3 percent are students of color. In New Mexico, only 57 students took the computer science AP exam in 2012. This is a result, in part, of the fact that New Mexico does not offer computer science teacher certifications for middle and high school teachers and is one of the 36 States that does not count computer science courses toward high school graduation requirements for math and science.

Computer science provides students with the 21st-century skills necessary for innovation by teaching design, logical reasoning, and problem-solving. Yet, too few students have access to this rigorous coursework. That is why I cosponsored H.R. 2536, the Computer Science Education Act, that will help ensure that more students have access to computer science education by making it a core academic subject and in-

cluding computer science teachers in professional development.

I urge my colleagues to join me in support of the Computer Science Education Week and Computer Science Education Act. It is critically important that every student have the opportunity to learn computer science at an early age.

When we show them that they have the power to create the next great app, not just use it, I believe we will capture their hearts and minds and foster the next generation of innovators.

IN MEMORY OF JOHN REDNOUR

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

Mr. ENYART. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the memory of one of my constituents, Mr. John Rednour of Du Quoin, Illinois.

John passed away on December 1, and I had the privilege of attending his funeral service last week. All of us came to honor a man who did so much for southern Illinois. John had many titles, and most of us knew him as the mayor of Du Quoin, a position he held for 24 years. He was a businessman, a banker, and an ironworker. He served for many years on the Illinois State Police Merit Board. But none of those titles do the man justice. He was one of the foremost civic leaders in Illinois, and he worked tirelessly to improve southern Illinois and to create opportunity and jobs for its people.

John was a self-made man who rose from humble beginnings, but never forgot where he came from. His passing is a loss to our region. Most of all, it is a loss for his family; and today I ask my colleagues to remember the Rednour family, especially John's wife of 61 years, Wanda, who was his true partner.

Southern Illinois is a better place because of John Rednour, and today I am proud to honor my friend's memory.

URGING UKRAINE TO SETTLE ITS INTERNAL DISAGREEMENTS PEACEFULLY

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the political turmoil in Ukraine demands the world's attention.

It is now 5 p.m. in Kiev where protesters in Independence Square are regrouping after a night of violent clashes with Ukrainian security forces. As of now, the security forces have begun to pull back from the crackdown; and despite intimidation and threats of violence, the opposition has retained control of Euromaiden, the name given to Independence Square in a clear sign of solidarity with Europe.

The United States has sided unequivocally with those Ukrainians who are demonstrating for an independent Ukraine, for their rights to free assembly and free speech under provisions of