

make our Nation great in goodness and good in its greatness.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. CAPPS led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

HEALTH CARE CONSCIENCE RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. DAINES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAINES. Mr. Speaker, our Founders believed that conscience and religious rights occupied the highest rung on the civil liberty protection ladder. The Obama administration has fallen short of these expectations.

As a fifth-generation Montanan and a person of faith, I know that my faith does not begin and end at the doors of our church. Living the principles of what I believe is a key part of my faith.

But under the Affordable Care Act, religious institutions and employers, as well as health care providers who hold religious and moral convictions, are stripped of their religious freedoms. Religious institutions and employers are forced to pay for coverage of contraceptive methods. Health care providers do not have the protection to refuse to perform abortion services that they are morally opposed to. That is a violation of the First Amendment.

That is why I am proud to help introduce the Health Care Conscience Rights Act, which will uphold our constitutional rights of religious freedom and uphold our moral calling to practice life-affirming health care.

UPHOLDING VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. HIGGINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, this weekend I joined a trip led by Congressman JOHN LEWIS to some of the landmark sites of the civil rights struggle, culminating in a walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge on the 48th anniversary of that historic march. The trip underscored the importance of the Voting Rights Act, which is responsible for much of the progress we have made toward eliminating voter discrimination, and the need for the Supreme Court to uphold section 5 of the law in the case pending before it.

Meanwhile, in Congress, we should be working to eliminate the inexcusably long lines at polling places across the country and ensure that every American who wants to cast a ballot is able to do so.

Decades ago, Congressman LEWIS helped lead the fight for the idea that all Americans should be able to participate in our democratic process. It is my hope that the Supreme Court and this Congress will honor that struggle in the years ahead.

SEQUESTER AND FEDERAL SPENDING

(Mr. BENTIVOLIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BENTIVOLIO. Mr. Speaker, before I came to Washington, I was a high school teacher. To be a good teacher, I had to make things understandable for my students in the classroom. With the budget, I knew that there had to be an easier way to explain the numbers I was looking at to the people who sent me to Washington. Thomas Jefferson once wrote that an informed public was vital to our continuing democracy. I would like to share with you how the sequester affects Federal spending.

Spending is expected to be around \$3.8 trillion; that's the number 38 followed by 11 zeros. The sequester is \$85 billion; that's the number 85 followed by nine zeros. That's a lot of money.

The best way to understand these numbers is to take eight zeros off of both of them. The President is complaining that we are taking an equivalent of \$850 from a budget of \$38,000. This is all pretty hypocritical after he forced hardworking Americans who actually have to live on \$38,000 a year to pay another \$760 or so in increased taxes as part of his fiscal cliff deal.

The people in my district want us to get serious about the enormous spending that's happening here in Congress. We should be able to have a reduction in the increase of spending without acting as if it will cause the end of the world.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HARRIS). The gentleman is reminded to avoid inappropriate references to the President.

SEQUESTRATION ISN'T A SOLUTION

(Mr. CICILLINE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I visited Core Composites, a company located in Bristol in my home State of Rhode Island. Because of sequestration, this small business has been notified that funding for a government contract will be reduced by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

I also recently met with Alexion, a pharmaceutical manufacturer in Rhode Island, whose FDA approval of a life-saving drug will likely be delayed because of sequestration. Countless other small businesses across our country are facing these same challenges today because Washington failed to take action to avoid sequestration.

Sequestration isn't a solution to our Federal deficit; it's a penalty that goes into effect because Republicans and Democrats failed to work together to responsibly reduce the deficit. And it's a penalty that will place a heavy toll on hardworking men and women across our country.

We spend a lot of time fighting in Washington. Now it's time for us to work together to reach a commonsense solution on this issue. Congressman CHRIS VAN HOLLEN has offered a very detailed alternative to sequestration that I'm proud to cosponsor that would cut spending responsibly, repeal subsidies to Big Oil, adopt the Buffett rule, and preserve the Medicare guarantee for seniors. Rather than pointing fingers, we should be looking at this and other reasonable alternatives that would provide critical relief for working families right now.

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HONORING THE LIFE OF RALPH WALDO ELLISON

(Mr. LANKFORD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise to be able to pay honor to a man who deserves honor. March 1 would have been Ralph Waldo Ellison's—we know him as Ralph Ellison—100th birthday.

Ralph Ellison is a proud son of Oklahoma City. He's a graduate of Douglas High School in Oklahoma City. He hopped trains to Tuskegee to go to Tuskegee College on a music scholarship.

He's a musician, he's a sculptor, and he's the writer of the famous work, "Invisible Man." It was the defining work of African American literature in the 1950s, and still continues today as being one of the defining works to be able to point our culture to not ignore racial injustice, social injustice, and economic injustice that still occurs in our Nation today.

His work ethic, his passion for education, and his passion for justice is a

great example to all Americans. I rise to be able to honor a great Oklahoma citizen, Ralph Ellison, and begin a one-year celebration of his 100th birthday.

THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH REGION OF AZERBAIJAN

(Ms. CHU asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. CHU. This year marks the 25th anniversary of a critical turning point in the political freedom of the Armenian people of Azerbaijan. Let us take this occasion to remember their struggle for self-determination and freedom.

In 1988, the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan petitioned to become part of Armenia. For the next 2 years, the Armenian population was the target of racially motivated pogroms. Hundreds of Armenians were murdered and more wounded during three violent attacks in Sumgait, Kirovabad, and Baku.

In 1991, Nagorno-Karabakh officially declared independence, becoming a democratic state committed to freedom and respect for human rights. But today, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh are still forced to live under authoritarian rule. As we commemorate their century-long struggle, let us not forget their quest for autonomy and justice.

WE MUST RESTRAIN SPENDING

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this year the United States Treasury received more revenue than any year in the history of our Nation, yet we will spend a third more than we take in. Clearly, we do not have a revenue problem. We have a spending problem.

The Budget Control Act signed into law last year was a good first step towards deficit reduction, half of which has already been put in motion. With the Supercommittee's failure to achieve the other half, those cuts are now going into effect under sequestration.

Can these cuts be made smartly, targeting waste and overspending? Absolutely, but only if the President stops playing scare politics and begins working with Congress to make these reductions in a manner that best protects national defense and domestic priorities.

If the sequester takes full effect, the Nation's budget is still on a path to grow exponentially over the next 10 years. Unless we continue to restrain spending, our \$17 trillion national debt will continue to grow, crowding out the Nation's ability to even provide for the most in need.

We have a spending problem, not a revenue problem. More taxes won't solve it, but a little more leadership sure would help.

NATIONAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST WEEK

(Mrs. CAPPS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of National School Breakfast Week. We know that the simple act of a child eating a healthy breakfast can have dramatic effects, not only on their health, but on their academic performance.

I am cochair of the Congressional School Health and Safety Caucus, and I was honored to join the Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Campaign discussing last week, in a briefing, the importance of the School Breakfast Program.

I was proud to vote for the bipartisan Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 that helped to expand the School Breakfast Program, but I'm disheartened that only about half of eligible students are participating in the program. We can do better.

I spent years as a school nurse, and I saw, firsthand, how hunger can cause children to lack focus in school, often get sick, and eventually fall behind. And that's why students are encouraged to eat, and often provided with a breakfast on the day of a big test. But we need to make sure they eat breakfast every day.

We've put the School Breakfast Program in place, and now we need to increase awareness and ensure access for all eligible students. That's why I encourage my colleagues to join me in recognizing National School Breakfast Week because, after all, breakfast is the most important meal of the day.

SEQUESTRATION IS AFFECTING US ALL

(Mr. WEBER of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WEBER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't seem like good leadership practice for the President to be going around the country reminding Americans that he failed to prevent his own sequestration, but to each his own.

Unfortunately, the President's sequestration is affecting us all. Why should he have shackled us all with the sequestration?

The truth is, the President's inability to lead has shackled us. The truth is, the President has not only a spending problem but a denial problem.

Well, make no mistake, Mr. Speaker. Sequestration is here. I implore the President to come back, work with Congress, and quit campaigning in the media.

SEQUESTRATION HAS BEGUN

(Ms. HAHN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, Congress' failure to avert the sequestration with a balanced and responsible plan before the March 1 deadline is not just sad, it's inexcusable. The ramifications of failure are anything but artificial. They are real and they are severe. While the sequestration process has begun, it is not too late to work together to put us back on the right path.

Funny enough, Democrats and Republicans actually agree on one thing: that we can and must adjust the way we spend money. But we have dramatically different ideas about the best approach.

Democrats in Congress have a balanced approach, which includes spending cuts and revenue through closing tax loopholes to reduce our debt. This sequestration plan is not the answer to dealing with our deficits, and neither is another eleventh-hour temporary solution.

We owe it to the American people to move the needle forward and come to a compromise on a real plan that will increase revenue from sources other than just slashing critical programs.

I ask unanimous consent to bring up H.R. 699, a balanced bill to replace this sequester with spending cuts and revenues.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the guidelines consistently issued by successive Speakers, as recorded on page 752 of the House Rules and Manual, the Chair is constrained not to entertain the gentlewoman's request unless it has been cleared by the bipartisan floor and committee leaderships.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING IS THE PROBLEM

(Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Mr. Speaker, last week I sat around the table with a group of young people, Millennials, who wanted to talk with me about solving our Nation's spending problem. These Millennials want all the same thing: a solution to Washington's spending problem today to stop hurting America's youth tomorrow.

I heard from one young college student who had just recently graduated, and she said, you know, I was excited to embrace all the opportunities that America had to offer, only to have many people tell me to expect 5 years of unemployment.

Unfortunately, these challenges are not unique, and their experiences are not uncommon. The national debt is more than a \$16 trillion pricetag. It's more than just a number.

Washington's out-of-control spending threatens the next generation of America's leaders from finding jobs after they graduate and having the tools they need to keep America competitive. Why?

Because spending is the problem. So we will continue to urge the Democrats