

Why don't we understand that investment is what America is all about? Because America is not broke, and we have the opportunity to invest and to create more research and development, but we are living under the umbrella with the big elephant in the room—sequester. That doesn't make sense, because this country is one of the richest countries in the world.

I can assure you that, if we invest in America, we will create jobs, and those jobs will then churn the economy again and continue to bring down the debt. I don't know why a commonsense approach to building this economy up should not be the direction of this country.

Yesterday, I spoke at a high-speed rail summit. It is very clear that a building of high-speed rail will create thousands of jobs and increase mobility of Americans, but yet the image is that we are broke, and that is a very sad commentary.

As I listened to the ads that were utilized in my State of Texas, individuals not running for Congress or the United States Senate but running for State offices, all they can talk about is standing up against Obama. I want to stand with President Obama and stand with him to build this country and make it greater. That should be the message: invest in people. That is what will make America the Nation that all have looked to.

AID FOR UKRAINE

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I first want to recognize Annie Lowrey and Michael Gordon—they are reporters from The New York Times—because I will summarize their article and plagiarize other portions of it in talking about Ukraine.

The world watched in wonder, concern, excitement, and sometimes horror, and marveled at the tenacity and the resiliency of the Ukrainian people. However, Ukraine is in desperate need now of billions of dollars—and quickly. Its economy is shrinking; its government treasury is empty; its foreign exchange funds are low; and its banking system is fragile. Which brings us to the point of: What are the next steps?

The first step is for the Ukrainian people to organize an interim government. I call upon them to do it as rapidly as they can so that the international community has someone then to negotiate with and deal with some of these pressing matters, and that they go into a positive direction in doing that.

The second thing is for the capitals of Brussels and Washington, D.C., to take immediate action to help offset some of these dire financial constraints that Ukraine has.

I want to applaud Secretary Kerry for already trying to address this and floating the idea of \$1 billion that

would then go to immediate aid, and I want to call upon the European Union, headquartered in Brussels, and all the individual European countries to do the same. It is important now for this financial faith and confidence so that the people of Ukraine can continue to move forward and develop some financial security in this transitional period.

This is also critical in that this occurs as a bridge before the International Monetary Fund weighs in. The International Monetary Fund obviously needs to have a stable government to deal with. It also needs to have—and will ask for—reforms, transparency, rule of law, and some financial controls to get the ledger solidified in Ukraine, and that is what they should do.

So the important aspect of this debate is that the individual countries that have concern about the stability of what were formerly called the captive nations, the Eastern Bloc, now countries that want to be in the European community of free, democratic institutions, that there has to be a bridge so that, obviously, the chaos that has been involved in the country of Ukraine will not continue post the departure of their President and so that stability can reign.

I call upon the people of Ukraine to keep the faith and work hard and move forward on these reforms. I call on the governments—as I mentioned before, my own government, and the governments of the European Union—to offer immediate assistance, and I call for the International Monetary Fund to move as expeditiously and as quickly as possible to help stabilize the situation in Ukraine.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF TUSKEGEE AIRMAN CAPTAIN LEON "WOODIE" SPEARS

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

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Each February during African American History Month, Americans come together to celebrate the important contributions of African Americans throughout the Nation. I am proud to share the remarkable story of one of my constituents, Hayward resident, Captain Leon "Woodie" Spears.

Growing up near an airfield, young Woodie always dreamed of flying. After attending college, he was given the opportunity to achieve his dreams. Woodie was among the few selected to join other young African Americans in Alabama at the Tuskegee Airfield, where he was trained to fly. During training, Woodie overcame very tough odds, battling prejudice and racism, to earn his wings and the honor of serving with the Tuskegee Airmen.

Following training, then-Lieutenant Spears was sent to Italy at the height of World War II, serving with the all-African American 332nd Fighter Group.

Woodie's tensest moment came in March 1945, when his plane was hit by antiaircraft fire at 32,000 feet. He was forced to make an emergency landing in Germany, only to be taken prisoner later by the German Army. Later, Woodie was able to locate Russian forces and found his way back to safety.

Captain Spears and his fellow Tuskegee Airmen proved themselves in battle abroad, but upon returning home, they faced another battle—the struggle for equality. Denied basic human dignity, they fought back. With like-minded citizens, they changed America for the better, and, of course, that fight, their struggle, still continues today.

For their brave service during World War II, the Tuskegee Airmen were collectively awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2007. Captain Spears was among those present to receive this prestigious honor.

After Captain Spears' military career, he dedicated his life to public service, toured the country to share his military experiences during the time of segregation, and spoke up for equality for all. Although Captain Spears is no longer with us, we are reminded of the life motto he lived by: Dare to dream.

Captain Spears is just one of many African Americans with a unique story that makes our country what it is today. The story of Captain Spears reminds us that the United States has come a long way, but that we still have a much longer way to go to truly reach equality for all.

I will not rest until all Americans have an equal opportunity to achieve their dreams.

A RESPONSE TO TWO U.S. SENATORS REGARDING PUERTO RICO STATEHOOD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. PIERLUISI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the junior Senator from Mississippi and the junior Senator from West Virginia spoke on the Senate floor about Puerto Rico's political status. Because Puerto Rico is a territory and not a State, we have no Senators who can respond to these two Senators on the Senate floor. So, as the only elected representative in Congress of the 3.6 million U.S. citizens that live in Puerto Rico, I respond now.

The Senators discussed the referendum that was held in Puerto Rico in November 2012. However, neither Senator mentioned that, on the first question in that referendum, 54 percent of voters said they do not want Puerto Rico to be a territory, which means that my constituents no longer consent to the current status.

Likewise, neither Senator noted that, during a Senate hearing on the referendum held last August, the senior Democrat and the senior Republican on the Committee on Energy and

Natural Resources agreed that it was indisputable and clear that the people of Puerto Rico oppose the current territory status.

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Finally, in their remarks yesterday, neither Senator acknowledged that in the referendum, statehood received more votes than any other status option, including the current status. In short, the Senators' discussion of the historic referendum was clearly deficient.

In addition, both Senators expressed opposition to the Puerto Rico Status Resolution Act, which I introduced last year in the House and which was introduced earlier this month in the Senate. The two Senators have every right to oppose this legislation, which calls for an up-or-down vote in Puerto Rico on the territory's admission as a State and outlines the steps the Federal Government would take if a majority of voters favor admission. But to argue, as the Senators did, that the bill excludes other options other than statehood makes no sense. A binary vote, by definition, is not exclusive. Those who support statehood can vote "yes," and those who oppose it can vote "no." This was precisely the format of the votes that led to Hawaii and Alaska becoming States.

I ask the Senators: Do you believe those earlier votes were unfair or exclusionary? In any event, there are now 132 Members of the House and Senate who have cosponsored the Puerto Rico Status Resolution Act and, therefore, disagree with these two Senators' characterization of the bill. Both Senators sought to contrast their opposition to the Puerto Rico Status Resolution Act with their apparent support for a Puerto Rico-related appropriation that the President included in his fiscal year 2014 budget request at my urging, and that recently became law. Under this appropriation, funding would be provided for the first federally sponsored vote in Puerto Rico's history, to be held among one or more options that are consistent with U.S. law and policy and that would "resolve" the status issue. Contrary to the suggestion made by both Senators, a vote on Puerto Rico's admission as a State is a perfectly valid and logical way to structure the federally sponsored plebiscite to be held pursuant to this appropriation.

Both Senators also expressed the view that the status debate is a "distraction" from efforts to tackle Puerto Rico's economic and fiscal challenges. This argument is familiar, but it is false. The reality is that Puerto Rico's economic problems are structural in nature and are rooted in the territory's unequal and undemocratic status. No wonder my constituents are relocating to the States in unprecedented numbers.

I look forward to the day when the men, women, and children I represent have the same rights and responsibilities

as their fellow U.S. citizens residing in the States that the two Senators represent. We do not seek special treatment. We seek equality, and we intend to achieve it.

WAR ON POVERTY

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

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, it was 50 years ago that then-President Lyndon Johnson declared a war on poverty.

I rise today to join my colleagues in recognizing the 50th anniversary of this declaration, this promise that America will be a better place for the generations that come after us. I join them in restating our commitment to fighting for policies that lift all Americans up.

That American Dream that we so often speak of, it only happens if we embrace national initiatives that respect and encourage that dream—guaranteeing a fair wage, promoting educational opportunity, and investing in an economy that works for the 21st century. That is what we should be spending our time on here in Congress, not gutting consumer and safety protections, or political distractions like we see on this week's agenda.

I am not worried that the Republican Party has surrendered in the war on poverty; I am worried that they were never interested in it to begin with. A life in poverty shouldn't be a life sentence with no future, but for too many Americans, that is exactly what it is.

Mr. Speaker, 46.5 million Americans live in poverty today; 16 million of those are children. In my hometown of New York City, that is one in three children. One in three children. These families, these children, find themselves trapped in poverty, and they need a government that is willing to help them out of that morass.

Helping those in need has long been a part of our country's philosophy. That is why we have unemployment insurance for when workers lose a job through no fault of their own. That is why we have Social Security so that seniors no longer have to live out their final days in grinding poverty. That is why we have SNAP benefits so that no child goes hungry in the richest Nation on Earth.

These programs and other lifelines are under threat, putting millions of Americans in danger of slipping further into poverty. We cannot let that happen. We cannot let the threads of our social safety net slip apart. We have to make sure that a hard day's work pays enough to make ends meet.

Today, we have millions of Americans who are the working poor. That means they get up every morning, get dressed, go to work, and they put in 40-plus hours of work—or I would suggest even more—every week, but they are not making enough money to pay the bills or even meet basic needs like food and shelter. To me, that is not how

America should be. If you work a full-time job, you should be able to feed and support your family, but the fact is, someone who works full time on minimum wage only makes about \$14,000 a year—\$14,000 a year. That is just not enough money, no matter how many ways you slice it to make ends meet, and it is definitely not enough to take care of children or families. It shouldn't be this way.

For all of our differences, we should be united in the desire to give our children a better way of life than we had. That is what I know my grandparents were thinking when they immigrated here from Ireland, just like many others.

They passed the Statue of Liberty, the famous signal of hope and opportunity. The words at the base say, "Give me your tired, your poor." The Statue of Liberty doesn't say we should forget about poor children. No, it says give us your tired, give us your poor. Give us.

Imagine what a wonderful message that is, that America is actually about helping the poor. It is because that is who we are as Americans. That is what the war on poverty demands of us, living up to the ideals we have set for our country.

I urge every one of my colleagues to look inside themselves and recommit themselves to fighting the war on poverty, a fight that, as President Johnson said, we cannot afford to lose.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 8 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. YODER) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Compassionate and merciful God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

We pray that You bless this country we love with all our hearts. We thank You for those who founded our Republic upon faith, respect for law, and constitutional rights of individuals, and the common good of the Nation and all its citizens.

Fan the flame of freedom in the hearts of all Americans, and especially those who serve in the Armed Forces. Strengthen the resolve of all the Members of this people's House, that they, attentive to Your commands, may follow their consciences and always do what is right as they wrestle with complex issues.