

ports, and levees; robbing our families and our children of critical investments in education and health care reform; robbing our seniors of the retirement and health security they have counted on.

Every dollar we pay in interest is a dollar that is not going to investment in America's priorities. Instead, interest payments are a significant tax on all Americans—a debt tax that Washington doesn't want to talk about.

Senator Obama finally brought up our debt to unfriendly nations:

Now, there is nothing wrong with borrowing from foreign countries. But we must remember that the more we depend on foreign nations to lend us money, the more our economic security is tied to the whims of foreign leaders whose interests might not be aligned with ours.

Increasing America's debt weakens us domestically and internationally. Leadership means that "the buck stops here." Instead, Washington is shifting the burden of bad choices today onto the backs of our children and grandchildren. America has a debt problem and a failure of leadership. Americans deserve better.

I therefore intend to oppose the effort to increase America's debt limit.

Today, America's debt is over \$18 trillion—with a t. Clearly, President Obama has forgotten Senator Obama's words. But the American people remember, and on their behalf, I ask President Obama to decrease our debt by working with Congress to end the debt tax by growing our economy and shipping American natural gas to friendly countries like Ukraine, like India, like Japan, and like South Korea.

WELCOMING ENDA KENNY TO CAPITOL HILL

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

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, as the world prepares to celebrate St. Patrick's Day and this afternoon we welcome the Irish Prime Minister of the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, here to the Capitol, I want to pause for a moment to recognize the anniversary of a pivotal event in the peace process in the north of Ireland.

Twenty years ago, against the advice of his own State Department, President Bill Clinton granted a visa to the leader of Sinn Féin and its president, Gerry Adams, to visit the United States. It was at the time an unpopular decision, but history has proven it to be a catalyst for the peace process which, again, has proved to be most durable. It helped to bring an end to the longest standing political dispute in the history of the Western World. Simply put, Bill Clinton took an extraordinary risk that has paid huge dividends.

I was one of a handful of Members of Congress at the time who urged President Clinton to approve the visa. When Gerry Adams arrived in the United States after stopping in Boston, he made his way to my hometown of Springfield, Massachusetts, and ad-

dressed a core group of thousands at the John Boyle O'Reilly Club, and he thanked them for their support.

During his campaign for President, we had urged then-candidate Clinton to make peace in the island of Ireland a top foreign policy priority if he was to be elected. After his inauguration, to our great and pleasant surprise, he sent his National Security Adviser at the time, Tony Lake, to Capitol Hill to tell us that they were to elevate Ireland to the same category of priority as the Middle East.

A year later, on January 31 of 1994, the visa was issued to Gerry Adams, and the American dimension to the Irish peace process was born. Fourteen years later, the Good Friday Agreement was signed, and a society in the north of Ireland was transformed overnight.

On the night that Mr. Clinton offered that visa—it was one of the more memorable events in my career—I defended the Clinton administration that night on the BBC's Newsnight Hour, which would be the equivalent of Nightline here in America. I debated the leader of the UUP, Ken Maginnis.

Later today, I am hosting a briefing with Gerry Adams and the Congressional Friends of Ireland, and I urge our friends to visit with him if they can, and later on to meet the Irish Prime Minister at 3:30 this afternoon.

When we contrast where America and Ireland were in this special relationship that dates back three centuries, it is important to recall what it looked like in the north of Ireland 30 years ago. There were 30,000 British soldiers in an area the size of the State of Connecticut. There was a police force that held the position that nationalists need not apply—the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The British soldiers are gone and the Royal Ulster Constabulary are gone today. The watchtowers that monitored the activities largely of the nationalist community have been taken down, and you can cross from Derry to Donegal without knowing that you have moved from the north of Ireland to the Republic of Ireland or through Newry and County Down, as well, without being stopped, searched, and, in some instances, being frisked by British soldiers.

America's role in bringing about this success story provides an argument for the reach and the role of the United States in addressing some of the most difficult issues in the world. Ireland represented the longest standing political dispute in the history of the Western World, and America's role was pivotal to helping make that change. That model has become, today, something that could be emulated worldwide, and, in fact, the people who participated travel the world to talk about how they found common ground and a path forward.

There is a representative democracy in Belfast today in what is known as Stormont, where parties sit some days in disagreement and other days in

agreement, but always with the idea that they are in charge of their own destiny and their own future. That is the genius of representative democracy.

I call attention to this issue today because of many of the stubborn problems that plague the world, with the understanding that men and women of good will in the crucible of politics can indeed chart a path forward, and not to miss the fact that it was still the risk-taking of the Clinton administration that took up the notion that the nationalist voice on the island of Ireland and in the north of Ireland and six small counties should be heard, and today the result is all around us.

So as the political parties visit on the eve of St. Patrick's Day all across the island of Ireland, we can satisfy ourselves with this achievement: the notion, once again, that good will and understanding the other side's arguments can, in fact, be heralded in the sense of achievement, but also, again, in the Stormont government that has been duly elected.

So, today, we in America take great satisfaction as to the role our men and women played in bringing about this success story and also to recognize something on a personal basis. I and many others here were allowed to participate in all of these "it can never happen" moments. Thanks, America, for help, once again, in leading the way.

CONCERNS OF INADEQUATE CBP STAFFING AT MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a great sense of urgency over the critical need to have more Customs and Border Protection officers at Miami International Airport, known as MIA. MIA, which I humbly represent, is not only the busiest airport in the State of Florida, but it is also the second largest international gateway in the Nation. In fact, international passenger traffic at MIA has steadily grown over the last few years far more than any other U.S. international gateway. However, the insufficient Customs and Border Protection officers, known as CBP, staffing levels at MIA pose a threat to this welcome growth of travel and tourism into our country.

Passengers are experiencing long wait times for immigration and customs processing. For example, just a few days ago, last Wednesday, the 7,681 passengers who arrived at the Federal Inspection Service at MIA's North Terminal were held in line for more than 2 hours. Out of the 72 lanes available to assist passengers, only 20 were open. And there is only one simple explanation for this problem. CBP staffing does not meet the numbers needed for

the safe and efficient processing of passengers and cargo going through our airport.

As time passes by, this endemic problem has only proven to deteriorate. The Miami-Dade congressional delegation and MIA officials have long been focused on how to fix this problem while ensuring a safe and seamless travel experience for our local residents and our many, many visitors.

Earlier this week, I wrote a letter to Secretary Johnson of the Department of Homeland Security asking for his immediate action on alleviating the ongoing shortage of CBP officers, a deficiency that sets back efforts to make Florida competitive; and it hurts our travel and tourism, two vital engines to our Nation's economy.

The entire Miami-Dade congressional delegation, including our Senators, is united on this bipartisan, bicameral effort.

With a strategic location to handle connections between the Americas and Europe, MIA serves as the doorstep to the United States. In 2013, a record 40 million passengers passed through MIA's doors as they made their way to their final destinations. These people come to our port of entry either to visit south Florida or to make connections to other national and international destinations. We need to welcome them with the world-class airport that MIA can be and not with long lines, hassles, and congestion.

Under the leadership of Dr. Emilio Gonzalez, the director of the Miami-Dade Aviation Department, MIA has taken a number of steps to ease the lack of CBP officers. How have they done this? Installing automated passport control self-serve kiosks; also, increasing the Miami-Dade Aviation Department staffing, participating in a reimbursable fee agreement pilot program approved by Congress which allows for needed overtime, and by closing certain gateways in order to concentrate CBP officers in appropriate areas.

However, despite MIA's innovative approach, CBP's insufficient staffing levels continue to pose serious challenges to the airport's daily operations. With the growing number of passengers arriving or transitioning through MIA and with the World Cup in Brazil approaching, MIA will have an even busier summer. We need to be prepared. And that is why we ask for Secretary Johnson's assistance in providing much-needed CBP staffing and to remember that MIA's success is our Nation's success.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot stress enough the pressing need for Federal staffing at MIA, which will only allow for a further streamlining of long lines and will also help in the reduction of wait times for visitors and for residents, alike.

END HUNGER NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from

Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, this week, as part of my End Hunger Now series, I want to focus on one of the most important and successful Federal antihunger and nutrition programs, the WIC program. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, commonly known as WIC is a fantastic program that is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. It truly is an amazing program, one that has been a tremendous success for 40 years.

WIC is a short-term intervention program designed to influence nutrition and health behaviors in a targeted high-risk population. What does that mean? Well, Mr. Speaker, it means that it provides nutritious food and nutrition education, among other services, to pregnant women, infants, and young children.

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Specifically, WIC provides quality nutrition education and services, breast-feeding promotion and education, a monthly food prescription, and access to maternal, prenatal, and pediatric health care services.

Not only has WIC been around for 40 years, it has served millions of women and children over that time. For example, more than 10,000 clinics served 8.7 million women and children each month in 2013. That figure includes 853,000 pregnant women, 595,000 breast-feeding women, 598,000 postpartum, 2 million infants, and 4.6 million children. Those are monthly figures, Mr. Speaker.

Let's be clear: this is an important antipoverty program. It helps poor pregnant women, postpartum mothers, and their children receive both nutritious food and nutrition education. That's right, this program serves poor people—and does so successfully.

To qualify for WIC, participants' income level must be at or below 185 percent of the poverty level or they must be on Medicaid. That is about \$36,000 a year for a family of three. We are not talking about wealthy people here, Mr. Speaker. In fact, nearly three-fourths of all WIC participants live in families with incomes below the Federal poverty level. That means most families of three are making less than \$36,000. In fact, according to the latest data available, the average income of a participant was \$16,842 a year.

The services WIC provides are critically important, and they are based on sound science. For example, we know how important it is for women to breast-feed their children. Breast milk contains important nutrients infants need to grow and to develop. We know that breast-fed infants tend to be healthier because they receive antibodies from the breast milk, antibodies that protect these young kids against infection. Did you know that breast-feeding has also been proven to save money? That's right. If 90 percent of

U.S. mothers exclusively breast-fed their infants for 6 months, the U.S. would save \$13 billion annually in medical expenses and prevent 900 deaths a year.

Another important part of WIC that is based on science is the food package that is made available to each client. They are designed specifically for each person, whether you are a pregnant mother, nursing mother, or a child. The foods available are approved by the scientists and the researchers at the Institute of Medicine. That's right, not Members of Congress or non-science-based administrators in a Federal agency that approve or deny certain foods from the WIC package. We know that proper nutrition can make people healthier, reduce instances of illness and disease, and prevent or reduce hospital visits and stays. I guess my mother was right when she said, An apple a day keeps the doctor away.

That is why it is so maddening and so disappointing when special interests try to change the WIC food package just so they can see a little bit more money for their product. Proper nutrition can save money—something I think should be popular in this Congress—and ignoring science because special interests want to make a quick buck is just wrong.

That is why I am so proud of this program. A few years ago, there was an attempt in the House of Representatives to underfund WIC—to deny these important services to poor women and their children. The backlash was fierce. That funding was quickly restored, and we haven't seen an attempt to cut WIC since. I only wish that were true for other Federal antihunger programs.

You see, Mr. Speaker, this program is what is best about America. Ironically, it was a program that was born in the Nixon administration. In fact, it came from the first and only White House conference on hunger, something I wish this President, President Obama, would convene before his term is over.

For 40 years WIC has ensured that poor women and their children have access to nutritious food and nutrition education. It is just that simple. These women and children have a lifeline to making their lives healthier and better. It is safe to say that the millions of people served by WIC would be worse if it weren't for this program.

I am proud of this program. I am proud of the people who work at WIC clinics, and the administrators, and those who administer the program in every State. I am proud of the people who advocate and fight for this program. I look forward to the day when we don't need WIC because we have eradicated poverty once and for all. Until that day comes, I am proud that we have WIC to help make the lives of the women and children they serve just a little bit better.