

Athens"; to Plato, who laid a groundwork in philosophy so vast that the entirety of European philosophical tradition is said to simply be a footnote to his work; to Count Ioannis Kapodistrias, the first head of state of an independent Greece, Greeks have been exceptional and continue to be exceptional, Mr. Speaker.

I am almost certain that Thomas Jefferson cast an eye across the Atlantic towards Greece when he uttered these words in 1821: "The flames kindled on the Fourth of July 1776 have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism. On the contrary, they will consume these engines and all who work them."

I am blessed to be of two cultures, Mr. Speaker, that have been beacons of liberty for all of civilization: the place of my birth, the land of the free and the home of the brave, the United States of America; and the land of my ancestors, the birthplace of democracy, the Hellenic Republic.

Many Greeks fought for years, holding on to their heritage, their culture, their faith. Bishop Germanos of Patras raised the emblem of freedom for Hellenes, the flag bearing a white cross and nine blue and white stripes representing the nine letters, "Eleftheria," which means freedom.

Eight years of bloodshed and battle led to the Treaty of Adrianople, the formal declaration of a free and independent Greece.

Greece was the world's first advanced civilization, one that provided a cultural heritage that has influenced the world. Firsts in philosophy, mathematics, politics, sports, and art stemmed from a free Greece.

Liberty and justice, freedom to determine the path of one's own life, these are human desires and were embodied by Greece throughout their fight for independence. Those unyielding Hellenes paid life and limb for those desires, and generations of Greeks for decades to come owe their ancestors thanks.

As George Washington once said: "Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth." This held true in Greece in 1821, as it did in America in 1776.

"Freedom or Death," Eleftheria i thanatos, was the battle cry of the revolutionaries nearly 200 years ago. It rings true today.

Freedom is a powerful and beautiful notion. The Greek people achieved that for themselves 195 years ago, and I am proud to celebrate in memory of those who fought bravely to shed the shackles of the Ottoman Empire.

Greece has its own unique challenges today but, also, a history of resilience and ability to climb its way out of turmoil. As centuries-long allies, we must continue to creatively come up with solutions to help Greece control the flow of refugees arriving on its shores.

I am encouraged by the growing cooperation and collaboration that our

closest allies in the Eastern Mediterranean are proving this year. The trilateral agreements between Greece, Cyprus, and Israel are a refreshing reminder that we stand united with our allies in the fight for security, stability, and prosperity in a volatile region.

We celebrate Greek independence to reaffirm the common democratic heritage we share, and, as Americans, we must continue to pursue this spirit of freedom and liberty which characterizes both of our great nations.

Zito I Ellas. God bless America.

□ 1030

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET

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

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, this morning I intend to comment on middle class budgets. But, before that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just very briefly reflect on a trip I just took to visit with our troops in the Middle East, in Iraq and elsewhere.

I have been to Iraq about 10 times. I think one of the fundamental responsibilities we have, as Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, is not just to talk about supporting our troops, but to go into the theater, visit with them, and learn firsthand the challenges they face.

Every time I visit with our troops, when I come back, I think the same thing: that we are so blessed to live in a country that gives us the right to agree with the decision to put people in harm's way, we have the right to disagree with that decision, and we have the right to remain silent, but no American has the right to forget even for a day the sacrifices that those men and women are making for us every single day.

We owe them our support and our awareness for the work that they do and, more importantly, supporting their families who are here and supporting our troops when they return as veterans.

Mr. Speaker, Friday, April 15, is a day of two deadlines. That is the deadline most Americans know by which they must pay their Federal income taxes. Everybody understands that deadline, and Americans don't have a choice but to comply with that deadline.

The other deadline is that that is the day by which Congress must pass a budget, and it is up to the Republican majority to produce that budget and bring that budget to the floor for a vote.

Unfortunately, the Republican majority will miss that deadline and fail the American people in our fundamental responsibility to earn our pay by passing budgets.

That is what we are put here to do: to debate priorities and pass budgets; yet,

this deadline will be missed. Failing to pass a budget by the deadline is a fundamental failure to the American people.

I will say, however, that, in this case, a missed budget may be a little better than the bad budget that Republicans have originally proposed. It is a budget that fundamentally fails the middle class.

It is a budget, as proposed, that gets rid of the Medicare guarantee. It is a budget, as proposed, that slashes \$6.5 trillion in fundamentally important priorities to the middle class in making sure that their kids are well educated, making sure that we are rebuilding America with infrastructure and trying to reduce traffic jams, rebuilding our bridges and our tunnels, and modernizing our airports. It is a budget that undermines the middle class. It is a budget that fails the middle class.

Now, I understand the need for us to reduce spending, and I have supported significant reductions in spending in my time in Congress.

But what this budget does is it takes away from the middle class in order to further enrich the most powerful: the special interests.

That is why people are so angry out there. They understand that Washington has to do more with less, but not give more to people who already have the most.

That is what the Republican budget does. That is the architecture of spending tax dollars that must be paid by April 15.

You take away from the middle class and you give more to people who are doing pretty well already, people who are doing so well that they can hire all sorts of friends to do their work here in Washington and maybe even contribute to some super-PACs. I think that is wrong.

People are angry because not only are our priorities wrong, but they see very little evidence of a Congress, under Republican leadership in the Senate and the House, that is doing its job.

They are angry because the Republican Senate won't even debate and vote on a Supreme Court nomination. You can vote for it. You can vote against it. They won't even vote on that nomination.

That is a failure to do the job that they are paid to do. They are angry because the majority here in the House of Representatives won't do their job and pass a budget.

As I said before, Mr. Speaker, maybe no budget is better than a bad budget, but both represent failure for the American people.

The Pew Research Center did a study just several weeks ago that said that, for the first time since the Depression, to be in the middle class in America is to be in the minority. About 49 percent of Americans are in the middle class. The rest are either richer or poorer.

An economy grows best when the middle class is strongest. We need to

fulfill our responsibility to that middle class by doing what they will pay us to do on April 15: just do our jobs and pass a budget that invests in their growth, in their families, in their children, and, as I opened, invests in our troops, our national security, and makes sure that every veteran in America is taken care of. Those are the priorities we have in our budgets.

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 10 o'clock and 34 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Stephen Thomlison, St. Stephen's Catholic Church, Exeter, Nebraska, offered the following prayer:

Good and gracious God, we come before You filled with gratitude for the many blessings You have bestowed upon us. Humbly, we ask for Your forgiveness for when we have chosen the wrong path.

We beseech Your mercy, O Lord, upon our Nation. Rain down from heaven Your holy fire—not a fire of wrath or destruction, but a fire of love, a fire of mercy, and a fire of wisdom so that we may love as You love.

Pour into this Chamber today a spirit of civility, a freshness of renewal, and a bountiful grace of new ideas.

Bless these legislators, their families, their staff, and abundantly bless all those they represent. May the work of this Chamber be guided by Your divine hand.

Hear us, O Lord, for I ask this in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Thy Son and our Savior.

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 gentleman from California (Ms. HAHN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. HAHN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Repub-

lic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING REVEREND STEPHEN THOMLISON

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I rise to welcome Father Steve Thomlison, and thank him for serving as our guest chaplain today.

Father Thomlison serves as chaplain for both the Nebraska Army National Guard and the Nebraska State Patrol, actually, as well as the FBI, providing support to hundreds of our servicemen and -women, first responders, law enforcement, and their families.

Ordained in the Catholic Diocese of Lincoln, Father Thomlison pastors the parish of St. Stephen's Church in Exeter, Nebraska, and the mission parish of St. Wenceslaus Church in Milligan, Nebraska.

He did not enter the priesthood right away, but by his mid-thirties, a restless heart and a renewed focus on prayer led him to the seminary. He was ordained a priest at age 41.

It is also important to note Father Thomlison is a proud Cornhusker, having attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

It is my honor to welcome Father Thomlison to the United States House of Representatives.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

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

BALD EAGLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT WINS NUTRITION HABIT CHALLENGE

(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, I rise to commend several school districts in the Pennsylvania Fifth Congressional District for their work in helping promote healthy lifestyles for their students, staff, and residents.

In 2015, more than 2,200 people participated in the Nutrition Habit Challenge, which was established 3 years ago by One on One Fitness, a local fitness consulting company, in order to inspire people across the county to make better choices for their diet and exercise habits.

Each year, the winning school district is picked based on the number of successful participants divided by the district's total number of students. Those who participate must commit to changing a nutritional behavior over the course of 1 month.

This year, the Bald Eagle Area School District, my alma mater, won

\$500 through the competition. District officials say families participating in the challenge cut soda from their diets and increased consumption of water, while others packed salad for lunch instead of opting for fast food.

I commend the students, the staff, and residents of all Centre County's school districts for participating in this unique challenge.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF BILL ROSENDAHL

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

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of my dear friend and former Los Angeles City Councilman Bill Rosendahl, who lost his battle with cancer on March 30.

In 2005, Bill became the first openly gay man to be elected to the Los Angeles City Council. I remember how brave he was in the face of adversity. He became a fearless supporter of the Los Angeles LGBT community, and he left behind a legacy of fighting for HIV and AIDS research and an end to discrimination.

Bill was one of the most selfless and kindhearted individuals I have ever known. That heart made him an incredible advocate and a beloved champion for the people he represented.

I visited Bill recently in hospice and had a chance to hold his hand and tell him stories about when we served together on the city council in Los Angeles.

I will never forget his joyfulness, his gregarious laugh that never failed to put a smile on my face. I have cherished his friendship, and I will miss him dearly.

May he rest in peace.

MAIN STREET JOBS AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

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

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, talk to any small-business owner, and they will tell you how challenging it is to operate in this environment: heavy-handed regulations, confusing paperwork requirements, a complex and unfair Tax Code. I hear it all the time as I travel Michigan's Seventh District, hold listening sessions, and tour local shops and manufacturing facilities. That is why I am introducing the Main Street Jobs and Opportunity Act.

To grow a healthy economy, we need to foster policies that help small businesses do what they do best: bring their products to market and hire new workers in the community.

It is time for Big Government to stop squeezing the small family farmer in Jackson County, the local diner in Eaton County, and the manufacturer in Monroe County. Instead of building up Washington or Wall Street, let's focus on helping Main Street.