

ask ourselves what really keeps America safe in today's world.

REINING IN GOVERNMENT: A NEW ATTITUDE AND A NEW DAY

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

Mr. YOHO. Madam Speaker, it is a great day here in America.

Four years ago I came to Congress with a desire to change the business-as-usual politics in Washington, D.C. That road has been tough, but change has been achieved. My efforts, along with the efforts of like-minded colleagues, changed the leadership of this House for the better. There has been a renewed work ethic and excitement to set forth an agenda for the American people that puts them first, not Big Government, not Big Business. There is truth in the saying: Do not grow weary in well doing.

Madam Speaker, with positive incremental changes taking hold, the key stone to our success will be a change in leadership at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Our current administration has done everything it can to avoid working with Congress. Time and again, Republicans have sent legislation to the President's desk on behalf of the American people, only to have each one of them vetoed. With every veto, the President casts aside the will of the very people who elected us to serve, telling them, essentially: I know what is best for you. Or he rules with a pen and a phone.

Every Member of Congress takes their work and the work of the American people seriously as Representatives and as a legislative body. If this administration, in their remaining time in office, doesn't want to work with Congress on anything, then the Republicans in the House and the Senate must take action to address the issues facing the American people.

Due to the President's policy of stonewalling Congress, the legislation that we have passed has no chance of gaining his signature. Compromise, once accepted as a means to accomplish the greater good, now seems to be a thing of the past. The executive branch, whether held by Democrats or Republicans, has grown accustomed to exercising unilateral power to reinterpret existing law and twist it to fit its own ideology.

Again, I want to repeat. The executive branch, whether held by Republicans or Democrats, has used that power and twisted it to fit its own ideology.

Congress has no answer to the authoritative rulemaking process used by government agencies today. Madam Speaker, we need to reestablish a check on those agencies that are willfully disrupting business across America.

I am not talking about rules that were crafted with an understanding of the industry and a truly thoughtful

process which included all stakeholders. I am talking about the rules, like the Clean Power Plan, endorsed by radical environmental groups with no reasonable knowledge of what affordable energy means to people who live paycheck to paycheck and follow an ideology of their own.

To blunt these rules, Congress must have a tool that truly is a check on the executive, one that forces the executive and legislative branch to work things out together.

One tool that scholars repeatedly pay lip service to is the power of the purse. We talk about it all the time, but we don't see it in action. While historically being an important tool to enforce the will of Congress, nowadays, a fight over spending devolves into a blame game over shutting down the government. It is a black eye to our system of government; it is a black eye to the notion of stability; and it is an insult to the American people and furthers the dysfunction of this great institution.

The balance of power in our government is out of alignment, and it is up to us in Congress to reclaim what used to be ours—the legislative veto. The legislative veto used to be a potent check on the executive branch for the better part of the 20th century. However, a broad ruling by the United States Supreme Court in 1983, *INS v. Chadha*, nullified the legislative veto in over 280 statutes. This was a sweeping decision, one that both handed more authority to the executive branch while limiting Congress' ability to stand up to Federal bureaucracies.

In his dissent, Justice Byron White, who was nominated to the Court by President Kennedy, correctly identified the fallout from the decision, and I quote: "Without the legislative veto, Congress is faced with a Hobson's choice: either to refrain from delegating the necessary authority, leaving itself with a hopeless task of writing laws with the requisite specificity to cover endless special circumstances across the entire policy landscape or, in the alternative, to abdicate its law-making function to the executive branch and independent agencies. To choose the former leaves major national problems unresolved; to opt for the latter risks unaccountable policymaking by those not elected to fill that role."

As members of the legislative branch, we all must take this seriously. We may be in the middle an election year, but if we play party politics when it comes to the struggle between the executive and the legislative power, neither party wins, and the American people lose. What is at stake, and more important than party politics, is the survival of our very form of government, a constitutional Republic.

This is the time to come together, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Americans, to bring this power back.

FAILURE TO PASS A BUDGET

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

Ms. ESTY. Madam Speaker, last Friday, this House blew right through the statutory deadline to enact a budget resolution.

Let's set aside, for a moment, the fact that passing a budget last Friday was required by law. The real injustice to the American people is that Congress has once again failed to fulfill the most basic responsibilities that the American people sent us here to carry out.

A budget is supposed to reflect the values of the American people. It should be a roadmap of Congress' plan for supporting working families, creating middle class jobs, and strengthening our education system. It should be a roadmap for lifting barriers to opportunity, supporting our Nation's innovators, and helping startups and small businesses to get off the ground. It should be a roadmap for keeping Americans safe at home and abroad.

Now, let's be clear. The proposal that came out of the Budget Committee did none of these things. Dismantling Medicare won't improve our economic security. Abandoning public schools won't lift barriers to opportunity.

But the way forward is not to simply throw up our hands and abandon the budget process entirely. A budget is not a political exercise. We don't pass budgets when doing so is easy and walk away from our jobs when it gets hard.

Republicans and Democrats need to come together to craft a budget that reflects the priorities of the American people, a bipartisan budget that envisions a smarter, leaner government, one that creates predictability and support for good-paying jobs and increases opportunity for all.

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We need a budget to rebuild America by investing in our transportation and infrastructure. I worked very hard to successfully pass the 5-year highway bill that was signed into law late last year.

But according to the American Society of Civil Engineers, the United States needs to invest more than \$3.6 trillion by 2020 to bring our infrastructure up to basic standards.

Nowhere is this truer than in my home State of Connecticut where we have some of the oldest infrastructure in the country and where we rely on Federal funding to fix crumbling roads, bridges, and transit systems.

Our budget should encourage innovation and entrepreneurship. Connecticut has a long, proud manufacturing tradition. We are home to 5,000 manufacturers, many of them small and family owned, and I know they can compete with anyone if they have a level playing field. We need a budget that helps us create one.

Supporting innovators means investing not just in infrastructure, but in

infrastructure, our electrical grid and the physical building blocks of the Internet, which are vital to the success of startups and small businesses throughout the country.

Madam Speaker, in Connecticut and around the Nation, we need a budget that invests in STEM education and 21st century jobs, commits to growing our manufacturing sector, and provides the resources we need to fight the opioid epidemic that is tearing apart so many families.

The American public wants to see Congress take bold action. Our budget should set us on a path to leadership in today's and tomorrow's global economy.

A budget is much more than a statement of principles. It is a roadmap to lifting barriers to opportunity. It is an investment in our infrastructure and in the research and development we need to power 21st century careers. It is an investment in the American people.

It is time that we in this House put our responsibility to the American people before partisanship and political games. When the people we represent at home stop doing their jobs, they don't get paid.

In Congress, we should work the same way. We should pass the No Budget, No Pay Act because Members of Congress should only get paid when they do their jobs. If we worked under No Budget, No Pay, I guarantee you the House would have passed a budget last Friday.

So I call on my colleagues. Let's do the job the American people sent us here to do. Let's do the job we are paid to do. Let's go to the table—Democrats and Republicans—and hammer out a budget that supports good-paying jobs, grows our economy, keeps us safe, and truly reflects the priorities of the American people.

WASTING TAXPAYER MONEY IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Madam Speaker, I have brought to the floor today a prophetic political cartoon. Let me describe it very quickly.

There is Uncle Sam sitting in a wheelchair, and he shouts out with great excitement: I can see Greece from here. Behind the wheelchair pushing is President Obama. Behind President Obama is a donkey representing the Democratic Party, and behind the donkey is an elephant representing the Republican Party, the point being that all of us are guilty of heading this country towards Greece, and that means an economic collapse is forthcoming.

Madam Speaker, we are \$19 trillion in debt.

Another reason I am on the floor today is that the continued waste of the taxpayer money in Afghanistan is becoming astounding.

Madam Speaker, I include in the RECORD an article titled, "Report cites wasted Pentagon money in Afghanistan."

[From USATODAY.com, Jan. 20, 2016]

REPORT CITES WASTED PENTAGON MONEY IN AFGHANISTAN

(By Tom Vanden Brook)

WASHINGTON.—The embattled Pentagon agency blamed for building a budget-busting gas station in Afghanistan and renting luxury housing for its employees also imported Italian goats to boost the cashmere industry in the impoverished, war-wracked country, according to a government investigator.

Meanwhile, the former head of the Task Force for Business Stability Operations, Paul Brinkley, blasted back Wednesday at the government inspector general, accusing him of inaccuracy and hype.

At a Senate hearing, John Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR), said in prepared testimony that the task force lacked "strategic direction" and suffered from a "scattershot approach to economic development."

Among the more egregious examples of boondoggles he cited: "importing rare blond Italian goats to boost the cashmere industry." The \$6 million program included shipping nine male goats to western Afghanistan from Italy, setting up a farm, lab and staff to certify their wool.

A chart summarizing task force initiatives shows the inspector general did not conduct an audit of the program. The program, according to a contractor's analysis, may have created as many as 350 jobs. Sopko ripped the Pentagon and the task force for failing to track its spending. It's not unclear, for instance, if the goats were eaten.

"We don't know," Sopko said. "This was so poorly managed."

Sopko testified Wednesday on his report, "Preliminary Results Show Serious Management and Oversight Problems." The task force was charged with jump starting the economy of Afghanistan with nearly \$800 million in U.S. taxpayer funds.

Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., who chaired the hearing, called the allegations about the filling station troubling and called for a full accounting of task force spending.

"What happened to the money?" Ayotte asked. "All of it?"

Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., was livid about task force spending and called the natural gas-station program "dumb on its face," given the cost of converting cars to natural gas exceeds the average income of Afghans.

"This is a terrible waste of taxpayer money when we have so many other uses for it," McCaskill said.

In a letter and other documents, Brinkley, who led the task force in Iraq and later Afghanistan from 2006 to 2011, defended his oversight of the agency and lashed out at the government's watchdog.

"A meaningful and balanced review cannot be accomplished through a sustained media campaign or a practice of repeating uncorroborated allegations," Brinkley wrote to the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Sopko has released several provocative reports charging the task force with waste and shoddy accounting practices. Among the most eye-catching: a \$43 million natural-gas filling station that should have cost \$500,000 and proved of no use to average Afghans; and \$150 million spent on renting luxury villas for task force staff and visitors. Those alleged boondoggles have drawn ire from Capitol Hill and cast Brinkley as a profligate spender.

Brinkley, through his lawyer, bristled at the charge from the inspector general that

he had approved of programs without knowing their cost. Brinkley told investigators on Dec. 17 that his task force had no contracting authority, relying instead on career military officials to make deals within government regulations, according to his lawyer.

"This was done, in fact, in fact to ensure proper oversight—not to avoid it," Brinkley's lawyer, Charles Duross, wrote Wednesday to the inspector general's office.

The Pentagon on Wednesday also took issue with Sopko's price tag for the gas station, saying it was closer to \$5 million, not \$43 million. Brian McKeon, a top Pentagon policy official, said in a statement to USA TODAY that the methods used Sopko were "flawed, and the costs of the station are far lower."

The refueling station itself cost \$2.9 million, and the balance of the \$5 million paid for associated buildings and equipment, McKeon said.

Brinkley, in his letter, challenged the assertion that he and his staff lived in luxury, eschewing the basic, free accommodations offered by the military in Afghanistan.

In a previous report, Sopko criticized the task force for spending \$150 million on "western-style hotel accommodations" that included flat-screen TVs, private bodyguards and "three-star" menus for staff and guests. Bunking with the Army, Sopko suggested, could have saved taxpayers tens of millions of dollars.

Living conditions during his tenure, Brinkley wrote, were far from luxurious—"basic and minimal, with multiple bunks in shared living quarters" or on military bases.

"When this was not possible or practical, the challenge was to find facilities that did not continually smell of raw sewage, and food that did not frequently sicken our personnel or visiting government and business leaders—a challenge we never fully overcame," Brinkley wrote.

The task force's final grade is not yet in, McKeon said.

"Ultimately, time will tell whether the task force succeeded in its overall objectives," McKeon said. "Reports that the (Pentagon) commissioned to assess the Task Force's work—as well as SIGAR's work—tell us that the Task Force had a mixed record of success, with some successes and some failures."

Mr. JONES. In this story, John Sopko, the Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, tells that the worst boondoggle he has ever seen is the fact that the Department of Defense spent \$6 million to buy nine goats—nine goats—for \$6 million.

The sad thing about that is he testified before the Senate: We can't find the goats. What does that mean to the taxpayers? I don't know anymore. That is why they are so outraged, quite frankly.

Madam Speaker, I include in the RECORD a second article titled, "12 Ways Your Tax Dollars Were Squandered in Afghanistan."

[From NBC NEWS.com, March 5, 2016]

12 WAYS YOUR TAX DOLLARS WERE SQUANDERED IN AFGHANISTAN

(By Alexander Smith)

The United States has now spent more money reconstructing Afghanistan than it did rebuilding Europe at the end of World War II, according to a government watchdog.

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) said in a statement to Congress last week that when adjusted for inflation the \$113.1 billion plowed