

Does anyone care? This is the math.

In 10 years, according to CBO from just a couple days ago, Grandma is going to take a 23 percent cut in her check, and year after year it is going to get bigger unless we do something big.

Now, you look at Social Security, up until last week I was the senior Republican over Social Security, so I am pretty good at the math. We have one actuarial dataset that if you do the 75-year life, which is how you actually look at Social Security, it is like \$500 trillion short over the 75-year window. It is more than the wealth of the world.

Every day we don't do something here because it is politically distasteful because you are going to walk out the door and the press is going to run up to you and say, well, Democrats are saying a rumor that you Republicans intend to cut it.

We are trying to find a way to save it. You have weaponized it.

Then you want to know why this place runs away from the issue?

This is one of the things where if we don't hold hands and jump off the cliff together, you have just screwed over grandma and everyone else heading toward retirement.

These numbers aren't fake. This is your future.

Then I got up here last week. And I want to double-check; there was someone very smart. I do look at most of the comments. This one has had 300,000 views on YouTube since last week. Thank you for those who are insane enough to watch this because a year ago I would have like 12 people, and I couldn't even get my family to look at this stuff.

When we look at all—this is for the average, the couple that pays into Social Security, they will pay in over a lifetime—so let's just use, I think it is based on, the 40-quarter formula—about \$625,000. You are going to get back about \$698,000, and that is in constant dollars, so you get a little spiff.

You would make a hell of a lot more money if 20 or 30 years ago we had allowed workers to take a little sliver of their Social Security and put it in the market, you would have been much wealthier, but that became a political war. Remember, AARP and the Democrats beat the crap out of President Bush for even talking about it.

The question we had on YouTube was, is this both sides? Is this the employer contribution and the worker's contribution?

Yes, it is both sides. When we look at these numbers it is the total in. Social Security, you get back most of your money.

The folks on there who say, well, for Social Security and Medicare, just give me back my money, and I will be happy, we would take that deal as a government in a moment. We will give you back every dime if you promise never to take another dime of Social Security and Medicare.

Here is the punch line: On Medicare, remember three-quarters of Medicare

comes out of the general fund. The tax portion of your FICA is just the little portion we call Medicare part A. It is hospital and some doctor there.

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So the average couple will only pay about \$161,000 in a lifetime. That is someone who is retiring right now; \$161,000 in Medicare taxes, and they are going to take out 522. See the 1-to-5 ratio? This right here is the primary driver of U.S. sovereign debt over the next 30 years. It is healthcare costs.

How many Members of Congress are stupid enough to get behind this microphone and tell the truth? But it is the truth. It is the math. And you can't pretend.

And you read the comments and you want to just reach out and say, I know the political classes lied to you for years but you have got to stop living in the lunacy world.

Well, get rid of salaries for Members of Congress.

Okay. It pays for 28 minutes of an entire years' worth of borrowing.

What would you like to do with the rest of the year?

Well, let's get rid of foreign aid.

Okay. You just got rid of a couple weeks of borrowing for an entire year.

People don't see the scales. It is hard to do 14 zeros in your head, but we have been trying to put this together, even all sorts of the Democrat proposals.

Well, go to a 70 percent tax rate. Great, we took care of another 6 weeks of borrowing.

The political class has been unwilling to tell the truth. Republicans get up: Oh, well, we will get rid of waste and fraud and foreign aid.

The Democrats: Well, rich people don't pay enough taxes.

You lay them all out, you don't get near the borrowing. And understand, the borrowing doubles in 10 years because of the structural deficit driven mostly by what I was showing there. And you start to look at the math. This is all the entitlements. Yes, there is other crap that are mandatory spending. These are earned entitlements. You earned it. You worked a certain amount of quarters. You hit a certain age.

You see the chart. It is everything. These over here, this is Federal retirement. This is veterans benefits. Those are also earned.

We call them mandatory because it is a fixed formula but you can't pretend this isn't real. What scares me also on this—I know this chart is almost unreadable—we mapped out the Congressional Budget Office's modeling. And it would just show you they are almost overly optimistic all the time, that the numbers historically come in much worse than the models we get, because it is hard to predict the next pandemic, the next recession, the next war. So be careful, because often the Congressional budget numbers we get, are the best-case scenario.

Now, I am just going to do this really quickly. If I came to you right now and

said, okay, healthcare is the vast majority of all future debt. Change the price of healthcare. Well, the moral thing is legalize technology, legalize the type of technology where you can take care of yourself, but it also cures.

There are amazingly wonderful things happening. And I am going to do more of this over the coming weeks. The optimism that, if we would actually understand, instead of just moving the pieces around on the table, Oh, we will cut this but we will shift it to the State. We will cut this, and we will shift this to the individual. That is not a cut. The spending stays the same as the size of the economy.

There is a reason you didn't go to Blockbuster Video last weekend. There was a technology revolution. You no longer get that silver disk. You hit a button at home.

We are on the edge right now of curing stunning numbers of cancers. What would happen in healthcare when you start to see that, when you actually start to see ideas like this?

Not too far from here, I think it is 60, 70 miles, there is a co-op going up here in Virginia that is going to make eight types of off-patent insulin, and they are going to do it less than the subsidized price than the Democrats passed last year. As a matter of fact, what the Democrats did almost screwed up the co-op's model.

How do we encourage more competition? If you want to crash the price of pharmaceuticals, get everyone and their cousin making pharmaceuticals.

Remember, the vast majority of drugs you and I consume of pharmaceuticals are off-patent. Humira is off-patent; the most expensive drug in our society. We are waiting for that competition to come in to start to crash that price.

The other things that are happening around us, when we start to see early Phase 1's, that there are paths that are having remarkable opportunities to cure our brothers and sisters. I have come here and done entire presentations on the stem cell CRISPR treatment for diabetes. I am going to end on this:

Diabetes is 33 percent of all healthcare spending. It is 31 percent of all Medicare spending.

I know it is hard. I know it means changing. The six people cured right now are on type 1. Type 2 is difficult. It has some real societal implications and would be the most moral, compassionate thing we could do as brothers and sisters here, to put the resources in. And maybe a decade from now you could crash the deficit by curing our brothers and sisters and changing their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

AERIAL FIRE RETARDANT TO PROTECT HUMAN LIFE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the

gentleman from Washington (Mr. NEWHOUSE) for 30 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me say that I associate myself with the remarks from the gentleman from Arizona and hope that many people listen to his important messages that he provides for us.

Mr. Speaker, standing here in front of, what some would say, a beautiful picture, this is a photo of a fire that occurred near Grand Coulee Dam in my district about 1½ years ago to help depict something that I want to bring some attention to this evening in this Special Order.

My friend from Montana, Mr. ROSENDALE, and I, and several others, will be talking about something that is critical to the people in the Western United States. The communities across this country who will be absolutely devastated if a radical environmental group gets its way in a courtroom in the State of Montana.

Now, for those of you who may be unfamiliar with the Western part of the United States, let me just tell you a couple things.

In many parts of the West, it gets very, very dry. And in the summertime, that dryness is coupled with extreme heat. And this can—although it makes for some gorgeous, beautiful days, but you may have heard it often leads to catastrophic wildfires that devastate forests, lives, property, and even full communities.

Now, fire in the forest is a natural occurrence and it is an important part of that forest's lifecycle. But as many of us have been saying for many years, and many of you know, much of our forest has been poorly managed, if managed at all. There are decades of buildup of dead trees, and brush, that are on our forest floors so that fires in recent years have been truly catastrophic, leaving swaths of our National Forest, nothing but ash, dead trees, blackened trees laying all over the Earth, scorched Earth that cannot produce another crop of trees.

In my district, in Okanogan County, the Whitmore fire back in 2021, burned through almost 60,000 acres destroying several structures on the Colville Indian Reservation and had as many as 500 residences under level 2 evacuations. It was devastating.

But through the hard, backbreaking work of firefighters doing everything that they absolutely could do to protect those communities, I am happy to say that no lives were lost and it was successfully contained.

I think I can say that everyone in this room agrees that we have to do

something about these catastrophic fires. And also, I think I can say that when faced by fire, we can all agree that we must utilize every tool in our toolbox to help prevent those fires from endangering human lives.

I cannot say the same about a group that calls themselves the FSEEE. For some reason, this organization, the FSEEE, have decided to use a provision of the Waters of the United States Rules, or WOTUS, and put the lives of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people, at risk by removing one of the most important tools that we have to fight fires in the West, and that is, aerial fire retardant.

For those who don't know, aerial fire retardant is dropped around a wildfire's edges in an effort to contain its spread and allow ground crews, those that are fighting fires by hand, the time that they need to help extinguish the blaze. Firefighters call this painting the box, and use the respite that the retardant line gives them to safely build a defensible line to hold the fire.

Aerial fire retardant is generally considered non-toxic but the Forest Service prohibits placing these fire retardants directly into water bodies or into buffer zones that surround water bodies with one allowed exception: to protect human life and safety.

Between 2012 and 2019, less than 1 percent of Forest Service retardant drops were made into water that was allowed under this exception.

According to the FSEEE, by protecting human life and safety, the Forest Service has violated the Clean Water Act for discharging aerial fire retardant into navigable waters without an NPDES, or a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit.

Even though the regulations for administering the NPDES system specifically state that fire control is exempted and communications from EPA dating back all the way to 1993 indicate a permit was not required for firefighting efforts.

Now, if this group wins this case or even receives an injunction, the Forest Service and other firefighting organizations would be prevented from aerially dropping fire retardant nationwide during the coming 2023 fire season, and even beyond, until they acquire this permit, the NPDES permit, which as many of you know, can literally take years to secure.

Now, if you haven't already connected the dots, this would be catastrophic for Western communities who routinely experience wildfires.

The 2023 fire season, if you didn't know, has already started in the drier parts of the country. It has already burned through over 11,000 acres this month, January, alone. The FSEEE claims to be doing this for environmental reasons. I asked them:

How environmentally friendly is it to release millions of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere when these fires can't be controlled?

How environmentally friendly is it to have burned soil, ash choke our rivers and our streams?

How environmentally friendly is it to wipe out entire ecosystems, plant life, wildlife, the trees, the birds, the wild animals?

And even if the FSEEE were able to prove me wrong on every single one of these points, is all this worth the cost of human life?

Firefighters risk their lives to protect our communities, other people, and our forests, and we should listen to them when they tell us that fire retardant makes their job safer, and it truly is an essential tool to protect lives.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today in truly utter disbelief that I even have to make this statement. That, no, the value of a human life is far beyond that of some possible incidental disruption to aquatic ecosystems that would be equally, or more accurately, more damaged by the toxic runoff of ash following a wildfire.

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We did ensure that fire retardant remains available to our firefighters for this 2023 fire season and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, I turn to my friend from Montana, Mr. ROSENDALE, who is co-leading this Special Order with me, for his comments from his great State.

Mr. ROSENDALE. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative NEWHOUSE for chairing the Western Caucus and bringing this very important issue and lawsuit to light.

Let me begin by quoting President Dwight Eisenhower when he said farming looks mighty easy when you live a thousand miles away from a cornfield and use a pencil for a plow.

The problem that we face on a regular basis across our Nation is that far too many individuals who are completely removed from the issues are making decisions about how to address them. This is exactly the case when we look at the current lawsuit against the United States Forest Service.

First, let's shed a little bit of light on the litigants, the Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics. As Representative NEWHOUSE described them, the FSEEE is not a group of Forest Service employees. They are a radical group out of Oregon whose goal is to stop humans from properly managing forests while lining their own pockets with taxpayer dollars after a settlement.

The result? Severe air and water quality degradation and the risk of thousands of lives and livelihoods.

Fire retardant is a vital and effective tool for Montanans and rural communities, slowing the spread of fires and minimizing damage.

Wildfires burned more than 7.5 million acres across the United States in 2022. This number could easily be doubled or tripled if not for the use of safe and effective fire retardants that the litigants are suing to prohibit the use of.

Anyone who has visited the site of a wildfire, even years afterward, recognizes the devastation and destruction

they cause, both short and long term. The soil is rendered sterile because of the immense heat generated, resulting in no productive vegetation growth for years after the fire. This lack of vegetative cover then leads to major erosion problems and a dramatic reduction in water quality, severely damaging the fisheries, and the elimination of food and habitat for wildlife.

On top of that, the reduction in air quality during wildfires is so severe that anyone who hasn't lived through it couldn't even comprehend the effects on a community.

I have driven through these smoke-choked areas in broad daylight and had to use my headlights because the visibility was reduced so dramatically because the smoke was so thick.

I have spoken with young and old alike who have been hospitalized due to severe respiratory conditions as a direct result of the smoke and the particulate that is produced by these wildfires.

In Montana, we see thousands of acres burn every single year, and these wildfires pose a major threat to our way of life. We see property destroyed and crops decimated. It cripples our economy and slows our tourism.

Montana is proud to have a dedicated team of first responders and pilots who fight tirelessly to contain these wildfires utilizing these retardants. Because of their ability to utilize this tool and mitigate fire risk, ways of life in rural communities are preserved, and those who choose to live in remote areas are able to do so safely.

Wildland firefighters work to protect communities and forests from the spread of wildfires, and the aerial application of fire retardant has proven to be the most effective method of containment.

This method is crucial at a time when government regulations tie our hands in regard to proper forest management. If it were not for these draconian regulations, fewer fires would be burning, and much of the retardant complained about would not even be necessary.

Montanans have a proud tradition of responsible stewardship of our land and water resources. A simple review of State and private land conditions, as compared to the Federal lands of Montana, will prove that.

The claims by environmentalists that our efforts to contain wildfires are harming our watersheds are blatantly false. According to the Forest Service's environmental impact study, 1/100th of 1 percent of all fire retardant drops spilled into the water. This was done either inadvertently or under the allowed exception to protect life and safety. This is because our first responders follow already-existing rulings prohibiting the delivery of fire retardant directly into bodies of water.

We recognize the need for clean water. It is obvious that keeping our water clean is very important for our agricultural industry, our energy pro-

duction, critical infrastructure development, and certainly for all of our citizens.

I also ask those who allege these claims to remember that wildfires do not discriminate. They spread wherever there is fuel and, if left unchecked, can and will further threaten protected water and lands.

The consequences of a future ruling preventing the use of fire retardants are especially dire for Montana. If this were to happen, catastrophic wildfires would threaten thousands of lives, millions of dollars in assets, with immeasurable destruction to air, land, and water quality.

This lawsuit is a continuation of the radical environmentalists' agenda that has been waging war against Western and rural communities. Simply put, these environmentalists literally want to watch the world burn. I won't stand by silently and allow that to happen.

This case needs to be thrown out. Please join me in fighting these misguided lawsuits, which strive to gain revenue from taxpayers at the expense of property and the lives of people across Montana and the rest of the country.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. ROSENDALE, I appreciate that, especially coming from the State of Montana. Your State, just like mine, has seen record catastrophic fires over the last several years.

Thousands of acres have been destroyed throughout the Western United States, millions of dollars of damage, lives lost, and communities that have been totally destroyed. Untold numbers of wildlife have been lost. These fires have literally changed the landscape of our national forests for generations.

The carbon dioxide being emitted from these devastating fires surpasses the auto emissions in just 1 year. The smoke from these fires has even recently come as far as Washington, D.C. I had hoped that that would get people's attention.

We are dealing with that on a regular basis all summer long in the communities that I represent and that Mr. ROSENDALE represents, causing health issues and tainting agricultural crops. It truly is an issue that is hurting our quality of life.

If this court case is lost, the situation is going to get much worse. We cannot let this happen.

To help tell the story that we are facing in the Western United States, another Western Caucus member from the great State of Idaho, the Gem State, Mr. RUSS FULCHER, is here.

Mr. FULCHER. Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the State of Washington and my colleague from the State of Montana and I share some very similar concerns and some very similar demographics, so I am here to rise in opposition to the attempts to ban any kind of aerial fire retardant.

Currently, the Forest Service is facing litigation that, if its opponent is

successful, could result in the loss of this critical firefighting tool.

Aerial fire retardant helps slow the spread of wildfires and creates a barrier between the fire and unburned fuel load. This makes it easier for ground crews to access and extinguish fires. It can be applied quickly in hard-to-reach areas where the ground crews cannot get access.

Additionally, aerial fire retardant can help protect homes and other structures, as well as reduce the amount of smoke produced by the fire.

We are seeing the catastrophic results of years of neglect and mismanagement by the Federal Government. It comes in the form of more frequent and more destructive wildfires. These fires not only do more harm to people and property but also to nature itself.

If I can be very clear, our Federal resources are overwhelmed. In my own State, two-thirds of the land mass, or nearly two-thirds, is Federal land. They simply don't have the capacity to manage these lands, and so they don't.

That results in wildfire, and we need every tool in the toolbox we possibly can access to fight it.

As we prepare for the 2023 fire season, we must maximize these tools at our disposal in order to better fight the fires that threaten our local communities, economies, environment, and health.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. FULCHER, thanks for relating your experiences in the great State of Idaho.

Mr. Speaker, fires are a huge problem in this country. We have been working hard over the time I have been here in Washington, D.C., to make this problem better.

This action, if this court decision moves forward, as we think it might, is going to take us back years. It is going to make the problem considerably worse. We must not let this happen.

I thank Mr. ROSENDALE from Montana for helping lead this Special Order and Mr. FULCHER from Idaho for sharing with us his thoughts from his home State. I thank members of the Western Caucus, almost a hundred of us strong in this Congress, for focusing on this issue and bringing to the attention of the American people how important this court decision could be for the future of our national forests.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

PUBLICATION OF COMMITTEE RULES

RULES OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE FOR THE 118TH CONGRESS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE,
January 31, 2023.

Hon. CHERYL L. JOHNSON
Clerk, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MS. JOHNSON: Pursuant to clause 2(a)(2) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, I present the Rules of the Committee on Energy and Commerce for the