

□ 1845

ISSUES OF DEBT AND DEFENSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 30 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, we learned late this afternoon that the Republican leadership of this House has derailed the important appropriation bills to fund the Government of the United States for the fiscal year that actually began October 1.

It has been delayed for months and months, and now, today, with legislation ready to move, again, the Republican leadership has failed the people of the United States.

Why did they do this? The incoming administration, which has not been sworn in yet, called and asked them to shelve the funding of the Government of the United States for the fiscal year of 2025, which, as I said, began on October 1.

Why did they do that? All the Members were here on both sides of the aisle. We were ready to vote. We had done the work.

I serve on the Appropriations Committee. We have worked for well over a year to put 12 bills together that should have been presented to the Chamber one at a time starting back last June.

They say they want to talk. They want to talk with Congress about the debt ceiling. Surely, this is a joke.

Here are the facts, and here is a great chart. Numbers don't lie.

President-elect Trump in his last term had tax cuts passed to millionaires and billionaires that have already added \$2 trillion to the over \$30-trillion U.S. debt. We are going to add up numbers tonight, simple numbers. So, \$2 trillion from the first term, and that adds up even more every year.

There is more to come, Mr. Speaker. The tax cuts provided by a predecessor of his, George Bush the second, have already added \$8 trillion to the U.S. debt. Those benefits went to, again, billionaires and millionaires, not to the middle class or working people, and there is more debt to come because those tax cuts haven't expired.

So, just with the past Trump administration and the two Bush tax cuts, we are talking about almost one-third of the accumulated debt of the country, and that number is right up here. It is \$36 trillion in U.S. debt.

It is interesting where it is coming from. Bush two's wars added another \$8 trillion as part of that \$36 trillion in military spending to the debt, but it wasn't paid for.

Just these three Republican gouges of the Federal purse total \$18 trillion of the \$30 trillion.

That is accumulated debt on the current generation and future generations, but it is not over. Republicans again cuddled up to Wall Street, causing the horrid recession of 2008. That cost a

minimum of \$3 trillion more of the \$36 trillion to bail out America where it could be bailed out. That recession was a total disaster.

The average African-American citizen of our country who owned a home lost one-half of their accumulated wealth because so many families lost their dwelling. About 30 percent of Hispanic Americans lost their homes. The rest of the country lost about 20 percent of their accumulated wealth. That was a horrible, horrible, horrible meltdown of the economy. Again, it added \$3 trillion to the accumulated debt.

Now, we hear one of the people on the phone to the leadership of this House, Elon Musk, who is the richest man in the world, is trying to strangle the U.S. Government, in other words, to not pass the appropriation bills to grow his monopoly power. He already has contracts with the Department of Defense and from NASA.

What is he interested in doing? Gaining even more control over the production of three things: electric vehicles, space-based communication, and commercial and military rockets.

How much is he going to add to the accumulated debt?

Mr. Speaker, this is not a pretty picture. The middle class and working people of this country have to stand up to these billionaires and millionaires strangling the U.S. Treasury and causing raids in the future on the accumulated wealth of the American people, particularly in our Social Security and Medicare accounts and the food and agricultural programs, which are being held up because this body is being held back by people who haven't been sworn in yet from doing its job.

Environmental cleanup? Forget about that. There is not going to be money for that and so many programs critical to the working people of the United States.

Numbers don't lie. Forget politics, Mr. Speaker. Just look at the raw figures.

We have a lot of accounting to do in this Chamber to the American people for the chaos attending those who hold the gavel, and they had better bring that bill to the floor tomorrow. The American people have been waiting for far too long. Frankly, they shouldn't be paid. If you can't bring the bill to the floor, then you shouldn't be paid.

I want to turn to another subject, and this regards the Army-Navy Football Game that was broadcast about 1 week ago.

For spectators watching the Army-Navy Football Game, the moments can be exhilarating. From either their seats in the stands or couches at home, spectators can enjoy the thrill of the game.

Meanwhile, the teams on the field put their grit and mettle to the test. The trials of the gridiron are often compared to the rigors demanded of our young soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and guardians in uniform.

There may be similarities in teamwork, but believe me, ultimately, play-

ing football does not compare to the sacrifices demanded of our servicemembers in combat, including, for some, the last measure of full devotion.

Our Nation is protected by our military's patriots, whose motto is: We Are Your Defense.

The veterans in our family have fought for our Nation for over a century and a quarter. Most of them did not play football. All were hard workers dedicated to service and deep patriots of the United States of America.

Our Uncle Tony, who served in the Office of Strategic Services under Lieutenant General Joseph Stilwell, remarked that service in his lifetime meant kill or be killed in the lethal China, Burma, and India theater as U.S. soldiers parachuted into those killing fields and ultimately built what is called the Burma Road.

Our father's oldest brother, Szepan, deployed into combat under Woodrow Wilson as a marine against the Bolsheviks' civil war after World War I. He was sent to northern Russia in the Arctic, where frigid, 40-degree-below-zero temperatures and remote conditions took their toll as marines deployed to Arkhangelsk and Vladivostok to fight the Bolsheviks. That ultimately resulted in a civil war.

The Red army was victorious, sadly, and almost all those who served in our family on both sides, both our mother's and our father's sides, had been combat veterans for this country going back a century and a quarter.

For my part, as a senior in high school, I dreamed of attending the United States Air Force Academy to serve my country, but in those days, my application was rejected because I was a woman. Thank goodness that has changed.

Despite this rejection, I maintain my interest in our national security by now serving as a senior member of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, and that is another reason that the leadership of this House should not hold up the appropriation bills. The Defense funding for 2025 is in that bill. The work of Defense ensures our men and women in uniform are supplied with the resources required to protect American interests at home and abroad.

As I watched the publicity around the Army-Navy Game, I realized I could not recall any veterans in President Donald Trump's family. Could I possibly be correct? I began to consider how someone with no or few veterans in their family would think about selecting advisers on such weighty questions as defense, war, and peace.

We must hope that these appointees being considered will be outstanding intellects and experienced leaders. This is America's tradition as the greatest fighting force on Earth. Top leaders must have exemplified lives of integrity, a serious commitment to military service, a deep knowledge of history, command of contemporary world events, and a record of managing a very large, complex organization.

The Defense Department's mission is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and ensure our Nation's security. Accomplishing this mission is anything but simple. It requires the dedicated work and leadership of around 2.3 million troops and civilian employees, with an annual operating budget at the Department of Defense of nearly \$900 billion.

The individual appointed to lead this Department must be highly capable mentally, physically, and emotionally to lead these brave men and women while managing the vast means to move the levers of military might and national security. Historically, our Nation has appointed individuals with the background and aptitude commensurate with the demands of this office. Those who rise to the role of Secretary of Defense are cut from a special cloth.

For example, at a turning point in history, Americans such as General George Marshall—one of my heroes, without question—served President Truman in shaping the new post-World War II alliance with our Allies. Marshall's selfless patriotism—oh, my, he was one of a kind—and superior military and diplomatic experience built the foundational alliances that still guard liberty today here at home and abroad.

Truman, who integrated the U.S. military, called Marshall the architect of victory in World War II. Marshall spent most of his life, 49 years, devoted to America's defense.

Another example of a great defense leader was James Forrestal, the first Secretary of Defense under the Truman administration who served from 1947 to 1949. He played a defining role in reorganizing our military to meet the requirements of a post-World War II landscape under the National Security Act of 1947.

That is when the U.N. was just being founded. There was a lot of imagination and intellect that went into creating the institutions for liberty following that most costly of our wars after the Civil War.

Forrestal previously worked for the Secretary of the Navy handling extensive contracts and legal affairs and built his office into an efficient organization. He had served as the Secretary of the Navy in 1944, guiding our Navy through World War II and the difficult years of demobilization following the surrender of Imperial Japan and its rebuilding. His service set a very high standard for leading our brave men and women in uniform to maintain the security of our Nation.

During the Eisenhower administration, Charles E. Wilson led a major internal reorganization and implemented the "New Look" defense concept that elevated strategic air power and modernized the Reserve forces.

Wilson brought to the Defense Department his experience as president of General Motors, one of our greatest industrial companies, and his direction of the country's defense production effort during World War II.

Remember, Mr. Speaker, we entered that war without sufficient weaponry and armaments.

President Franklin Roosevelt recognized his personal commitment and expertise by awarding him the U.S. Medal of Merit for his efforts to create and manage the arsenal of democracy.

After selling his stock in General Motors to avoid a conflict of interest, he used his experience to ensure that the Department of Defense managed its budget in a manner that aligned national security and economic prosperity.

A more recent example, Robert M. Gates is the only Secretary of Defense in U.S. history to be asked to remain in that office by a newly elected President. He served Presidents of both political parties.

Prior to his appointment as Secretary of Defense, Gates served in the Central Intelligence Agency for 27 years and was the only career-level officer to rise from entry-level employee to Director.

Imagine that, Mr. Speaker. During 9 of those years, he served on the National Security Council for four Presidents. That is seasoning.

Gates also served as president of what was at the time our country's seventh largest university, Texas A&M.

George Herbert Walker Bush appointed Gates as his Secretary of Defense in 2006, and President Obama requested that he remain in that position. His background gave him expertise in special intelligence, the management of large organizational budgets, and foresight. He devoted 31 years of his life in service to our Nation.

During my own service, I have had the privilege of serving in Congress with many individuals who rose to the position of Secretary of Defense. These include Leslie Aspen of Wisconsin, Leon Panetta of California, and Dick Cheney of Wyoming. Though their views differed widely, they were respected as stable, broadly competent, and knowledgeable in defense and international affairs.

□ 1900

In contrast to these individuals, Caspar Weinberger serves as a cautionary tale of the importance of maintaining a strong moral compass in one of our Nation's most critical positions.

He served as Secretary of Defense during the Reagan administration. During his tenure, he worked with Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North and Robert McFarlane to make a secret agreement to send antitank missiles and other military equipment to Iran in hopes of securing the release of U.S. hostages.

Despite raising concerns on the legality of this agreement, his actions were nonetheless critical to enabling the sales to occur. This debacle, the Iran-Contra affair, would become synonymous with political hubris, government incompetence, and dishonesty.

The Secretary of Defense is a position of great power. With great power

comes great responsibility. The American people have a right to expect that their Secretary of Defense will have the experience, aptitude, and integrity of character to take the helm of the world's strongest military with a steady hand.

This is even more important now as our Nation faces a growing spiderweb of tyranny: Russia, Iran, China, and North Korea causing instability in the Middle East, the Korean Peninsula, and in European nations that require working in concert with our allies to protect the foundations of democracy itself.

The President-elect must ask the hard question: Is Mr. Pete Hegseth, the current nominee for Secretary of Defense, the most experienced and capable choice to lead our Department of Defense during this contemporary era, a most complex period?

His experience appears to consist of running two small veterans organizations, both of which reportedly fell into significant debt, and working in public relations as a weekend cohort of a morning cable news program.

Yes, he served in the military as a junior to midgrade officer, for which America and I thank him. However, I cannot help but note the disparity between leading a platoon of 50 soldiers or an organization of less than 60 individuals compared to leading a department of over 2 million men and women.

He has also said publicly that women should not serve in combat. This is 2024, not 1964. Nearly 20 percent of the U.S. military is comprised of women. On July 12, 1948, President Harry Truman signed the bill into law that permitted women to enlist from ages 18 to 35.

The American people rightly expect that our men and women in uniform will conduct themselves according to the highest standards of ethics and integrity.

I have heard that Mr. Hegseth wishes to reclaim the title of the "War Department" for our Department of Defense, changing the title. I do not agree with him. Why?

After World War II, which set the stage for modern international relations, it is my understanding that the term "War Department" was dropped because the U.S. did not want to be seen as the enforcer of global security.

Rather, the term "defense" was used in recognition of the fact that other nations had been invited into a fraternity of democratic countries that would form NATO, the mutual self-defense pact of trusted allies that forms a powerful defensive shield among free nations.

In addition, respected alliances were negotiated with the Virgin Islands, the Philippines, the Northern Mariana Islands, Hawaii, until it became a State, Guam, and American Samoa.

Proposals to change the name of the U.S. Department of Defense would be subject to very serious congressional review and debate. Current threats to

the United States and liberty-loving people require military alliances that can counter and defeat willful aggression by rogue states.

The Secretary of Defense is in a critical position that requires a sacred trust, especially the trust of our brave servicemembers, that they will be led capably; the trust of our Nation, that we will maintain the security of the American people; and the trust of our allies and partners, that America will continue to stand strong as a shield of freedom and liberty for all.

The consequences of betraying that sacred trust are both dire and lasting. We must choose wisely.

AMERICAN ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I have one final topic this evening on the question of American energy independence, which is so vital to our domestic security and our international security.

We well know, when the United States became dependent on imported oil, we fell into deep recession during the 1970s, and we spent the last half century trying to catch up to become energy independent here at home in perpetuity. It is a major objective for the safety and security of our people, and we are making great progress.

With the radiant lights above us here in the Chamber tonight, I am here to speak about that force that illuminates every facet of our daily lives: energy. Not just any energy, but American energy. Energy infuses life into our Nation, energy powers our homes, energy fuels our industries, and energy safeguards our independence.

My message is clear: Our Nation must aim forcefully toward American energy independence in perpetuity.

In northwest Ohio, you don't have to look far to see the embodiment of an all-encompassing energy strategy. From the majestic wind turbines that dot our western agricultural basin landscape, especially in the agricultural regions, to our premier domestic solar manufacturing companies, to the advanced nuclear and hydrogen future we imagine, our region is a living testament to the strength and potential of our skilled technicians and industrious innovators.

America can't and shouldn't play the piano with just one key. We need every key on the energy board: oil and gas, wind, solar, hydrogen, thermal recovery, biofuels, advanced nuclear, and systems yet to come.

Energy is essential and innovative. It creates high-paying jobs in multiple energy sectors, ensuring that the lights stay on for energy and power systems and allowing our holiday trees to sparkle a little brighter. Energy allows families to gather in warm homes, bake holiday treats, and make good memories.

Over the last 4 years, our Nation has made enormous strides toward energy independence. We are increasing energy production across all sectors. In 2023, the United States set all-time

records for both crude oil production and natural gas exports.

As time goes on, those resources will diminish, and we simply must invent our way forward to be energy independent forever. This is not easy, but it is the struggle we are in.

At the same time, renewable energy production continues to grow with the shocking statistic of wind and solar power now contributing close to 15 percent of our electricity. That is just in modern history, and we have a long way to go. These technologies are revolutionizing our accomplishment of energy independence at the start of this 21st century's new energy age.

Yet, as we make strides in energy diversity and security, we face new political whims that mustn't threaten to derail the progress that we have made. Politics should never jeopardize the security of the American people or play games with energy independence. We must keep our pedal on the metal, pushing forward, not backward.

To the new administration in Washington, I say: Embrace an all-of-the-above energy policy. Leave no sector behind. "Clean energy" is not a dirty word. We must maintain a balanced portfolio to ensure American energy independence going far into the future.

The farm bill that has been held back by the leadership of this House, that we could pass this week, has a special section that is built into it, and that includes the continuing resolution that it is a part of an E15 inclusion for our country in perpetuity. It is just magnificent as we try to use every key on the piano to help our country produce new, good jobs in the energy sector and one that uses all of our talents.

Come to northwest Ohio. See firsthand how a comprehensive energy strategy operates. See the innovation and dedication that fuels our community and our country. We are inventing the future.

Just this week, the village of Pioneer in Williams County, Ohio, has shown remarkable vision and determination to harness the power of clean energy with new funding announced for a solar field through a \$10.5 million Federal loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Pioneer will deliver tangible benefits for northwest Ohio residents, including lowering energy costs, strengthening infrastructure, and promoting energy independence for decades to come.

I commend the Pioneer community leadership in pursuing this opportunity to power its future with better and lower costs through renewable energy. Northwest Ohio is the solar capital of America, and I encourage other communities across our region to follow the pioneering lead of Pioneer, Ohio, in building solar fields that can harness the renewable energy of the Sun that shines bright over our region.

Let's not throttle down on American progress in any sector. Instead, let's do what America does best: invent the future and adapt to changing conditions.

Let's accelerate energy innovation. Let's champion it. Let's support it and propel it into the future. We have a duty to safeguard our energy independence to ensure security so that every American family, community, and business can continue to thrive.

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

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 7 o'clock and 11 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 2231

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. YAKYM) at 10 o'clock and 31 minutes p.m.

HOUR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 9 a.m. tomorrow.

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

There was no objection.

BILLS PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Kevin F. McCumber, Acting Clerk of the House, reported that on December 17, 2024, the following bills were presented to the President of the United States for approval:

H.R. 7872 To amend the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act to modify certain requirements applicable to salinity control units, and for other purposes.

H.R. 6960 To amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize the Emergency Medical Services for Children program.

H.R. 6829 To amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize and support the creation and dissemination of cardiomyopathy education, awareness, and risk assessment materials and resources to identify more at-risk families, to authorize research and surveillance activities relating to cardiomyopathy, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5301 To amend title 31, United States Code, to require agencies to include a list of outdated or duplicative reporting requirements in annual budget justifications, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3801 To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to streamline and improve the employer reporting process relating to health insurance coverage and to protect dependent privacy.

H.R. 3797 To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide an alternative manner of furnishing certain health insurance coverage statements to individuals.

H.R. 3254 To amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to establish a process to review applications for certain grants to purchase equipment or systems that do not meet or exceed any applicable national voluntary consensus standards, and for other purposes.