

thank them for their work in this regard. In the '90s, President Clinton declared Osama bin Laden to be America's "public enemy number one." He saw that danger long before 9/11. Then, of course, following 9/11, President Bush tried to pursue Osama bin Laden. Their work was important, but I am here to commend President Obama in particular for executing the plan to get it done in recognition of the foundation that was laid by President Clinton and President Bush.

When we think of the symbol of Osama bin Laden and why bringing this to closure is so important, we are venturing onto sacred ground, 9/11—a shocking act of terrorism that affected our country very, very deeply, but none more deeply than the families who were affected by 9/11. We can never make them whole. We can never make up to them all that they have lost, but I hope it is some comfort to them that at least this has happened, however long it took. They used their grief for the greater good at the time by supporting the 9/11 Commission to investigate why this happened so endangering the lives of the American people would never happen again.

I commend the 9/11 families for their sacrifice, yes, for their patriotism, and for what they did to make a difference as we go into the future. Who knows? Maybe the work of the 9/11 Commission contributed to the success of this operation as well.

I know that our time is running out, and I just want to close, Mr. Speaker, by saying that our colleagues in the United States Senate unanimously passed a resolution to honor those who so successfully carried out this mission, and I'd like to associate myself with the language of their resolution. It says in part:

"The death of Osama bin Laden represents a measure of justice and relief for the families and friends of the nearly 3,000 men and women who lost their lives on September 11, 2001, the men and women in the United States and around the world who have been killed by other al Qaeda-sponsored attacks, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and the intelligence community who have sacrificed their lives pursuing Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda."

As they said, the death of Osama bin Laden represents a measure of justice. With gratitude for this measure of justice, I again hail to the chief, President Obama, for his great work. I thank him and congratulate him and all who made this historic achievement possible.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you very much, Congresswoman and Leader PELOSI. I'll say, "Speaker." Is that okay? We thank you for your leadership. We thank you for your remarks.

We have a couple of additional members of our caucus who would like to speak. I think we've claimed the next hour. I believe that it will be available. We're out of time at this point, so I will simply wrap up with these three or four words, which are:

It is with gratitude that I and my colleagues congratulate all who were involved in bringing to justice Osama bin Laden. A job well done. Mission accomplished.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I yield back the balance of my time.

IALOGUE WITH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WOODALL). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. RICHMOND) is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. RICHMOND. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RUPPERSBERGER).

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to serve as ranking member of the Intelligence Committee. The killing of Osama bin Laden is clearly the most monumental intelligence achievement in recent memory.

Osama bin Laden was a terrorist leader who was responsible for killing thousands of innocent Americans—moms, dads, brothers, sisters, friends, and loved ones. Bin Laden was a threat to the United States and a threat to the world. He had the blood of thousands of people on his hands. As we all know, 9/11 changed America forever.

Over the weekend, our military and intelligence professionals took extraordinary steps. They worked together as a team and killed the al Qaeda leader. It was a risky mission that was executed with intense training and a high level of skill. These professionals risked their lives to keep our country safe, and no American lives were lost. The men and women who carried out this operation exemplify the extraordinary courage of those who serve our Nation. The countless intelligence and counterterrorism professionals who had pursued bin Laden for years have the satisfaction of a job well done. I applaud them for their persistence and professionalism.

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It was a great day for America. Justice has now been done. But let it be known, we have shown the world that if you come after Americans, we will come after you. Even if it takes disciplined persistence by our intelligence professionals and considerable time and resources, we will get you. Let that be a warning to all members of al Qaeda and any terrorists who attack the United States. Our fight against terrorism and those who want to harm Americans is not over, but we have severely weakened al Qaeda. We will remain vigilant as we continue to work tirelessly to protect our Nation.

Mr. RICHMOND. Mr. Speaker, I am going to start something tonight in an attempt to engage more of our American people in the process.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you know that it is no secret that America is still emerging from the recent economic downturn. We still grapple with high unemployment rates and our national debt. We are doing better than we were doing 2 years ago, but we have to do much better, and we will do much better, because we are Americans. That is our history. That is what we do.

We persevered through the Great Depression of the thirties and the depression of the eighties and the recession of yesterday. We supported one another and persevered through hurricanes, through floods, through tornadoes. We mourned together and persevered through the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, through Robert Kennedy, and through Martin Luther King. We persevered. In addition, I personally remember the attempted assassination of President Reagan. I remember writing President Reagan a get well note in the second grade. I even remember getting a note back saying thank you. We persevered again.

Fifty years ago today, an interracial group of Americans left Washington, D.C., on a bus trip to New Orleans with the goal of desegregating bus terminals. They were the first Freedom Riders. They never made it to New Orleans. They were beaten and bloodied throughout the South, but they sparked off a movement of over 400 Freedom Riders with the same goal and the same dogged determination and perseverance. Eventually our Nation repudiated segregation and embraced equality. We persevered.

If we are going to shake off this economic downturn, we need to embrace the Freedom Riders' spirit of perseverance and dogged determination. That is so very American. America will only rise up again on the strength of our collective ideas. Americans make up America, the people make up the Nation, and it is the people who will keep this Nation great.

Mr. Speaker, the U.S. House of Representatives is the people's House, and it is time that we listened directly to the ideas from the people.

Mr. Speaker, I am inviting the American people to join in this conversation. Here is how to contact me. Here is how to talk to me. Here is how to talk to Congress. You can email me at myidea@mail.house.gov. Again, that is myidea@mail.house.gov. That is because I want to hear your ideas. Or you can go to Facebook and follow me or leave a message on the wall, or go to Facebook and contact me, or you can follow me and I will follow you on Twitter so we can have a free exchange of ideas.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give credit where credit is due. You and the House Republicans last year launched YouCut based on a similar idea, and I applaud that again. YouCut requested that Americans identify what funding they would cut from the government's funding, and I am glad that you engaged the people.

But I think we need to go further. We should and must request that Americans share how they feel about everything. What bills do they want us to champion, what laws do they want changed, what programs do they want extended or ended.

Mr. Speaker, under House rules, I, unfortunately, can't directly address the American people. I must address my comments to you, Mr. Speaker. However, if I could speak directly to the American people, I would request that they send me their ideas for how to keep America great. I would request that they send me their thoughts on whatever they want to talk about.

Mr. Speaker, the American people can, again, email me at myidea@mail.house.gov. I will lead a conversation with the American people in which they will be an active participant. I will bring your thoughts up here and I will talk about them. I will engage you and Congress so that people can read what you write and read your ideas. I will also put your name on it. I don't want the credit. I just want a better country for our seniors and for our children.

Every couple of weeks while the House is in session I will make sure to come down here and start this conversation with America again. Although it is a conversation by me alone right now, I would suspect that we will get other colleagues joining in the conversation as we get other Americans joining in the conversation.

But right now we are going to stop, and I want to talk factually for a second about our financial situation, and I want to do it as nonpartisan as I can and not lay blame on one party or one President. I just want to talk about where we are.

We can start with recent history. According to the U.S. Treasury, when President Clinton took office, the national debt was \$4.188 trillion. When President George Bush took office, the debt was \$5.728 trillion. When President Obama took office, the debt was \$10.672 trillion. Remember, the total debt is the sum of our accumulated annual budget deficits, so it shows a history of out-of-control spending.

So what is our current budget deficit? Last year, the U.S. Government spent about \$3.5 trillion and collected \$2.1 trillion in revenue. The deficit was right at \$1.2 trillion. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that this fiscal year's budget deficit will be in the neighborhood of \$1.4 trillion. The deficit for this fiscal year is projected to be higher than that of last year due to increases in mandatory spending and less growth in revenues as a result of the temporary payroll tax reduction as a part of last year's bipartisan tax deal.

So here we are, Mr. Speaker. The total amount of U.S. debt today is in the neighborhood of \$14 trillion and the current debt limit is \$14.294 trillion. The Department of the Treasury estimates that the debt will reach very

close to this limit the week of May 16, at which time we will be forced to do some courageous things to avoid jeopardizing the full faith and credit of the United States of America.

So, what is the big picture? Well, the fact is over the last several years the U.S. experienced an imbalance between spending and revenues. As a result of the recession, we spent much more than we brought in.

I would like to point out that our recent spending spurred hiring in the private sector. It also provided small businesses with unprecedented tax relief. It helped home buyers purchase homes in this tough market; it helped police, teachers and firefighters continue to get paid; and it helped cities and towns across America weather this financial storm.

Last Monday night while leaving Afghanistan, I was having a conversation with a colonel in our Armed Forces. I was talking about this Special Order and I was going back and forth with him about his input and about ideas on how to engage people. He volunteered to be the first person to start the conversation and to pose a question.

He didn't really have much of a comment, but he wanted to pose a question to the American people. And his question was very simple, and it dealt with how big and what we do as Americans. So, right now I will start with his question, and that was: As Americans, what do we have, what do we want the government to provide, and how are we going to pay for it?

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I think that that's a very basic question but it's at the heart of the debate from Democrats and Republicans and Independents. So that's what I think that we will start tonight with, Mr. Speaker, that if I could ask the American people a question, I would request of them to tell me how they feel about that statement: What do we have, what do we want the government to provide, and how are we going to pay for it?

Everyone agrees that where we are now is not where we need to be. We're dealing with big issues that demand big solutions. We have an aging population, rising health care costs, crumbling infrastructure, and uneven educational outcomes. Fortunately for us, America does great things. I believe that we can find a balanced approach that combines some reductions in spending on some programs, but combining that with increases in revenues for those who are most able to afford it and other policies that will promote faster economic growth, like during the Clinton era.

The current budget proposals, both the President's budget and the Republican budget proposed by Congressman RYAN, don't exactly get it right. They both leave room for improvement. We have to get this right, Mr. Speaker. The only way that we can get this right is by both parties working together and sacrificing.

We know that the American people don't want to underfund education or investment to grow the workforce. We know that they don't want us to sacrifice our long-term global competitiveness for short-term gains. Americans believe that we can walk and chew gum at the same time. Mr. Speaker, we can invest in tomorrow and still get our fiscal problems and our fiscal house in order.

How do we move forward? There are a number of options, but one thing is for certain. We should be honest about the tax burden currently faced by Americans.

I want to briefly show you another board, which we're not making any proposals but we want to talk about for a second, the effective tax rates.

The Congressional Budget Office just finished completing an analysis—in fact, they finished it in 2010—about the effective tax rates, which are the actual average rates of taxes paid. What we're going to look at today is the taxes on the top earners were far lower than the top tax rates. The tax rates for the top earners in this country are right at 35 percent of their income. Well, when you look at it after deductions—and legal deductions—and policies that we set as a country, those tax rates are far lower than 35 percent.

The top 10 percent of earners, representing approximately 12 million households in this country, paid an average tax in the neighborhood of 16.2 percent. Now, after paying taxes, their average income was \$289,000.

Let's look at, now, the top 5 percent of earners, which only represent 5.9 million households. They're taking home an average post-tax, after-tax income of \$440,500. They're paying an effective tax rate of 17.6 percent.

So you can see that when you look at 16.2 and 17.6, those numbers are far below the 35 percent that's in statute.

Now, when we get to the top 1 percent of earners in this country, representing only 1.2 million households, they took home an average after-tax income of \$1.3 million, while paying only a 19 percent individual tax rate. So they fall right at 16 percent under the tax rate that's on the books.

Again, I'm not proposing what the numbers should be. But what we do know is that the top number is 35 and the lower three numbers are 16.2, 17.6, and 19 percent as the effective tax rate.

So the question to America, the question to this Congress, Mr. Speaker, is: What is the appropriate number if we're going to continue to pay down the debt, stop running deficits, but at the same time continue to take care of our seniors, invest in our children, do all of those things that continue to make this country what it is?

The next thing I'll talk about: What is the biggest takeaway from these facts? It's about sacrifice. What are we willing to sacrifice to do the things and allow government to do the things that government should do? What are the sacrifices we will make to take care of

our seniors, to take care of our children, to invest in innovation, to protect our homeland, to spread democracy, and to do all those critical things that we want to do?

These are the facts, Mr. Speaker. I encourage the American people to draw their own conclusions based on the facts—not hyperbole, not conversations from either side, not political rhetoric, but from the facts.

So, as I have laid out our debt situation, I would ask that you send me your ideas on what you think the numbers should be. This is the people's House. We see how they feel in the polls, but we need to hear their stories directly from them, Mr. Speaker. I will request that the American people send me those stories, tell me about their hardships, tell me if they think they're paying too much. But give me a specific example. Tell me how that tax rate, that tax liability, that tax burden affected your family. I want to know. I think Congress wants to know. We don't presume, and I certainly don't presume to know everything. I think it's very critical.

My grandmother told me a long time ago, Mr. Speaker, smart people know what they know and know what they don't know. I'm telling you today that I don't know everything, and I'm willing to listen to the people that do.

After all, we need everyone's creativity, everyone's inventiveness, everyone's ideas if we're going to keep this country great. This is America, home of amazing structural feats: The San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge in California, the Hoover Dam on the Arizona and Nevada border, Mount Rushmore in South Dakota. This is America, one of the most inventive nations in the world. We brought the world bifocals and the modern suspension bridge, dental floss and the doorbell, the airplane and peanut butter. America brought the world the defibrillator and the traffic light, digital recording and the Super Soaker water gun, the artificial heart and the personal computer.

This is America, a Nation of firsts and a Nation where our inventive spirit rings from sea to shining sea. This is America, where we do big things because we have big ideas. As President Obama said in this year's State of the Union Address: We're a Nation that says, I might not have a lot of money, but I have this great idea for a new invention; I might not come from a family of college graduates, but I will be the first to get my degree; I might not know those people in trouble, but I think I can help them, and I need to try; I'm not sure how we'll reach that better place beyond the horizon, but I know we'll get there. I know we will. We do big things.

Those were President Obama's words from the State of the Union in which he laid a course of where we are, where we need to get to, and why we all know we'll get there.

Mr. Speaker, again, I wish I could directly address the American people. If I

could, again, I would invite them to reach out to me on Facebook, on Twitter, or by email. Email me at myidea@mail.house.gov.

We've been through rough patches before and we got through them because we're Americans. We will work together and we will listen to the American people. Our perseverance, ingenuity, creativity, and work ethic are unmatched. We're going to get through this because of our people.

Mr. Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to travel to Afghanistan, Batumi, and Baku, and over there I just want to say that the energy and the optimism in our troops were unmatched because they were representing America. They were representing what that flag stands for. They were representing the sacrifice that stands in this country's history.

□ 1950

We didn't always get it right since our founding, but we've always, always made it a goal to strive to be a more perfect union. I hope that through this conversation, we will continue to pursue being a more perfect union.

I want to take a detour for a second and just thank the New Orleans Hornets and thank their GM, Dave Dickerson, who when they found out that I was going over to Afghanistan to visit with some troops, that they sent care packages and T-shirts and bands and stickers and magazines to our troops because they understood the sacrifice that our troops were making and they wanted to make sure that they participated in just saying to our Louisiana troops, thank you, job well done, we appreciate your sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, tonight, thank you for allowing me the time to have a conversation with you about what I believe the American people stand for, about the greatness we have inside ourselves, about the great things that I know we can do when we stand together. And thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to invite the American people to participate and become their own representative in this Congress and talk about their ideas and express their desires, their wishes and what they're willing to sacrifice and those things they think we need to do.

I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mrs. EMERSON (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for May 2 and the balance of the week on account of flooding in her district.

Mr. BILIRAKIS (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today on account of attending the funeral of a family member.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. RICHMOND. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 7 o'clock and 52 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, May 5, 2011, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

1393. A letter from the Deputy to the Chairman, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting the Corporation's final rule — Procedures for Monitoring Bank Secrecy Act Compliance and Fair Credit Reporting: Technical Amendments (RIN: 3064-AD76) received April 6, 2011, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

1394. A letter from the Deputy Director for Operations, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting the Corporation's final rule — Allocation of Assets in Single-Employer Plans; Benefits Payable in Terminated Single-Employer Plans; Interest Assumptions for Valuing and Paying Benefits received April 6, 2011, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

1395. A letter from the Deputy General Counsel, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Planning Resource Adequacy Assessment Reliability Standard [Docket No.: RM10-10-000; Order No. 747] received April 6, 2011, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1396. A letter from the Deputy General Counsel, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Mandatory Reliability Standards for Interconnection Reliability Operating Limits [Docket No.: RM10-15-000; Order No. 748] received April 6, 2011, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1397. A letter from the FWS Chief, Branch of Aquatic Invasive Species, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Injurious Wildlife Species; Listing the Bighead Carp (*Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*) as Injurious Fish [Docket No.: FWS-R3-FHC-2010-0094; 94140-1342-0000-N5] (RIN: 1018-AT49) received March 23, 2011, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1398. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Special Regulation: Areas of the National Park System, National Capital Region (RIN: 1024-AD96) received March 23, 2011, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1399. A letter from the Chief, Endangered Species Listing, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Designation of Critical Habitat for *Carex lutea* (Golden Sedge) [Docket No.: FWS-R4-ES-2010-0003] (RIN: 1018-AW55) received April 4, 2011, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1400. A letter from the Chief, Branch of Recovery and Delisting, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Removal of *Erigeron maguirei* (Maguire Daisy) from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Plants; Availability of Final Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan [Docket No.: FWS-R6-ES-2008-0001]