

from Virginia, the Republican majority leader, declare that tax reform—like cutting the \$20 billion in subsidies that these companies will receive in the next 10 years—is off the table? Why are tax write-off earmarks for corporate jets off the table? Why are hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires off the table? Why are we talking about cutting programs for nursing homes and preschools, for local cops and firefighters, for retirement security and the future of renewable energy? Why are we talking about cutting these programs without asking the Big Five oil companies to stand on their own two feet?

I have watched programs that my constituents rely on end up utterly decimated on the floor of this House this year. And yet I come before you today not asking for less sacrifice, but for more. I'm asking for those at the top to bear their fair share of both the burden and the potential triumph of this historic moment.

Again, I must merely ask for a little humility as we attempt to solve a challenge that no one woman or one man among us should attempt to tackle—or scuttle—alone. Nothing is off the table, and nothing is more important than getting every single American who wants to do a hard day's work for a fair wage back on the job site. Any budget agreement must take this balanced approach and must not hurt our economy further.

BRING THE TROOPS HOME

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, Monday I had the honor and the humbling experience of visiting Walter Reed Hospital. I met three young men that all three have lost both legs above the knees. And actually, one of them I engaged about Afghanistan, and he, with his wife there with him, believes that we have done just about all we can do, and certainly he has done more than that: he has given his legs for this country.

That leads me to wanting to read just a paragraph of an editorial by Eugene Robinson that was in the North Carolina papers, and the title of his column is "Afghan Strategy: Lets Go." And I will read the last paragraph of his column:

"We wanted to depose the Taliban regime, and we did. We wanted to install a new government that answers to its constituents at the polls, and we did. We wanted to smash al Qaeda's infrastructure of training camps and safe havens, and we did. We wanted to kill or capture Osama bin Laden, and we did. Even so, say the hawks, we have to stay in Afghanistan because of the dangerous instability across the border in nuclear-armed Pakistan. But does anyone believe the war in Afghanistan has made Pakistan more stable?"

Mr. Robinson, you're right, it is not more stable because we are in Afghanistan. Perhaps it is useful to have a United States military presence in the region. This could be accomplished, however, with a lot fewer than 100,000 troops; and they would not be scattered across the Afghan countryside engaged in a dubious attempt at nation-building. The threat from Afghanistan is gone. Bring the troops home.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the President will say tonight, and I wish the President well. But Mr. Gates has been saying all weekend—and he did testify before the Armed Services Committee in February and said it would be the latter part of 2014, maybe 2015, before we start bringing a substantial number of our troops home.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the House of Representatives, both parties, let's come together and join in the McGovern-Jones bill, and let's start bringing our troops home and say to the President we don't need to be there until 2014-2015. As Eugene Robinson says, we're not going to change anything. History has proven you will never change Afghanistan. They don't want to change themselves. Quite frankly, the Taliban are Afghan people; it's a civil war.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I have done before, I have the poster that has a flag-draped coffin being carried by the Air Force at Dover Air Force Base. Mr. President, you're a very smart man. You can call the shots on this war in Afghanistan. Say to the American people tonight that we will be home before 2014-2015.

Mr. Speaker, I say in closing, may God bless our men and women in uniform. May God bless the families of our men and women in uniform. May God, in his loving arms, hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. And I ask God to bless the House and the Senate, that we will do what is right in the eyes of God for his people here in America. And I ask God to give wisdom, strength, and courage to the President of the United States, that he will do what is right in the eyes of God for his people.

And I close three times: God please, God please, God please continue to bless America.

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ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

NOT SIZABLE, SWIFT OR SIGNIFICANT

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, tonight the President of the United States has

an opportunity to show the bold leadership that the American people are crying out for regarding Afghanistan. Tonight he will announce how many troops will be redeployed out of Afghanistan. This must not be, as early reports are indicating, a token withdrawal, bringing only as few as 5,000 troops home now and 5,000 troops home by the end of the year, because that number falls tragically and painfully short of what the national security and moral decency demands.

There are many interpretations, Mr. Speaker, of "sizable, swift or significant" as the requests have been for him in his drawdown, but none of those interpretations go so low as 5,000 now and 5,000 by the end of the year. "Sizable, swift or significant" is not what 5,000 troops would accomplish. Ten thousand troops doesn't even bring us to where we were before the surge.

That is not a new way forward in Afghanistan. We were promised a new way forward in Afghanistan, and it is going to take 18 months just to get even that much done. How many times are we going to move the goalposts? Anything less than a major shift in Afghanistan policy will be a huge disappointment to the Americans who are paying for it in blood and treasure.

Clear, strong majorities of our country believe it is time we finally end this awful foreign policy blunder. This is not a partisan stance. You just heard Congressman WALTER JONES from North Carolina. This is common sense. Several Republicans in this body oppose this war. Even some of the Republicans running for President have expressed concern about continuing the military occupation much longer.

It is simply not acceptable to ask for more patience and more time for this strategy to work. You mean 10 years isn't enough? How many families were missing a seat at the table on Father's Day this weekend because we kept giving this dreadful policy one more chance?

Afghanistan casualties are on the rise, Mr. Speaker, with 2011 on pace to be the deadliest year yet and 43 percent of fatalities having occurred since the surge began a year and a half ago. How many more people have to die, Mr. Speaker, both U.S. servicemembers and Afghan citizens, before we say enough? How many more lives have to be destroyed? How many more young Americans have to leave limbs behind in Afghanistan? How many more have to come home ravaged by post-traumatic stress? And how many more billions in taxpayer money do we have to waste for the privilege of having our people killed and our global credibility destroyed? For pennies on the dollar, we could fight terrorism the right way, with a civilian surge that emphasizes humanitarian and political aid and reconciliation.

Mr. Speaker, it continues to pain me that we have to scratch and claw for every single dollar of Federal investment in the American people. One