of marine mammal stranding, which will include the development of an interpretive display of the skeletons of marine mammals recovered from the waters around our islands. In aid of local charitable fundraising efforts, Barry also regularly contributes his work for auction or raffle by social service organizations in the Commonwealth.

Today, as a nation, we face challenges to the arts—for both financial and ideological reasons. I hope that we all consider the nexus between the arts and our civilization, globally and locally, as we debate the issues. And I also hope that you will join me in paying tribute to Barry Wonenberg—who has spent much of his life, to the benefit of the Northern Mariana Islands, practicing what President Kennedy preached.

TRIBUTE TO TERRY R. GORSUCH

(Mr. TIPTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an American hero. Not a hero in our typical sense of the word but in a context of heroism that we have seen replicated across the face of this great Nation. Today, Mr. Speaker, I pay tribute to Terry R. Gorsuch.

He was a man who embodied the characteristics that we rightly honor in our country. He worked hard, overcame adversity, and in business he innovated. He risked all and, by the grace of God and through perseverance, was rewarded with his successful company, Triad Western Constructors.

The story could stop there, but he believed his greatest accomplishment and blessing in life was his family—married to his loving wife, Rita, for 45 years, raising their two children, Traci and Terry D., and then seeing their children grow to adulthood, marry, and blessed the family with two grandchildren, Gracine and Jaydine.

Terry R. Gorsuch lived the American Dream. He worked hard, played by the rules, loved his family, and always extended a helping hand to others. He could not win his final battle as he succumbed to Lou Gehrig's disease, but his admirable moral fiber held firm even as the final sands of his time slipped from beneath his feet.

We don't often reflect on the heroes who make this country work and help make this country what it is, but today, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to honor an American hero, Terry R. Gorsuch.

□ 1930

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, this evening the Congressional Black Caucus is pleased that our Democratic leadership has given us the opportunity to once again come to the floor for the first Democratic hour this evening.

I want to just talk a little bit about some of the people who came and visited me in my office in my district this morning. I had a visit from AARP leadership and some of their advocates and volunteers this morning in my St. Croix office. They came to bring this petition to the office, signed by hundreds of people just on one of my islands. And it says:

''Dear Members of Congress,

''Seniors and future retirees earned their benefits after a lifetime of hard work and paying into the system. Yet some Members of Congress from both parties are considering harmful cuts to Medicare and Social Security''—I know nobody in the Congressional Black Caucus is considering those kinds of cuts—''as a part of a deal to pay the Nation's bills. A deal like that could dramatically increase health care costs for seniors and future retirees, threaten their access to doctors, hospitals and nursing homes, and reduce benefit checks they rely on to pay the bills.

''Instead of cutting the benefits of seniors and future retirees, Congress should be reducing wasteful spending and closing tax loopholes. Instead of shifting more health care costs to seniors, Congress should be working to hold down health care costs for everyone,'' as the Democrats worked very hard to do last year when we passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

So these undersigned are calling on us to oppose any deal that would make harmful cuts to the Medicare and Social Security benefits Americans have been working on for all these years. And this is just the beginning, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. There will be more of these petitions to come.

Some of the participants that came to my office this morning are: Aloma Peters, Lucie Rodriguez, Elizabeth Torruela, Nicolas Encarnacion, Luz D. Sierra, Theodora Moorehead, Ann Thomas, Ellarine Batiste, Joan Sackey, Miguel Ramos, Ramomta Cagnes, Doris Brown, Paul Simmonds, Denyce Singleton, Genny Dargan, and Lumoz Ayala, but representing the hundreds of people that sent this petition to the Congress of the United States.

In my district, and they talked about this this morning, we have one of the highest utility bills in our country, and they're just trying to figure out what they would do if their Social Security checks were not coming to them next month.

But a default is not just catastrophic for individuals on Social Security. It would be catastrophic for everyone. It's catastrophic for our Nation and our economy. The poor, of course, would lose their safety net and the ability to pull themselves out of poverty, the help that they need.

And the middle class will also pay a price. It would be so catastrophic that mortgage payments would increase by over $1,000 for the average family. Credit card interest would increase by $250 for the average family. Families could pay an additional $182 per year on utilities. I'm sure our utilities in the Virgin Islands would be much higher than that. And families could pay an additional $318 per year on food. They could lose thousands of dollars in their retirement savings.

We are so proud and honored to have a leader like Leader NANCY PELOSI, who has represented us in all of the discussions at the White House, and has stood strong for Democratic priorities and kept the voices of House Democrats and the interests of the American people on the table.

We have heard of two different proposals that are coming forth this evening. It's interesting that Speaker BOEHNER has brought forth a proposal with, still, no tax hikes. We were never talking about tax hikes, Mr. Speaker. We were talking about letting the temporary Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans expire, as they were always intended to expire.

His proposal speaks about entitlement reforms and savings. I just read the letter from the AARP, the petition, at least in part, which calls on us to save Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Yet the Republican proposal would include entitlement reforms and savings.

And again, here comes the balanced budget amendment, a budget amendment that would be required before the end of the year. And then a short-term lifting of the debt ceiling, something that will not bring the stability to our economy and that would still put our credit in the world at risk.

He says it's a two-step approach to hold President Obama accountable. Is that what this is all about? Or is it that we're trying to restore the good faith and credit of this Nation?

Their two-step approach to hold President Obama accountable, I don't think he needs to be held accountable. He's been a good President, and he doesn't need us to help him be accountable.

They have cuts. They want cuts that exceed the debt hike, the hike in the debt ceiling. I think that's a new one. I thought that originally we talked about having a balance between the lifting of the debt ceiling and the cuts.

Caps to control future spending. Well, we know what that would mean. All the programs that our communities, the communities that we represent, would lose funding for programs that they need. Again, here comes the balanced budget amendment and entitlement reforms and, of course, no tax hikes.

Now, I've been joined by several of my colleagues, and I'd like them to join in this Special Order if they are ready at this point in time. And I'm always pleased to be joined on these Monday evenings by the gentlelady from Houston, Texas, Congresswoman

SHEILA JACKSON LEE, and we're glad to yield to her such time as she might consume.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. I thank the gentlelady from the Virgin Islands. And let me thank you for persisting in discussing these issues with our colleagues. You have been determined, and your leadership has caused us to have this, I think, very thoughtful discussion more often than not.

I'm also pleased to be joined by my friend and colleague from Virginia, who has developed tenure on these issues dealing with the budget and has always been helpful, Mr. SCOTT, on really sort of getting us through the weeds.

And in an hour or two, or approximately an hour and a half maybe, the President will speak to the Nation. And I believe that this President truly appreciates democracy and, frankly, has no problem with coming to the American people in a straightforward and honest manner.

□ 1940

But it really is important I think to educate ourselves, to educate our colleagues, because with all the chatter, it seems as if they've lost their way.

Soon after the President speaks tonight—I believe around 9 o'clock—Mr. BOEHNER will come forward. But if our Republican friends come forward, are they coming forward with facts? Will they educate the American people to inform them that the debt ceiling has been raised 100 times before? Will they educate the American people that probably for the first time in 2011 they have actually put ''debt ceiling'' in your vocabulary. Now it's going to be highlighted in Webster's dictionary. Most Americans did not know that terminology, but I think those of us who remember our history and those who studied the Constitution—even those of us who are lawyers remember the importance of studying the Constitution, and will always remember the words the ''full faith and credit of the United States.'' Even in difficult days that keeps the country going. Why? Because the world buys America's Treasury notes. They buy it willingly and openly and excitedly, which means that our dollar is strong and that people are happily holding on to the Treasury note, again, because they believe that America will never default on her debt.

Now if you wanted to get more detailed, I'd refer you to the 14th Amendment, section 4. There's a lot of chatter about what it means, but the clear language says that the public debt shall not be questioned. Of course it lists wars and other issues that occurred in the historical perspective of that amendment, but scholars have not formed opposition to the thought—hardcore opposition—that it also lives today and really means that we must recognize the public debt and pay our bills. So full faith and credit and a constitutional premise for doing what we should do.

So why don't we just move forward so that on August 2, or even before that, we will not have to face our seniors looking for their Social Security check, or maybe even visit a nursing home, as I have done over the last 2 weeks and before, and see seniors who are able to pay their way, but others who are on Medicaid. So I don't think that we should suggest that this is a drama and a dramatization to say that some seniors will be put out on the curb because they depend upon Medicaid. Even those who worked but had jobs that did not allow them to have a 401(k) or long-term care, they depend upon Medicaid.

And as we look at the plan that we will hear tonight, it's been put on the Web site by Speaker BOEHNER, there is a great deal of fear that Social Security—or apprehension might be the word that we want to use—that really the Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security safety net are in the eye of the storm. And so when you look at no tax hikes—which we have heard a number of people raise their voices on that, and I think it should be noted that the Obama administration and this Democratic leadership in the last Congress gave tax cuts over and over again, and particularly gave tax cuts to the working and middle class. The stimulus package, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, gave tax cuts. But how do you truly say to the American people that we're trying to do what you do, which is to tighten your belts, that is, looking realistically at the right kinds of cuts—and most economists will tell you that the cuts should be long range. They tell you it makes no sense to talk about cuts overnight. In fact, it's unrealistic. The family sits at the kitchen table trying to balance their books. It is almost impossible for them, in the next 24 hours, to have a total change. They have to, over a measured period of time—maybe someone gets another job, maybe someone finds an increased amount of wages, and then they, over time, cut their budget and begin to pay bills. America has to pay its bills right now. But over the timeframe, we need to look for ways to raise revenue.

So let me just share with you: A friend of ours, a colleague, Congressman BISHOP has shared this very potent poster that is very easy to understand. We need to allow those tax cuts for a small percentage of the American public—and this is not a class warfare situation. I believe it is important for people to enjoy their wealth, to create wealth, to create jobs, but this is what we call equal sacrifice, accepting the burden of being an American, rising to the cause when you're called upon to serve. No one can compare to the men and women right now as we stand here that are on the front lines of Iraq and Afghanistan. No one can compare to families who are welcoming flag-draped coffins home right now because their soldiers died on the battlefield. We can't compare to that. But right now America needs all of us, and she needs us to stand up and be counted.

And so there are wealthy persons like Warren Buffett and Bill Gates who for a long period of time indicated that these tax cuts need to expire. Here is the revenue right here. There are 30,000 households that report incomes of more than $1 million. One day of the Bush tax cuts for millionaires expiring gives us $120 million. That may provide the resources for our national parks and wildlife. It may as well shore up hospitals that really depend upon Medicare reimbursement. It might help in a military family's pay increase. Then of course if you take one week of allowing those tax cuts to expire, here is revenue to the Federal Government—here you get $857 million. That is one week. Just a reminder, in terms of moneys that were spent, we created 3 million jobs—and I'll get to that. I think I'm going to hold that point because I want you to see the difference—$857 million comes in for one week. That's Pell grants for our students; that's allowing research at the NIH for cancer, cures for cancer and as well for heart disease, stroke, neurological disease; payments for those suffering from mental health needs.

And then if you just go 1 month of the expiration of the Bush cuts, you have $3.43 billion. Now in the Recovery and Reinvestment, the President, because of the crisis he faced—which was none of the Clinton surplus was left; it was all gone because of two unpaid wars—he had to come in and save us. So about $800 billion in the Recovery Act put 3 million jobs on the table. It created 3 million jobs. Just imagine what would happen if those tax cuts expired. We would have $3.43 billion, and we would have the opportunity to multiply that, which I think goes in about six times—math on the floor of the House—a little less than that, four times. It would create 4 times 3 million: 12 million jobs—real quick math here.

So the question is, and let me reverse that math because I see BOBBY SCOTT looking up. I thought it was 343; it's only 3. So I won't do any math on the floor of the House, but I will say that it will create jobs. Because we had $800 billion—I was reading that as $343 billion. So it was $3.43, and then if we do 1 year of Bush cuts, it will be $41 billion. And so we can take a portion of the $800 billion and we can see the jobs that will be created by $3 billion and $41 billion.

What I will say to you, my friends, is that the announcement that is going to be made by the Speaker doesn't give us that flexibility. It truly undermines the safety network of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, but it also puts in some elements that clearly undermine the running of this country.

A balanced budget amendment is not realistic for the United States because the Federal Government takes care of 50 States, not just one. And our friends will tell us that these States have balanced budgets. It's okay when you're

taking care of one household, but if you're taking care of 300 million households plus, when that particular State that needs the Federal Government—like Missouri during the horrible tornados, or Alabama, or the floods, or any other manmade or natural disaster—they want us to be able to help them. A balanced budget amendment would not allow that.

□ 1950

And then the caps to control spending do not allow the discretion to be able to make priorities when priorities are necessary.

The last point I want to make about what our Speaker will be announcing tonight to calm the markets is that this is going to be a bifurcated process. Let me say to my colleagues, if you are having fun now, just think about 4 months from now or 6 months. We will have to go through this again. Another debate about the debt ceiling. And I remind you, we have raised it 100 times before. Most Americans have never heard of it because we worked with the Presidents, like President Reagan who in 1983 wrote his own Republican Senate majority leader, Senator Baker, and said you cannot not pass the debt ceiling. It is incalculable to think of America defaulting on her bills.

So here we go with a proposal that would cause us to have to vote twice in a 6-month period. What does that mean? It means that a young couple trying to buy a house sees a surge in their interest rate. It means if you have a credit card, it may be defunct only because you cannot afford to pay the surging interest rate. Fees for you to buy a house might skyrocket. Housing costs might go up. Houses might stop being built.

So I would simply ask my colleagues today: let's be Americans. Let's look at what we can do together. Just allow these tax cuts to expire and allow us to be able to calculate this amount of money. And, again, $3.43 billion and $41 billion makes a difference in the lives of Americans.

So I thank the gentlelady from the Virgin Islands for allowing me to share some thoughts and to hopefully dispel some myths, and also some fears. It is $14.3 trillion. It is a big number, but economists will tell you that America is not broke. It's not broken, either. It is at a stage when we need to come together to raise this debt ceiling and go back into regular order.

Whether I agree or disagree with what the House Republicans bring forward in the appropriation process, we can hassle that out on the floor of the House. But we will allow America to pay her bills. And soldiers on the battlefield will not fear that grandparents are not getting their Social Security, or worrying about their family members getting compensation that they are truly due because of the sacrifice that their loved ones are making on behalf this Nation. I believe America is going to stand up and be counted.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I thank you, and I thank you for bringing the charts so we can see very clearly how much money is lost from just not taking the tax cuts back to the Clinton tax rates. You can imagine, and I'm not doing any math on the floor, either, but how much money we have lost during the time those cuts have been in place and will continue to lose through next year.

The Republican proposal that is being brought to us now, I don't see any investment for the future. No investment in education, no investment in relieving ourselves of our dependence on foreign fuel or continuing to invest in health care or creating jobs. There is nothing like that. It is just cut, cut, cut; and the economists also tell us that this is not the time to be cutting spending.

We have a budget guru here with us this evening, the person who leads us every year in putting together a fantastic Congressional Black Caucus budget, one that not only invests in the future and in all of those things that I talked about, but also has every year, has found a way while investing to also reduce the deficit.

I am pleased to yield to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I thank the gentlelady for yielding. If we are going to talk about how bad the budget situation is now, I think it makes sense to explain how we got here.

First, in the early 1990s, the budget had gone totally out of whack. The first President Bush got together with the Democratic leadership of the House and Senate. Unfortunately, we had to break his pledge on ''read my lips, no new taxes,'' and they came to an agreement and did a little bit to fix the budget.

In 1993 after President Clinton came in, we did some serious work about the budget. We raised some taxes and got the budget under control in the 1993 budget. When you vote on budgets, they are tough budgets. President Bush to a large extent can credit his decision to address the budget with new taxes as part of the reason for his defeat.

And when the Democrats, without a single Republican vote in the House, and not a single Republican vote in the Senate, passed the 1993 budget, 50 Democrats lost their seats. It was a tough vote. You lose your seats when you have very serious deficit reduction. But as a result of that 1993 budget, we not only balanced the budget in just a few short years, but we went into significant surplus and created a record number of jobs. The Dow Jones Industrial Average almost quadrupled.

In 1995, when the Republicans got in control by demagoguing the votes that we cast fixing the budget, they came in and tried to undermine everything in the entire budget. President Clinton let the government get shut down rather than sign those irresponsible budgets that the Republicans passed.

As a result of his tenacity and holding on to his original plan, the budget was balanced in a few short years. Now, there are some in Congress who talk about the historic balanced budget amendment in the mid-90s. Well, if they hadn't come to such agreement, the balance would have balanced itself. We didn't know when we voted on that, as a matter of fact, whether the budget had already gone into surplus. They hadn't finished counting the money. It went from a 290 deficit, we got down to $10 billion, and the agreement slowed down the progress a little bit. But we still went into surplus.

In 2001, Chairman Greenspan was answering questions like, what's going to happen when we pay off the entire national debt held by the public? What's going to happen to interest rates? What's going to happen to the bond market when there are no government bonds? How do you calculate investment strategy when you don't have government bonds setting the no-risk limit, and you have increased rate of return after that, how do you calculate investment strategies if there are no government bonds because you have paid them all off?

By 2008, it was projected we would owe no money to China, Japan, and Saudi Arabia. We would have paid off our entire national debt. So people are thinking this is hard. We had done it. In 2001, by August of 2001, after the first round of tax cuts, we had already gone broke. Instead of the surplus, Social Security surplus, they were talking about the lock box, put that away for Social Security, Medicare surplus, put that in the lock box for Medicare. We had a surplus over that.

By August of President Bush's first year, we had gone through all of the surplus, and we were into Social Security and Medicare by August. You cannot blame September 11 for the fact that we had already gone broke a month before. And so after two tax cuts, not paid for, after prescription drug benefit not paid for, a couple of wars not paid for, we are in the ditch.

Now, during the Clinton administration, we had PAYGO. You wanted to spend some more money, you had to come up with the money to pay for it. You wanted to cut taxes, you had to cut some programs, you had to pay for it. Everything you did, you had to pay for it. When President Bush came in, they did away with PAYGO and put us in the ditch.

Now we're so far in the ditch that most experts suggest we need $4 trillion in deficit reduction to get back to a point where we are fiscally responsible. About $4 trillion. The Simpson-Bowles committee came up with one plan with a lot of this and a little of that—$4 trillion. But there is one interesting thing that you could do to come up with almost $4 trillion: let all of the Bush tax cuts expire. Done. That is all you have to do.

As a matter of fact, in the Congressional Black Caucus budget this year, we started off with that premise. Let them all expire. But we wanted to extend some, and so we paid for them. We

cut the oil loopholes and extended some, and we cut some other loopholes, and added this tax and cut this. We got to a point where we could extend a lot of the tax cuts because we paid for them.

□ 2000

If you want to know what deficit reduction looks like without revenue, you can look at the continuing resolution earlier this year. It started out at $66 billion, which annualized, was about a hundred billion. And 10 years, that would be about a trillion. If you look at what was in that first trillion dollars that they wanted to cut, it was so bad that they couldn't get it passed. They ended up having to compromise. We had cuts in the safety net like community health centers, cuts in energy assistance for low-income seniors, cuts in community action agencies, and we had cuts in investments in the future. Head Start, Pell Grants got cut. Scientific research and NASA all got cut.

And then just perfunctory parts of government. FBI agents got cut. We're sitting up in the Judiciary Committee trying to figure out how to deal with many of the problems we've got, and half of it is we don't need new criminal laws. We need new FBI agents to investigate the cases. FBI agents were cut; 4,000 fewer. Clean Water Grants, Environmental Protection, all cut. Air traffic controllers. There are so few. They're working so hard that they're falling asleep on the job. They were cut.

The next round of cuts would be, obviously, Medicare and housing and other programs were next on the chopping block. We could not get—they could not get that passed. As a matter of fact, by the time they finished, now they're going to a program suggesting that we need to cut not $1 trillion but $2 trillion or $3 trillion. If you couldn't get the first trillion passed because you're so deep into the things that people believe in, things that—Clean Water Grants, food inspectors. There are so few food inspectors in that budget that some meatpacking plants would have to close because they are obligated to have a Federal meat inspector on site. And if you can't be on site, you can't operate. They had so few meat inspectors that they anticipated many of the companies would have to close down or at least close temporarily because there were so few.

Now they're trying to figure out how you can do $2 trillion or $3 trillion worth of cuts. They came up with this idea of the debt ceiling. The debt ceiling is something that recognizes the fact that we've already spent the money. So you raise the debt ceiling not because you're spending any money but because you have already spent the money. It's a perfunctory kind of thing. Dozens of times, almost once a year over the last 50 years, we've had to increase the debt ceiling. Democrats and Republicans all have had to vote for the debt ceiling.

The charade about the thing is usually the majority party has to cast the tough votes and the minority party gets to talk about fiscal irresponsibility and grandstand a little bit, but it's never in the context that there's any question about whether the debt ceiling is going to be increased. Speeches are made, but it's in the context it's going to pass. And you can make a speech about it.

Now they're saying, Maybe we won't increase the debt ceiling. Nobody knows what would happen if the debt ceiling were not increased, if we defaulted on our bonds, if we didn't send out Social Security checks. Nobody knows what would happen—what would happen to the investments, what would happen to the interest rates. We had a temporary technical glitch a few years ago where checks were a day or two—couple of days late going out and they calculate that as a result of that little glitch we paid about half a percent higher interest rate for many years.

Now, a 1 percent interest rate on the national debt now is about in the range of $100 billion. So if you're looking at what would happen if you defaulted on the debt and people charged more interest, well, that's the order of magnitude that we would be talking about. We shouldn't have to even discuss what would happen ''if,'' because it could be anything. And who would want to find out? We ought to just go ahead and increase the debt ceiling and not use it as a threat that unless you do this, we'll blow up the economy. I would hope that our leadership would not capitulate to those kind of threats because if you capitulate this time, in October they can shut down October by not passing appropriations bills. Don't get ''my way or the highway'' to close down the government. In a year or so you would have to do the debt ceiling again. Same thing.

So if you capitulate to these kinds of childish threats, there will be no end to it and you will certainly invite them back. As a matter of fact, what is going on now is they're kind of slow-walking us through some cuts that never could have been made in the normal legislative process. Last year, in December, we extended the Bush tax cuts. That cost $400 billion a year. Now we're broke, and we need to come up with about $400 billion a year, as if we had forgotten what we did last December.

Now, when we extended those tax cuts, there's no mention of how it would be paid for. It would have been nice to know what the plan was, whether we're going to have to cut Social Security or Medicare in order to afford the tax cuts that were extended in December. Now they're going to try to get some cuts that they couldn't otherwise get if you're making rational choices. And legislative process is about choices. If you want a program, you ought to pay for it. If you're willing to pay the taxes, then you can have your program. Not willing to pay the taxes, can't have your program.

Last year we passed health care reform. It cost a trillion dollars. We raised more than a trillion dollars in taxes. That's a balanced approach. If we didn't want to pay the taxes, we couldn't have the program. And so that's the balanced approach that we're not making as we go along now because the next step in this process will be not cuts but caps.

No program will be cut if any deal comes on. These $2 trillion or $3 trillion deals come back. Not a single program will be cut. There will just be caps. Three months from now, when you try to appropriate under those caps, you'll wonder why you can't afford Head Start, why you can't afford any food inspectors, why you can't afford any FBI agents, because the caps are so low.

If you put them all together, if you had made your choices, if you had known you were going to have to cut Head Start and FBI agents and Clean Water Grants when you cut taxes, maybe you wouldn't have cut the taxes. You should have made the choices all at once.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I yield to the gentlelady from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. I think you said playing politics. Is that the same as a schoolyard game of playing chicken? And in the course of what you just said, is there any light for creating jobs in this approach that is being taken, where you have no revenue and you have cuts, with no plan? I see no opportunity for creating jobs.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. In terms of jobs, much has been said about the reason why you would not want to increase taxes in an economic downturn. Because you would adversely effect the economy. That's true. But if you have spending cuts, the effect on the economy is not only larger but more direct and more immediate. Increases in taxes don't hit until the following year. As soon as you cut spending, somebody is getting fired. Jobs get lost immediately when you have spending cuts.

So for the same reason that they say you can't increase taxes during an economic downturn, the stronger argument could be made that you should not have any spending cuts. The estimates on some of the Republican plans are that hundreds of thousands of jobs would be lost if those plans had been enacted.

Now, one of the real tragedies about all this discussion is sometimes—talk about rhetoric in politics—some people are talking about this so-called balanced budget amendment as a condition of moving forward. Well, one of the things about the legislation that we'll consider called the balanced budget amendment is a bill that has a misleading title. It says: Proposing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. Guess what that legislation does not require?

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I yield to the gentlelady from the Virgin Islands.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Does it require a balanced budget?

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. It does not require a balanced budget. What it does is require a three-fifths vote to pass a budget that is not unbalanced. Every budget we consider this year was not in balance the first year. So the Ryan budget that passed would have required a three-fifths vote. The Republican Study Committee plan that was not balanced the first year that in the fullness of time would cut discretionary spending 50, 60, or 70 percent was not in balance the first year. It would require a three-fifths vote.

Now, as I said, when you cast those tough votes, the first President Bush lost his Presidency trying to balance the budget. Fifty Democrats lost their seats in 1993 trying to balance the budget.

□ 2010

I will guarantee you that there will be Republicans who will lose their seats for voting for the Ryan plan because it included, essentially, a repeal of Medicare and replacing it with an inadequate voucher, and they're going to lose their seats over it. We already picked up one seat in upstate New York where that Ryan plan was an issue, but when you vote on real deficit reduction, people will lose their seats.

If you were to move the threshold up to three-fifths and if you were the chief sponsor of a severe deficit reduction plan, common sense will let you know that it will be harder to pass if you move that thing up to three-fifths. So the enactment will make it harder to pass deficit reduction. Once you need three-fifths, there is no limit to how irresponsible you can get. The tax cut extensions of $400 billion in December, that got three-fifths. You could have more tax cuts and more additional spending totally out of control, and all you'd need is three-fifths.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. But the caps would be in place.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. The caps are another part.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. They would be in place as part of the bill, but you couldn't raise any revenue.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. There are four provisions.

The first is you need three-fifths to pass a budget. That's going to make it harder to pass a budget. The second provision is a two-thirds vote to raise taxes. So, if you're trying to balance a budget, having a two-thirds vote to raise taxes will obviously make it harder to balance the budget. This thing is called a ''balanced budget amendment.'' The first two provisions obviously make it harder to balance the budget.

The third provision is you need a two-thirds vote to pass a budget that spends more than 18 percent of the gross national product, a two-thirds vote to pass if it's more than 18 percent of GDP. We haven't been that low since we passed Medicare, so that's going to put a lot of pressure on the Medicare program. Guess what? If you put all these things together with the pressure on Medicare, we know we can cut the benefits with a simple majority, but to save the program with new taxes: two-thirds in the House and two-thirds in the Senate.

There is another little insulting provision at the end. It's a three-fifths vote to raise the debt ceiling, and raising the debt ceiling this year has been enough of a spectacle that they want it to be an annual, everyday occurrence.

You have this thing called the ''balanced budget amendment,'' which will make it harder to balance the budget, and it would certainly put pressure on Social Security and Medicare by allowing those programs to be cut with a simple majority. Yet to save them with new revenues like increasing the amount right now with Social Security a little over $100,000—no more Social Security tax—and if we were to extend that like Medicare to all of your income, we could pretty much solve the problem, but you couldn't do that without a two-thirds vote. You couldn't close an oil loophole to save Social Security without a two-thirds vote—but to cut the benefits, a simple majority. They want to inflict the balanced budget amendment in there to preserve their oil company millionaire loopholes and jeopardize Social Security and Medicare and put us in a budget situation where it will be virtually impossible to ever balance the budget.

People should read the bill past the title. Most people, when they hear the title, they start debating whether it's a good idea or a bad idea to have a balanced budget or whether it's a good idea or a bad idea to balance the budget every year without exception, which would not allow countercyclical spending in times of downturn.

Now, interestingly enough, the gentlelady from Texas and I serve on the Judiciary Committee, and we heard one of the Representatives from Arizona talk about the Arizona balanced budget amendment and how that works on the State level. Then we did a little research to find out: How did Arizona balance its budget?

We found out, first of all, they got billions of dollars of stimulus money to help them balance the budget, but that wasn't enough. Do you know, in the last couple of years, the Arizona State government has sold—sold—their State capitol and sold their Supreme Court building and leased it back? They got hundreds of millions of dollars in the kitty that helped them balance the budget by selling the State capitol and by selling the Supreme Court. That's what a balanced budget amendment does for you, I guess.

We need to make sure that we don't get lost in the rhetoric about the misleading titles of legislation, and we need to actually read past the title in the balanced budget amendment.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. That happened so often with some of these bills.

I thank you for taking us through the history of how we got to where we are, because there is a lot of rhetoric that tries to hide how we got here: the fact that hard votes were taken in '93, that President Clinton did leave a large surplus and that, by the end of President Bush's term, we were in a deep deficit and then in a recession—a recession that was not created by this President but inherited by this President. When they talk about, yes, President Obama has increased the deficit, what should he do—allow us to fall deeper into a recession?

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. What would he do? What would the Republicans have supported him doing to reduce the deficit? Would they have supported increased taxes? What spending are they talking about with specificity?

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. They have never accepted increased taxes, not in any crisis.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Legislation is about choices. I mean, if you want a Head Start program, you've got to pay for it. If you want clean water grants, you've got to pay for them. We need to be making these choices, not in the context of threats about blowing up the economy, but by making the rational choices about what kind of vision and what kind of future we think we want. Some of us think that education is important. You have to pay taxes to get a good education. Some people think that clean water grants are important. Some people think that scientific research, food inspectors, FBI agents, air traffic controllers are important. There are a lot of things we like in government, and you've got to pay for them.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you again for joining us and for laying out that history.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. To add to what my colleague just said, we are also in a climate of fighting against terrorism, and in order to secure the homeland, you have to make choices about how you invest, so I have a different opinion. I think, if you invest money, you get innovation and you get jobs; and none of what has been said by Speaker BOEHNER says anything about innovation, jobs, and he has no, seemingly, understanding of the importance of securing the homeland.

Mr. Speaker, I am joined this evening by Members of the Congressional Black Caucus to call upon Congress to pass a bill that increases the debt ceiling so that we can avoid economic disaster and continue to work for the American people in repairing our economy and creating jobs.

While I support bipartisan efforts to increase the debt limit and to resolve our differences over budgetary revenue and spending issues, I cannot support any measure that unduly constrains the ability of Congress to deal effectively with America's economic, fiscal, and job creation troubles.

Since the debt limit was first put in place, Congress has increased it over 100 times; in fact, it was raised 10 times within the past decade. Congress last came together and raised the debt ceiling in February 2010. Today, the debt ceiling currently stands at $14.3 trillion. In reality, that limit has already been eclipsed, but due to accounting procedures by Treasury Secretary Geithner, the debt limit can be avoided until August 2nd.

Congress must act now in order to avert a crisis. Never in the history of America has the United States defaulted on its debt obligations.

We must be clear on what this issue means for our country. United States Treasury bonds have traditionally been one of the safest investments another country or investor could make. For foreign nations and investors, purchasing a U.S. Treasury bond meant that they held something virtually as safe as cash, backed by the full faith and credit of the United States government.

As we continue to discuss the necessity of increasing out debt ceiling, I have heard the concerns of many of my constituents and the American people regarding the size of our national debt and the care with which taxpayer money is spent. I, too, am concerned about these issues; for to burden future generations of Americans with tremendous amounts of debt should not be a way to avoid our fiscal responsibilities to the American people. However, the task of resolving our debt ceiling crisis must take precedence over other concerns, including political ideology.

Prior to the existence of the debt ceiling, Congress had to approve borrowing each time the federal government wished to borrow money in order to carry out its functions. With the onset of World War I, more flexibility was needed to expand the government's capability to borrow money expeditiously in order to meet the rapidly changing requirements of funding a major war in the modern era.

To address this need, the first debt ceiling was established in 1917, allowing the federal government to borrow money to meet its obligations without prior Congressional approval, so long as in the aggregate, the amount borrowed did not eclipse a specified limit.

In turn, with the proceeds from the bonds, the federal government of the world's largest economy is able to finance its operations. If the United States defaults on its debt obligations, the financial crisis that began in 2008 would pale in comparison, according to economic experts. The ensuing economic catastrophe would not only place the U.S. economy in a tailspin, but the world economy as well.

The fact that Congress, a body that typically has its fair share of political battles, has never played political chicken when it came to raising the debt ceiling should give us all pause, and is a testament to the seriousness with which we must approach this issue. However, this time around, some of my Republican colleagues have created an impasse based upon an ideological commitment to spending cuts.

While I understand and share the concern of my Republican colleagues with respect to deficit spending, and will continue to work with them in order to find reductions, now is not the time to put ideology over pragmatism. The reality is that, on August 3rd, the United States will begin to default on its debt obligations if the debt ceiling is not raised.

This detour into a spending debate is as unnecessary as it is perilous, as increasing the debt ceiling does not obligate the undertaking of any new spending by the federal government. Rather, raising the debt limit simply allows the government to pay existing legal obligations promised to debt holders that were already agreed to by Presidents and Congresses, both past and present. Raising the debt limit simply matches the amount the United States is allowed to borrow to the amount it already owes.

Moreover, the impending crisis would have already occurred were it not for the extraordinary measures taken by Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, including the suspension of the investment in securities to finance the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund, as well as the redemption of a portion of those securities already held by that fund.

If the United States defaults on its obligations on August 3rd, the stock market will react violently to the news that for the first time in history, America is unable to keep its promises to pay. Not once in American history has the country's full faith and credit been called into question. Credit rating agencies like Moody's and Standard & Poors stand ready to downgrade the triple A rating that America currently enjoys.

Once America defaults, investors who purchase U.S. bonds and finance our government will be less likely to lend to America in the future. Just as a person who defaults on a loan will find it harder to convince banks to lend them money in the future, a country that defaults on its debt obligations will find it harder to convince investors to lend money to a government that did not pay them back. Showing the world that the United States does not pay its debts makes the purchasing of that debt less desirable because it requires the assumption of more risk on the part of the investors.

Furthermore, any investors who continue to purchase U.S. Treasury bonds will demand much higher interest rates in order to cover the increased risk. Once a default occurs, investors figure that the chance of the United States defaulting again is much greater, and will require the government to pay higher rates of interest in order to make the loan worth the risk for investors to take on.

Imagine the impact on our stock market if we do not pay our debts. As we have seen throughout the recent financial crisis, a bad stock market hurts not only big businesses and large investors on Wall Street, but small businesses and small investors as well. Families with investments tied to the stock market, such as 401(k)s, pension plans, and savings, will once again see the value of their investments drop. The American people are tired of the uncertainty of the value of their retirement accounts. With uncertainty still lingering in the markets and in the minds of citizens, we must not allow another wild fluctuation in the markets to occur due to default.

One of the major reasons that the job market continues to remain so stagnant is the fact that the flow of credit to small businesses that enables them to hire and expand has slowed.

Increasing the debt ceiling is the responsible thing to do. Congress has already debated and approved the debt that an increased ceiling makes room for. However, my Republican colleagues have chosen to use this as an opportunity to hold the American people hostage to their extreme agenda. They knew that the "Cut, Cap, and Balance Act" was not a realistic proposal and that it was not going to pass the Senate. They just wanted to waste time.

Mr. Speaker, along with the Congressional Black Caucus, I believe that Congress should increase the debt ceiling to meet the obligations the United States has already promised to undertake. By refusing to do so, it endangers our economy and the recovery of our jobs.

Last week Republicans introduced the "Cut, Cap and Balance Act" which I aptly named the "Tap Dance, Loser Club, and Bust Bill." Because it tap danced around raising our debt ceiling and acting in a responsible manner to pay our nation's debt obligations. That bill would have forced our nation to join a losers club as it would have eliminated important social programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, and Pell grants. The theme for the Republicans seems to be a focus on cutting programs for the most at need and ignoring the need to focus on Job creation. This bill busts the hopes and dreams of our children, seniors, and military families. It busts the hopes to grow our nation in the future. The "Tap Dance, Loser Club, and Bust Bill" was just a distraction and now we have the opportunity to once again get serious about raising our debt. We can not continue to waste a tremendous amount of time. The Deadline is right around the corner. The American people cannot have a government that is the embodiment of living check to check. We must do something NOW!

For a moment think about the American people. Step back and envision the faces of those who will be impacted if we are not successful in finding common ground. They are the faces of the the elderly who will not receive their social security payments. They are the faces of children and infants who will not receive their WIC benefits. They are the faces of hardworking every day Americans, including the multitudes of poor working families who will not be able to receive the benefits they need from government run programs that are keeping them from falling into homelessness. When you think of our future, also see our present. Without raising this debt limit we are putting the present and the future of Americans at risk.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I thank you for adding that again.

At this time, I would like to yield to the former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE from Oakland, who is also chair of the Out of Poverty Caucus. A lot of times—well, even up to this weekend—nobody is talking about the poor.

I thank you for starting the Out of Poverty Caucus and for leading us through an agenda that continues even today of pathways out of poverty and for bringing us to the floor every day for the last couple of weeks to talk about how the Republican policies, the bills that they are proposing and the way they're holding the debt ceiling hostage are hurting the poor in our country.

Ms. LEE. Let me thank Congresswoman CHRISTENSEN for leading this Special Order tonight.

I also thank you for your leadership on behalf of, really, my constituents and on behalf of the entire country because it is so important that you as first vice chair of the Congressional

Black Caucus—and chairman CLEAVER, who chairs the Congressional Black Caucus—continue to be the conscience of the Congress and to speak out and sound the alarm about the consequences of possible bad political and policy decisions. So thank you very much for what you're doing. It's so important that these issues be swept from under the rug and discussed in an open forum.

The debate and the discussion with Congressman BOBBY SCOTT and Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE were very important to have because I think that the public, who is listening to this discussion, will understand the history and the background and the technical aspects about this budget and deficit reduction plan that the Speaker is bringing forward, which really do, once again, put the American people as pawns, I think, in a game that they are not responsible for playing. People cannot wait any longer. They are tired of having their futures threatened by Republican politicians who are playing games that put the entire Nation and our economy at risk.

As for the Ryan budget and now this debt ceiling plan put forth by the Republicans, I'll tell you that what comes to mind is, when you look at it and when you listen to what's in it, it's a ''you're on your own'' kind of plan. For those who are wealthy and those are beholden to special interests and hedge fund billionaires and millionaires and all of those who have benefitted from the tax cuts, they'll be fine; but for those, as you mentioned earlier, who are poor or who could possibly fall from middle income into the ranks of the poor, this debt ceiling plan put forth by the Republicans is morally wrong and is fiscally unsound. We don't want to see the majority of the American people on their own once again, so I'm glad we're here tonight discussing this.

A Republican default on our debt, this would devastate the retirement savings of millions of American seniors—just devastate. We know that Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid—these government safety net programs—have provided for millions of our seniors to live a decent life in their golden years and to not fall into the ranks of poverty. Now all of these programs are on the chopping block. It makes no sense. A Republican default on our debts, it would weaken our entire economy and weaken our national security, and we heard earlier that hundreds of thousands of jobs could be lost, that even more jobs would be lost. We should be about creating jobs, not putting forth measures that would take us further down the road into a recession and, for some, a depression.

□ 2020

In fact, it's very simple. America must pay our bills on time, and we must do this in a way that does not devastate the safety net for our senior citizens and our children's future.

Either you are on the side of the American people and want to safeguard vital human needs programs like Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, critical food benefits for families and children—or you're on the side of the billionaires and the bankers, financial services industries, subsidies for massive oil company profits. You're on one side or the other in this debate.

The Congressional Black Caucus continues to be on the side of our Nation's most vulnerable populations, who, in these very hard economic times, depend on these vital safety net programs for their survival day-in and day-out. Meanwhile, we keep hearing claims from the other side of the aisle that only misdirect attention.

America really is not broke. We're the richest and we're the strongest country in the world, and we still have the best ideas, the best workers, the best schools, and the largest economy in the world. But we won't be for long if the Republicans have their way.

You know, you often wonder for those who say that default will not wreak havoc on the country. There are some who I think could care less if we went into default because if you listen to what they're saying, it doesn't really bother a lot of Members here. And that, to me, is tragic.

Some tell us that the future is bleak and that the government cannot afford to invest in a prosperous and growing America. But the truth is that raising the debt ceiling should be very simple. It should be a simple vote by all of us to allow the United States Treasury to fund all of its programs and obligations and debts of the entire Federal Government that are already in the law.

Republicans in the House have already voted to support and pass a $9 trillion increase in the national debt. And now again, instead of working to create jobs and help our Nation rise out of this great recession, and depression for many, the Republicans are really playing a high-stakes game of chicken with the safety net and with the security of every single American so that they can protect the massive—and Congressman SCOTT and yourself talked about this—$400 billion tax cut that Congressman SCOTT warned us we would have to pay for some time soon. It came sooner rather than later, Congressman SCOTT. And we listened to you, and those of us who voted ''no,'' we tried. But here we are with your prediction coming true.

Here we're asking once again those who have been hurt, the most vulnerable, to pay once again. And that is just downright wrong.

A failure to raise the debt limit would mean an immediate stop to over 40 percent of the entire Federal Government. Our soldiers would not get paid, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid payments would be delayed. And the health and safety of every single American would be threatened, along with the health of our very fragile economy.

The incredibly irresponsible position that the Republicans have taken protecting tax breaks for the super rich, Wall Street corporations, Big Oil, that seems to be more important than preventing the United States government from defaulting on our debts.

And let me just remind those who want to cut Medicare and dismantle Medicare. That's basically what they want to do. Medicare recipients did not create the national debt. And that is unconscionable to even talk about balancing the budget or paying down the debt on the backs of our most vulnerable populations, including those who are facing living in poverty.

And let me remind our Republican colleagues again that the Congressional Black Caucus, under the leadership of Chairman CLEAVER, Congresswoman CHRISTENSEN, Congressman BOBBY SCOTT, already offered a budget—and he mentioned it earlier—that would have saved $5.7 trillion from the deficit, protected our most vulnerable communities, and would have ensured the stability of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. And our budget was balanced.

So the country is not broke. We know how we got here—two wars, these massive tax cuts for the very wealthy, Wall Street going amok. So it's time to be real, and it's time to be truthful. It's time to be honest, and it's time to make sure that the decisions we make here will not dig us deeper into the hole. America really doesn't have any more time for these Republican games.

Let me also conclude by talking about those who are unemployed because if we don't do something quickly, the ranks of the unemployed are going to grow even greater. And unemployment compensation is really survival funds, survival compensation, until we figure out how we're going to create jobs. And incidentally, the Republicans haven't put forth any job plan since they've been in power.

But these long-term unemployed Americans who have run out of their unemployment compensation, known as the 99ers, they continue to face uncertainty and hardships, and the House must act now to stand with these individuals.

H.R. 589, which my colleague, Congressman SCOTT, and I introduced earlier this year, Congresswoman CHRISTENSEN and many members of the Congressional Black Caucus are cosponsors. This would add 14 weeks of unemployment emergency compensation. It would make these benefits retroactively available to people who have exhausted all of their benefits and are still unemployed. Extending these benefits for long-term unemployed individuals will stimulate our economy, empower more consumers, and create more jobs.

So this extension should be in any deficit reduction plan because we know that not only is it the right thing to do, the morally correct thing to do, this is the economically prudent thing

to do in terms of passing an emergency extension. It really should be the first step in taking bold steps to create millions of jobs for Americans.

So we should be working to pass a jobs bill that would help people find this pathway out of poverty. We should help keep middle-income individuals from falling into poverty. We should be looking at a budget and a plan that, yes, will help pay down our debt. Yes, it is part of deficit reduction—that incorporates deficit reduction as part of it. But no, that does not cut Medicare, Social Security, or Medicaid. And we should really be trying to figure out a way to create some jobs for people. I mean, that's the bottom line. That's what we need to do.

Thank you again, Congresswoman CHRISTENSEN, for calling this Special Order today. We should make sure that the world knows that the Congressional Black Caucus continues to call attention to the games that Republicans are playing that will threaten our national security interests as well as our economic interests. And the fact that we're here working to try to create some jobs and to help ensure that this debt ceiling is raised, that's the bottom line.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE.

I just want to mention that when we had our job summit about a week and a half ago, we passed out some information to those in attendance that added up about 30 job-creating pieces of legislation that just the CBC has introduced in this year. I don't believe that the Republican majority has brought any job-creating bills to the floor, and in this recovery, that's what we need, jobs.

I know sometimes we were accused of class warfare, but we're not pitting the poor against the rich or the middle class against the rich. We just think that everyone needs to be on the side of our country. We are calling for shared sacrifice and for fairness.

And really, this ought to be a clean raising of the debt ceiling. The cuts we're talking about that are going to hurt the people of this country are too important for us to be rushing through and using to hold the debt ceiling hostage.

□ 2030

So let's not hold such a critical thing as our ability to pay our bills and take care of our seniors, our children, our people with disabilities, and preserving our creditworthiness not only for Americans but the whole world depends on us, and we cannot let them down. We cannot let the American public down, including my constituents. We cannot let our country down and all of the countries in the world who depend on us.

With that, I thank my colleagues for joining me. I want to, once again, thank the AARP for their petitions and for their strong advocacy on behalf of not only seniors but all Americans and our country.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Unitell States has reached the current debt ceiling, which is set by law at $14.294 trillion, and Congress must act by August 2, 2011 to avoid defaulting on its loans. If Congress fails to reach an agreement on raising the debt ceiling, it will cripple our economy, halt our recovery and end up costing taxpayers more in the long-run. For those reasons, I agree with financial analysts and experts who say that raising the debt ceiling is necessary to ensure our fiscal stability and continued economic recovery.

Although the bill to raise the debt limit did not pass in the U.S. House of Representatives in May, I voted in favor of the measure because the consequences would have been disastrous for our economy.

The Republican leadership brought this bill to the floor, but ironically urged their Members not to vote for it. The national debt limit is not a joke and needs to be taken very seriously. Normally, the periodic raising of the national debt limit is a noncontroversial legal necessity to ensure that the U.S. does not default on its debt obligations to foreign creditors and maintains its credit rating.

Raising the debt limit does not authorize new spending—it simply allows the government to finance existing legal obligations that Congresses and presidents of both parties have made in the past. The United States Congress has acted 78 times to raise, extend, or revise the debt limit; 49 times under Republican presidents and 29 times under Democratic presidents.

While no one is more frustrated than I am about our current fiscal state of affairs, I support responsible efforts to bring down our national debt. I firmly believe that it is a mistake to compound past irresponsibility with further irresponsibility on this issue. If Congress fails to increase the debt limit, the government would start to default on its foreign owned debts, which would have "calamitous" consequences for the U. S. economy. Not to mention it would be unprecedented in American history.

In addition, if the United States defaulted:

Investors would be less likely to lend to this country; borrowing costs, not only for the federal government, but for families, businesses and local governments would increase; and so would interest rates for municipal bonds, mortgages, car loans, and student and business loans.

Mr. Speaker, America's debt is a non-partisan concern. Both parties share responsibly for ensuring that this nation's bills are paid. I stand ready to work with all of my colleagues to meet our obligations and put forward a productive plan to reduce the deficit.

GOP DOCTORS CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my leadership, the majority leader on the Republican side, the Speaker of the House, and our conference chairman, Representative JEB HENSARLING, for giving us the opportunity—us, the House GOP Doctors Caucus—to have the Special Order hour this evening.

It's kind of convenient, Mr. Speaker; my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, the well-respected Members, my friends from the Congressional Black Caucus, were talking about the budget and what we're trying to do with regard to moving forward, talking, of course, about safety net programs and entitlement programs, such as Social Security and Medicare. And that's a great segue into the topic of our discussion this evening because it's going to be about the Medicare program.

We, on our side of the aisle in the Republican-passed House budget, take a responsible approach to solving the Medicare crisis, which the trustees have said to all Members of Congress—not Republicans, not Democrats, not House Members, not Senate Members, but all of us—that according to the trustee report, by the year 2024, if we don't do something about the Medicare program as it currently exists, as it's currently funded, the amount of spending that occurs year after year—and will only increase as more and more of our baby boomers are reaching age 65—if we don't do something about that, then that Medicare part A hospital trust fund is not supported by any constituent premiums, it's going to go broke. It absolutely is going to go broke.

So I say to my Democratic colleagues who just spoke, the compassionate thing—and I know they have great compassion for those who, maybe through no fault of their own, can't help themselves; but the compassionate thing, Mr. Speaker, is to save the program, to guarantee, preserve it for current Medicare recipients. Indeed, even for folks that are only 55 years old today, Medicare, as we know it, would be protected, would be strengthened for all of those individuals. And by the time those who are 55 years old today become 65, in 10 years, around 2024, there would be something like 65 million seniors and a smaller number of disabled individuals in the Medicare program as we know it. They would be in that Medicare program as we know it for the rest of their natural lives. And thank God, because of good health care in this country, women, I think, are living on average to age 82 and men maybe to age 78. So these 65 million people will be on Medicare for a long time. Medicare as we know it.

My colleagues didn't mention this in their hour; but what we do in our budget is go forward with a plan for younger folks—indeed, even for my grandchildren, my 10 grandchildren, the oldest two are 13-year-old twins—but let's say them, or 25-year-olds, 35-year-olds, 45-year-olds, indeed, we create the adult approach, the mature approach to solving the Medicare problem so that it will be there for them instead of nothing come 2024. And maybe some of us have paid for 25 years that FICA tax that's taken out of our paychecks every week or every month.