

guarantee. So there's a loophole we can agree on closing, hopefully.

But they are going to have to give up on this lame argument that somehow making millionaires and billionaires pay taxes at the rate of the Clinton era, when we had record low unemployment, will hurt our economy.

GRANTING PERMANENT NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS TO RUSSIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, as the Representative of a district that recorded more than \$2 billion in exports last year, I know full well the significance of expanding market access for American companies and ensuring that our businesses are competing on a level playing field. That's why I believe it's important to support passage of H.R. 6156, which will grant permanent normal trade relations to Russia.

This past August, Russia joined the World Trade Organization, giving its members full access to Russia's rapidly growing market, reduced tariffs, and ensured transparency when implementing trade measures. However, while foreign competitors are currently benefiting, the U.S. will not receive any of these benefits until Congress authorizes the President to grant Russia permanent normal trade relations. Simply put, American companies, workers, and farmers are being put at a competitive disadvantage.

Last year, my home State of Michigan exported \$225 million worth of goods to Russia, despite many of its best products facing tough competition from foreign competitors. With this agreement in place, farmers and producers in my district will be assured of more predictable market access for their crops and agricultural goods, while manufacturers will enjoy reduced tariff rates for Michigan-made vehicles and equipment.

As a World Trade Organization member, Russia has agreed to comply with the rule of law. Though these reforms won't happen overnight, Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization requires their compliance with all of the organization's rules and duties. This includes addressing discriminatory practices, enforcing intellectual property rights, and increasing transparency. If it does not comply, members can enforce them through dispute mechanisms.

Of further importance, this legislation includes critical human rights provisions which will hold foreign officials accountable for gross human rights abuses and prevent them from entering the U.S. or accessing our financial systems.

House Republicans have worked tirelessly during the 112th Congress to advance pro-growth legislation which provides greater certainty for American companies and helps our Nation's businesses hire more American work-

ers. We've made great gains in advancing trade interests for the U.S. and promoting new market opportunities for our companies.

An ambitious trade agenda must continue for us to successfully lower the unemployment rate and restore our place as the global economic leader, and I'm glad we have the opportunity to pass another part of that plan today. If we're going to jump-start our economy and get Americans back to work, we have to find ways to increase global market access for American companies and to advance economic freedom.

I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation today.

CALLING FOR AN END TO WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues here in Congress from both sides of the aisle to call for an end to the war in Afghanistan. After more than a decade of war, with now more than 2,000 lives lost and hundreds of billions of American tax dollars spent, it's time for our troops to come home to their families.

I represent the military communities of Travis Air Force Base, and come January I will represent the community of Beale Air Force Base as well. I can tell you from firsthand experience that the men and women who serve in our Nation's military and their families are America's finest. They are not afraid of sacrifice. They joined the armed forces because they love our country and they are willing to give everything to keep our Nation safe, but their sacrifice must be for a reason. If we're going to ask them to risk life and limb on the other side of the world, it must be for a mission that is vital to our Nation's security. We can no longer say that about the mission in Afghanistan.

Our brave soldiers are continuing to die in Afghanistan for what is now a war of choice. We sent them to eliminate the terrorists responsible for the terrible 9/11 tragedy, and they did it with remarkable courage and competence. The al Qaeda training camps have long been eliminated; most of al Qaeda's top leaders have been killed or captured; Osama bin Laden is long dead.

□ 1030

Terrorism remains a global threat, and we must combat it. But keeping tens of thousands of troops in a country the size of Texas is no way to achieve this objective. Rather, we must continue to use our superb intelligence capabilities and our special operation forces to root out the terrorist networks and destroy their leaderships wherever they may be.

When we do bring our troops home, we must ensure that our returning he-

roes receive the support that is their due when they get back. We must make sure that they have access to housing, medical care, employment, educational opportunities that they deserve, and we must take care of all of our veterans.

The war in Afghanistan has lasted 11 long years, and it must not last another. It's time to bring our troops home. And as we do so, we must turn our attention to rebuild America's economy. One way to do this is to focus on enhancing our green energy sector.

The American wind energy industry is in jeopardy. The production tax credit will end December 31, 2012. It must be extended or else 30,000 jobs will be lost and 450 manufacturing businesses will close.

Two additional measures must also be considered. First, we could apply the master limited partnership and the real estate investment tax programs to the green energy sector and, thereby, bring significant financing opportunities along with the production tax credit.

AVOIDING THE FISCAL CLIFF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, while the President returned from the campaign trail last week with a slightly more conciliatory tone, his insistence on a year-end tax hike on small businesses is unchanged, and frankly, that is completely unacceptable.

It is unacceptable for more than 23 million Americans struggling for work right now. It's unacceptable for millions of middle class Americans struggling to support their families with rising gas prices and higher health insurance costs. And it's unacceptable because it will destroy jobs and hurt our economy.

Yesterday, the President said that his reelection victory is a mandate to help the middle class. He can start with helping the middle class by stopping his job-killing tax hike on small businesses.

The President continues to call for increased tax rates for the top two brackets, which hit more than 1 million small businesses and 53 percent of all small business income. That's a big problem, considering that small businesses create two out of every three jobs in America.

According to the Ernst & Young report, the President's plan will result in the elimination of 700,000 jobs.

The position of the congressional Republicans on extending current income tax rates for all Americans is far from extreme. It is actually the same exact position that President Obama espoused 2 years ago when he agreed to extend all Bush-era tax rates for 2 years on the basis that raising tax rates would hurt our weak economy.

That logic still stands. In fact, our economy is even weaker today than it

was in 2010. GDP growth is lower than in 2010, in large part due to the looming cost of the President's health care law and his administration's dramatic increase in regulations.

With more than 23 million Americans struggling to find work, that is not the time to be raising taxes on anyone, period.

We must also find common ground on the defense sequester to ensure that spending cuts are implemented, but in a way that does not weaken our military or threaten our national security.

Both the tax and spending issues we face in lame duck are a microcosm of our Nation's massive fiscal and economic long-term challenges. Entitlement reform and comprehensive, pro-growth tax reform in the 113th Congress are key to addressing our Nation's greatest challenges.

The policy outcome and the narrative that transpire from this lame duck session will set the stage for what is possible in 2013 and beyond. We have a critical opportunity right now to avert the fiscal cliff and lay the groundwork for bipartisanship with policies that reflect our economic and our fiscal realities.

DELIVERING ON VOTERS' DEMAND FOR BOTH PARTIES TO COMPROMISE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Those of you watching on C-SPAN just heard from my friend from Tennessee the unwillingness of the Republican side of the aisle to even recognize that elections have consequences, that, in fact, the President won reelection decisively. Democrats made gains in the Senate and gains here in the House.

It's time to put aside the talking points. It's time to come together for this country.

Mr. Speaker, Speaker BOEHNER actually said it well. He said the mandate from the election of last week is "for us to find a way to work together on solutions to the challenges we face as a Nation."

I can't agree more. Elections have consequences, and our ability to avert the fiscal cliff, in which expiring tax cuts and across-the-board spending cuts are on a collision course to derail this economy, requires us to respect that directive from voters.

Yet, once again, lines are being drawn—you just heard it—over what types of revenue will be considered or what cuts are considered too steep. I hope I was not the only one astounded by the comments of the CEO of the American Petroleum Institute, who recently said, "the oil and gas industry will not be singled out for punitive treatment."

How fascinating. Perhaps I could introduce him to the Federal workforce, our Federal employees who are, so far, the only group to be singled out for pu-

nitive treatment, to the tune of \$75 billion of deficit reduction. They understand the principle of shared sacrifice and have patiently been waiting for everybody else to actually share in it.

Mr. Speaker, our chances for success in fending off the fiscal cliff become even slimmer if we start removing options from the table, as my friend from Tennessee just did, before we've even sat down at that table. America voted for and deserves a divided government that actually works.

The last time I checked, divided government doesn't mean it's going to be my way or the highway, or your way or the highway, or Grover Norquist's way or the highway. Divided government can and has succeeded in the past when leaders have done that thing which we have not been able to achieve very often in these last 2 years: compromise.

That is the singular message from our voters this year, compromise. Work together to move the economy, our families, and our Nation forward. I've repeatedly heard that mantra from across my community, whether it's from seniors, teachers, small businesses or my own neighbors.

And now the Nation's business leaders are starting to echo that call. In fact, the head of the Business Roundtable, the former Republican Governor of Michigan, and other top CEOs are asking Congress to do just that, compromise.

In addition, the Task Force of American Innovation, comprised of our Nation's top technology companies, is urging us to preserve Federal investments in education and R&D, which are the bedrock of future innovation and competitiveness. And this week even the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said it was open to a compromise that included revenue.

These are the constructive voices I hope my colleagues listen to as we approach negotiations on the fiscal cliff. Politics is the art of compromise and, working together, we can reduce our Nation's deficit and preserve strategic investments in those programs that fuel economic growth and competitiveness.

Even in the midst of the Civil War, President Lincoln and the 38th Congress authorized the Transcontinental Railroad, the Homestead Act, and the land grant college and university system. They understood we had to invest in the future, while also dealing with the crisis of the present.

No doubt, we all have something to lose if we do not succeed. So perhaps, by each of us giving a little, we can revive this economic recovery, restore faith in our ability to govern responsibly, and deliver on that mandate we just got last week from the voters.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair and not to a perceived viewing audience.

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POISONOUS PARTISANSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLEAVER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I rarely come to the floor to make such comments is that it is so troublesome to me that we will have fact-free debates. One of the problems is that we are talking in a parallel universe. There are small businesses that will pay more taxes, but I think it is important to say to you that the top hedge fund managers last year earned \$22 billion and then paid a 15 percent tax rate as small businesses. So I am troubled when we are not being accurate and factual with the American public.

Mr. Speaker, my concern today—and I believe it is the concern of many Americans—is the situation in which we find ourselves. The American people have elected a government wherein only cooperation can bring progress. We have a House of Representatives that is predominantly Republican, and we have a Democratically controlled Senate. It would not take a 3-year-old a great deal of time to figure out that the only way we can do the work of the American people is if we stop this ridiculous partisanship—this poisonous partisanship—that is damaging the country and creating a level of anger. There are State legislators in at least 13 States who have introduced legislation for secession from the Union based on the fact that they didn't particularly like the President who was elected. One of the reasons, I think, is that we are exporting hate. If it's not hate, it's certainly anger, and "anger" is just one letter short of "danger."

The American people gave us a mandate to do the simple things, and that is to lead. We understand that the challenge before Congress in the coming weeks is no simple task. I would be wrong if I said that what we need to do is simple. We have some major challenges:

The Postal Service is losing \$25 million a week, and we are running around here acting as if the most important thing in the world is remaining faithful to our ideology. Ideology, tragically, has trumped logic in this place, and that cannot continue. Right now, we are facing hundreds of billions of dollars in expiring tax cuts. It might be important, Mr. Speaker, for all of us to keep in mind that, if we fail to deal with the sequestration issue, 90 percent of the people in this country will have their taxes raised.

But there is another problem.

We have three major credit rating agencies in this country—actually, for the world, essentially—Standard & Poor's, Moody's and then Fitch. We have been warned as a Congress and as a Nation that if we walk up to this precipice again as we did two Augusts ago that we will suffer another downgrading of our credit rating. The