

It was great to travel and to serve with you, and I wish you great success as you continue to serve the State of Colorado with great fashion.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thank you.

Mr. PLATTS. I thank the gentlelady again for the time she's allowed me here today.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you.

I yield 1 minute to Mr. YODER.

CONGRATULATING KANSAS HOUSE SPEAKER
MICHAEL O'NEAL

Mr. YODER. I thank the gentlelady from Illinois for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute the legacy of service and dedication of my friend, Kansas Speaker of the House Michael O'Neal. After 28 years, Mike has decided to retire from public service to the people of Kansas. He leaves behind a history of courageous leadership in making smart public policy on behalf of all Kansans.

Mike spent his career in the Kansas House notably chairing the Judiciary Committee and the Education Committee before eventually being elected by his colleagues twice as Kansas speaker of the house. While Mike's career in the people's house in Kansas will be remembered for his many notable legislative achievements, his most prominent legacy may be the wonderful friendships and relationships he built along the way. Many of us consider Mike a mentor and true friend, someone you can always count on—a rare quality in politics today.

So as the gavel falls for the last time and Kansas Speaker of the House Mike O'Neal closes this chapter of service on behalf of so many appreciative Kansans, I would like to thank him for his 28 years of tireless service to make Kansas the best State in the Nation.

Rock Chalk, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. BIGGERT. We have no other Members that are here so I would just like to say, again, thanks so much to my colleagues, and particularly my family. Some have been with me these entire 14 years and some have arrived after the start of the 14 years. To my friends and my supporters who have helped me really to grow and to learn and to serve the people of Illinois, it's been a real honor and a privilege. Public service is something that is such a privilege and honor, and I think that this has been the greatest privilege of my life, to have been a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

THE PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

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

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My name is KEITH ELLISON, cochair of the Progressive Caucus along with my good friend, RAÚL GRIJALVA. I want

to come before the body today, Mr. Speaker, with the Progressive message. The Progressive message is a message that the Progressive Caucus shares with people. The progressive message is very simple. It's a basic idea that America, this great land of ours, is big enough for everybody, has enough abundance for everybody, and we have natural resources which should be respected, and we should live in harmony and promote a green economy and should have civil and human rights for all people.

In the Progressive message we say that we would promote dialogue and diplomacy before we ever find ourselves in military conflicts. The Progressive message is about an inclusive America—all colors, all cultures, all faiths, an America that says if you live in this country and you want to work hard, the economy should be robust and broad enough and fair enough for you to make a good run in this economy. If you work 40 hours a week, you ought to be able to feed your family. You shouldn't have to resort to public assistance. It's talking about standing up for the rights of labor, the rights of working men and women, the right to be able to be paid fairly, the right to be able to go to the doctor, the right to look forward to a decent and fair retirement, the right to be able to see that your children will be able to get a good education that can see them through. In other words, the Progressive message is the message of an inclusive America that makes sure that our economic and our environmental lives are strong, healthy, and affirming.

We contrast this with another vision—a vision of a divided America, where not everybody counts and not everybody matters; an America in which labor and management are fighting and there's no peace; an America where there's not full inclusion of LGBT Americans or Americans who are trying to join America through immigration—a not fully inclusive America; an America in which women have to worry about their right to be able to seek out contraception or seek out equal pay for equal work. This is the America that we don't embrace. The America that we embrace embraces equality, inclusion, and opportunities.

Now where are we today? We are in the middle of a national conversation which is playing itself right here in Congress that has to do with the so-called fiscal cliff. I'm not going to use that term anymore because we're actually not on a cliff. What we are on is a set of important deadlines that we should meet and we should work at. But this imagery of a cliff and of falling over something and plummeting downward is false, and we should stop using this analogy. I know the press likes it because it adds drama. Of course, the press thrives on drama. But in truth, there are some important deadlines we should meet. But we should not surrender our deeply held

views simply to get any deal done. The deal we should do should be a fair deal, it should be a deal for all, and it should be a deal that meets our most important priorities. But it should not be some force-fed thing that we accept simply because we fear going over this cliff that really doesn't exist.

You can refer to it as a set of deadlines. That's the best way to put it. That's what it actually is. And if you don't meet a deadline, then, of course, there are consequences to not meeting deadlines. And you want to avoid them. But at the same time, this idea that we've got to put up with anything that the other side may offer because we're facing a cliff is a concept that I reject, and I hope the American people reject, Mr. Speaker, because that's not really what is going on. We have a set of deadlines that we should meet. And everybody in this body should work earnestly, sincerely, and in good faith to compromise. But in terms of just accepting some bad deal just to get a deal done because of a crisis that they've threatened, we shouldn't buy into that line of thinking.

Now what are these deadlines? Well, we know that the Bush tax cuts are expiring. They'll expire for everyone, not just the top 2 percent. This is something that we don't want the American middle class to get hit with, a tax increase at this time, but we do believe the wealthiest among us should pay more. And we think that the top 2 percent should pay a higher tax rate on the money they make after \$250,000 a year.

□ 1430

We also believe that there's more that can be done. Closing loopholes. People say, well, let's talk about that tonight too. But we see the Bush tax cuts expiring for everybody. We see the production tax credit expiring—which is something important for people who work in the wind industry and in the area of industry that promotes environmental matters. We also see the expiration of things like the estate tax, the SGR—which is the doctor fix for Medicare. We also see the sequestration, which is the outcome, the final outcome of the Budget Control Act that we passed in August 2011 which is now coming due. There will be equal defense and discretionary spending cuts on both sides, which will inflict damage.

So all these things are happening at the same time, and so the same question is going to be asked: How will this budget entanglement be resolved? Will it be resolved on the backs of people who can least afford it, or will the people who can best afford it be asked to help out?

So it's within this context, Mr. Speaker, that I come before you with the Progressive message today to try to bring some clarity to folks listening to C-SPAN today about what the real issues are, what we have to avoid, and what we have to fight for.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this deal that is being considered right now by the U.S. Congress and the American people—and of course the President—is still something that is subject to being changed and altered depending upon how vigorously people are willing to advocate for what's right. So I want to talk about that today. I don't want to call it the fiscal cliff—that will be the last time I use that term—because it's not that, but there are serious fiscal issues that we should address.

Now, I want to talk about a few things that we should not be discussing and don't need to be talking about, and one of them is Social Security. Social Security does not contribute to the deficit. It's not expiring. There's no reason we have to deal with Social Security right now. It is one of those things that some people—who never liked Social Security, by the way, called it socialism even—want to change and have been wanting to change for decades, and so they create this imagery of crisis coming at the end of the year. Then what they're trying to do is say, well, we've got to change Social Security because of the so-called "fiscal cliff"—although it's not really a cliff. So this is something that really shouldn't be on the table.

I want to encourage folks to really discuss and get the facts, Mr. Speaker, because Social Security is solvent through 2037. Does it need to be fixed? Yeah. It is true that there is slightly more money going out than coming in. But when you look at all the money that is owed to Social Security and you have the interest payments that are being made on it, it more than pays for itself for now. There are some things that could be done into the future that are not an emergency. It doesn't have to be done this second.

Social Security is probably more solvent than a whole bunch of businesses and agencies of government. To try to throw Social Security into the mix at this time is a big mistake. I believe, Mr. Speaker, it's being done because people who have been wanting to change it for decades and decades and decades want to create the idea of a crisis and then use that crisis to get Members to vote for something that is not well considered.

I insist on any changes to Social Security being well considered. I insist that there be a full-fledged debate on Social Security, not this fiscal mess that we're working through right now. But let Social Security be considered on its own freestanding basis, and if changes need to be made, we make them. But just to sort of argue that in order to solve this fiscal crisis that we're facing with these ending deadlines, these expiring deadlines, because of that we've got to deal with Social Security, Mr. Speaker, I think the American people should reject that idea.

I have brought this issue to people who say, Well, what are we going to do about Social Security? I say, Well,

we're going to continue to have Social Security. Well, we've got to change it. We have the fiscal crisis coming up, don't we have to change Social Security? No, we don't. It doesn't add to the deficit. In fact, if any changes need to be made to it, they need to be on their own, freestanding.

Social Security is one of the greatest programs this country has ever produced. It helps literally millions and millions of senior citizens and people on disability and people who receive survivor benefits. It's a great program, and we should continue to support that program. We don't need to mess with it. When we do want to reform it, it needs to be something that will preserve benefits for people and allows the program to continue. It's a solid program, and it doesn't need to be in these budget entanglements. I hope Americans really get the facts.

Some people say, Well, okay, you're right, Social Security doesn't add to the deficit, but let's talk about it anyway. Okay. Well, let's talk about it for a minute anyway even though it shouldn't be considered. Here's what could be said, Mr. Speaker, by someone who wants to defend the excellent program known as Social Security.

They might say, Well, shouldn't we raise the retirement age? Again, it's an irrelevant conversation to this problem. But if they want to go down that road you can tell them, Look, we don't need to raise the retirement age because, firstly, people who are running jackhammers or people who are on their feet for their whole working life—nurses, firefighters, people who really use their bodies to earn a living—it's just not fair to them when you say we're going to raise the retirement age. If you've been a nurse picking up patients and walking, walking, walking for 30, 40 years, now all of a sudden they tell you, yeah, you used to be able to retire at 65, but we're going to move it to 70, that's just not fair to them. If you're just a white collar worker, that might be a little different, but the truth is it's going to be a big rule that everybody has to abide by, and it's not fair to a number of people, so we're against it.

Here's another reason—even the more important reason—why messing with Social Security that way is the wrong thing to do:

As you know, Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years we've seen our 401(k)s go to what? 201(k)s. We've seen American savings rates go down. We used to talk about a three-legged stool when it came to retirement: one, Social Security; two, the money you save yourself; three, the money you get from your job.

The money that we get from our jobs, we have seen pensions, guaranteed pensions become almost a thing of the past. Some people still have them—God bless them—but most workers are now having to bear the risk of their own retirement through a 401(k) plan. If the market has been down, as it has been,

people's retirement savings—or at least one-third of what they were counting on—is diminished in a very significant way.

The other thing, private savings have gone down. A few years ago before the financial crisis hit in 2006 we had a savings rate of negative 2 percent, which meant people were not saving. So here we are when we're having one of the largest age cohorts in American history moving into their golden years, when they're expecting to retire, their 401(k) is a 201(k) and their pension from their own personal savings has gone down, and now we're going to tell them, your Social Security, you can't really count on that anymore. This is a problem.

We have a problem with retirement in America today. People aren't ready for it. This is the wrong time to take that one solid leg on what we used to call a three-legged stool and start sawing on it and making it less strong than it was before. The fact is, raising the retirement age means lessening benefits for people—people who need it, many of them who have been working hard at jobs all their lives—and it's wrong to do.

As I said before, Mr. Speaker, as we talk about this fiscal entanglement, these expiring deadlines that we're coming up on right now, Social Security shouldn't be part of the conversation. Anybody who brings up Social Security in this conversation ought to be asked why they're bringing up things that are irrelevant to resolving these expiring deadlines that are coming up between now and the end of the year. Why do they want to bring up stuff that doesn't have to do with these expiring deadlines? If it doesn't have to do with sequestration and it doesn't have to do with the 2001/2003 tax cuts that are expiring, then what are we discussing it for? It's a distraction from what we should be devoting our time to.

□ 1440

Now, Mr. Speaker, you're also going to have people who like to use the term "entitlement." I resent the term "entitlement" because entitlement kind of suggests that, well, this is just something we're giving to you. No, this is an earned benefit, Social Security, and it should not be referred to as an entitlement.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that people begin to defend Social Security and say, Look, don't call my Social Security an entitlement. I've worked my whole life for this, and I'm not about to just say it's some sort of entitlement, that it's some sort of a thing that somebody's handing to me.

I just want to say that I think people need to defend Social Security. They need to stand up for it. They need to explain that it's not part of this fiscal mess that we're in. It's not part of the expiring deadlines that we're seeing happening right now, and we should

not deal with it here. They should defend it by saying that people's retirement security has significantly diminished over the last number of years, and now is not the time to start cutting benefits to Social Security. And more than that, we should make it clear that Social Security is the best program, perhaps one of the best programs our government has ever come up with. We're going to get more into the expiring deadlines that we see coming up in the next few weeks.

But before I say another word, Mr. Speaker, I want to yield to my good friend from the great State of Texas, SHEILA JACKSON LEE, a stalwart member of the Progressive Caucus. She is totally reliable and can be counted on to stand up for the American working people.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. I thank the distinguished gentleman. And, of course, who could help but listen to that very potent message. And we are better for the fact that you and the distinguished gentleman from Arizona have come together again to—I call it standing in the gap and reinforcing to individuals who have never walked these Halls.

The thing I want to just reinforce very briefly is how much all of us who have the privilege of walking these august Halls, sometimes on occasion looking at these ornate murals and recognizing the historic features and the history of this body, the largest democracy but the longest democracy, extending democracy in the world, that is the United States of America. And for this place called the House of Representatives, this honored place to be called the people's House is for the very reason that we are the defenders. We are those who will stand in the gap. We will be there when others cannot and when others' voices cannot be heard.

So let me give you a picture of America because, for some reason, if we are not tied to the latest social media or maybe to our favorite cable stations, we can't imagine what happens across America, from California to New York, from the furthest State going to the North to our southern friends, including the great State of Texas.

Every morning, every morning some family, some single mother, some single dad, some mother and father rise at 4:00 or 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning. And on some tables, there may be more than one would expect for breakfast; on some tables, there is no breakfast. They rush to prepare for the day's work. They rush sometimes to get their children to schools that are far beyond bus stops. And the reason why I say that is many school districts have even cut out school buses. So that means that these hardworking Americans have to rush and get their children to school. And they go off to jobs that are 8, 10, 12 hours long, where they work all day. And maybe they had someone—a grandmother or someone—pick up the child, but maybe they did

not, and, therefore, they have to either have extended public care or wind up picking up those children. But what I will say to you is that they toil and work every day.

So this fiscal deadline—deadline—is very serious to the Progressive Caucus and those of us who really believe that we would not be the patriots that we claim to be if we did not recognize the millions of Americans—with great humor, people were making jokes to the gentleman from Minnesota about the Powerball last night and how many people had tried to sign up for it—not out of greed. When they interviewed people, they were talking about charity and their friends and helping Mama get a better house and helping themselves get a better house.

And something was said in our discussions today that the people who are trying to get into the middle class are the ones that we should be able to say to them, Your desires, the service you have given to your country, the work you do when you get up in those early mornings—some of them are park attendants. Some of them are working in bus barns. They may not even be bus drivers or they may not be conductors. They may be working around. They may be working in the great work that we could not survive, we call it Departments of Sanitation, the same group of men at that time that Martin King went to Memphis for.

And the reason why I call out what it's like every morning before dawn when people get up and go to work is that they don't have time to do social media. They don't know when we are in negotiations about the fiscal deadline, but they're hoping someone is here standing in the gap.

And Social Security is earned. It is earned by these people, whether they're in coal mines, as I said, whether they're sweeping streets, whether they are children who are disabled, whether they are children of the deceased who the only thing that kept them going or is keeping them going is a Social Security death benefit that they got from their deceased parent.

So it is important as we look to what we will be doing is that we understand that it is not those of us in this place that we speak of. And as we speak of the hardworking middle class, we must put into the mix those individuals that keep the lights on, those individuals that keep the streets clean, those individuals that are assisting those who are at home—our nurses, attendants, and aides—those who are working in daycare centers, those persons who, when a fire in my district burned down a daycare center or something occurs, then you can be sure that there are workers who cannot work.

And let me be clear: Since there was a tragedy in my community, I was not speaking of that specific tragedy. I'm talking about if something stops you from working, something happens to your business and there are workers there, those workers are unemployed,

but they had paid into Social Security. Which brings me to a couple of other points, and I will yield back to the distinguished gentleman.

It is important that we maintain the extension of unemployment benefits because I'm glad to say that I feel a surge in this economy. Things are getting better. We've had some great Thanksgiving sale days, and people went out even on Thanksgiving Day. Then we had Black Friday and then Cyber Monday. And everybody is telling us that things are on the move.

But it is important to recognize that the country churns if you keep the important safety nets of Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security. And that must be what we do. And then to add unemployment, unemployment insurance. You always have to say over and over again, the word "insurance" means that you've gotten some insurance to get you through a rainy day. It's not a handout. It's a hand up. But it is insurance, and you've earned it because you have worked and you are now unemployed and you are looking for work. So the unemployment insurance is to be something that we need to count as a safety net and one that is of great need.

Now let me finish by trying to, again, reemphasize the importance of bipartisanship. And progressives are those who recognize what a great country this is, and we are progressive by the nature of some of the issues that we support. But we do not have a wall in front of our face and say that we don't believe in bipartisanship or we haven't joined with some of our colleagues to make a difference for America.

I truly believe that every set of policies have, maybe, relevancy as their past, and some policies—and I'm going to add the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act—have an unending life. But when you come to fiscal policy, because the economy churns and it goes in cycles, sometimes we're up, and sometimes we're down.

Tax cuts of the nineties and earlier than the nineties with President Bush, before President Clinton and then thereafter with President Bush who came after President Clinton—sometimes economic policies say it's time for a rest; and those tax cuts, the top 1 and 2 percent, it is time for a rest.

□ 1450

To be able to shore up, to say to every American that you will get a tax cut for \$250,000 of your income, which includes 97 percent of small businesses is a reasoned response to the changing economy. The protection of the safety net is a reasoned response to the changing economy. And the recognition of the importance of Social Security, the recognition of the importance of Medicare and Medicaid, and the recognition of the importance that if you're unemployed of extending the unemployment, responds to the people who don't get their news on a regular streaming basis. They don't know

what's going on up here. They're counting on us to stand in the gap and to make a difference in their lives. Some of them are working and some are on assistance, but they're not defined by anything except that they are Americans that love their country.

I hope as we go into 2013 and as we have the privilege of being sworn in again, that we will look at issues like a wealth tax, that we will look at issues that address equalizing the impoverished in this Nation, most of them children. We're not there yet, but I think that we would be even a greater country—we're a great country and the greatest country in the world—if we recognize that there is value to lifting all boats, that there is value to saying that you're on hard rubble times, and this great country wants to lift the boat so that any children that you are raising have the equal opportunity to achieve their greatness.

To the gentleman of Minnesota and the cochair of the Progressive Caucus, let me thank you for your wisdom and your sense of—I think the characterization that I've heard you state in many different instances and the characterization that I made today. We have an obligation to the people whose daily life is simply about trying to make it to the next day. I hope this Congress and I hope this process of negotiations and media debate and discussion don't ignore the fact that sometimes you've got to make sure that you respond to those who are now busily filling in those 12 hours of work, and the only thing they're looking forward to is whether they will have enough for a dinner at home and to pick up those children and get ready for the next day. As Americans, many of whom have served their Nation, I feel an obligation to make sure that we stand in the gap on their behalf.

I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank the gentleman for his leadership.

Mr. ELLISON. I thank the gentlelady for joining me. If you have the time, we'd love to hear more from you.

Let me just say today that we're members of the Progressive Caucus talking about the deal for all. First of all, we are laying out some of our values, but also talking about some things that are really problems in this debate.

I mentioned before and you mentioned, as well, Social Security is not contributing to the deficit. Social Security is solvent through 2037. Social Security may need attention, but to try to fix it in the midst of this debate is not the right thing. Again, I'm speaking only for myself. People who are demanding that we reform Social Security right now are people who want us to put attention on something that is other than the problem, and then I have to wonder why that is. Does it have something to do with the fact that ever since Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the legislation, that there have been some that don't like it. Why? Because they don't think the

proper role of government is to have a program administered through the government that looks out for the aged, the disabled, the vulnerable. They don't think the government should do that. They think it's all about 100 percent individual initiative, and they don't believe the government has a role or responsibility to administer a program to make sure the aged and the sick and those who are the children of those people who may have died should have some basic sustenance.

We disagree philosophically and fundamentally, but some folks—there is a concept out there known as the “shock doctrine.” A woman named Naomi Klein wrote a very interesting book. Sometimes you will have folks who will create a crisis. They want there to be a crisis because within the context of the crisis, the parties to the bargaining will be willing to do things that in the absence of a crisis they would never agree to. So I believe that these expiring deadlines don't have to be a crisis, but they've been created to be one. We even use words that invoke imagery of a crisis, and that's why we now talk about this thing as to what it really is, which is expiring deadlines.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. If the gentleman will yield for a moment.

Mr. ELLISON. I yield to the gentlewoman.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. The Congressional Budget Office even indicated that there is no such thing as a “cliff.” There will be expiring deadlines that will allow deliberative thought. That's what you're talking about. Let's have deliberative thought. When you act and your hair is on fire or you're running out of a burning building, you will take any water hose you can find; and that may not be the good water hose that will keep us going.

I just wanted to mention my late colleague, Mickey Leland. This is his birthday this week. It was November 27. I just wanted to mention it on the floor of the House. Congressman Mickey Leland served in this Congress in the late 1970s until 1989, when he died in Ethiopia trying to feed the starving Ethiopians who had been impacted by the drought. At the same time, he helped cochair the Hunger Select Committee because at that timeframe there was an effort to try to extinguish hunger in America and hunger in the world. Lo and behold, here we are in 2012, and I bet we can have a vigorous debate on hunger that still exists in this country.

When we put our hair on fire, then we start looking and digging deep and we start ignoring the peace dividend and resources that we could get from that, from an expedited withdrawal for our hardworking military that are in far-away places such as Afghanistan. The point is that then we begin to do things like look at the minimal subsistence that people get in order to survive. Social Security is a different line of funding; but as you well know, I mentioned

that sometimes you get it on disability and sometimes you get Social Security as a death benefit for a deceased parent that keeps those children going. Then you have people who get payments because they are ill or have no way of working or have children, need assistance; and people start looking at that.

We need to be deliberative in our attempt to do the things that we want to do in a bipartisan way, which is reduce the deficit, to make sure we tighten our belt and act accordingly to churn this economy, and we're fair in our tax policies. My friends, we can do all that, but let us not do that with hysteria that starts looking at the basic safety net of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. As my friend said, Social Security is 2037 and Medicare is 2024. That means your house doesn't have to be on fire. You don't have to get a skinny hose that is just drip, drip, dripping, and then you just burn up.

You can be deliberative. We can deal with this immediate fiscal issue of deadlines with tax issues and begin to build on what the revenues will be.

Mr. ELLISON. The gentlelady correctly mentioned Medicare, because in this whole fiscal situation, they keep on throwing out Social Security and Medicare entitlement reform, which is what they want so bad. Again, we've clearly shown Social Security has no place in this debate.

Let's talk about Medicare for a moment. In the Affordable Care Act, the so-called ObamaCare, which I used to not want to call it that, but now I do because Obama does care. We call it ObamaCare because the Republicans thought they could use it as an insult, but actually it's kind of a badge of honor.

The Affordable Care Act, with the bill we passed, is estimated to save about \$500 billion over the next 10 years. They say we've got to reform Medicare. There may be reforms to Medicare that are important to do, but we already started that process with the Affordable Care Act by reducing extra subsidies paid to Medicare Advantage plans. They said they were going to do it for cheaper, and they did it for more. Now we're saying we're going to hold you to your word.

□ 1500

We used that savings to close the doughnut hole, to make reductions in the rate of growth and provider payments, in efforts to make sure that Medicare programs were more efficient, and to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse.

Medicare will be reformed as we reform health care and as we move away from this fee for service, where it's this much for this test, this much for that test, then some folks run a bunch of tests, and you get this huge bill. We are now moving from that fee-for-service model to a model that goes on, Are you improving the health of your patients? There are a lot more doctors nowadays, particularly at the Mayo

Clinic in Minnesota, who are on salary so that the doctors don't have to worry about the tests, they just have to worry about health. They order the tests that you need, but they don't order the ones that you don't.

So my point is that we are already implementing ways to maintain and control costs in Medicare that do not deprive seniors of good medical care. That's the key. Medicare—I'm sorry—is going to cost more in the future because we have a lot of people born between 1945 and 1960 who are now getting into older years. Everybody knows as you get older you may need to go to the doctor more, and we have more folks who are in that age group, so that's the way it is. It does make sense to try to control costs, but the proposals have been to give seniors a coupon that the Congressional Budget Office admits is going to cost them \$6,000 a year more than it does now and to give Medicaid a block grant program, which we know will likely be reduced.

What's the point?

They keep on saying, "entitlement reform," "entitlement reform." Social Security is fine for now, and it will be into the future with just a few tweaks that will not hurt beneficiaries. As for Medicare, we are reforming it and making it more solvent. We literally extended the life of the program up through 2024. Republicans during the campaign attacked President Obama for this, and yet we extended the life of the program. If entitlement reform were wrapped up in the expiring deadlines and the sequestration, I would say, yes, we have to talk about that now, but it isn't. Why are we doing that? It's because people never liked the program and don't believe the proper role of government is to help people. So we just disagree. I just wish folks would be a little more transparent in the positions that they take.

I am very fortunate to have been joined by the gentlelady from Illinois, JAN SCHAKOWSKY, and I yield to the gentlelady.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I want to thank you so much, Congressman ELLISON, for pulling this together, because we are in the midst of an incredibly important debate about how to deal with all of these fiscal issues. Mainly, to me, it's about who shall pay, not about what are the dollar figures and how do we take a little bit from this and that. It's about who exactly in our society is going to be responsible.

I want to focus on the entitlements. In addition to some of our Republican colleagues—I'm talking mainly about the CEOs now, the fix-the-debt group, who say quite piously, by the way, and self-righteously that we have to cut entitlements. In listening to them, you would think that the United States of America is poorer today than it was 50 years ago when Medicare and Medicaid became part of our social contract, or 70 years ago when we created Social Security. Now they say it's unsustainable. Is it because the United

States of America is actually poorer today than we were then?

I wanted to quote from something in The Washington Post, an article that Ezra Klein wrote, entitled, "Why Rich Guys Want to Raise the Retirement Age":

The first point worth making here is that the country's economy has grown 15-fold since Social Security was passed into law. One of the things the richest society the world has ever known can buy is a decent retirement for people who don't have jobs they love and who don't want to work forever.

I think that's right. It's like—really?—we can't afford it? This is one of the things that we absolutely have to cut.

I wanted to just make a point about some of these guys, these 71 CEOs who are in the fix-the-debt group who wrote this letter about the things that need to be done, some of which included the cuts.

Mr. ELLISON. Will the gentlelady yield?

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. ELLISON. Is not having to bail them out on that list?

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Bailing them out, that was then. Get over it. Of course they got a lot of money from the taxpayers. Why do you keep bringing that up, Mr. ELLISON? That was just a fine thing to do.

But here. The 71 fix-the-debt CEOs, who lead publicly held companies, have amassed an average of \$9 million in their own company retirement funds. A dozen have more than \$20 million in their accounts. So, if each of them converted his assets to an annuity when he turned 65, he would receive a monthly check of at least \$110,000 for life. Now, one of those fellows, Dave Cote, whom I know because I served with him on the Simpson-Bowles commission—and he's a longtime advocate of Social Security cuts—has a \$78 million nest egg. That's enough to provide a \$428,000 check every month after he turns 65 years old. Since the average monthly Social Security benefit is \$1,230, Dave Cote would receive a retirement income every month—by the way, this doesn't count his Social Security—of as much as 348 Social Security beneficiaries. This is a guy saying that those 348 people, who are together going to get as much as he gets, ought to see those Social Security benefits cut.

I just think it's outrageous because this is about who we are. Really? We can't afford today the kind of Medicare benefits that we had 50 years ago when Medicare went in or 70 years ago?

Here is the other thing. One of the arguments that is used is that life expectancy has gone up. That's true for some of us but not for all of us. Since 1977, the life expectancy of male workers retiring at age 65 has risen 6 years in the top half of the income distribution, but if you're in the bottom half of the income distribution, then you just gained 1.3 years. The fact of the matter

is, if you are a poor woman in the United States of America, you have actually lost ground in terms of longevity in this country. So it is just simply a myth to say that. Averages can be deceiving, right? You get a basketball player, and you average him to 6-foot tall even though one is 7'2" or whatever. That's ridiculous. People are actually losing life expectancy.

The truth of the matter is, while the Social Security retirement age is now about 67, you can retire early at 62, which is the earliest the law allows. You lose some benefits, but that is when most people retire. Now, these are not slackers. These aren't people who just now want to lie around at home and eat bonbons. These are people who pretty much can't wait until their full benefits kick in because they've been working really tough jobs, long hours, who've been on their feet, flipping patients in beds, working with their hands. It is not easy. So now what? Are these people supposed to go out and all find jobs—what jobs? Where are those jobs?—in order to wait even longer for them to get their Social Security benefits?

Frankly, I'm personally pretty resentful that some of the very richest people in our country, who are now offering advice on how we can save money and fix the debt, are offering up senior citizens, half of whom make \$22,000 or less per year.

□ 1510

Those seniors who make \$85,000 or more a year are already paying more for their Medicare benefits. We are already means testing Medicare benefits. A lot of people don't know that. So who are the rich seniors who are supposed to pay more? Who are the seniors who are living longer? Well, you know, Dave Cote and the other CEOs, they're doing just fine. They may want to work forever. God love them. God bless them. Let them do it and retire with tens of thousands of dollars every single month. And their advice is cut the rest of the people. That's not right.

Mr. ELLISON. It's not right.

You know, here's the reality. In this whole debate, we want to talk about how to deal with these expiring matters like the 2001 and 2003 taxes and the sequestration. They have a time limit on them, and we in Congress are here now to address these issues. But does it strike you funny that they keep on talking about stuff and want to drag it into this debate that doesn't have anything to do with sequestration or these expiring tax matters? Why do they keep talking about Social Security? Why do they want to keep talking about raising the age or somehow cutting benefits for Medicare and Medicaid? I mean, one needs to ask the question, if these are problems and they need to be solved, why do they have to be solved in this very limited window of time when there are other things that, in fact, are expiring?

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Well, first of all, I agree with you because I think what

I'm hearing you say is let's put those—Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid—in a separate basket and deal with them at another time. Social Security should not be even on a different table. It should be in a different room, because Social Security has a big surplus in the trust fund and hasn't contributed one thin dime to any deficit.

Medicare and Medicaid, I'm all for making those programs more efficient. We can find savings in those programs. But let's remember, it occurred to me that Democrats, through ObamaCare, actually found—does this number sound familiar?—\$716 billion worth of savings in Medicare that made the program more efficient but didn't touch benefits.

Mr. ELLISON. Right.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. We actually improved Medicare by finding savings.

It seems to me that number came up in the election that Democrats were somehow stealing from Medicare, implying to senior citizens that their programs were being eroded when, in fact, their programs were being improved and Medicare was made more efficient. So now that the election is over, they're back to saying we've got to cut these entitlement programs; they're unsustainable. We just can't make it anymore. We're too poor a country. We can't aspire to make sure that people with disabilities and old people are going to have access to health care. We can't do it anymore. That was so 20th century. We're done with that.

I mean, it's really outrageous, the hypocrisy of criticizing us for making the programs more cost effective, cost less, but keep benefits, and now hitting us over the head with that and now saying, Oh, no, never mind, we have to go back and cut those programs.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, you know, I appreciate the gentlelady in revealing really the real deal here. The President, to his credit, is trying to talk to broad cross sections of Americans. He's had labor and progressive groups join him, and then the CEOs come in. And it's funny, when the CEOs come in, and I'm not talking about everyone, but this letter where they're telling us we've got to have austerity, we've got to lower people's expectations as to what people expect.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Other people. Not them, other people.

Mr. ELLISON. Other people. They are extremely well taken care of, and they come from companies, several of them, that got direct benefits from the government. And now all of a sudden, you know, everybody else has to tighten their belt. It's shocking, actually. And if there's anything funny about it, it is that they don't get the irony of what they're doing.

I think the American people should know that whenever you see CEOs from polluting industries, from financial services industries, from industries that have gotten a lot of help and benefit from the government talking about how other people should tighten their

belt and have to lower expectations, this should be met with extreme displeasure.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Here's Lloyd Blankfein, and he's just one example, the CEO of Goldman Sachs, and part of what I really resent about it is he doesn't even know what he's talking about. He says:

You can look at the history of these things, and Social Security wasn't devised to be a system that supported you for a 30-year retirement after a 25-year career.

Well, first of all, the average beneficiary collects about 16 years, so a 30-year retirement after 25 years?

Mr. ELLISON. He must be talking about himself.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I don't know what he's talking about.

So there will be things. Maybe the retirement age has to be changed, maybe some of the benefits have to be affected, maybe some of the inflation estimates have to be revised, but, in general, entitlements have to be slowed down and contained.

Now, you know, this is a guy who's a pretty entitled fellow. And the idea of him pointing to these people who, you know, half of whom make less than \$22,000 doesn't sit well with me and, I don't think, most Americans. It's not just that I think; we've asked most Americans.

And, by the way, even people who voted for Mitt Romney said, Do not cut my Social Security and Medicare benefits. They don't want that. And it's not because they're stupid or greedy, as Alan Simpson would like to make them out to be. It's because, in this country, retiring with some level of security is something that people who've worked all their lives deserve in this country and something that should be a priority.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, let me quote Mr. Blankfein of Goldman Sachs. He says:

You're going to have to do something, undoubtedly, to lower people's expectations of what they're going to get, the entitlements, and what people think they're going to get because you're not going to get it.

That's what he said. Now, this gentleman is the CEO of a firm that received tens of billions of dollars—

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Tens of billions.

Mr. ELLISON. Tens of billions of dollars from direct money and indirect money through access to the Fed at lower rates, and now has the audacity—is the only word you can use—to start talking about how somebody who is making \$22,000 a year has to figure out what they're going to do.

Here's the thing. I remember 2008 very well. I remember people's 401(k)s taking massive hits directly related to the behavior of large banks. So it used to be that you had money you saved, money you saved on the job and then Social Security. Two sources of your retirement income are now dwindling in part because of the behavior of these banks, and one of the leaders of one of the biggest ones is talking about other folks having to get by on less.

My question is: What happened to the basic concept of civic virtue? I mean,

what happened to the basic idea that, yes, I may be a CEO and, yes, I have an obligation to my shareholders, but I also have an obligation to the community that has fed my business and I've got an obligation to the United States that has made it possible for me to do well.

□ 1520

What happened to the basic idea that we're sort of in this thing together?

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Well, frankly, I think that idea is alive and well and was reflected in the elections on November 6—

Mr. ELLISON. I agree.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. That the idea that we are all in this together, that we do have some responsibility. And I want to tell you that there isn't a person that goes to synagogue or church or a mosque or a temple that doesn't learn about, we are our brother's and our sister's keepers, we do feed the hungry and take care of the poor, that we have an obligation to do that. So in our private lives, and in our faith lives, we're taught that as well.

I mean, it's good economics, but it's also the right thing to do. And I also think it's a very American kind of ideal, and that, at the end of the day, that most people agree with that.

When I say under \$22,000, that's income. The average Social Security benefit is far below that. And so we're talking about very little, very little money to provide not a whole lot of security, but some security.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, I'd just like to advise the gentlelady that we've got about 3 more minutes in our hour, and I just wanted to encourage you to think about some of your essential points that you may want to repeat for the Speaker.

But I just wanted to say that, look, you know, the Progressive Caucus—we're here with the Progressive message—is thinking about these fiscal deadlines that this country is facing. We do believe that we should try to come up with a fair deal in anticipation of sequestration and the expiration of deadlines on some taxes.

We believe that the top 2 percent of the income scale should have to pay more. We believe that the Defense Department, which has seen its budget double since 2001, should have to take cuts.

We believe we have to invest in jobs and get people back to work. And we believe we should protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Those are some takeaways that I think are very important.

We do believe in negotiating. We believe that it's important to do so. We've already given up \$1.5 trillion in the last term. People talk about what's on the table, what's off the table—\$1.5 trillion should be on the table as cuts that have already taken place.

I'd just like to leave the gentlelady the remaining time to summarize.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. You have the sign, "The Progressive Message," and I

am a proud member of the Progressive Caucus. But I believe that if you presented what you just said to the American people, in general, that the vast majority agree with that because it's fair. That's all.

We are willing to find cuts, and as you pointed out, we've already done that. That's already been done with \$1.5 trillion in cuts. But fairness means not just that starting from scratch, we cut everybody across the board, but we do it in a humane and fair and sensible way in our country. And I think the Progressive message is the American message, the one that we're hearing from the American people.

So I thank you so much for your leadership. And going forward, I hope we can help to mobilize, along with the President, mobilize people to support these ideas.

Mr. ELLISON. The gentlelady from Illinois has the last word from "The Progressive Message."

I yield back the balance of my time.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 1998. An act to obtain an unqualified audit opinion, and improve financial accountability and management at the Department of Homeland Security; to the Committee on Homeland Security; In addition to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

BILLS PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported that on November 28, 2012, she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bills.

H.R. 6063. To amend title 18, United States Code, with respect to child pornography and child exploitation offenses.

H.R. 6570. To amend the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 to consolidate certain CBO reporting requirements.

H.R. 2453. To require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of Mark Twain.

H.R. 6118. To amend section 353 of the Public Health Service Act with respect to suspension, revocation, and limitation of laboratory certification.

H.R. 6131. To extend the Undertaking Spam, Spyware, And Fraud Enforcement With Enforcers beyond Borders Act of 2006, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 23 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until to-

morrow, Friday, November 30, 2012, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

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

8494. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — 1,4-Dimethylnaphthalene; Amendment to an Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2011-1029; FRL-9368-2] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

8495. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Dinotefuran; Pesticide Tolerances [EPA-HQ-OPP-2012-0060; FRL-9365-1] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

8496. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Flonicamid; Pesticide Tolerances [EPA-HQ-OPP-2011-0985; FRL-9368-7] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

8497. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Delaware; Requirements for Prevention of Significant Deterioration and Nonattainment New Source Review; Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}) [EPA-R03-OAR-2012-0381; FRL-9747-9] received November 2, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8498. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Tennessee; Regional Haze State Implementation Plan; Best Available Retrofit Technology Requirements for Eastman Chemical Company [EPA-R04-OAR-2009-0786; FRL-9752-5] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8499. A letter from the Chief of Staff, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Amendment of the Amateur Service Rules Governing Qualifying Examination Systems and Other Matters; Amendment of Part 97 of the Commission's Amateur Service Rules to Give Permanent Credit for Examination Elements Passes; Amendment of Part 97 of the Commission's Rules to Facilitate Use in the Amateur Radio Service of Single Slot Time Division Multiple Access Telephony and Data Emissions; Request for Temporary Waiver; Amendment of the Amateur Service Rules Governing Vanity and Club Station Call Signs [WT Docket No.: 12-283] [WT Docket No.: 09-209] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8500. A letter from the Deputy Bureau Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Amendment of Part 90 of the Commission's Rules; Implementing a Nationwide, Broadband Interoperable Public Safety Network in the 700 MHz Band; Service Rules for

the 698-746, 747-762 and 777-792 MHz Bands [WP Docket No.: 07-100] [PS Docket No.: 06-229] [WT Docket No.: 06-150] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8501. A letter from the Chief, PSHSB, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Implementing Public Safety Broadband Provisions of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012; Implementing a Nationwide, Broadband, Interoperable Public Safety Network in the 700 MHz Band; Service Rules for the 698-746, 747-762 and 777-792 MHz Bands [PS Docket No.: 12-94] [PS Docket No.: 06-229] [WT Docket No.: 06-150] received November 14, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8502. A letter from the Chief of Staff, Wireless Communications Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Amendment of Part 90 of the Commission's Rules to Permit Terrestrial Trunked Radio (TETRA) Technology; Request by the TETRA Association for Waiver of Sections 90.209, 90.210 and 2.1043 of the Commission's Rules [WT Docket No.: 11-69] [ET Docket No.: 09-234] received October 31, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8503. A letter from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Basic Service Tier Encryption; Compatibility Between Cable Systems and Consumer Electronics Equipment; Inter Mountain Cable Inc.'s Request for Waiver of Section 76.630(a) of the Commission's Rules; RCN Telecom Services, Inc.'s, Request for Waiver of Section 76.630(a) of the Commission's Rules; Coaxial Cable TV's Request for Waiver of Section 76.630(a) of the Commission's Rules; Mikrotec CATV LLC's Request for Waiver of Section 76.630(a) of the Commission's Rules [MB Docket No.: 11-169] [PP Docket No.: 00-67] (CSR-8483-Z) (CSR-8525-Z) (CSR-8334-Z) (CSR-8528-Z) received November 21, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8504. A letter from the General Counsel, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Electricity Market Transparency Provisions of Section 220 of the Federal Power Act [Docket No.: RM10-12-000; Order No. 768] received November 16, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8505. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 12-56, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

8506. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 12-0C, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(5)(e) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

8507. A letter from the Acting Secretary, Department of Commerce, transmitting Periodic Report on the National Emergency Caused by the Lapse of the Export Administration Act of 1979 for February 26, 2012 — August 25, 2012; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

8508. A letter from the Director, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, transmitting the semiannual report on the activities of the Office of Inspector General for the period April 1, 2012 to September 30, 2012; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

8509. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Transportation, transmitting the annual report under the Federal Managers'