

challenge our own views of the importance of cities.

These may be tough conversations, but they are absolutely necessary that we have to take on as a Nation. We cannot sit idly by and pretend that Detroit won't matter and that it won't affect us and wait for the next Detroit to happen. It is important for our Nation, it is important for our people, it is important for our competitiveness, it is important for our economy, it is important that we be a competitive place. And the only way we do that is with vital and rich growing communities, and we have to get places like Detroit and Flint and Saginaw and Pontiac and other places that are important to this economy back on that trajectory.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT AND JOBS

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to the recent rising unacceptable unemployment numbers in some regions of our Nation. The fact is Republicans control this House, and they are not only doing nothing to create jobs in America, they are actually creating more unemployment.

In my home State of Ohio, the unemployment rate jumped up to 7.2 percent. In the city of Cleveland, the unemployment rate rose from 9 percent to 10.1 percent over the past month. In the city of Lorain, unemployment dramatically rose from 8.7 to 10.6 percent. In the city of Toledo, we saw an increase in unemployment from 8.7 to 9.3 percent.

Nationally, the unemployment rate remains stalled, stuck, at 7.6 percent. But in too many neighborhoods across our country unemployment is a daily reality.

When you incorporate labor underutilization, the real national unemployment rate is actually 14.3 percent. There are currently 11.8 million, nearly 12 million, unemployed people in this country—4.3 million people have been jobless for 27 weeks or more and are considered long-term unemployed.

New Federal Government employment has declined by 65,000 persons over the past 12 months—65,000 more people spit out.

The unemployment rate for the construction industry is 9.8 percent. Manufacturing employment has declined in the past 4 straight months.

Do those job numbers sound like an economic recovery to you? What is the Republican response to these dubious unemployment and jobs numbers? Block the President.

So what do they do? Let's repeal the Affordable Care Act 38 times. And they've tried again and again to do that.

Let's not appoint budget conferees so we can negotiate a budget deal that puts people to work and strengthens the middle class. No. Sequestration is

arguably the primary driver of these poor job numbers. So, let's ignore the harmful effects of sequestration. The Congressional Budget Office estimates just the unemployment resulting from sequestration costs our economy an additional 1.5 percent in lost economic growth.

Remember when the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that sequestration would reduce economic growth and cost about 750,000 jobs? Well, they were right. We are seeing the effect of that today. The sequester was the largest cause of the negative growth numbers in the fourth quarter of last year.

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the economy is growing far slower than expected, despite the fact that personal consumption and business inventory spending has increased recently. You would think that if consumer and business spending is up, we would see strong GDP growth, given that our economy is based on consumer spending.

Unfortunately, this is where the sequester and the Republican policy of cut and run, cut and run, cut and run comes into play. Government spending has declined in 11 of the last 13 quarters since the first quarter of 2010.

We may have seen robust growth if we took a sensible, long-term approach to deficit reduction instead of using the Republican shortsighted sequester and steep unfair budget cuts. They are even kicking thousands of mentally ill citizens out of their assisted housing—thousands—over 27,000 people who can't make it on their own being kicked out of their humble shelters across this country.

With the Republicans refusing to replace their mindless sequester, 600,000 civilian defense workers are currently being furloughed. The economic impact of these defense furloughs will be the loss of over an estimated \$2 trillion for our economy; just in Ohio 22,000 furloughs in the civilian defense sector. The policies of this Republican House are hampering robust economic growth across our country.

The Federal Reserve agrees with what I am saying. In a recent hearing the chair of the Fed said, "the economic recovery has continued at a moderate pace in recent quarters despite the strong headwinds created by Federal fiscal policy."

Unfortunately, Republicans will likely continue to refuse to compromise and focus on slowing the economy even further. Congress has already cut spending by \$2.5 trillion. That has real impacts on job creation. Discretionary spending is at its lowest level in 45 years. The Federal deficit is projected to be at its lowest level in recent memory. And the Treasury has actually even recently made payments on the national debt.

We need a jobs bill here, not more reckless cuts. The President has a plan; the Republicans don't. I would urge my Republican colleagues, bring to the

floor the President's jobs agenda. Let's show America which party is committed to job creation in this country, not more stalling.

#### UPDATE ON PUERTO RICO'S POLITICAL STATUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. PIERLUISI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, as we approach the birthday of the late Dr. Jose Celso Barbosa, the father of the statehood movement in Puerto Rico, I rise to update my colleagues on the progress that has been made to resolve the territory's political status.

Last November, Puerto Rico held a referendum. As I described in a floor speech the following week, the results show that a majority of the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico do not support the current territory status, a supermajority favor statehood among the three alternative options, and more voters want statehood than any other option, including the current status. These results are now part of the historical record, and they cannot be dismissed or diminished by those who find them inconvenient.

Now that American citizens living in an American territory have informed their national government, in a free and fair vote, that they do not consent to a political status that deprives them of the most basic democratic rights, it is incumbent upon the Federal Government to take appropriate action in response. For the President and Congress to do otherwise would be to contravene the principles that have made this country a light to the world.

Today, I can report that positive steps have been taken. In April, the administration requested an appropriation of \$2.5 million, which would be provided to the Puerto Rico Elections Commission to conduct the first federally-funded status vote in the territory's history, with the specific purpose of resolving this issue. The administration's action was favorably received by Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle, who rarely find common ground. Earlier this month, thanks to the leadership of Congressmen WOLF, FATTAH, and SERRANO, that funding was approved by the Appropriations Committee, confirming that the effort to secure fair treatment for Puerto Rico is not, and should never become, a partisan issue.

The committee's report endorses the conditions proposed by the administration stating that Federal funding will not be obligated until DOJ has certified that the ballot and voter education materials are compatible with U.S. laws and policies, thereby ensuring that the vote will deal with one or more status options that can actually be implemented and that would settle the issue.

I will continue to fight for the approval of this appropriation by the full