women of Virginia Task Force 1, a domestic and international disaster response resource sponsored by the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department.

I was honored to welcome these miracle workers home this past Saturday morning after their 3-week deployment to Nepal.

Virginia Task Force 1, in partnership with USAID, is always at the ready to answer the call when tragedy or natural disaster strikes, either at home or abroad. Nepal was devastated by two major earthquakes, resulting in the loss of over 8,500 lives, and Virginia Task Force 1 was there to help.

With their incredible skill and teamwork, they were able to rescue a 15-year-old boy trapped in the rubble for 5 days. When the second earthquake hit, they saved a 41-year-old woman who was trapped in a four-story building. They also medically treated countless others.

When they returned home on Saturday morning, they were enthusiastically greeted by their relatives and families. Those families also endure countless hours of worry while their family members and loved ones are halfway around the world in unfamiliar and dangerous circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, the Members of Virginia Task Force 1 are truly fabulous and wonderful ambassadors for the Commonwealth of Virginia and our country, and it is an honor and a privilege to thank them for their courageous service to the people of Nepal and to the work they do every day in our country.

MANDATED FIXED WHEELCHAIR LIFTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SCHWEIKERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Mr. Speaker, I am going to do a budget presentation in a couple of moments, but I wanted to actually come up here and, with my good friend from South Carolina, MICK MULVANEY, talk about a little article that popped up in The Economist last week, and there is the issue.

This place has fairly short memories, but about 2 years ago, there were a handful of us coming here and talking about sort of an esoteric issue, something called—what is it—wheelchair lifts.

For those of us who represent resort areas, I am blessed to represent the community of Scottsdale, a wonderful area. I had one of my resort owners call me, and in a fairly gruff voice, saying: ''David, do you know what the Justice Department is doing to me? I have seven pools and Jacuzzis, and apparently, I have to put permanent fixed wheelchair lifts at every pool and Jacuzzi.''

He said: ''I want to be sensitive and caring to my mobility-challenged guests.''

He went on to tell me the story that for 10 years, he had had a portable wheelchair lift, and it had never been requested. Here we are, 2 years later. He has torn up his landscaping; he has put in the units. Guess what is now happening?

He has called me and told me that now his insurance rates are starting to really bounce up because of unattractive nuisance. The very things MICK MULVANEY predicted, I like to say I predicted 2 years ago, are coming true.

I would like to yield to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. MULVANEY). Tell us the other side of the story of what is going on.

Mr. MULVANEY. Mr. SCHWEIKERT, thank you for the opportunity to talk about this a little bit without the pressures of the 2-minute timer or a 3-minute timer, actually talk about something in detail for a change in this House because it merits the discussion.

My experience with it, Mr. SCHWEIKERT, was exactly the same as yours—they are not exactly the same. I am not from the resort part of South Carolina. Mr. SANFORD and Mr. RICE get that. I am from the more rural inland part of the State; but we have got a lot of freeways and a lot of small businesses operating hotels, a lot of them owned by Asian Americans.

I was approached by a group of Indian American hotel owners last year. These are folks, mom-and-pop operations, that might own one hotel, they might own two. They told me the same story you just told about these pool lifts having to go in.

A lot of them, like your friends with the resorts, had the portable lifts, so if anybody ever asked for help getting into and out of a pool by themselves, they had the ability to do that. Of course, similar to your story, none of them had ever been asked.

The Department of Justice came in and said: You know what, we are going to require you, under the terms of the Americans with Disabilities Act, to put these fixed pool lifts in every single body of water that you have; so if you have a regular size pool, a kiddie pool, and a hot tub, that is three of these fixed lifts.

It was a tremendous burden on these small businesses who, as you mentioned, wanted to help folks who needed help in getting in and out of the pool, but just wanted to do it with a portable machine, as opposed to a standard machine.

□ 1900

They came in, and they said: Look, Mr. MULVANEY, we have seen this act before. This is how we got rid of diving boards. This is why we don't have any diving boards.

Years ago, people said they were an attractive nuisance. Kids were jumping off of them and hurting themselves, so now that entire generation of Americans has grown up without diving boards.

What is going to happen now is that the next generation of Americans is going to grow up without swimming pools at hotels for the exact reason that you have just mentioned.

We spent 40 years getting rid of these things that children could climb up on and jump off of into the pool, and now the Department of Justice has required these hotel owners to come in and put the exact same thing back in.

It is no longer a diving board. Now it is a mechanical chair. But to an 8-year-old, it looks like something to climb up and jump off of. So they were lamenting the fact not only that their business is going to be hurt but that part of the enjoyment of coming to the hotel would be gone and not available to their customers, and that eventually, you would see them start filling in their swimming pools. Unfortunately, I think that is the way that we are moving.

But they also talked about something—and this is to the point of the article that you just mentioned, The Economist from April 25, which is that there was a private right of action in the regulations that came forward. And what this means, to folks who aren't familiar with what that means, is that anybody can sue. In fact, in the United States of America, when anybody can sue, typically, anybody does sue.

The article goes into great length about one very, very energetic plaintiff who filed 529 lawsuits against small-business owners at hotels throughout the southeast. In fact, in one particular period of time, they hit 50 hotels in a row shortly after the regulation became effective so that they could file their lawsuit against the hotel owners.

I will read one of my favorite passages in the article, which is something that should be enlightening for all of us: ''There is evidence that lawyers explicitly target small businesses, which are more likely to pay up without a fight.''

There we go. That is what we have done in the name of helping people whom folks were already trying to help. But in the name of having the government tell small business and large business how to help people, what do we end up with? Essentially a jobs bill for the plaintiff's bar.

Before we started today, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SCHWEIKERT) and I were talking about why we were going to take a few minutes to talk about this.

As my friend from Massachusetts, Barney Frank, said before he left: ''Everybody always says, 'I hate to say I told you so,' but the truth of the matter is, people love saying, 'I told you so.'''

This is exactly what we said would happen. And why the Department of Justice saw fit to single out small business hoteliers who were already trying to help people and say, You know what, we know better than you how to help people. You think these portable units are good? Well, we think the fixed units are better. And trust us because we are from the government, and we are here to help you.

What do we end up with as a result of the government trying to fix the problem? We end up with small businesses making less money. And I know not a lot of people are sympathetic to that. I certainly am. I used to be a small-business person. And believe me, the people who worked for me liked it when I made money. So did I. But I recognize the fact that a lot of people are not sympathetic to small business. But small business makes less money.

Kids are going to have less access to swimming pools as they travel the country. Think about that for a second. How absurd is that, that we are going to end up filling in swimming pools in order to prevent lawsuits.

And then lastly, and the worst is, you will end up with a situation where all we have done is empower a small group of overzealous trial lawyers and their plaintiffs.

It is a sad story but one that we hear again and again in America. And I only hope that the next time the government comes up with an idea like this on how to fix things, they will look to what is happening now to the small-business hotel owners as an example of government gone wrong.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. I remember you and I having this conversation on the floor and particularly Members from the left coming to the microphone and basically scolding me on how insensitive I was.

Now I realize that my father may have been right about something. He said: ''It is almost always about the money.''

When you look at The Economist article, you start to realize that this was a jobs act for the Democrat supporters and the trial bar because they are running up and down our communities, suing small businesses.

And I believe you are absolutely correct: our future will be hotels and resorts without pools at all.

Once again, the folks in the opposition questioned our sensitivity, our love for our brothers and sisters. And we were trying to say, This is the economic argument, and here is the litigious argument. And we lost.

The administration basically gave into the trial bar, and now we do have the ''I told you so.''

Mr. MULVANEY. I would suggest to you, Mr. SCHWEIKERT, that you were, in fact, being insensitive: you were being insensitive to the trial bar.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Darn it. I knew I was doing something wrong.

Mr. MULVANEY. Listen, I had the same experience as you did, Mr. SCHWEIKERT. I was in the Longworth House Office Building a couple years back. You and I wrote a bill together to try to either delay or prevent the DOJ from putting this regulation into effect, and we had people literally protesting outside of our office, folks from the disability community who wanted this particular accommodation. And I am completely sympathetic to that.

What I think they failed to see at the time and failed to grasp was, number one, they were already being accommodated. My guess is that 99.9 percent of the people who came to protest had never asked to use one of these portable lifts at hoteliers, so they were not aware of the fact that they were there but, at the same time, they never gave any thought to the unintended consequences of this particular piece of regulation that the DOJ promulgated. And I think that, again, is a lesson to be learned.

A government that is big enough to give you everything that you want is big enough to take from you everything that you have. And this, in a very small way, is what we saw in the promulgation of this particular regulation.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. The closing thought on this colloquy:

We are already seeing the insurance world starting to charge higher and higher and higher fees for apartments, hotels, resorts that have these lifts, these permanent platforms. It is because they are already modeling the risk that someone—hopefully not with alcohol involved—but someone is going to crawl up on top of one and jump in. The same litigation profile that removed diving boards 20, 30 years ago, the other side basically has driven us to. And they are going to be our brothers and sisters out there. There are going to be some that are going to be hurt, maybe hurt severely, and ultimately, what is our future? The removal of the swimming pools.

We have got to thank the folks on the left that weren't willing to discuss rational economics and the DOJ, once again, for making a bunch of money for their trial bar friends.

Mr. MULVANEY. We will get equality, Mr. SCHWEIKERT. We will have equal access to the swimming pools under this regulation because no one will have the access. That will be the ultimate result here.

In an effort to make it accessible to everybody, we will end up making it accessible to no one, and in the final analysis, that is a sad state of equality that I don't think anybody should applaud.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. This is not a petty little issue. This is just a simple example that we talk about here almost every day of the runaway arrogance of Washington believing they are going to run our businesses, run our lives, and sort of the obvious outcomes that turn out to be fairly disastrous.

So, Mr. MULVANEY, I appreciate you coming down and giving us some of your time.

Mr. MULVANEY. Mr. SCHWEIKERT, thank you for the opportunity.

THE BUDGET

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Mr. Speaker, I am going to set up here in a second. I am going to actually walk through something we have been working on in our office now for the last month, and that is, what is really going on in budget numbers.

We did a budget town hall about 2 weeks ago in Scottsdale. And I always like to start it with a simple question that says, How many of you are tired of seeing us in Congress fight with each other? And the hands always go up, and they say, Yes, you have to stop fighting with each other.

And I always try to make the point: it is about the money. You need to understand how bad the underlying financial data is and what is really going on in the scale of debt and deficits and just the sheer scale of spending but also where that spending is going because we have so many of my brothers and sisters here, we go out and campaign and say things like: We are going to take care of waste and fraud. We are going to take care of this and foreign aid. We are going to do this and that. And they are not providing an honest picture of where the money is and where it actually goes.

So we are going to do about 10 of these boards. I know it is going to get technical.

When you run for Congress, one of the first things that happens, if you are a numbers guy, the pollster and the consultants sit you down and say, You can't use big numbers. People won't understand them.

In this presentation, I am going to treat everyone like adults—these aren't Republican numbers; they are not even Democrat numbers, though the majority of these slides actually do come from the White House—to understand what is actually underlying in the data and how quickly it is eroding.

Two points of reference: For decades, we used to talk about how we were going to hit this inflection point when baby boomers began moving into retirement and what was going to happen to the debt curve and what was going to happen to the curve of consumption of the entitlements.

Guess what. We are now well into that inflection point. It has begun, and Congress has done very, very, very little in regards to mandatory spending. You are going to see on these boards that that is actually what may take us down as a Republic.

So this is 2010. Let's just do this as a reference. And remember, 2010 was a year when there was still lots of stimulus money, lots of other spending out there.

You see the blue. The blue is what we refer to as mandatory spending. It is primarily Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, some transfer programs, interest, veterans, and the new health care law.

Okay. In 2010, about 63 percent of our spending was in that blue area; 37 percent was what we call discretionary. That is what we get to vote on here because what is in the blue is in formulas.

I have been here a little over 4 years. I have really had absolutely no influence on that blue area. It is a formula. You hit a certain age, you get a certain benefit.

But I want you to watch what is happening in that entitlement, in that mandatory spending. And, yes, this is the very discussion that gets people unelected because people get very upset, but we have to have an adult conversation of what is really going on here.

So we are going to do a couple of these slides just to sort of create a reference.

Here is where we are this year. And you remember, on that slide, I think the blue area was about 63 percent of our total spending. This year, it is 69 percent of our total spending. And obviously then the discretionary, what we get to vote on as Members, has now gone down to 31 percent.

Do you notice the movement? And that is just in the last 5 years.

So where are we going? Well, right now, to give you a different way of looking at this, this is our 2015 modeling from the White House. This green area is our revenues. That is the total revenues coming into your Federal Government. That purple area is our debt. That is what we are going to borrow this year to make up for our shortfalls, though you will be happy to know that, as of about 48 hours ago, the administration changed the debt number from $576 billion for the 2015 fiscal year to—now it is going to be $582.5 billion. This continues to erode.

We are going to talk about that at the end here, what is actually going on in GDP, on economic growth in this country. And if we do not develop a growth-oriented agenda, we can't meet our obligations. We cannot keep those promises we have made.

And with that, I stand here in shock of how often we engage in these debates, and it is not a growth-oriented focus.

So one thing on this slide I really want you to get: blue over here is mandatory spending. The red is discretionary, with defense. Defense is considered discretionary. We have to borrow either every dime of defense or every dime of everything else, other than defense and mandatory or discretionary—Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, interest on the debt, veterans benefits, and the new health care law.

□ 1915

Mr. Speaker, we have to borrow either every dime of defense or every dime of discretionary other than defense, and that is in this year's budget. That is how quickly this is moving away from us.

So what happens if we look way off into the future, like 4 years from now? 2020 is only 4 years from now. When I first got elected in 2011, I did a presentation here. The numbers I am going to show you that happen in 4 years were not supposed to happen until 9 years from now. This is to give you an idea of how quickly the numbers are eroding. Yet I hear almost no one talking about it.

So we are going to be working on that budget in 4 years. Do you remember that 2010 slide? Sixty-three percent of our spending went to Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, interest on the debt, veterans' benefits, and the new healthcare law. Well, it is going to be 76 percent—76—three-quarters of all of our spending. We are only going to be voting on 24 percent of the budget, and half of that will be defense.

I don't know if anyone knows, because these numbers are small and it is hard to watch, what we will be spending in 2020 on discretionary. So defense and all the litany of programs you think of are basically going to be almost identical to what we were spending 10 years earlier. I will hold that up as one of the successes of the Republican House. We have been very disciplined on spending on what we had the ability to influence, which was the discretionary budget, but the formulaic portion of our budget, entitlements, continues to explode. It is almost as if Washington, D.C., did not know that there was a baby boom, did not know people were going to be turning 65, did not know that 76 million of our brothers and sisters were born in about an 18-year period of time, and now we are into the third year of baby boomers beginning to retire, and that inflection has begun.

So just as a reference, because I often get asked for this slide—and we are putting these slides up on our Web site—there is the spending pie chart for this year. You will see the blue area is all the way to here: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, the transfer programs also including the new healthcare law, interest on the debt, veterans' benefits.

Two weeks ago when we were doing a budget presentation in my hometown of Scottsdale-Phoenix, I had one woman who was absolutely positive, if we would cut foreign aid, we would be just fine here. It is important to understand. Do you see this little red area here? Foreign aid would be ultimately nothing but a small sliver within that. Yes, it is something, but in many ways, it is theater.

If you have a politician standing in front of you and they are not talking about the mandatory spending and the speed of its growth, you are not having an honest budget discussion. It is hard because in many places around the country, when you stand behind a microphone and hold up these boards and start to say that we need to have an honest conversation about the math underlying Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and what is going to happen on interest on the debt, the new healthcare law and its cost projections blowing through the ceiling, and veterans' benefits, often those Members who have tried to have that conversation get unelected.

But if you have someone walk in to our door here and say, ''David, we so desperately need new spending on this,'' we often pull out our charts and say, ''You are absolutely right. This would be wonderful. Do you have a solution to help me refine and deal with and manage the explosion of the cost in Medicare?'' And they just stare at you like we are not allowed to talk about that. But that is what is going on here.

So let's do another slide to just sort of see how the numbers really are exploding. If I came to you and said, hey, in 4 years, that 3.8—and it is actually a $3.75 billion budget we are going to have this year. So 3.756 trillion—sorry, not billion, trillion. So we are going to spend $3.8 trillion this year. In 4 years, we are going to be spending an additional $1 trillion on top of that, an additional trillion, and every dime of that is going into mandatory spending. It is not going into health research; it is not going into new parts; it is not going into building a new aircraft carrier; and it is not going into all these programs that we all talk about because it is easy politics. Every dime of that additional trillion dollars in 4 years from now will be in Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, interest on the debt, veterans' benefits, and the new healthcare law.

How many times have you heard that? This is right in front of us. This is what is going on. Your government is growing at an exponential pace, but it is not in the area where we, as Members of Congress, get to vote because it is in the formula areas, the mandatory spending.

Are you starting to see a theme in this discussion and on the slides? I am trying to build an understanding out there with both my brothers and sisters here in Congress and the public out there that if we are not willing to have honest conversations, particularly with this coming Presidential election, about entitlements, mandatory spending, and ways we can manage them—and it is not cuts, but there are much better ways we can deliver these.

You put all the programs, all the promises we have made at risk because just pretending everything is going to be fine means you are basically dooming them to a really ugly future, or the country to an ugly future. So, Mr. Speaker, this gives you an interesting projection.

Now, if we go beyond that 2020 slide, if we go 9 years out—9 years out—we will be running over trillion-dollar deficits, and that is using the current GDP projections for the future, which we are going to talk about that model on the very end slide. There is something horribly wrong in how we are modeling our future income growth into this country.

The math is real. I know it is uncomfortable and it is almost sacrilegious to many of the political people here, saying: Well, we are not allowed to talk about that. David, why are you such a downer? Don't you want to get reelected? Why aren't you doing happy talk?

I am optimistic about the country. I am optimistic about some things happening out there in the economy despite government. But you have to understand, in 9 years, interest will be $1 trillion. And think about this: it is almost going to be approaching all discretionary. At that time, in 9 years, we will be about $1.4 trillion in interest. Our best interest projection is over $1 trillion.

The chart, when you go a couple years out, we will be spending more money on interest than all of defense, all of discretionary, all of education, all of parts, all of health research, everything else. That is what we are doing. We are creating this trap where, as we build more and more debt and build more and more debt and build more and more debt, that becomes our Achilles heal. That becomes our fragility in this country.

So once again, remember that earlier slide where I went over there and marked that now this year's deficit projection is $582.5 billion, and that is coming from the White House as of about 2 days ago.

We had someone in our office earlier today. We were trying to do some modeling. If GDP continues to do what we think is happening right now, we could be having a discussion this coming October that the 2015 shortfall was almost $600 billion. You do realize that is approaching double what the optimistic projections were last year for 2015.

There is something horribly wrong out there. It is a combination of lack of economic growth and, let's be honest, the mandatory spending, the entitlements, are growing faster than the underlying models we have built.

So this is an interesting slide just to give you the point of talking about inflection. It is a fancy word that a lot of the statisticians like to use, and we politicians will use it. But there it, and it has begun. We are well into it.

Do you see where those blue lines start to explode? But do you notice something interesting? The red lines, from about here over basically stay substantially flat. That is the discretionary spending. That is what we get to vote on. That is your defense. That is everything else other than the mandatory spending.

But what is exploding through the ceiling? It looks like Washington, D.C., failed to understand the demographic issues that were heading towards this country and systematically avoided them, because I am sure it had nothing to do with my brothers and sisters often caring more about their next election than having to go through the painful process of educating our voters to understand this is your greatest threat, I believe, to our Republic.

One more slide to put this in perspective. The blue line is interest. The red line is all—all—of defense spending. Do you notice something, that in about 7 years, 6½ years, we are now spending more money in interest than all of defense? All of defense. It is 6 years away. Actually, in reality, my math is closer to 5½, but we will use the 6 years.

Think about that. We will be spending more money in interest on U.S. sovereign debt than we are spending on all defense of the Nation. It is absurd. And this is what we are about to hand to our kids. As a matter of fact, this is no longer about our kids. This is about us now. The numbers have eroded so fast, it is here. And the happy talk that we were doing just 1 year ago, particularly coming from the administration, has not turned out to be true.

So one of the things that is going on out there, can you regulate yourself to prosperity? Can you tax yourself to prosperity? Can you, in an arrogant fashion, have a bureaucracy that is so inept, its ability to even when we do bipartisan, pro-growth pieces of legislation like the JOBS Act—we all got together here 3 years ago and did the JOBS Act. You do realize there are still substantial portions of that piece of legislation that are still sitting at the SEC that still don't have their rules because of the underlying politics behind them? They are 3 years beyond their due date, but we still don't have them.

There is something horribly wrong in this government if we don't have an honest discussion and actually then do something about our Tax Code, our regulatory code, access to opportunity, and then the difficult one, the design within our entitlement state, which is something the Republicans for the last 4 years, 5 years, have been putting into our budget.

Do you all remember the television commercial of the PAUL RYAN look-alike throwing grandma over the cliff? Great politics, horrible math, because the Republicans, PAUL RYAN and the rest of us, stood up and said that we are willing to actually propose a model that saves Medicare and deals with this curve that consumes everything in our path. It is really bad politics; it is honest math. And we get the crap kicked out of us for telling the truth.

So now we get to look at a slide like this. We were projecting 3.1 percent GDP for this year. As of a few hours ago, the Atlanta Fed, which actually does this really interesting modeling of collecting current statistics and constantly adjusting their GDP projections, now has us not at 3.1 percent GDP for this year—and remember, every point of GDP is—it matters what velocity model you use—about $80 billion to $100 billion of revenue. So you start to realize that a couple of points of GDP is a big deal. The Atlanta Fed's GDP calculation on their Web site now is 0.7 percent GDP coming in in this quarter, and the indicators look like we are going to get additional downward revisions on the first quarter.

Mr. Speaker, we are in trouble. Yes, the politicians will get up here and blame each other and blame each other, but it doesn't make the math go away.

□ 1930

The other thing is also—and this is one of my pet peeves here—we systematically do not tell the truth, and this is a Republican and Democrat problem. Some of it is because we use really bad modeling data, really bad underlying statistics; we underestimate the swings during boom times and slowdowns. We systematically have blown our GDP calculation; but understand, that GDP calculation has a lot to do with what we model as our spending, has a lot to do with what ends up happening on our debt.

If you look at this chart, the red is what real GDP turned out to be; the blue was our projection, and systematically, we are dramatically under the projection. It looks like this year we are crashing and burning. I am desperately hoping the third quarter and the fourth quarter get really healthy, but there is something horribly wrong out there.

Is this administration, are my brothers and sisters on the left, finally willing to have that conversation about the Tax Code, about our regulatory state, those very things that—let's face it—are stymying future growth and our ability to save this country?

One last slide just to sort of provide an opportunity—for those of you who have an interest in watching some of these numbers, and there are those out there who are also sort of numbers geeks, this is that GDPNow. Yes, it is often a pessimistic calculator; except for the small problem is, the last couple of years, it has actually been the accurate calculator of actual GDP growth. This is right off the GDPNow Web site from the Atlanta Fed, showing it looks like, now, we are all the way down to a .7 percent GDP growth in the second quarter.

A little bit else on this and then I will stop this thing I am doing, which may be bordering on a tirade. If you are particularly geeky, last week, you would have seen the Journal of Economic Perspectives did an entire report on Social Security calculations.

There is a handful of folks here with all sorts of letters behind their names, mostly Ph.D., talking about Social Security is actually in worse shape than we tell people, that they are close to $1 trillion additional underfunded in the latest projections, and that some of the modeling are simple things like we are actually using really bad life expectancy tables.

Now, I have incredible respect for the actuaries over at Medicare and Social Security; I think they deal with some amazing data sets, but some of the Nation's finest economists and Ph.D. economists are starting to write public articles, saying: We are in real trouble here.

Remember, last year, when the Mercatus did their detailed projection on unfunded liabilities and debt for the United States, they came in with a number that scared me half to death. They actually came in with a number of $205 trillion, as if you did GAAP standard accounting, not government accounting, standard accounting for the debt of this Nation and our unfunded liabilities.

Go on the Internet right now, and look up what is the wealth of the world. Some of the best models say the wealth of the world is about $180 trillion. We have universities out there modeling that U.S. sovereign debt and unfunded liabilities are over $200 trillion. Our unfunded liabilities are greater than the wealth of the world.

We are better than this. This is the greatest issue in front of us, and we spend so little time actually having an honest discussion about the math.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

CAMPAIGN SPENDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POLIQUIN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from California (Mr. MCNERNEY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk a little bit about spending today, like my friend and colleague from Arizona, but I am going to talk about spending of a different kind. I am going to talk about campaign spending.

Campaign spending is quite an issue, and I want to spend about an hour or less talking about its effect, and I want to talk about some of the solutions that we have out there that might make a big difference.

First, I want to say I truly believe in my heart of hearts that the United States of America is the greatest country in the world, probably the greatest country that the world has ever seen and may see in the future. You can just see that by some of the markers.

The notions of freedom that this country has had in the past have inspired nations; they have inspired individuals around the world. Our economic strength is unrivaled. Our cultural influence reaches every corner of the world. Our military power is absolutely unrivaled.

However, again, I truly believe that we can do better, and I will tell you some of the big challenges that we are facing right now, that if we take on these challenges, we will even be a greater Nation.

First of all, we need massive investments in our Nation's infrastructure, our highways, our bridges, our ports, our airports. We need it in our broadband. We just need a massive amount of investment in our Nation's infrastructure.

Our Nation's education is falling behind. Yes, we have some of the greatest schools, some of the greatest universities in the entire world, some of our public schools, some of our charter schools and private schools unrivaled; but there are a lot of schools that are struggling and producing students that really can't compete in today's world.

We need to do immigration reform. We have 12, 15 million people in this country that are undocumented that live in the shadows that may or may not pay taxes that contribute to our economy but are always afraid of being deported.

We have climate change. Climate change is here; it is progressing; it is going to get worse. We need to do something about it as soon as possible.

We have a vanishing middle class. There is a huge disparity in incomes between the richest and the poorest in this country, and it is increasing. Our middle class is vanishing. They are feeling more and more insecure. They are unable to send their kids to college. We have a huge challenge in that regard.

We have a need to establish background checks for purchase of weapons and to close the gun show loopholes.

We need to create a sustainable economy.

These are huge challenges that we need to attend from the Congress, from this body, from the House of Representatives, from the United States Senate, from the State legislatures, from local governments; but we are unable to attack these problems, in a large part, because of the way campaigns are financed.

Now, we see a growing perversion of Presidential campaigns. We have super-PACs. We have dark donors, and they are having meetings with Presidential candidates, which are allowed by the laws because the candidates are not official candidates.

No one knows what is legal and enforceable right now in Presidential candidate financing; and worse than that, foreign money is probably coming into all of these campaigns now.

I just want to say elections up and down the ballot are being more and more perverted each election. All Americans should be concerned.

While I was waiting to speak this evening, I just read an article in the National Journal Daily today that stated: ''According to data gathered in 21 states by the National Institute on Money in State Politics, $175 million was spent by them in 2006''—that is local politics; that is city council and school boards—''a number that ballooned to $245 million four years later.''

That is a delta of $70 million increases in local campaign financing in just 4 years, and that is a fraction of the total expected to be spent in future local races.

Before I go further, what I would like to do is take a break and yield to my friend and colleague from North Carolina (Mr. JONES). He wants to say a few words.

Mr. JONES. Mr. MCNERNEY, thank you very much, and I want to thank you for taking the lead tonight to be on the floor. I know you have other Members of Congress to join you in your hour, but I have been here for 20 years, and I must tell you that, since I have been here, I have never seen as much influence by the special interests as I do now, and that is because of money.

Actually, both parties—and that is why you are a Democrat, I am a Republican—but both parties seem to succumb to the influence of money to get bills to the floor.

I am a strong supporter of JOHN SARBANES, who is from Maryland. You have your bill that I have joined today, by the way, to sign my name to your resolution, and I am on JOHN SARBANES' bill, which is H.R. 20. The title is the Government By the People Act.

I will touch on four quick points. One is building a government of, by, and for the people. The second part of the bill says empower the Americans to participate. The third part is amplify the voice of the people and then fight back against Big Money special interests.

In my few minutes, Mr. MCNERNEY, what I would like to talk about is the influence of money. I am a Republican and proud to be one; you are a Democrat and proud to be one, but I will tell you that I have seen so many bills this year get to the floor of the House because, in my opinion, it is because of the influence of special interests.

You and I recently had a bill on the floor that basically said that we would change the law that would allow the mobile home companies that sell mobile homes—many people in my district, 45,000 people own mobile homes, and there will be others buying mobile homes—but they will change the contract to say that it would go from 8 to 12 percent.

Well, who did it benefit? It was Warren Buffett. I don't deny Warren Buffett his success. He is a very successful man, and I am happy for him. What this bill did was to say to the average person that maybe in California or North Carolina that needs to buy a mobile home, because that is the best they can do: we are going to let you pay more in interest.

I was the only Republican to vote ''no'' on that bill. I said this back in my district, and quite frankly, I was pleased that the majority of people agree with me that we should be considerate of those people who cannot afford to buy better than a mobile home; but there, again, that special interest influence, that is what you just said a moment ago.

I am of the firm belief that if we do not change the system—you have an H.J. Res. that you have introduced. I talk about JOHN SARBANES' H.R. 20. That will create an alternative to the system that we have.

You and I both know that Citizens United that said that a corporation is an individual has created a lot of the problems that we face today. I will say that the American people need to get behind what you are trying to do, what Mr. SARBANES is trying to do—and I, in a lesser way—to return the power of the people to the people because, too