

continue to raise these issues to the forefront of our agenda.

There is no excuse. We have the resources. It is on all of us to prioritize basic hunger needs. Supporting school breakfast and lunch programs, and maintaining reasonable eligibility for nutrition assistance programs, are the least we can do to end hunger now.

We live in the richest country in the history of the world, and we have millions and millions of people who are hungry. We should all be ashamed of that.

Hunger and food insecurity are political conditions. We can solve these problems if we have the political will. I urge my colleagues to gather that political will.

□ 1015

#### \$22 TRILLION DEBT AND DEBT CEILING REACHED

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

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, America recently blew through the \$22 trillion debt mark with no end in sight.

In January, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office warned Washington that America faces an unending stream of trillion-dollar-a-year deficits beginning in FY 2022 and culminating in a \$1.4 trillion deficit in FY 2028, the amount Congress spends each year on our discretionary budget that pays for the military, NASA, ATF, FBI, and almost every other Federal agency.

The cumulative effect of these deficits is a debt that explodes from \$22 trillion today to \$33 trillion in a decade.

As debt goes up, so does debt service. The CBO warns: "In CBO's projections, outlays for net interest increase from \$325 billion in 2018 to \$383 billion . . . in 2019, and more than double by 2029, to \$928 billion" a year, which is the rough equivalent of almost 50 NASA programs.

Compounding matters, this past weekend, on March 2, the Federal Government hit the debt ceiling, which means the Federal Government's operational costs are being paid for via extraordinary measures, such as borrowing from the Social Security and Medicare trust funds.

Washington's response to this financial firestorm is akin to that of Roman Emperor Nero, who fiddled as Rome burned.

Rather than be proactive and work to prevent a debilitating national insolvency and bankruptcy, Congress emulates an ostrich that buries its head in the sand and denies lurking danger.

In sum, America's sea of red ink and projected financial path is wholly and completely unsustainable.

America must learn from financially reckless nations like Greece and Venezuela, and from Puerto Rico, an American territory that defaulted on its \$70 billion debt.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of American voters are oblivious to America's lurking financial dangers, in large part because of minimal national media coverage.

American voters are too often seduced by debt-junkie politicians who promise free stuff to get elected, while knowing full well America can't pay for it. If American voters do not elect financially responsible officials to Washington, America will succumb to the same debilitating insolvency and bankruptcy that wreaks havoc in Greece and Puerto Rico, with one major difference; unlike Greece, which has been bailed out three times by the European community, and unlike Puerto Rico, which may yet be bailed out by American taxpayers, there is no one, no one who can or will bail out America.

Instead, America will be more like Venezuela, whose annual inflation rate now exceeds 2 million percent, where the International Monetary Fund reports there are: "Widespread shortages of essential goods, including food, exacting a tragic toll," where grocery stores have rows and rows of empty shelves and Venezuelans can't find food to feed their families.

Worse yet, Venezuela's bankruptcy has made it one of the most violent countries in the world, with a chilling 82 homicides per 100,000 population, roughly 20 times worse than America's homicide rate. Caracas, Venezuela's capital is the world's most violent city, with a war-zone-like 120 murders per 100,000 citizens.

Mr. Speaker, America must learn from the financially irresponsible mistakes of others. As the adage says, We can either learn from history, or we are doomed to repeat it.

American voters must wake up and stop being seduced by the wily ways of debt-junkie politicians who promise anything to get elected, who pretend to be Santa Claus, when, in fact, they are the Grinch that stole America's future.

Time is running out. The American people must start being good stewards of our Republic, and elect Washington officials who both understand the threat posed by defaults, and deficit, and debt, and have the backbone to fix it. America's future depends on it.

#### PROTECTING ATLANTIC COASTAL ECONOMIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. VAN DREW) for 5 minutes.

Mr. VAN DREW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I am profoundly concerned with the possible permitting of seismic airgun blasting off the Atlantic Coast, from Jacksonville, Florida, to Cape May, New Jersey, to Portland, Maine. This is an extremely serious issue.

Late last year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, also known as NOAA, issued five Incidental

Harassment Authorizations which advanced permit applications for seismic airgun blasting in the Atlantic Ocean. This action essentially sets the stage for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to approve these permits at any day now.

Seismic airgun blasting is not only the first step toward offshore oil and gas exploration and development, but it is harmful to marine mammal life and to marine life in general, and it encroaches on vital military operations.

At a time when we are attempting to limit the dangers of climate change, such as extreme weather events like Superstorm Sandy, it is unthinkable to further harm the environment and endanger our coastal economy in South Jersey and along the coast, which is largely based on fishing and based on tourism.

Our public policy goal is to create a cleaner and healthier environment, an environment that we can pass on to our children and on to our grandchildren so that they may enjoy it.

I am proud that broad arrays of organizations in New Jersey have supported my legislation. These organizations include the Chambers of Commerce of Cape May County, Ocean City, Vineland, Greater Wildwood, Greater Atlantic City, the Garden State Seafood Association, the Recreational Fishing Alliance, the Jersey Shore Partnership, Clean Ocean Action, Surfers Environmental Alliance, the American Littoral Society, Oceana, and the New Jersey chapters of the Sierra Club, the League of Conservation Voters, Audubon Society, and Environment America.

Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure to have worked with Congressman RUTHERFORD of Florida on H.R. 1149. I am also grateful that several of our elite colleagues joined us on important efforts, including JOE CUNNINGHAM of South Carolina, CHRIS SMITH of New Jersey, DONNA SHALALA of Florida, and BRIAN MAST of Florida, as well.

Our bipartisan bill, the Atlantic Coastal Economies Protection Act, would prevent the five seismic airgun blasting permits that are now under consideration from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management from being issued. It would stop them.

I urge my colleagues to protect our precious coastline and to protect the livelihoods of those that depend upon it by supporting H.R. 1149. It is a bipartisan bill. It is the Atlantic Coastal Economies Protection Act.

Mr. Speaker, I include three letters of support for the RECORD.

[From the Greater Atlantic City Chamber]  
RESOLUTION OPPOSING BOEM 2019-2024 OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF OIL AND GAS LEASING PROGRAM

Whereas, on January 8, 2018, the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) announced in the Federal Register notice the release of their Draft Proposed Program (DPP) for the 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. BOEM is requesting public comment on the

DPP as well as formal scoping for a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the 2019-2024 Program; and

Whereas, this new plan includes the entire Atlantic Ocean from Maine to Florida, including the waters off New Jersey within 3 miles of beaches, as well as including other ocean areas totaling some 90% of US ocean waters; and

Whereas, New Jersey boasts over 127 miles of beautiful ocean coastline and hundreds of miles of back-bays, estuaries, and other waterways connected to the Atlantic Ocean; and

Whereas, the Jersey Shore is essential to the health of the our communities, environment and the thriving economy of New Jersey; and

Whereas, the physical, hydrodynamic, and biological characteristics of the ocean off the Jersey Shore are unique in the world, as more than 300 species of fish, nearly 350 species of birds, 5 species of sea turtles, and many marine mammals such as 20 species of whales and dolphins, 1 species of porpoise, and 4 species of seals, frequent this region. Nine endangered species, four of which are whales, can be found in these ocean waters, including the Atlantic Right Whale, one of the world's most endangered marine mammals. The region also serves as an essential migratory pathway for many of these species; and

Whereas, the Jersey Shore sustains the economy of the region with its bounty of natural resources and intrinsic values for millions of people through tourism. Tourism brings more than \$44 billion to NJ's economy each year and provides jobs to more than 500,000 people with \$6.2 billion generated in Cape May County alone; and

Whereas, recreational and commercial fisheries in NJ provide enormous economic benefits, including revenue, food production, and recreational activities with the port of Cape May and Wildwood ranking as the second largest seaport on the east coast. In 2014, recreational fishing supported nearly 20,000 jobs and resulted in \$2 billion of retail sales. Commercial fishing supports nearly 7,300 jobs and provides \$152 million in landings, not including restaurant and retail sales; and

Whereas, current estimates of the amount of technically recoverable oil off the entire Atlantic coast from Maine to Florida would only last the nation approximately 229 days, and the amount of technically recoverable gas would only last approximately 562 days; and

Whereas, offshore oil and gas development, causes substantial environmental impacts, including: (a) onshore damage due to infrastructure, (b) water pollution from drilling muds and the water brought-up from a well with oil and gas (called "produced waters"), (c) noise from seismic surveys, (d) air pollution, and (e) oil spills; and

Whereas, the harmful environmental consequences of offshore oil and gas exploration and development are serious and threatens the environmental and economic assets of New Jersey; and

Whereas, The BP Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico (2010) is clear evidence of the dangers associated with offshore drilling, including costing the lives of 11 people, devastating coastal economies and countless livelihoods, and killing countless marine animals, as well as continuing to cause harm to marine life as documented by a steady flow of studies; and

Whereas, Federal Administration officials are also weakening protections of ocean resources by undermining rules and regulations, cutting funding sources for spill response; and

Whereas, oil spills travel vast distances, and the Gulf Stream and Labrador Ocean

Current all flow toward New Jersey making the region vulnerable to impacts from spills anywhere in the Atlantic Ocean; and

Whereas, Within 5 days of the release of the DPP Governor Scott from Florida was able to convince Department of Interior Secretary Zinke to remove Florida from further consideration for drilling due to the importance of coastal tourism to that state and NJ shares this same economic dependence on tourism and clean ocean economies;

Whereas, bi-partisan opposition against drilling off the New Jersey coast has included every Governor since 1985, and a majority of the congressional delegation and most coastal towns; and

Whereas, in the January 8, 2018, BOEM Federal Register to requests comments on the Draft Proposed Program (DPP) and scoping comments for the Programmatic Environmental Impact Study

Whereas, energy conservation and efficiency measures can significantly reduce the nation's need to explore and drill for non-renewable resources, such as oil and natural gas; and

Whereas, coastal municipalities have a profound interest in maintaining strong federal protections for our nation's coastal environment, as well as the economic and social benefits it supports;

Now, therefore, be it resolved on March 5, 2018, that the Greater Atlantic City Chamber hereby opposes offshore oil and gas exploration and drilling activities that would affect the coast of New Jersey, and calls upon Secretary of the Interior Ryan K. Zinke who oversees the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to withdraw New Jersey and the entire Atlantic Ocean from consideration for the offshore oil and gas exploration, development, or drilling.

JOSEPH D. KELLY,  
*President.*

OCEAN CITY REGIONAL CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE AND VISITORS SERVICES,

*Ocean City, NJ, February 6, 2019.*

Congressman JEFF VAN DREW,  
*Mays Landing, NJ.*

DEAR CONGRESSMAN VAN DREW: On behalf of the Ocean City Regional Chamber of Commerce, I would like to extend our endorsement of Atlantic Coastal Economies Protection Act to prohibit the Department of the Interior from issuing certain geological and geophysical exploration permits under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, and for other purposes.

The Ocean City Regional Chamber of Commerce, which is comprised of more than 550 member businesses, strongly supports this act as we are against seismic airgun blasting in the Atlantic Ocean.

We stand by you and your support of the Atlantic Coastal Economies Protection Act.

Kindest regards,

MICHELE GILLIAN,  
*Executive Director.*

GREATER VINELAND CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE,

*Vineland, NJ, February 7, 2019.*

U.S. Representative JEFFREY VAN DREW,  
*Washington, DC.*

DEAR CONGRESSMAN VAN DREW: On behalf of our organization, including more than 450 members, we write this letter as an endorsement of your proposed bill, known as the "Atlantic Coastal Economies Protection Act", to prohibit the Department of Interior from issuing certain geological and geophysical exploration permits under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, and for other purposes.

We agree that seismic air-gun blasting in the Atlantic Ocean has the potential to harm

or kill marine mammals and other marine life that are vital to our region's coastal economies. We are also wary that the survey data collected is not available to the public.

Thank you for your efforts in proposing this bill.

Sincerely,

DAWN S. HUNTER,  
*Executive Director.*

## VISITS TO RICHLAND, CAMBRIA HEIGHTS, AND PURCHASE LINE HIGH SCHOOLS

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, over the past couple of weeks I had the honor of visiting three high schools in my district, the Richland High School, near Johnstown, Cambria Heights High School, in Patton, and Purchase Line High School in Commodore, Pennsylvania.

As a senior member of the House Education and Labor Committee, I love speaking with students about their learning experiences, and hearing from faculty and staff as well.

Last week, the Richland School District invited me to join them for their Teacher-in-Service event with award-winning educator and principal, Salome Thomas-El. It was a pleasure to be with educators from the Cambria County area to hear the ways that we can work together to improve education in America.

I enjoyed hearing Mr. Thomas-El discuss the change in attitudes and strategies of school staff, parents, and members of the community to help the students in most need of guidance. He is currently the head of the Thomas Edison Charter School in Wilmington, and before that, began his career as a teacher and chess coach at Vaux Middle School.

Since then, he has published several books, received prestigious awards, appeared on television, and Disney recently optioned the movie rights to his best-selling book titled "I Chose to Stay." He has committed more than 20 years of his life to answering the question of how to ensure that every child achieves their greatest potential.

The question is one that all educators seek to answer and even policymakers in Congress; and that is why I will continue to support legislation and initiatives that meet the needs and grow the potential of every student.

We must also address family poverty, child nutrition, community violence, and other barriers that affect student success.

As Mr. Thomas-El says, All children can and will learn as long as they have adults who care enough. And he is right. In order for our country's students to truly succeed, they need the support from adults at home, in the classroom, and throughout their communities.

I left the in-service event with Richland School District encouraged and