

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.

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\$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 wrecks 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