

including China, when I was first elected to this Congress in late 2002, a lot of debt to have built up since the founding of our country.

But how about this number, \$7.775 trillion, our total debt today? Yes. In just the 28 months since I was first elected to this Congress, we have seen a 25 percent increase in national debt.

But wait a minute, if that is not bad enough try this one, \$8.184 trillion, the current maximum permissible debt of our country. The debt ceiling has increased for a third time in as many years, voted on by this Congress or at least by a majority, and a majority that did not include me, just a few months ago, currently estimated to be reached and breached in January 2006. An increase in our total national debt of 32 percent in just the 3 years since I joined this Congress.

But wait. In the budget resolution for 2006, just passed on this floor 6 days ago, over the objection of every Member of the minority party and 15 Members of the majority, hidden in that resolution, glossed over, buried, shunned, avoided, turned away from, concealed, an automatic authority to increase our debt ceiling a fourth time in as many years to \$8.965 trillion.

When might we reach that total debt, bump up against that debt ceiling at the rate we are going and why is it so crucial to pass another debt ceiling bump way before we are even close to the ceiling we just bumped up against? When? Late 2006, most likely December 2006, after the 2006 election. Coincidence? I surely doubt it. Can it be that our colleagues cannot stomach another ceiling increase in mid-election?

When we reach that level of debt, there will have been added to the debt load we all face \$2.767 trillion, a 45 percent increase in just 4 years since I joined this House.

This administration and its supporters in Congress would have us believe this is normal, that this debt is in balance with our gross domestic product, with our collective ability to pay it, or that this debt is because of our commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Well, let us strip both of those arguments down.

First, total debt increase over the past 4 years, almost \$3 trillion total. Cost of Iraq in the same time period, almost \$300 billion, 10 percent of total debt increase. So clearly that is not the reason.

What about this gross domestic product argument? This is from the President's own budget, and it shows total Federal debt as a percentage of gross domestic product, in other words, the ability of our economy to carry the load, and that total Federal debt percentage of our gross domestic product will hit 68 percent in 2008 under the President's own budget. Guess when the last time that percentage was that high? Couple of years ago? No. Couple of decades ago? 1955, after a full 10 years, 15 years, of war and Cold War and war again. So, clearly, that is not the reason.

This debt is completely unusual. This debt is completely out of control. Something is wrong. Something is terribly wrong, and do not let anyone lie to you about it.

The first step towards addressing any crisis, and this is the crisis of our time, is to know you have one, to look yourself in the mirror and say, yes, I have a problem. Then you can get to work. So let us quit letting ourselves be fooled and get to work.

The House Blue Dog Coalition is way past being fooled, way, way past being fooled. We are at work and we welcome the participation of anybody who realizes that this is the crisis of our time.

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DEFICIT AND DEBT CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. INGALLIS of South Carolina). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, I join my fellow Blue Dog, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. CASE), in speaking about the deficit and debt crisis that our Nation faces. He gave a lot of stunning numbers. Let me put it on a time line.

What are the milestones that we are facing as a Nation? First, the year 2004, the year past, the Comptroller General of the United States, David A. Walker, said that arguably it was the worst year in American fiscal history, clearly setting our Nation on an unsustainable path. Those are tough words, and they are from our Nation's leading auditor. Arguably the worst year in American fiscal history.

Our history goes back many, many decades, and it stretches through periods of trial and turmoil, like World War II, the Civil War, and other conflicts. Yet the year 2004 was the worst year in American fiscal history according to the Comptroller General.

Now, in 2005, what has happened in our budget and deficit this year? The House Republican majority ran through last week on Thursday night, under a so-called martial law rule, the entire budget of the United States of America, \$2.6 trillion. And from start to finish, from first time to look at the budget to final passage in this body was no more than 2 to 3 hours of time. Literally, no one in this body had any clue what was in the budget because no one can read a document of that complexity in that short amount of time, especially under a martial law rule.

Let us look forward. By the last year of the Bush administration, by the year 2008-2009, we will be spending, according to the House Republican budget, more money on interest payments to the creditors of our Nation than we will be spending on all regular government in America. Let me repeat that: more money will go to creditors of our Nation, bond holders, than to the citizens of our Nation in regular government, at least in the form of domestic,

nondefense discretionary spending. That is a tipping point. That is an outrage. And that is the result of profligate Republican spending policies, the latest evidence of which is in this Cato Institute report that came out on May 3, 2005, that says the Bush administration is the worst spending administration since Lyndon Baines Johnson.

Let us look forward. The Wall Street Journal reported about a month ago that if current trends continue, the last living U.S. bond holder will sell his or her holding to the People's Bank of China on February 9, 2012. Then the Chinese will own virtually all of our foreign-held debt. That is not a good situation for the security of our Nation, either defense security or fiscal security.

Let us look forward again. The year 2017. That is the year in which the Social Security surpluses will run to zero, and that will be the first year in modern times that the American people will get an honest picture of the size of the Federal budget deficit. Because no longer will the Social Security surplus be able to be used to hide the true size of the Federal deficit. For example, in 2004, most folks, most experts think the deficit was \$412 billion. Wrong. The real deficit was \$567 billion, or \$155 billion larger than is represented, because our government has used the Social Security surplus to hide the true size of it.

Let us look forward again. By the year 2040, only 35 years from now, if current trends continue, the Comptroller General of the United States says that it will take all revenues collected by the Federal Government, every dime collected in taxes from our people, just to pay interest on our debt. This is a truly stunning finding of the GAO, because it indicates that there will be no money left by the year 2040 for any national defense, any Social Security, any Medicare, any money to meet the needs of our people.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, that is an unsustainable path. Clearly, I think we need Presidential leadership. Because being practical, even though we have a strong package of Blue Dog budget deficit reforms, even though both parties should come together, it is hard for a group of 435 in this body or 100 people in the other body to exert the leadership that the President should be demonstrating. But the President has vetoed no legislation during his entire Presidency. He has not disciplined Congress in any way. He is the first President since James Garfield in 1881 to fail to veto a single measure of this body. President Garfield was only in office for 6 months before he died. President Bush has been in office for 5 years now.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to focus on the deficit and debt crisis that this Nation faces.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.