

that meet the essential needs of hungry and poor people at home and abroad.

#### THE DEBT CEILING

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

Mr. LONG. Mr. Speaker, our debt ceiling is currently \$14.3 trillion—or more than \$45,000 for every American man, woman, and child. By the end of the year, our debt will be larger than the size of our entire economy, a significant amount of that owed to foreign countries. Oddly enough, even though we're driving faster and faster towards a cliff, instead of slowing down, President Obama is hitting the gas.

After President Bush's second term, the national debt was \$10 trillion. This was accrued over 43 Presidents. In just 2½ years, President Obama has managed to increase our Federal deficit by over \$4.3 trillion, 40 percent since he was sworn into office January 20 of 2009.

Let me say that again. In 2 years our government has borrowed nearly 40 percent of the debt that it took 200 years to accumulate. There is no word in the English language for this kind of recklessness.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Federal Government consumed about 6 to 8 percent of the gross domestic product. Back then America became the greatest industrial power and the wealthiest economy in the history of the world when the Federal Government spent just between 6 and 8 percent of GDP. Today, the Federal Government spends no less than 25 percent of GDP. And on top of that, the rest of the government, State and local, spends even more. Total, around 40 percent of GDP is consumed by government at all levels.

What have we gotten for this unprecedented level of Federal spending? Our infrastructure is crumbling, our economy is weak, and jobs are not being created. If government spending stimulated anything, then business should be booming. It turns out the only stimulus going on is the debt.

And despite all of that, despite common sense, the President is asking for even more credit. The President wants us to trust that government will live within its means this time. Giving a blank check to the government makes as much sense as investing with Bernie Madoff.

Democratic leaders think they can continue to spend as much money as they want whenever they want to. They are upset that Republicans are making a big deal about the debt ceiling increase because they want to be able to spend taxpayer dollars without ever having a check or balance to ask if that spending is necessary.

Enough is enough. It's time to end this irresponsible spending. Families in southwest Missouri cannot spend 42 percent more than they take in, and

neither should the Federal Government.

I came to Washington to stop the spending and abuse of government. That's why I will fight this debt ceiling increase without a serious plan to reduce our debt. And the people of southwest Missouri agree with me.

I have had hundreds of phone calls and emails and messages in my office about the debt ceiling. It is something that the people of the Seventh District feel very strongly about, and I want to share a few of their thoughts with you:

Fifty-one percent of the calls and letters to my office say don't raise the debt ceiling under any circumstances; 26 percent say raise it with substantial cuts; 10 percent are okay to raise it whatever; and 10 percent say you can raise it but do not increase taxes. The people have spoken.

There's an old saying that if you owe the bank a thousand dollars, that's your problem; but if you owe the bank a million dollars, that's the bank's problem. We're at a point where the financial community, our bank, is starting to fear that our problem is becoming their problem. Two major rating agencies, Moody's and Standard & Poor's, have publicly announced that they are going to reassess America's AAA credit rating.

The people have spoken. The business community has spoken. When will the President and the Democrats listen?

Every dollar we spend on political preferences is one more dollar American families cannot spend on their children, one more dollar that small business cannot spend hiring an employee, one more dollar that a worker can't save for his retirement. This time it's serious.

Cut, Cap, and Balance is the first step but by no means the last. We have to make immediate cuts to show the financial community that we're serious about being good on our promise to repay our debts. And the President needs to get serious. He refused to put his plan in writing but vows to veto our Cut, Cap, and Balance. A speech or a framework is not a plan.

Well, the first thing to do when you dig yourself into a hole is to stop digging. We need commonsense reforms that will make sure this will not happen again. We need spending caps, a balanced budget amendment, spending cuts which will balance our budget. But most of all, we need something that's not very common: common sense.

I would like to close with one of the hundreds of letters from one of my constituents:

"Dear Congressman LONG, do not budge. We put you in office to stop these big spenders. Go ahead and call his bluff. I am in tornado-ravaged Joplin and rebuilding my house. I'm glad you are covering my wallet in Washington."

#### VOTER ID SUPPRESSION LAWS

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

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia, BOBBY SCOTT.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I rise today in opposition to an unfortunate trend that seems to be creeping up all over the country: laws requiring voters to show some form of photo ID before voting. Currently, 29 States have laws on the books requiring all voters to show some form of identification before voting, and many of these require a photo ID.

Now, my home State of Virginia requires voter identification or a signature on an affirmation of identity form, which is a much better process.

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This year, many other State legislatures are considering measures that would require voters to have an actual identification. While voter ID may seem like a good way to keep voter fraud at a minimum, this type of requirement has serious unintended consequences.

Mr. Speaker, requiring a photo ID will make it a little bit more difficult for some voters to exercise their right to vote. We should particularly be concerned that provisions like these have a disparate impact on minorities. One nationwide study of voting-age citizens found that African Americans are more than three times as likely as others to lack a government-issued photo ID. And these laws have unintended consequences, such as the situation where nuns were denied the right to vote because they couldn't produce a photo ID, even though they were personally known to the election officials.

It's obvious that voter ID laws will not prevent people from voting, but it creates another little barrier that will mean that a few potential voters will not get their paperwork in on time and will miss the voter registration deadlines. These few voters could make the difference in an election.

Mr. Speaker, these voter ID laws are a solution in search of a problem. There's no credible evidence that in-person voter fraud is a persistent problem. And the voters who will be denied the opportunity to vote under these processes will certainly outnumber any fraudulent votes that are prevented. Voting is not an arbitrary, inconsequential act.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we ensure that every eligible voter is given the opportunity to vote free from any unnecessary barriers.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. I now yield to the gentleman from Georgia, Congressman JOHN LEWIS, "Mr. Civil Rights."

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act made it possible for all of our citizens to become participants in the democratic process.

Mr. Speaker, voting rights are under attack in America. There's a deliberate