Wendy Hoffman, the national president of the Blue Star Mothers, has sent a letter to the committee and requests that their charter be amended consistent with the resolution passed at their national convention. She stated the following:

''As mothers of American servicemembers and veterans, we recognize changing family dynamics and have found it extremely important to include other 'mothers' who have played a part in raising military heroes and also those mothers who are not residents of the U.S.''

The Blue Star Mothers have also opened membership to mothers of children who have served in the military at any time. This bill makes the changes to the charter requested by the Blue Star Mothers. Our colleague SCOTT TIPTON introduced the House version of the bill, H.R. 2815, and the Judiciary Committee approved Mr. TIPTON's bill by voice vote.

This commonsense bill opens eligibility to ''a woman who filled the role of birth mother, adoptive mother, stepmother, foster-mother, grandmother, or legal guardian'' to a current member of the Armed Forces or to a child who has served at any time. To be eligible, the mother will not have to reside in the United States as long as she is a U.S. citizen.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill to help enable the Blue Star Mothers to continue their wonderful work.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

S. 1541, the Senate version of H.R. 2815, is another bipartisan bill to revise the Federal charter of the Blue Star Mothers of America. The revisions implemented by the legislation once again reflect minor changes recently made to the organization's membership eligibility requirements.

The Blue Star Mothers of America, representing the mothers of military servicemen and -women, has been a federally chartered organization since 1960. The existing charter restricts member in three ways:

A, members must be birth mothers, adoptive mothers, or certain stepmothers;

B, members must be U.S. citizens currently living in the country; and

C, the corresponding serviceman or -woman must be currently serving in the Armed Forces or must have served in World War II or the Korean War.

Last year, at the organization's national convention, the group adopted a resolution expanding these eligibility criteria. A conforming amendment to the Federal charter is needed in order make these changes operable.

S. 1541, the Senate bill, was introduced by Senator MICHAEL BENNET of Colorado. Its House companion was introduced by Representative SCOTT TIPTON, also of Colorado.

The legislation makes three minor revisions to the organization's charter:

First, to expand the membership eligibility requirements to include foster mothers, grandmothers, female legal guardians, and all stepmothers;

Second, it expands membership to U.S. citizens living abroad;

Third, it expands eligibility to servicemen and -women who served in prior conflicts other than World War II and the Korean War.

Our men and women in the military need all the support we can offer, so I applaud this effort by the Blue Star Mothers to provide the circle of support that the organization can provide. They do much to remember our servicepeople, and I appreciate their efforts. I support these changes, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, this is also another very bipartisan bill.

The Blue Star Mothers is a wonderful group. I have met with them and I have wept with them. I've prayed for them and am grateful to them for their work. I'm grateful for my mother, who passed away in 1991, as the mother of a servicemember and my stepmother as well, now.

What they're asking for makes perfect sense, and I would encourage my colleagues to support this resolution as the Blue Star Mothers have requested.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 1541.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SAVE THE POST OFFICE

(Mr. COHEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, the other day the Postmaster General said that first class mail wasn't going to be first class anymore; it wasn't going to be overnight; it might be 2 or 3 days.

Because of the problems we have with making the post office financially sufficient, there are ways they could accomplish this, and I've got a bill that allows them to go into other services to expand their revenue base, and there's also about $5 billion that's an issue concerning payments into a health fund that could be resolved.

The post office is almost as American as apple pie. A lot of people will switch to using the Internet to pay their bills and they'll never go back to the post office. I'm afraid that what's been recommended is penny-wise and pound-foolish, and a great American institution that serves many rural people and others without a lot of connectivity and fortune will suffer.

I wish the Postmaster General will reconsider his action. I have a ''Dear Colleague'' being circulated. I hope people will sign on and that we will save the U.S. Postal Service.

AMERICA AT A CROSSROADS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, there are an awful lot of people hurting across America now.

We take up a few suspension bills here that only the Congress could deal with, so it's something we have to do, we're proud to do, important to those organizations in two States. It's important to them; it's important to us.

We have people on the other side of the aisle who come forward and try to make it into a jobs debate when it would seem that some of the best debate would be if all of us, en masse, walked down to the other end of the hall of this building and began to seek to debate the Senate—the Senate leadership, that is—and Democratic Party on why they are so intent on stopping legislation that could put people back to work.

There are many besides the President, in addition to the President, who say this is a do-nothing Congress; and because the Senate does so very little, they give credence to that argument. One need only look to all the bills we have been passing here in the House that could help the economy, would help the economy, would put people back to work, would bring down dramatically the cost of energy, which would bring down inflation and the stagnation and stagflation that's been put in place by this President and, actually, the 2 years prior to this President when our Democratic friends across the aisle controlled Congress and jumped up spending like we could not have anticipated.

Our friends across the aisle correctly pointed out that Republicans in 2006 were spending too much money. They were right in pointing out that we should never be spending $160 billion more than we were taking in. They were right.

As a result of their being right on that and their promises that they would rein in that runaway spending, our friends across the aisle were given the majority in November of 2006.

□ 1710

What followed in 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 under the Democratic majority was runaway spending at a level never even dreamed of, at least on our side of the aisle.

Who would have ever dreamed that the same party that condemned Republicans—correctly—for overspending the amount of money coming into the Federal Treasury by $160 billion would up that ante and overspend by 10 times that much? Over a $1.5 trillion deficit in just 1 year. It is just unfathomable.

One of the things that so concerned me about TARP, not only the bill when I read it, but the fact that it desensitized Americans to just how much $700 billion is and how much it was in late 2008.

It's my belief that if we had not passed TARP and people being so desensitized as to how much $700 billion was, President Obama could never have gotten through what was said to be around an $800 billion porkulus, stimulus, whatever you want to call it, which turned out, by some accounts, to be more like a trillion dollar giveaway program—only if you consider giving away amounts like $500 million to $600 million to Solyndra, that goes bankrupt, as throwing away money.

We have set this country on a course toward ruin. And now the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Geithner, who we recall had time with the International Monetary Fund, as came to light during his unfortunate confirmation hearings, 4 years in a row he was paid by the International Monetary Fund and was said to be an independent contractor, although he manifested control and some level of governance within the International Monetary Fund. He had a job with the International Monetary Fund, but they paid him as an independent contractor, and, therefore, when he signed a document swearing that he would pay all of the taxes due on those amounts that were listed on those four documents, then he was allowed to receive all of the money that should have been paid to the Federal Government in taxes in return for his sworn agreement to pay that tax independently on his own. As we found out during those confirmation hearings, he did not fulfill his oath. He broke his oath. He didn't pay those taxes, and now he's in charge of the Treasury. How amazing.

I've privately had Internal Revenue Service employees tell me how grieved they were to have had someone who did not pay his taxes when he was required to do so by law, went even further and he signed a sworn document that he would take care of it, and didn't, because, despite all the jokes about the IRS and despite there being some people with the IRS who can be a bit brutal at times, there are some wonderful people who work for the Internal Revenue Service who are abundantly fair, want to do the right thing, and have incredibly clean backgrounds.

In fact, the rule as I was given to understand by IRS employees is, if you ever have underpaid your taxes or failed to pay taxes, you're out. You cannot work for the IRS. There have been incidents where an IRS agent has overpaid taxes and then recalled someone giving them cash, and without anyone ever being able to hold them accountable, no one would have ever reported it, but to keep a clean conscience because an IRS agent was so clean and had a conscience and wanted so to abide by honesty and truth and the U.S. law, filed an amended tax return which still allowed a refund coming back. And as a result, their employment was in jeopardy.

Imagine the feeling of Internal Revenue Service employees who have had to throughout their stellar careers at the Internal Revenue Service, had to keep all of their affairs clean and in order, open, honest, to find out they are going to be ruled and governed by someone who misrepresented on signing a sworn document that they would pay taxes that they didn't until someone called it to their attention prior to being appointed to that role. It has to be tough for IRS agents who have had such stellar, honorable careers to have dealt with that.

So what's wrong with having somebody who plays so fast and loose with signing documents, not paying taxes, playing with other people's money in the International Monetary Fund? I would submit to you that we get things, as we have here recently, with our Secretary of the Treasury, who enjoyed spending hundreds of billions of dollars from TARP, who has enjoyed the power of giving away money, paying money. Under TARP, in fact, a provision allowed the Secretary of Treasury to pay more than fair market value if anything—and this is my interpretation—if anything in his opinion, his sole opinion, would somehow, some way, some day help our economy somehow, even if it was helping a foreign economy. That's the mentality at the IMF and apparently the mentality currently at the Treasury Department.

I did not think we could get a worse Treasury Secretary than Hank Paulson until we got our current Treasury Secretary, making the mistakes he has and taking the position he has, and now wanting Americans to come in and bail out foreign countries who are slightly ahead of us on the road to socialism.

If you go back to the Roman Empire, the Romans found that over time when you continue to give people bread and circuses, they come to rely on those. They come to believe that they shouldn't have to work, that the government will give them entertainment and will give them money to use, food that they need, and it materially affects work.

Socialism of a sort was tried in the New Testament church. And on this Earth, on this planet with fallible individuals, it resulted, as it always has and always will, in the Apostle Paul ultimately having to come to the conclusion and issue the order, okay, new rule: if you don't work, you don't eat.

The Pilgrims had a beautiful compact. They were going to bring together all into a common storehouse and share and share alike. That brutal first winter caused them to lose so many. Eventually, they got to a new thing that we now call private property where people would own their own property, produce from it as they wished with full freedom to do so. They could eat what they raised. They could trade what they raised. They could use it as they saw fit. That kind of mentality and that kind of structure that affords private property to people to own and use on their own, or rental property that they can use to produce income, those kind of freedoms have allowed the entrepreneurship that has brought us to the point in history where we are the greatest Nation in the history of mankind, with more freedoms than any in the history of mankind.

□ 1720

But over time we've seen those who fled Europe and England to come to America to start a new life, so many of them fleeing persecution as Christians, coming to a new land where they would not be persecuted as Christians. They came to America. And with private property engendering the kind of thought processes that led our Founders through the guidance—divinely, I believe—that they got, as pointed to by so many of the Founders, we got our Constitution. We have a structure of government from Founders who did not trust government; who wanted to make it as difficult as possible to pass laws. Even once they were passed, they could be vetoed. Struck down. They wanted it difficult. They saw gridlock as being a good thing. The more difficult it was to pass laws, the less chance the government would interfere in personal property rights and personal freedoms of the individual.

Europe after World War II seemed to move into this socialist type of thinking where the government will take care of people. Some in this country after World War II for 60 years, going on 70 years now, have been pushing an agenda to get us to a socialist state, where we take on the attributes of those systems that have repeatedly failed over and over in time.

I was recently in Israel. I went to a former kibbutz. Those were truly communes. They had real communism there. Share and share alike. But socialism, communism, it can sound so nice. Everyone bring in to the common storehouse. Share and share alike. It sounds nice, but it never works.

And I saw that so clearly in an exchange program to the Soviet Union back in 1973, when it really was the Soviet Union. And on visiting a collective farm, a socialist farm, you look out, the fields did not look very good. I have worked on farms and ranches, and those did not look productive. But I was surprised to see in the middle of the morning the farmers were sitting in the shade in the center of the village. I spoke some Russian back then and asked as nicely as I could without meaning to insult because I really was curious, When do you work out in the fields? And they laughed. And one of them that seemed to be the most boisterous of the group said, I make the same number of rubles if I'm out there or I'm here in the shade. So I'm here in the shade.

That's socialism. That's why it fails.

And we've seen the riots in Greece as the government tried to be responsible and say, Look, we're going broke. We're out of business. We have got to stop spending money we don't have. We've got to rein it in. And people have rioted and say, No, no, no, don't cut back what I'm getting from the government, not understanding if it's not there, your government will eventually be taken over by some type of radical form—at least historically that's what often happens—and some dictator, which they would hope would be a benevolent dictator, would take over, get the rioting under control, and set the government on a course.

We saw a government after World War I in Germany trying to work toward a process. Economic times were tough. So a little guy with a mustache ends up actually getting elected to office and then eventually taking over the country. We know the results of that—at least most of us do. There are some, like Ahmadinejad, that thought the Holocaust never happened. But it did.

So why in the world, when we see how that works out and we see that a country will not accept its own responsibility, as incredible as the people can be of a country like Greece—you meet people from Greece, you love them. They're just great folks. As beautiful as a country can be, as rich a history as a country can have like Greece, you want to embrace them. Understandable.

But when a people such as those in Greece want to continue down a bankrupt course and you see them heading for the edge of a cliff and they say, Come join hands with us, it doesn't make me feel any better to hear people like Secretary Geithner say, figuratively speaking, Let's join hands as they jump off the cliff and take us with them. But we're told, Well, gee, some of the European countries, they'll feel better about trying to bail out Greece if they know that the United States will come in if things don't work out and bail them out.

We have had such radicalized spending that's been out of control. And until we get that under control, we're of very little use to most of the world economically. The best thing we could do for Greece, for all of Europe, is get our spending under control, come back from a point of strength financially, show them by example how you get out of your problems, and then the world will be better off financially because you see repeatedly in history when a country gets in trouble financially, it opens the door to dictators or a radical form of a government such as we see in Iran today. That wasn't entirely economic.

We do recall—I was in the Army at the time—when President Carter failed to support our ally, the Shah. I never met the man, but apparently historically not a warm fuzzy fellow. Was not fine with the folks in Iran. But using very poor judgment, President Carter hailed the Ayatollah Khomeini in his return to Iran as a man of peace; and as a result that man of peace, as President Carter hailed him, thousands and thousands and thousands of Americans have given their lives or had their lives taken from them.

There are prices that are paid by bad judgment; and this country has paid a price for bad judgment, and now we have more efforts at bad judgment. That would include telling the world that as we've overspent more than a trillion dollars more than what we have coming in, Don't worry, we'll come bail you out. I was surprised to find out this summer that we're not printing money to get us out of our problem. No, we're not printing money. I was surprised to find out—because I've said that before. I think we're just printing money to try to pay off our debt. That causes runaway inflation. I was corrected. And I stand corrected.

We're not printing money to get out of our financial dilemma. No, I was told we're not printing this money. We're just adding ones and zeroes in a computer to say that we've got more money. We're not even printing it anymore. How irresponsible is that? There is a price that will be paid for that kind of irresponsibility, and it is very tragic that it may well be paid by our children and grandchildren. It is the height of irresponsibility to leave that to future generations.

And then to have our Treasury Secretary say, Let's go bail these folks out. Well, it's not really us. It's the International Monetary Fund.

□ 1730

It is kind of reminiscent of President Obama saying, We're going to go get Qadhafi, we're going to help these so-called ''rebels,'' but we're not actually going to do it. No, we're not going to do it; NATO will do it. We started a little bit out there, but now it's not the United States at all; it's NATO.

So we checked, and we find out 65 percent of NATO's military is United States Armed Services. Oh, no, it wasn't NATO—much. Sixty-five percent was the United States. It was the United States. And now the Secretary of the Treasury wants us to do this with countries that are failing and yet still unwilling to embrace the problem they've created.

And then we're told there's such great news, that unemployment has now dropped from 9.1 percent to 8.6 percent, or 9.0 to 8.6 percent, and we're supposed to feel like that is such a wonderful thing. I'm not a huge fan of The New York Times, but there was an article in December 2's New York Times, an editorial entitled, ''Been Down So Long.'' I think it's worth entering into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD by its reading.

The unemployment rate dropped to 8.6 percent in November from 9 percent in October in the jobs report released Friday. The economy added 120,000 jobs and job growth was revised upward in September and October.

That's better than rising unemployment and falling payrolls. Yet, properly understood, the new figures reveal more about the depth of distress in the job market than about real improvement in job prospects.

Most of the decline in November's unemployment rate was not because jobless people found new work. Rather, it is because 315,000 people dropped out of the work force, a reflection of extraordinarily weak demand by employers for new workers. It is also a sign of socioeconomic decline, of wasted resources and untapped potential, the human equivalent of boarded-up Main Streets and shuttered factories.

The job growth numbers also come with caveats. More jobs were created than economists expected, but with the job market so weak for so long, that is a low bar. It would take nearly 11 million new jobs to replace the ones that were lost during the recession and to keep up with the growth in the working-age population in the last four years. To fill that gap would require 275,000 new jobs a month for the next five years. That's not in the cards. Even with the better-than-expected job growth in the past three months, the economy added only 143,000 jobs on average.

And most of those new jobs are low-end ones. In November, for example, big job-growth areas included retail sales, bartending and temporary services. Teachers and other public employees continued to lose jobs, and job growth in construction and manufacturing were basically flat. Indeed, work—once the pathway to a rising standard of living—has become for many a route to downward mobility. Motoko Rich reported in The Times recently on new research showing that most people who lost their jobs in recent years now make less and have not maintained their lifestyles, with many experiencing what they describe as drastic—and probably irreversible—declines in income.

Against that backdrop, the modest improvement in the jobs report, even if sustained in the months to come, would not be enough to repair the damage from the recession and its slow-growth aftermath. Help is needed, yet Congress is tied in knots over even basic recovery measures, like extending federal unemployment benefits and the temporary payroll tax cut.

Meanwhile, the increasing likelihood of a recession in Europe, or any other setback, could easily derail the weak American economy, sending unemployment back up to double-digit recession levels.

Now, we've been hearing a great deal lately from the President and from Members of Congress on the Democratic side about how we just needed to extend this wonderful payroll tax holiday. Well, as the person who came up with the idea of a payroll tax holiday 3 years ago, I'm offended at the use of the term ''payroll tax holiday'' to cut 6.2 percent Social Security tax down to 4.2 Social Security tax when it has not increased jobs, it has not helped jobs.

We're talking $30, $40, $50, $60, when the payroll tax holiday I was proposing was a true holiday. It would have allowed every worker in America not to pay any Social Security tax, any Medicare tax, any income tax for at least 2 months. It would not have hurt Social Security, the trust fund, and it would not have hurt the Medicare system because it was totally paid for.

My bill said that money that was leftover—which was available at the time before our Secretary of the Treasury just started giving it away—that

money would be moved over and would cover the Social Security trust fund monies that were necessary so the tax would not be missed. It would cover the monies that were supposed to go in to cover Medicare. And so the only way that money would be missed is that Secretary Geithner would not have been able to give it away and support those four-to-one Democrats or Republicans that are executives on Wall Street and who reside in controlling our investment banks.

And that's a shock to some people when they actually do their research and find out Wall Street is four-to-one Democrat over Republican because they've been listening to Democratic leaders for years talk about those sorry fat-cat Republicans on Wall Street. Well, they hadn't done their research either; or if they had, they would have been very disingenuous in so saying.

That money—as I and many others contended—that was in TARP and was in the slush fund of the Secretary of the Treasury would have been far better used by those people who earned it, by just saying you get every dime back that you were paying in this month and next month. And I also knew privately in my heart that if we could have that payroll tax holiday, a true payroll tax holiday for 2 months—and initially I said a year.

But if we could have had that for even 2 months, then I knew taxpayers across the country would see—many, most for the first time—just how much money they were sending for the Federal Government to use, and they would demand better from their Congress, from their President. They would demand better from the bureaucrats in Washington that get to the end of the year and see they've got money left and rush out and throw it away, spend it on whatever they can. They would have demanded better government, and they would have gotten it or they would have fired everybody at the next election and gotten better. But we didn't get a true payroll tax holiday.

I was very honored to have a chance to explain the concept of a payroll tax holiday when President Obama came to our Republican Conference back the first of the year in 2009. As I explained to him, this is immediate; it immediately helps the economy. Moody's said the tax holiday idea—a true tax holiday, not this bastardization of one—the true tax holiday would have increased the 1-year GDP more than any other proposal, more than any other Democratic proposal or any other Republican proposal. And as I explained to the President, we pass this and you sign it—and if you just say you are willing to sign it, we would get it passed. If you sign it on a Thursday, then on Friday all of that money, all of the income tax, Social Security, Medicare tax, all of that will be in the check of the person that owned it.

□ 1740

It doesn't have to go through Washington, and Washington take its cut out and dribbles out $30, $40, $50, $60 to the worker. They got it all. And then, to know that was going to be paid for by stopping the giveaways to the auto companies, to the investment banks, to the fat cats, as the President calls them, that was what I wanted to see. And that money would go into the hands of the people that earned it, and then they would have decided.

We did a survey in our district about what people would use their money for. Look at your check. Think about it for 2 months. What would you use it for? And we weren't talking about $20, $30, $40, $50, $60 like this President has. We were talking about, $2,000 $3,000 $5,000 $6,000. And when people did that, they told us, for example, we've got a gas guzzler, and gas is so high now we can barely pay our gasoline bill, but we're underwater on our car. We owe more than the car is worth so we can't afford to trade it in. So we're stuck.

You let us have our money for 2 months, we'll buy a new car. And the people in America would have decided which car companies deserved to be bailed out, and they would do that by deciding which car they would buy. And you wouldn't have had to have an auto task force secretively meeting in the White House and an auto czar and all those folks breaching the Constitution, breaching bankruptcy law, and deciding which dealers got to keep their dealership and which would have had them arbitrarily yanked away, only years down the road to find out, oops, we made a mistake on that. Oh, well, they're gone. Too bad. We could have avoided all that.

And with all the effort that was undertaken to try to shore up the real estate market, we had people telling us, look, we got behind on our mortgage payments when gas hit $4 a gallon. You let us have the $6,000 we'd get to keep over 2 months, we'll catch up on our mortgage. We'll catch up on the other things. You don't need to have some big financial bailout situation because we'll take care of it ourselves if we have our own money.

Then again, to know that that would have been paid for by the TARP money, and Social Security would not have been hurt. They would have gotten all the tax money that would have come in. It would have just come from TARP, instead of the individual taxpayers. And to know that Medicare would not have been hurt, because that money would have gone directly into Medicare, not from the taxpayer for 2 months, but from TARP. That would have been the right thing to do.

If you really want a stimulus, let the people that earned it spend it. They'll know better than the people here in Washington did.

And it didn't pass. And President Obama has chosen to take the name ''payroll tax holiday'' that I was using 3 years ago and use it for a 2 percent tax. Why? Because it will look good for the election. Why? Because it looks to be so grand because, see, you can tell people that are working that, gee, the President's got you a petty $30 extra in your check, and these Republicans don't want you to keep that.

That's not true. We do. But we also, at the same time, don't want Social Security not to have the money that it needs. What the President is not telling people, as he has pitted those who are working now against our seniors, and to the one group saying, hey, workers, I want you to have that little extra 30 bucks in your pay check, and Republicans don't want you to have it. And then going to seniors and saying, you've got to worry about those Republicans because they're not going to take care of Social Security, never bothering to mention that when he says we're allowing you to keep this money in your check now, it means that money will not be in the Social Security Trust Fund, not even the IOU will be in the Social Security Trust Fund to take care of our seniors.

We were told when this President was running that he was a uniter, not a divider. And yet we see in this campaign ploy that working people are being pitted against our seniors. We've seen class warfare. In essence, if you see somebody has more than you do, you need to want it and go after it. After all, that basically seems to be the one common thread running through all the Occupy Wall Street, Washington, all the Occupy groups.

We had them come through Washington screaming in the hallways today. It wasn't enough that they're trying to disrupt a beautiful park people used to enjoy. Why? Because they have no regard for private property. Why? Because they've become envious and jealous.

I can say that because I'm repeatedly told in the analyses that I have less assets than most people. One time I had the least assets of anybody from Texas in Congress.

My wife and I cashed out all our assets, except our house, so I could run for Congress, so I could try to make a difference. And I am not jealous of anyone who has more than me. I thank God we have a country where people can be entrepreneurs. And I've accepted that as a role I can play in helping try to do that.

So it breaks my heart when I see a President dividing America with class warfare, encouraging envy and jealousy. You ought to want what they have and demand that you get theirs. Leaders coming out and saying they fully embrace the Occupy movement, it's a great thing, when even the Occupy folks can't explain anything other than they hate the people that got more than they do.

Then there's a report—I don't often cite CNBC, but cnbc.com, more Americans are going abroad for economic opportunities. It says that the State Department now estimates that 6.3 million Americans are studying or working abroad, the highest number on record.

We're told that 70 percent of Americans, adults, believe that their children will not have as much opportunity and freedom as they've had. That's why I ran for Congress. That should not happen. We can change that.

But I'm mystified when I think about the record spending in 2007 that was followed by additional record spending in 2008, under the guidance of Speaker PELOSI and Leader REID, because we know all spending originates in Congress. This is where budgets are passed. It's where appropriations are passed. If money is appropriated, it has to be appropriated from here.

In 2007, 2008, I never heard anybody, Democrat or Republican, complain that those budgets didn't spend enough money, each year going beyond what we had spent the year before. And so, then to have a new President come in in 2009, and with Speaker PELOSI and Leader REID still at the reins, jump up spending an extra trillion dollars, and then come before Congress and the country and say, look, you're just going to have to raise taxes to get up to where this extra trillion dollars is that I've already spent.

Why couldn't we just say, Nobody complained in 2007 or 2008 about too little money being spent. Let's go back to the Pelosi-Reid budget that was so much more than the Republican budgets of 2005 and 2006. We'll go back to those. It means we drop $1 trillion in spending. Boom, there you go. We didn't a need a supercommittee. There you are.

Another easy solution that isn't talked about enough, but this House voted to cut our own legislative budget 5 percent last year and 6.4 percent the year we're in. That amount of money, though significant to most of us, is a drop in the bucket when you look at the overall Federal budget. And the way that that should be used to make a difference is for this House, since we've done it to ourselves, now having the moral authority to say to every Federal department, every agency, we cut ourselves 5 percent last year, you're cutting yourself 5 percent next year.

□ 1750

And the year after that, since we've already done it, you're cutting yourself another 6.4 percent; an 11 percent cut. And there you are. We didn't need a supercommittee. You've got your cuts.

I am so grateful to Chairman PAUL RYAN. We had a good discussion back in July. Since he's been in Congress like I have, the four terms I have been in Congress, each time I filed a zero-baseline budget bill that says no more automatic increases for every Department. No automatic increases. It ought to be an easy concept.

But we're living under the rules that were established for CBO back in 1974, a very, very liberal Congress that ended our participation in Southeast Asia. We should have ended it because we had not given our soldiers, sailors, airmen—we had not given them the go-ahead to win that war. We had tied their hands.

When I hear some people say we ought to remember the lessons from Vietnam—and then it turns out they didn't get the lesson. The lesson is that unless you are willing to commit 100 percent of the resources and give the rules of engagement that allow our military to win, they should never be sent. It is outrageous to have our military in foreign countries with rules of engagement that don't allow them to adequately protect themselves. That's the lesson that should have been learned from Vietnam. We could have won the war.

SAM JOHNSON can tell you, the leaders in Hanoi, as the POWs were taken out, one was laughing: You stupid Americans. If you had just bombed us one more week—like the 2 weeks they had before—we would have had to surrender unconditionally. They could have done that years before, saved thousands and thousands of American lives in Vietnam, but we didn't commit to win it.

We shouldn't send anybody anywhere unless we're committed to win. It costs too much money. But even more than that, it costs the greatest American treasure, and that's American lives.

We are in an economic crisis; and as Peter Marshall as chaplain of the U.S. Senate prayed in the 1940s: What we call crises, God sees as opportunities.

It turns out, those of us in the House, those of us in the Senate, even the President, have an incredible opportunity. We'll never be called the greatest generation; but 100 years from now, if we bring spending down under control, people can look back and say: Wow, they had about 60 years, 65 years of uncontrolled spending. It grew and grew and grew. And the people that were in government then did something that most have never been able to do when they get to that point, when nearly 50 percent are getting more back than they are paying in. They were able to restrain their spending, get control of their financial destiny, and we got another 200 years of the greatest Nation in history.

The other is possible. They could look back and say: Wow, the United States followed the tried-and-true path to the dustbin of history. They spent more than they had. People found that they could get Congress to vote them money out of the Treasury. And once again, that socialist concept failed, and the Nation failed. The Nation that provided for that brief time of Camelot, a time of hope, relative peace, evolving toward more perfect freedom, was lost because of financial irresponsibility.

People have heard me so many times quote Ben Franklin. But it's easy to see from Proverbs, it's easy to see from speeches of people like Ben Franklin, our problem is a selfish problem—anytime we spend more money than we have with complete and utter disregard, gross negligent disregard, even intentional disregard for the future of our children and one day their children and one day their children, complete disregard, we want to spend it on ourselves now.

It's time to tell Greece, to tell everyone, let's hold hands and do this together, not jump over the cliff by spending good money after bad. Let's do it by not spending money we don't have. And there's no way a country would not be upgraded when S&P and the world see, these people are really serious about not spending more than they have coming in.

This is a brave country. They know how to make commitments. And that would get us back to having true freedom and not having the American citizens have to come begging to Congress, Please, please, throw us more morsels. Instead, Congress would be a body that inspired greatness and inspired potential again and wouldn't lure young women into the rut of having children out of wedlock because they're bored with high school. It would, instead, give them incentives and encouragement: Reach your potential; finish high school; go to college.

Let's have incentives not to stay out of work. Let's have incentives to get back to work. Let's have incentives to sell our products around the world. You do that by decreasing the tariff that we put on American-made goods by every American company. That would help get us on the road back to financial independence.

One other thing: When you have been blessed as the greatest country in the world when it comes to having your own energy, we ought to use it. We have it. We've been blessed with it. It's time to use it. And I would humbly suggest that this President get out of the way, stop preventing us from using our own energy, and allow us to become an independent and great Nation again.

With that, Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, December 6, 2011.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
The Speaker, U.S. Capitol, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on December 6, 2011 at 2:04 p.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 384.

With best wishes, I am
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.