

agreement instigated by Republicans, which we supported. Let us not forget, Mr. Speaker, that it was Republican hostage taking of the debt limit in 2011 that brought about the Budget Control Act, which created the sequester.

Speaker BOEHNER himself, after the deal creating the sequester was struck, said about the Budget Control Act, which included the sequester which faces us at the end of this month:

When you look at this final agreement that we came to with the White House, I got 98 percent of what I wanted.

Now, let me again stress that many of us voted for this. For the past 2 years, however, the Republican majority in this House has had our country lurching from one fiscal crisis to another. Repeatedly, they have threatened to default on our obligations, shut down government operations, and to slash spending in an irrational, meat-ax way.

They have shaken the confidence of our people and of all those throughout the world who look to America for security and stability. They have undermined, in my view, the growth of economy and jobs—and that's the view of CBO as well—and have put in question our commitment to investing in our defense and in job creation.

In short, the Republican majority, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, in this House has given us the most chaotic and confidence-destroying leadership I have seen in my 32 years of service in this House. And now, many of them suggest the sequester that is scheduled to occur on March 1 is an acceptable way forward. Mr. Speaker, I will not take the time to quote the number of Republicans who have said that, but I believe all of them are profoundly wrong.

Sequestration will have a devastating impact on both domestic programs and on our national security. If the sequestration were to take effect, it would mean 70,000 children dropped from the Head Start program; loan guarantees to small businesses would be cut by as much as \$540 million; and just as we are engaged in a national discussion about how to address mental health, up to 373,000 people suffering from mental illness could go untreated.

□ 1220

That is not the President's vision for America, nor is it the vision of Democrats in this House. Now, here we are at the 11th hour once again.

First, House Republicans walked away from the Simpson-Bowles recommendation to adopt a balanced way forward; then they refused to compromise on a balanced alternative to the sequester, starting the clock of sequestration. Then we came down to the wire on the fiscal cliff and delayed sequestration for 2 months, and here we are, once again, with Republicans continuing to cast blame on others.

Mr. Speaker, the blame game must end by us and by our Republican colleagues. The issue is not who is at

fault. As the previous speaker indicated, we're all at fault; we're all responsible; we all serve in this House. Many of us voted for policies that spend money. Some of us voted for policies to pay for what we bought. Others voted against policies for paying for what we bought. Here we are, once again, on the brink of a fiscal meltdown.

It's a game that has no winners, only losers, like the 14,000 teachers, teacher assistants, and other education staff who would lose their jobs; or the 125,000 families who would be at risk of losing their homes when our rental assistance program is cut; or the thousands of civilian defense personnel, in my district alone, and throughout this country who would be furloughed for up to 22 days during the year; and the hundreds of thousands around the country across every service branch, not to mention the tens of thousands of defense contractors critical to our national security, who would be at risk of losing their jobs.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, we need to get serious and work together to avert a sequester that could stop our recovery in its tracks and defeat our common goal of helping America's economy grow and its businesses create jobs.

Reducing spending in a rational way is important for us to do, let there be no mistake. Considering additional revenues will be essential—every bipartisan group has said that—if we are to get on a sustainable financial footing. The sequester, however, Mr. Speaker, is dangerous and unacceptable. We must stop simply fiddling while the sequester's flames threaten to burn our economy, our national security, and our people.

Mr. Speaker, we have no time to waste. I would urge the majority leader to bring a bill to the floor today that would comply with what Mr. LANKFORD, who chairs the Republican Study Committee, said that we ought to pass things that we think the Senate can pass, not just messages, not just political spin, but we ought to pass things that can actually be passed through the United States Senate and signed by the President.

Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM has said:

We have our fingerprints as Republicans on this proposal, on this sequestration idea. It was the President's idea, according to Bob Woodward's book. But we as the Republican Party agreed to it.

Let's make law and make policy so that America has the confidence that its Congress can work. It must work. America needs it to work.

AVIATION

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

Mr. POMPEO. Mr. Speaker, when I go around in Kansas and talk to folks and talk to them about a business that supports 1.2 million American jobs and over \$150 billion of wealth creation

across the U.S. economy and ask, "What do you think a President would do if they knew about an industry like that?" they'd all say the same thing folks all across the country would say. They'd say that the President ought to encourage that, ought to thank the people that work in that industry, and ought to promote that industry all across the world, a great American-manufactured product doing great things in America.

Yet, that industry, the general aviation industry, is used by our President as a rhetorical punching bag. Everywhere he goes, he talks about corporate fat-cat jet owners and those rich, wealthy people flying around in corporate airplanes.

Well, I know what this industry does. I came from this industry. I know precisely who these people are. When you use language like that and you talk about an American manufacturing industry in that way, you're talking about welders, you're talking about union mechanics, and you're talking about all the support people that work at fixed-base operations all across the country. You're talking about good, hardworking Americans, not corporate fat-cat jet owners.

Yet this President continues in the same way that he has. I had hoped that I wouldn't have to come back and talk about it again, but I anticipate that tonight, from this very Chamber, we'll hear about those same corporate fat-cat jet owners yet again.

The general aviation industry doesn't ask for a handout, and it doesn't need what Detroit received. It only asks that a President acknowledge and recognize the importance of this industry. It creates aircraft that are used by small businessowners all across the Nation to get to places they need to be. Every week, I fly on commercial aircraft from here back to Wichita, Kansas. It's no easy task. If you want to get to two or three of your suppliers or four or five of your customers in a day located all throughout the heartland, the most efficient tool to use to do that is a general aviation airplane.

And, of course, we know the President understands that, Mr. Speaker. He flies around in the nicest personal aircraft in the history of the world, actually built in Wichita, Kansas. And government employees use general aviation aircraft to travel all around the country. They do so because it is an efficient means of conducting their business.

Now, when the President talks about these corporate fat-cat jet owners, he's doing so because he says he wants to close a loophole, he wants to generate more money coming to Washington, D.C., and he talks about this subsidy. We looked long and hard to find out what subsidy it was he was referring to. Frankly, we think it is a depreciation schedule—a depreciation schedule—something that every asset in America is subject to. Yet, somehow,

he has picked on this particular depreciation schedule as offensive and antithetical to the American way of life.

Mr. President, the revenue that is generated in 1 year if we eliminated the provision about which we think you're speaking, Mr. Speaker, would generate enough revenue to run the government for a single day—1 day. Yet, Mr. Speaker, the President continues to use this language of class warfare against an industry that has created so many tens of thousands of jobs all across our country. It is unexplainable why anyone would be critical of this industry.

The President has also proposed a new tax, a general aviation fee, of \$100 per flight segment, which would require an entire new bureaucracy to implement and to execute. It is incomprehensible to me why anyone would think that was the right approach.

Mr. Speaker, I have invited the President of the United States to come to Wichita, Kansas, to see Beechcraft, to see Cessna, and to see Learjet and to see all the suppliers and all of the people who work so hard to make these airplanes. He has not taken me up on that yet, Mr. Speaker. I urge that he do so. But, sadly, if he continues to decline and continues to talk about this industry in the way that he does, he will not suffer, but tens of thousands of Americans who work on these airplanes all across the country will.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the President will change his direction, change his course of action, and recognize the value of this important industry.

THE CRISIS OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. I rise to speak about yet another phony, created crisis, and that would be the crisis of the United States Postal Service, which we have heard is hemorrhaging—hemorrhaging—money.

Well, it's kind of interesting. If you look back since in 2006, Congress forced the United States Postal Service to prepay health care retirement benefits for people who have not yet been born who might some day go to work for the Postal Service. Now, if you had trouble following that, I'd understand it. No one else in America, no other business, no other agency of government, as far as I know, no entity in the world is prepaying the anticipated health care costs of people who haven't yet been born, let alone if they're a specific entity, people who haven't yet been born and might go to work for them some day and might retire and might then need health care, but we're making the Postal Service do that.

Now, I'm not, but the Congress assembled deemed that, snuck it into one of those midnight special bills in a lame-duck session of Congress. So, now the hemorrhaging.

Well, they're hemorrhaging money, hemorrhaging money. Oh, my God, we must do away with them. That's basically the Republican line here. They, so far, have done nothing to either unshackle the post office so it can deal with some of these problems, and, in fact, have encouraged the most destructive instincts of the idiot who is running the Postal Service, who should be fired by the President, to go to 5-day delivery and to close all the sorting centers.

□ 1230

Under the plan of the Postmaster General, it will take longer for a first-class letter to go from my town of Springfield across the river to the city of Eugene than it took Thomas Jefferson to mail a letter from Monticello to the Continental Congress. Yes, really, that's what he's planning. Now, that's not going to cause a bunch of people to abandon the Postal Service—of course not, that will help their revenue. No, it won't.

With this benign neglect, the indifference, the refusal to act over here in the House, we're watching the Postal Service spiral down the drain, both the good and the bad of the Postal Service.

If you didn't make them prepay health care retirement benefits for people who haven't yet been born, who haven't yet gone to work for them, over the last 6 years, instead of saying they lost \$41,200,000,000, actually, it would come down to about \$9 billion. They prepaid \$32 billion of health care retirement benefits, \$32 billion. That is by far the large majority of their red ink. Just about 80 percent of their red ink is due to them being forced to do something that no other entity on Earth is being forced to do.

If you want to look for a phony, manufactured crisis, this is it. Yes, they still have a small problem. That would be about a billion and a half dollars a year. If we unshackled them a bit, let them get into some new lines of business—which the Republicans are refusing to do—if we allowed them to set rates rationally—they've got a couple of lines of business as they call them that make money, and they have others that lose money. But they're allowed only to increase rates—even if it is losing money to deliver junk mail—by a cost-of-living increase, which it would obviously be less than a penny on junk mail delivery costs. The same on first-class.

If we allowed them to set their rates reasonably, if we took away this mandate of prefunding retirement health care costs for people who haven't yet been born, who haven't yet gone to work for them, and if we settled up on the old dispute over their overpayment for the civil service retirees who got rolled into the FERS system with the Postal Service, actually we could have a viable entity and one that would continue to serve America into the next century.

The post office pioneered optical scanning. They used to have some vi-

sionary leadership over there. They need new leadership. They need to be unshackled by Congress. They need to have unfair burdens lifted. But they don't need to be destroyed. That's where we're headed, towards the destruction of the Postal Service at this point in time. Some say young people don't use it, no one needs it, who needs it. They're delivering packages for FedEx and UPS to places where FedEx and UPS doesn't want to go. They've partnered with FedEx and UPS. They deliver packages for small businesses and with their one-price package that FedEx and UPS can't afford, which are vital to thousands of small businesses in my State and millions nationwide. They deliver prescriptions. Yes, they deliver prescriptions on Saturdays for veterans and others.

We need to fix the Postal Service, not destroy it.

LET'S RECTIFY THE FISCAL SITUATION

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

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address that issue which will have a significant fiscal impact on the economic well-being of this country in just 16 days. That is the issue of sequestration.

I have to agree with the minority whip from Maryland, who earlier spoke today that it's time to stop the blame game. There is no need to blame any more about this terrible fiscal policy which we are about to sustain.

You see, across-the-board cuts that the looming sequester will implement in a couple of weeks are bad policy and a result of bad politics. I believe that we must cut spending, and I rise here in support of careful, targeted cuts.

It is a shame that 850 jobs will be lost in Florida schools while we build a \$750,000 soccer field in Guantanamo Bay for terrorists. It's a shame that more than 26,000 special education students will see cuts to their education in Florida while government agencies are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on conferences in Las Vegas, Nevada. And it is a shame that more than 35,000 health care workers in Florida are projected to lose their jobs while more than \$115 billion was lost in improper payments from this government in just one year.

We must ask ourselves, for every \$1 that we are going to spend, is it worth mortgaging and borrowing our children's and our grandchildren's future for 41 cents for every one of those dollars. I submit to you that it is not.

Let's rectify this situation. I urge the Senate to take up the House-passed legislation, which would make targeted cuts to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse so that important essential government programs will not lose their funding.

The American people not only demand and deserve transparency in