

SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, sequestration is a self-inflicted wound that really does not have to happen.

I hate to make my Tea Party friends uncomfortable by using a dirty word, but with a little compromise we can get this thing passed. If Tea Party Republicans choose not to compromise, sequestration will arbitrarily take \$85 billion out of our economy, lowering our GDP and harming our economic recovery.

We shouldn't sacrifice our economic well-being because Republicans are unwilling to vote for one penny in new contributions from their billionaire friends. Republicans continue to stand up for the billionaires. They continue to stand up for the oil companies and all of the other powerful interests out there that are making money hand over foot while middle class Americans are asked to shoulder the burden of the Tea Party obsession of cutting government.

Now, there is a big difference, ladies and gentlemen, between cutting government and cutting services that people need and depend on. There is a big difference between having a less costly government versus not having a government to do the things that people need to be done. Let's take, for instance, the Defense budget. Last week, at a constituents' meeting, Senator JOHN MCCAIN said that these sequester cuts could significantly undermine military programs.

"We are facing a situation where our national security is at risk," Senator MCCAIN said, adding that furloughs could affect as many as 49,000 military and defense jobs in Arizona.

I'll tell you, in Georgia, what's going to happen is that 37,000 civilian Department of Defense employees will be furloughed, reducing gross pay by \$190 million. Army base funding would be cut by \$233 million, and funding for Air Force operations would be cut by \$5 million. This is in the State of Georgia. This is for this current fiscal year. Can you imagine that much money coming out of the economy and its not having an impact on the overall economy? It certainly will.

Let's take all of those who travel. You go to the airport. You rely on the air traffic controllers to make sure that the planes are situated and are flying safely so that nobody is going to bump into each other up there in the sky. You're dependent on your TSA personnel to check and make sure that nobody is armed when one gets on the plane. All of those services that you take for granted will be cut if we continue to embark upon this self-inflicted wound of sequestration.

A balanced approach to deficit reduction will help support the American people through job creation, economic growth, and a strong middle class while

responsibly reducing our Nation's debt. House Democrats have proposed balanced solutions that reflect what the American people voted for in November. Instead of considering these or any other proposals, the Tea Party Republicans continue their strategy to obstruct the President so that they can blame him and the Democrats when the economy goes bad. They continue to play politics with this Nation's economy so that they can be well positioned in the upcoming midterm elections in 2014. This is very reckless behavior.

We have 3 more days before sequestration takes effect. Instead of dealing with the sequestration, instead of dealing with gun control, instead of dealing with immigration, instead of dealing with a budget resolution for next year, today, this House of Representatives is dealing with a resolution. So this do-nothing Congress continues, and the American people will suffer.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 9 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Loving God, thank You for giving us another day.

Be with each of us that we might be our very best and prove ourselves worthy of Your love and Your grace. Be with the Members of this people's House in their work and deliberations this day, that they might merit the trust of the American people and manifest the strength of our democracy to the nations of the world.

Without You, O Lord, we can do nothing. With You and in You, we can establish a world of peace, goodness, and justice now and into the future.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. HIGGINS led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

SEQUESTRATION

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, we have just 3 days until the sequestration cuts take effect. Instead of being here in Washington working to reach an agreement, the President is off again on the campaign trail. Giving speeches in front of adoring crowds is not going to solve this problem.

In divided government, we don't reach compromise by talking past each other. We come to solutions when we sit down and talk to one another. Obviously, we can't do that when the President isn't even here.

We can find more sensible ways to save billions of dollars. In fact, tomorrow I'm chairing an Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee hearing looking at innovative solutions to combat waste and fraud in Medicare and Medicaid. GAO tells us these programs make \$65 billion in improper payments. Outside groups tell us it can be a nearly \$1 billion-a-year problem. We can also eliminate wasteful programs like the HHS Secretary's duplicative slush fund.

We must get our spending problem under control, but we'll never get a better plan than sequestration if we can't sit down and talk and work together.

SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that we need to reduce the