

floor knows that, if we pursued that policy, it would be damaging to America, to the military, as was just brought up, and to our Nation. Every Republican leader has said that not increasing the debt limit is an alternative that ought to be pursued. Yet, we have this vote. That resolution has already been rejected by the Senate, and it stands no chance of surviving a Presidential veto. It is, frankly, simply political cover and a waste of our time.

The keys to any budget solution, Mr. Speaker, must be compromise and a seriousness of purpose. Americans want to see that seriousness, and they want to see much, much, much less of the political gamesmanship, some of which we will practice today, unfortunately.

Republicans and Democrats, I believe, in looking beyond a small fix and toward negotiating a long-term solution, will find that we actually agree on many things. We agree that gradual reforms are better than sudden ones. We agree that sequestration is not a sensible approach to achieving deficit savings.

Let me say as an aside: no matter how many times it is said on this floor that the sequester is President Obama's policy, it will not make it fact. It is dead, flat wrong.

The sequester is incorporated in the Republican budget that was passed in this House just some months ago. No Democrat voted for that budget, because they believed the sequester—as the previous speaker said, but he voted for the budget which implemented the sequester—is harming our national security and harming our domestic security and harming our economy and harming the growth of jobs.

In fact, sequestration—which I point out to people starts with “s,” which stands for “stupid”—is a terrible approach that was never meant to come into practice. Many of us all agree that, in replacing the sequester, we will need to find savings through revenue policies and reforms to mandatory spending that could pay dividends for the budget and the economy in the future.

The key to compromise, of course, is balance. Every American understands that. Every husband, every wife, every parent understands that compromise is essential within a family, within a business, within a community, and, yes, within a country. The key to compromise is balance, which is what both the Domenici-Rivlin and Bowles-Simpson bipartisan commissions embraced as a framework for agreement.

A balanced compromise is critical because Democrats and Republicans are going to have to work together to pass any agreement through both Chambers and have it signed into law. Democrats are ready to make the tough decisions necessary to set our fiscal house in order, but we have made it clear that we will not allow the most vulnerable Americans to carry the burden of deficit reduction, and it is not necessary that they do so.

Our goal remains a balanced approach to deficit reduction and an agreement that restores certainty to our economy. My Republican colleagues and friends said much about restoring certainty, particularly in the 2010 election. Unfortunately, for our economy, for our businesses, for our people, we have done anything but restore certainty. In fact, we have governed by crisis—30 days, 90 days, 180 days, a year. Arbitrary deadlines were put in place, which brought the country to the brink of default and to the brink of closing down government. In fact, of course, just recently, we did, in fact, shut down the government.

Now, my Republican colleagues say we wanted that to happen on our side of the aisle. Ironically, 198 Democrats voted to open the government. That is to say, every Democrat who was voting on this floor voted to open government. Of my colleagues who say they didn't want to shut down government, 144 of them voted to keep the government shut down, Mr. Speaker, and 87 of them voted to open up the government.

So the American public is not fooled as to who wanted to shut down government, but it was a bad policy, and it led to uncertainty in our economy. Reaching an agreement only for this fiscal year, in addition, will mean more left to do, more of sequester left to replace, and more confidence to instill.

I hope the conferees will take a broader view and will send us a budget worthy of this Nation, worthy of the Nation it will serve—one that reflects our priorities to grow our economy, creates jobs, gives opportunity to our people, ensures that our national security is protected and that our Nation's long-term competitiveness is enhanced.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we ought to do. That is what the American people expect us to do. That is what the American people hope we will do. Let's warrant the faith and confidence of the American people by keeping faith with them and with our country.

LOWER LEVEL OPERATIVES TO BLAME

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, is the administration aware of the actions that are taking place in the administration?

A little history:

Fast and Furious:

Everyone knows the President did not know about this tactic until he heard about it through the news media.

A quote from White House Press Secretary Jay Carney.

So lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

Benghazi: 5 days after the attack, the administration still blamed it on a video. We learned later that the White House was told that this was a terrorist attack within 3 days of the attack.

So when did the President find out this was a terrorist attack?

In any event, no accountability. Video blamed. No one in the administration was held accountable, and the killers have not been brought to justice.

The Department of Justice's wiretapping of the Associated Press:

Other than press reports, we have no knowledge of any attempt by the Justice Department to seek phone records of the Associated Press.

Once again, this was from White House Press Secretary Jay Carney.

Lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

The IRS scandal: The investigation was not a matter that should be conveyed to the President.

That was Jay Carney once again.

Lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

ObamaCare Web site disaster: Secretary Sebelius claims the President was not aware of the Web site problems until the Web site was launched.

Once again, lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

NSA spying on foreign leaders? U.S. officials claimed the President did not know about this. The President refuses to say whether he knew or not.

But anyway, lower level operatives officially blamed.

NSA spying on Americans: The President claims he did not know the extent of the spying on Americans.

Lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

Mr. Speaker, exactly who is running the country—lower level operatives? Has the government gone wild? Is there a shadow government operating without the knowledge of the White House? Is the President out of tune with what is taking place in his own administration or is he aware of those actions?

If the President were unaware of all of this, the White House needs to hold people accountable, to hold these lower level operatives accountable for their actions—their improper actions, their bungling, their incompetence. The White House needs to fix this out-of-control government immediately.

The White House needs to take responsibility for the actions of his administration and quit blaming others and lower level operatives. That is the White House's responsibility. After all, to quote the constitutional law professor, “The buck stops with me.”

And that's just the way it is.

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SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA PROGRAM

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, last night, I was at National Airport awaiting Delta Flight 3395, 9:52 p.m.

Shortly after 10 p.m., Janis Shenwari, his wife, and two small children emerged to be greeted by Captain

Matt Zeller. They had been kept under wraps as they made their way from Afghanistan to the United States. There was just one television camera there to record this happy ending as Captain Zeller wrapped Janis in a big bear hug.

It was a happy ending to a story with many ups and downs, all too familiar for those of us who had been working with the Special Immigrant Visa program to secure the flight to safety from Iraq and Afghanistan for those foreign nationals who worked with Americans as drivers, as interpreters, as guides. Janis was an interpreter who saved the life of Captain Matt Zeller in a firefight.

He, for 5 years, has been stuck in sort of a bureaucratic limbo as Captain Zeller dedicated his time and energy to secure the release of a man he referred to as his brother. It happened—despite the fact that there was a false start where Janis had been given the visa, sold his possessions, prepared his family, only to have it revoked at the last minute—we think because the Taliban learned of this and leaked false information that he was, in fact, a collaborator.

His arrival to safety in the United States was testimony to a little bipartisan cooperation—some people in the much maligned faceless bureaucracy who went the extra mile, who administered a couple of polygraph tests to him and, within 3 hours after the end of the government shutdown, reissued the visa and sent Janis and his family on their way to safety. They woke up this morning in their own little apartment in Arlington to a new life, but thousands who risked their lives for Americans are still held hostage, at risk themselves in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Earlier this month, in the midst of all the chaos surrounding the government shutdown and the harsh rhetoric on the floor, we were able to keep alive the visa program for Iraqis. We brought it back to life after it expired September 30. I would hope the same show of bipartisan support and bureaucratic activity, cooperation, and tenacity necessary to protect the visa program, and to make it work in the case of Janis, could be brought to bear to make sure that this program is extended for several years to allow escape to safety for other Iraqis in Afghanistan; that we can smooth the working of the agencies to expedite the granting of these visas from a trickle of a few dozen to a steady stream for the thousands whose lives are at risk because they helped Americans and they put their trust in us.

I think, as important as the lives of these people and their families are, and keeping our word, there is also a larger lesson, illustrating what can happen if we here in Congress are willing to work together. Yesterday, former House Minority Leader Bob Michel harkened back to an earlier era of extraordinary cooperation and civility that he enjoyed with Speaker Tom Foley.

Last night at the airport, I saw an example in this one family alive and

well and safe of that same civility and cooperation. Who knows where that example might lead us next if we are willing to follow it?

REMEMBERING OUR NATION'S VETERANS

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

Mr. COOK. Mr. Speaker, Monday, November 11, will be Veterans Day. Veterans Day is very, very special to all Americans, but more so to me.

I am a veteran. Part of the reason I ran for Congress was I wanted to talk about veterans' issues. I was concerned about the VA. I was concerned about the claims that have gone so long. I was concerned about, particularly, the Vietnam veterans that have their claims in a stack that haven't been addressed and yet the clock is ticking. They are dying. In 5 years, some insurance person can probably tell you how many of those Vietnam veterans are going to be dead.

We have an obligation in this House as Americans to look after those that gave so much for our country, those that gave their lives, people in this House here that gave their limbs, they have been wounded, still carry shrapnel in their body, still have a cloth and have NyQuil and wake up with a nightmare dreaming about a firefight in a way, or the DMZ, or what have you. The memories never go away.

We have an obligation to all Americans because, quite frankly, we are going to have another war in the future—I hope it is not in my lifetime—but there is always going to be a conflict, and we are going to call upon the military to do their job, and they will do their job. It is our responsibility to make sure we take care of those men and women that have given so much for their country.

Many, many years ago, in a place far, far away, I was a platoon commander. I had a lot of marines, great troops. Many of them never came back. Lance Corporal Borey, Lance Corporal Doran—I can go on and on. I am not here to impress you with my memory because it is no great feat. It is something when you were there with those people and you saw what happened; you realize the significance of Veterans Day and how we can never forget those people that gave so much.

So other than that day that is coming up very, very shortly, if you see a veteran, if you see somebody in the military, just say to them, thank you, because you care and you also remember.

REMEMBERING SENATOR GEORGE MCGOVERN

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, a week ago Monday, October 21, was the

1-year anniversary of the death of my friend, Senator George McGovern of South Dakota.

We shared the same last name, but we weren't related. I interned for him when I was in college and he was in the United States Senate. I embraced his liberalism. I admired his service to our country in World War II, where he served as a bomber pilot, and I respected very much his politics, the way he did politics, understanding the importance of reaching across the aisle, of working to build coalitions to solve big problems. In particular, I admired the work that he did to end hunger, working with people like Senator Bob Dole, a Republican from Kansas. He even worked with President Richard Nixon, who defeated him in the 1972 election, winning 49 States over Senator McGovern.

President Nixon held the first and only White House conference on food and nutrition. That conference helped spur a whole bunch of legislative activity aimed at improving nutrition for everybody in this country and aimed at ending hunger, which was a problem. George McGovern and Bob Dole, and even Richard Nixon, believed that in the richest country in the history of the world nobody ought to go hungry. I think of Senator McGovern often, especially now when I see what is happening in this Congress.

On Friday, November 1, a couple of days from now, the moneys that were put into the SNAP program, formerly known as food stamps, to help provide additional resources for people to buy food in this country, those reinvestment moneys will come to an end. There will be a \$5 billion cut in the SNAP program on Friday. Every single beneficiary will see a reduction in their food benefit. That includes 22 million kids, 9 million elderly people and disabled, and it includes 900,000 veterans.

We say we want to support our veterans, but many of them have come back and found it difficult to find a job or found it difficult to find a job that pays a living wage, and they rely on the SNAP program so they can put food on the table for their families. Yet, on Friday, 900,000 veterans who are on the SNAP program will see a reduction in their benefit. A family of three will see a reduction of about \$30 per month in their benefit. That is about 16 meals a month for a family of three.

That is an awful thing that is about to happen, but what is more awful is what is coming down the road. This House of Representatives passed a farm bill that includes, on top of this \$5 billion cut, an additional \$40 billion in cuts in the SNAP program. That would mean 3.8 million people currently receiving the benefit will be thrown off the program.

Hundreds of thousands of children who rely on the free breakfast and lunch program will lose that benefit. I have been to many schools where I have seen kids staring off into space