

2 years later, Russia has, once again, taken an active role in the Syrian civil war, enhancing and building military bases in Assad's territory and launching air strikes against Syrian opposition groups, including ISIL.

Several factors are influencing Putin's latest gambit to empower Assad.

First, Putin wants to revive a Russian sense of nationalism—an almost metaphysical understanding of a Russian realm of influence. Look back at his recent speech at the U.N. He rejects a unipolar world wherein the United States sets the rules for commerce and governance and values. Furthermore, he is suspicious of liberal democracy, preferring, instead, his idea of stability even if it is achieved at the hands of strongmen.

Second, Russia has a longstanding diplomatic, security, and economic arrangement with the Syrian Government, enabling him to expand his country's military presence there while also bolstering his political standing at home.

Third, Syria also has a rich Orthodox Christian heritage that survives as a minority faith in Assad's controlled territory. Putin sees his venture as protecting that familial alliance. Foreign policy analysis has largely overlooked this consideration as an important dimension of Putin's motives.

Russia claims to be fighting the terrorists. If true, their intervention could emerge as a point of convergence for the United States, Russia, and civilized interests; but that remains somewhat hypothetical at this moment, and there are significant signs of conflict escalation.

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Russia could help avert humanitarian disaster by focusing more intently on attacking ISIL. Currently, Putin is also choosing to fight other Syrian opposition forces with the possibility of furthering the protracted civil war.

The best scenario would be for Russia's involvement to create the space for a transition period for a new, more stable governing structure to replace Assad in the West. ISIL could be further pushed into the eastern desert, and a true international coalition could emerge to defeat this threat to civilization. Advancing this scenario is a key policy marker in what should be the overarching geopolitical strategy of the United States.

Of the many possible futures for the Middle East, one must certainly be avoided: Islamic militants sweeping across places like Straight Street in Syria, continuing to destroy ancient monuments in Palmyra and Nimrod, killing all the way from Mosul to the Mediterranean, threatening to raise its black banner of death from Damascus to D.C.

The prevention of peril in the 21st century requires a new cooperative strategic arrangement to fight dark

ideology, twisted theology, and barbarism across the globe. ISIL represents ninth century barbarism, but with 21st-century weaponry. ISIL is battling the very essence of civilization. Beyond the bloodshed itself, ISIL attacks the underlying philosophical proposition of the West that all persons have inherent dignity, which is the source of our rights.

Mr. Speaker, we stand at a solemn crossroads. The world must fight back on two fronts against ISIL and for the time-honored philosophical principles and values that sustain an orderly existence in the flourishing of any truly good society.

So depends the beauty of Paris. So depends the protection of communities like San Bernardino. So depends the security of the world and the protection of innocent people everywhere.

Mr. Speaker, I had an extraordinary privilege this summer on the 71st anniversary of D-day. This is a picture, a photo, of Utah Beach, one of the beaches where our troops first stormed through, where General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., came through with his men and declared, "We'll start the war from right here."

General Roosevelt went on 1 month later to die in battle of a heart attack. He was ill. He disguised his illness because he wanted to be in leadership with his troops.

He is buried at the Omaha Beach Cemetery, which contains nearly 10,000 American troops who gave their lives. He is buried next to his little brother, Quentin Roosevelt, who was an aviator, a flier, in World War I. Here you have two sons of a President of the United States who gave their lives in the two great wars of last century.

On this spot, Mr. Speaker, there is a new monument. That is a Higgins boat troop carrier with a replica of soldiers storming onto the beach. I am very proud of the fact that this monument is a replica of one that is in Columbus, Nebraska, a small town in my congressional district. It was built by the people of Columbus, shipped here, and placed for the 71st anniversary celebration of D-day.

A great sacrifice financially and time-wise, many people in the community of Columbus came together to build this extraordinary monument as a gift to France, but primarily as a perpetual memory of those who fought and died.

Both Quentin Roosevelt, General Roosevelt, and so many other young men and women gave their lives for a set of interlocking ideals, the beauty of liberty and the protection of human dignity, which, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, in our fallen world, must sometimes be preserved by a willingness to confront darkness, by a willingness to confront that which is irrational.

It is this same struggle, the same struggle that took place here, that we must engage in today. Unlike this struggle, it requires a different global effort, but it is the same struggle for

the tranquility of order, for the security of the world, and for the protection of America.

I yield back the balance of my time.

#### IN REMEMBRANCE OF ED FENDIG, JR.

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

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of Mr. Ed Fendig, Jr. Ed was born in Brunswick, Georgia, in 1927 and moved to St. Simons Island shortly thereafter. Growing up, he was a very active Boy Scout, achieving the rank of Eagle Scout.

Through his late teens and 20s, he served in the Navy in the Philippines and later in the Georgia Air National Guard in Casablanca. Between services, he played football on scholarship at the University of Georgia. Go Dawgs.

While stationed in Casablanca, he would go down to the port and watch the tugs dock and undock merchant ships and fell in love with the work. Shortly after returning from North Africa, Ed's application as an apprentice bar pilot was approved. Ed served actively as a State-licensed bar pilot in the Port of Brunswick for 37 years.

In addition to a full-time bar pilot, he also ran two long-time family businesses, Fendig Sign Company and Fendig Tire Company.

Ed was a man of many talents and held a list of accolades. He was a community leader, but, more importantly, he was a husband, father, and grandfather.

My thoughts and prayers go out to the Fendig family.

#### FUNDING BILL IS REFLECTION OF PRIORITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, if a funding bill is a reflection of priorities, then the omnibus that we are considering right now is the clearest snapshot of what is wrong with our Nation.

We are talking about lifting a 40-year ban on the export of crude oil, risking thousands of jobs and rising gas prices for working families immediately after joining the most important climate agreement ever created.

We are expected to swallow tiny increases to the programs working families need and rely on while we make permanent tax cuts for corporations and millionaires that we have not paid for. We are expected to cheer the extension of vital programs, like the child tax credit, when that credit has not been indexed to cover the rising costs families face.

Mr. Speaker, these are games. After only a year in Congress, I am tired of playing them. We like the word compromise. It implies that we have done something good, that we have worked together.

If we pass this bill, we will have worked together to keep America down for generations to come. We are patting ourselves on the back for making it out of sequester, but the incremental spending increases in this omnibus funding package do nothing to make up for the past 5 years of cuts.

We have spent so much time digging ourselves deeper and deeper into a funding hole that this omnibus seems like level ground. The fact is it is not. It is far from it.

Regardless of how nice funding increases may sound, the foundations of the American Dream are crumbling beneath our feet right now with stagnant wages, struggling schools and a wealth gap that is only getting bigger.

Working families need funding that supports their needs. They need a Tax Code that promotes the middle class. They need tax credits and funding for programs to help cover the outrageous cost of child care and preschool education, costs that outstrip tuition at public colleges in 31 of our 50 States. They need funding for higher education that would allow them to graduate without debt.

They need more support for our highways, our bridges, our rail systems, and broader infrastructure, the kinds of projects that create good-paying jobs and make every community stronger, the kinds of projects that cause people to feel confident that they have enough security in their future and enough money in their pocket to spend some of it and help to stimulate the economy and to create many, many, many ancillary jobs and small business needs. They need a lot more than what is being offered in this legislation.

A funding bill compromise should not compromise the needs of families across the country who are relying on us to get this right. Any extension of tax credit needs to be protected and uplift every American. We can't afford to pass them without a plan for them.

Mr. Speaker, we have labored over many things in this House. We have spent a long time talking about less important issues. But we are being confronted right now with a humongous bill that has broad implications on communities that are vulnerable for the next several generations. We are asked to support a piece of legislation that does not seem to address, from a proportionally equal perspective, those needs.

I want to take a moment now to just draw the House's attention to this front page story in Politico. It headlines "Congress' half-trillion-dollar spending binge."

What is fascinating about this is that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, the folks that are responsible for this spending binge, are always the first to condemn government spending.

Now they want to spend billions of dollars on special interests without supporting Pell grants, without supporting our Historically Black Colleges and Universities, without supporting the programs that combat poverty like WIC, without supporting the working families in this country and supporting the needs that they have in order to prosper.

Their prosperity helps guarantee the economy's prosperity because the revenues generated from the things that we do to uplift our working families gets put back into the economy and creates a better, fairer, and larger economy.

The numbers in this omnibus lie. They sound like increases, but they do nothing to pull us out of the rut that the past 5 years have left us in. I know that there are many of my colleagues who feel this same way.

We look at the modest increases that may be associated with the childcare tax credit. We look at modest increases that may be applied to a housing program. We look at modest increases that may be applied to several programs that, if there were sufficient revenue associated with those programs, would indeed make a difference in these communities.

□ 1515

But the proportionality of priority in this omnibus bill and in our effort today and tomorrow does not speak to our acknowledgment that it is the majority of people, that it is the middle class, the working class, and, yes, even the most vulnerable that we are leaving behind.

We can do better than that. Mr. Speaker, we need to do better than that because we are better than that.

There are several glaring omissions in the omnibus bill, but none are more illogical than our failure to support Puerto Rico. It is unfathomable that we are unwilling to support a U.S. territory in a financial meltdown just as we offer permanent tax breaks for corporations and special interests who don't even need our help. We are leaving the citizens of Puerto Rico woefully in need. This is not fair. This is un-American. This is not who we are.

What is our responsibility to the citizens of Puerto Rico who won't have access to good hospitals and medical care and Medicare? What about the children, almost 56 percent, who live in poverty? What are we saying to them? What we are saying in this bill that is before us this day coming forth that is expected to move forward in this House is that we are still only concerned with elevating the status, the well-being,

the security, and the happiness of those who already have a lion's share of all of it.

Mr. Speaker, we are better than that. We have a responsibility to speak up, protect, preserve, and ensure opportunity for all. That is what we have been elected to do.

I want to take a moment to talk about the giveaway to oil companies that we have in this omnibus. There is nothing positive about this for working families. Ending the 40-year ban on crude oil risks our energy security here at home. It threatens our environmental leadership, and it takes away jobs from American workers.

We didn't pass legislation to create more access to oil in this country simply to be able to provide wealthy companies the opportunity to sell it abroad at a higher price, to bypass our refineries, to sell crude oil in other countries and have them benefit from the jobs that we fought to create through legislation that we passed. That is illogical. That is counterintuitive to why we did what we did in the first place. But yet it is in this bill.

Yet the glaring priority of the wealthy multinational corporations versus the interests of the everyday working families is just in your face—unacceptable, totally unacceptable. It serves no purpose that I can identify other than to further appease another of the special interest groups so dear to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, but it does nothing for the economy of the United States of America and for the working families here. I guess I shouldn't be surprised because it is not the first time, and I doubt that it will be the last time.

Mr. Speaker, we can go on and on and on, and I will have additional points that I would like to raise with regard to this omnibus bill, but my friend, my colleague from the great State of New York, Congressman HAKEEM JEFFRIES, has come here to share his perspective on the impact of this omnibus bill.

With that, I yield to my colleague.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I would like to thank the distinguished gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN), from the Garden State, for her tremendous leadership throughout the course of this year as it relates to presiding over the Congressional Progressive Caucus' Special Order hour, where week after week you have been able to illuminate for the American people some of the challenges that we face here, trying to enact policies that make sense for hardworking Americans, for working families, for low-income folks, for the middle class, for seniors, for the most vulnerable amongst us.

For just a moment, I wanted to reflect on one particular aspect of the omnibus bill that I find troubling, and that is the failure to do what is necessary to help put the people of Puerto Rico—United States citizens—on a trajectory that will allow them to achieve some manner of economic stability moving forward.

Now, I never practiced criminal law. I am a lawyer, attorney, but I understand that there are sometimes crimes of commission—that is when you affirmatively do something that is damaging—and then there are crimes of omission. I think that the greatest omission as it relates to this \$1.1-plus trillion spending bill is the failure to do anything to help deal with the economic crisis that exists right now in Puerto Rico, a crisis, by the way, that, in large measure, has responsibility right here in the United States Congress.

In 1996, we began a process of a 10-year phaseout of provisions in the tax law that were put into place in order to help the economy of Puerto Rico. That 10-year phaseout ended in 2006. Over that period, it witnessed a dramatic disinvestment of corporate entities from the island of Puerto Rico toward the mainland and other places. A massive number of jobs were lost. That phaseout was completed in 2006. Puerto Rico has been in a deep recession ever since.

Now, every other citizen of the United States of America who lives in the 50 States here lives in a municipality that has bankruptcy provisions available to it to help it restructure its debt when necessary. The people of Puerto Rico, again as a result of a law enacted here in this Chamber in 1984, have been denied bankruptcy protection.

Fundamentally, all the people of Puerto Rico were asking for is to make sure that those citizens who live on the island can be put in the same place—not better—the same place as every other United States citizen so that they can avail themselves of bankruptcy protection to enable them to restructure their debt in a way that makes sense, that allows them to pay their teachers, their police officers, their firefighters, and others. And yet, when all that was done, all the acts of commission, with a \$1.1-plus trillion agreement, we couldn't help the people of Puerto Rico by simply putting them in the same place through restructuring provisions in a manner that would give them an opportunity without a single cent of taxpayer expense to be in a better place?

The people of Puerto Rico participate in the military, die in foreign conflicts of the United States of America at a rate higher than those in the 50 States, yet they are compensated, from a Medicaid reimbursement standpoint, around 40 or 50 percent—if not more—less.

We don't have enough time to go through how policy set here in the United States Congress has devastated the people of Puerto Rico economically for the last few decades, but it does seem to me that we could find some way to deal with this issue. We found a way to give away billions and billions of dollars to big oil companies as it relates to lifting the prohibition on the export of crude oil, but we couldn't find

a way to help the hardworking people of Puerto Rico. Shame on us here in the United States Congress.

Lastly, it is my understanding that the Speaker, who I take to be a man of his word, has said, well, we are going to deal with this issue in the next 90 days. But here is the problem. On January 1, there is a significant amount of money that Puerto Rico owes that it cannot pay, so the island can't wait until March 31 for the Congress to try to work this out. The promissory note is not good enough.

As an African American Member of Congress, I am reminded of the speech that Dr. King gave in 1963 right outside these Halls on The National Mall. He talked about the fact that the eloquent and magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence were a glorious promissory note: We hold these truths to be self-evident . . . all men are created equal . . . endowed by their Creator . . . the ability to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

But century after century, decade after decade, that promissory note essentially was handed over to the African American community as a check stamped "insufficient funds." I just can't, with all or any degree of confidence, suggest that we could credibly say to the people of Puerto Rico and to those individuals of Puerto Rican descent that I represent back home in Brooklyn and in Queens that this so-called promissory note issued is going to result in us taking any action 90-plus days from now.

I just hope that there is a way for us to find some measure of resolution before we ultimately vote on this omnibus bill to deal in good faith with the people of Puerto Rico—United States citizens—who deserve our attention.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. My colleague has spoken so eloquently about the impact of the omission of Puerto Rico in the omnibus bill and what it does to the territory of Puerto Rico and the citizens that are there. My colleague has spoken eloquently as to the proportionality questions in this omnibus bill, in general, that would not only negatively impact Puerto Rico but Puerto Rican and other citizens here in the United States of America; whole communities, whole cohorts of working class families.

Would my colleague just use a little bit of his time to talk about that issue of fairness and proportionality that I have heard you so eloquently speak about.

I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. JEFFRIES. The big question I think that we face here, earlier today we voted on a tax extender package, \$600-plus billion. None of it was paid for, at least as it relates to what was done today.

I think reasonable people understand that making these tax breaks permanent in a way where they were not paid for ultimately is going to blow a tre-

mendous hole in the deficit. As we move forward, the people who will pay for the tax cuts that were passed out of this House earlier today, hundreds of billions of dollars—notwithstanding the earned income tax credit and the child care tax credit that, of course, many of us support—the people who will pay for it will be the poor, the sick, the afflicted, working families, those who need assistance. In good conscience, there is no way that I could support the tax extender package and go back home to my community and say we have just done a good thing.

As it relates to the omnibus, I think we all have to ask the question, if the plus-up in the omnibus is somewhere in the neighborhood of \$31 billion or \$32 billion in additional spending, yet we understand that in the tax extender package hundreds of billions of dollars were unpaid for over a 10-year period and, ultimately, someone is going to pay the price for that—that is one of the reasons why we got something like sequestration. We got jammed as a result of tax cuts that were not paid for in 2001, tax cuts that were not paid for in 2003, a failed war in Iraq, a failed war in Afghanistan. None of that was paid for. Ultimately we find ourselves in fiscal difficulty. Who pays? The most vulnerable in America. That is how we got sequestration.

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So I am not convinced that we are not going to find ourselves in a similar situation moving forward as a result of what was done with this tax extender package today.

I am in the process of continuing to review the omnibus bill and trying to weigh and balance the equities. I will tell you, though, that the failure to do something for the people of Puerto Rico is greatly troubling, because it doesn't cost the taxpayers anything, and the fact that some of the programs of importance to urban America, like Historically Black Colleges and Universities, may not have received the resources that some of us think they deserve, and we have got concerns as a result of some of the foreclosure prevention issues in some other areas.

We are all going to have to take a look at the equities, but it is clear that we should be able to do much better for the American people, for those that we have come to Congress to represent, for those who have disproportionately borne the burden of reckless and irresponsible fiscal policies over the past decade or so. And let's just hope that we can proceed to do things differently in a way that benefits those we represent here in America.

So I thank the distinguished gentlewoman for the opportunity to speak further on this issue. I also want to acknowledge my good friend, KEITH ELLISON, who is a tremendous champion for working families all across the country.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I appreciate that and I thank my colleague and friend.

I appreciate your perspective on the proportionality issue. Who is going to pay? We are going to pay. Who is going to pay when the bill comes due? It is the working families. It is the most vulnerable. And let us not get so excited about a \$30 billion increase when we recognize we have been under sequestration. What does that mean?

I thank the gentleman for sharing his time with us.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON).

Mr. ELLISON. I thank the gentleman, who has done an awesome job holding down the Progressive Special Order Hour. It has been to the benefit of everyone who listens.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for all of us involved in this debate and every American to understand a concept known as starve the beast. It is a conservative concept. And what it really means—and I would like everybody to be clear—is that the conservative wing in our country wants to shrink the size of government so that a big multinational oil company will never have to worry about an EPA regulator because the government will have so little money, they won't have an EPA regulator.

The starve-the-beast concept means that a big bank won't ever have to worry about a bank regulator saying: Hey, Mr. Banker, you cannot do that with the American people's money. You have to be fair; you have to be proper and right with the people's money. Because we will shrink the government to be so small and so weak that there won't ever be that regulator who will say to the big banks: You cannot do that.

Starve the beast means that the largest private sector elements in our country can escape the accountability the government provides through the people who inspect the water, the people who inspect the meat, the people who inspect the air quality. It is the people who inspect all these things. And when the public interest runs afoul of the private gain, the private gain will prevail because the public won't have the wherewithal and the resources to say no, or you have to readjust this, or you have to operate at a higher standard of quality, or anything like that.

Now, how do you get this starve-the-beast strategy in play? Well, one thing that you do is you have unpaid-for tax cuts. You get these tax cuts in place and they are all good if you say: Isn't this great? Don't you want to escape paying taxes? Who likes paying taxes? Nobody.

So people say: Okay. Good. We are going to get out of having to pay taxes. How nice. But then you don't pay for them. Then what happens to the budget? Well, you have got a big hole in the budget because the revenue you were counting on is not there. Then you use the public relations to say that raising taxes is just the worst thing anyone could ever do at any time in their life.

They say this three-letter word of taxes—really, a four-letter word—and I will let your imagination go from there—and then, because they have made raising revenue utterly radioactive, all we can do is cut.

And so what do we do? Well, we cut education funding. We cut Meals on Wheels. We cut the National Institutes of Health. We cut, cut, cut all this stuff that ordinary citizens rely on until we get to the next rounds of tax cuts.

By the way, when it comes to tax cuts and conservatives, if the economy is doing really well, they need a tax cut. If it is doing really bad, the solution to that is what? A tax cut. And if we are just doing average, well, why not have a tax cut? It is almost always unpaid for.

And if you look at it over time, there is this pattern of irresponsible tax cuts, deficits, cuts to fix it, more tax cuts, deficit, more cuts to fix it. Never do we raise the revenue we need in order to meet the needs of our society.

Who gets hurt? Not the country club set. It is people who need the government to function on their behalf or people who drink water every day and who need an inspection of it, people who like to breathe clean air, people who might want to eat some meat that has been inspected, people suffering from a serious disease like Alzheimer's or Parkinson's who might need the National Institutes of Health to put forth a grant which will help.

So what does that all have to do with this discussion? Well, today, we just passed a bill that gave \$600-some billion worth of unpaid-for tax cuts and made them permanent. We created a structural deficit that is even worse.

Now, they are going to give it back a little bit. A little bit. We give away \$600 billion, they give us \$30 billion, and voila, we are supposed to be happy about that.

There is a concept known as Stockholm syndrome. Your captor holds you in control. After they have held you a little while, they give you a few little chits. Then they make you think that when they give you even a little drop of water, they are so benevolent.

I will never forget that we never should have had sequester in the first place. We never should have had sequester. We had a hostage-taking situation where Republicans were literally threatening to default and renege on the full faith and credit of the United States by busting the debt ceiling. And if we did not give them back all kinds of cuts and concessions, they would bust the debt ceiling.

So then we entered into this deal where we had some cuts in the beginning, and then they said: We are going to set up a special committee, three Republicans in the House, three Republicans in the Senate, three Democrats in the House, three Democrats in the Senate. And this committee was supposed to come up with some targeted cuts to reduce the deficit, which they said then was just the worst thing in

the world, and that is to ever have a deficit.

Then they got in that committee and instead of upholding their pledge to protect and defend the United States, they upheld their pledge to not raise taxes to certain political figures in our landscape. The whole committee failed. And it was contemplated that if this committee cannot come up with targeted cuts, then there will be across-the-board cuts on both sides, also known as sequester.

You know what? That committee really never had a chance. I wish we would have known then that that committee was always a sucker deal, because they were clinking the champagne glasses when that committee failed because they knew it was going to be across-the-board cuts. They said: It is going to be domestic discretionary, which you liberals like, and there are going to be cuts to the military, which us conservatives like—which is a sort of a gross overgeneralization and not exactly accurate, but that was the rough approximation.

What we never accounted for is that in 2001, the U.S. military budget was already about \$290 billion. By the time we got to sequester, it was about \$700 billion. They could stand some cuts, but the programs that the average citizen needed that were going to be ravaged could not.

And so that you know, no sooner than the sequester went into effect, we had people saying: Oh, we can't do these military cuts. It can't happen. It won't happen. They had their friends and their advocates, even though they had been getting fat for years, but what about Meals on Wheels and education funding and environmental protection? That was attacked.

So what does that mean about today? What it means about today is this: We have seen more taxes, more things given away. I definitely think that some of the things that were made permanent today are good tax treatments. I am for research and development. I am certainly for child credit and the EITC. But they should be paid for, because if they are not paid for, they are going to come out of another part of the budget next year.

Oh, and by the way, how come tax extenders don't have to be paid for, but anything that regular people need must be paid for? Why do we have to find offsets for unemployment insurance, but not for things that Big Business needs? It is utter hypocrisy.

I just want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, for the folks who are listening, that there is a very important thing that Speaker John Boehner said when the Republicans took over a few years ago. They came out with this big, ugly budget to cut all these things that Americans really rely on to prosper and grow, and we wouldn't pass their House bill. And so Speaker Boehner said: If they won't take it one big loaf at a time, they will take it one slice at

a time. And boy, if that promise has not been kept.

We absolutely have to turn around and say no to this starve-the-beast philosophy. We have to turn it around and start meeting the needs of the American people.

Taxes are the price we pay to live in a civilized society. If you don't like taxes, move to Somalia, where you won't have to pay any. Good luck. But in America, where we pay taxes that pay for schools, that pay for more clean water, highways, police, and fire, we have got to stop and stand against this false claim that there is something wrong with taxation.

Let me just wrap up on one point. I know we have got to move on—we have got other great speakers who I actually want to hear from myself—but I want to make one very quick comment as I listen to my colleagues and prepare to take my seat, and that is about one of the things we are going to be dealing with tomorrow.

Now, we talk about this tax extender thing and the omnibus as if it is two different things. It is actually one big thing. That is the truth.

One of the elements of the omnibus tomorrow—which is pretty ugly—is lifting the oil export ban on crude oil. According to the Energy Information Administration, lifting the ban will increase oil industry profits by more than \$20 billion annually.

Now, the big companies that make all these extra profits, I think they have their favorites in the House of Representatives. And not too many of them sit over here. Probably a lot of them sit over there.

I will also say that it will cut refinery jobs, it will make us more dependent upon foreign oil, and it will increase more fossil fuel. This is absolutely the wrong thing. The only virtue of it is that a small, tiny, select number of people are going to get \$20 billion. And I am disgusted by it.

By the oil industry's own expectations, this action will lead to more than 7,600 additional wells being drilled each year and more fossil fuels. According to the report from the Center for America Progress, repealing the ban would result in an additional 515 metric tons of carbon pollution each year, roughly equal to 108 million more passenger cars or 135 coal-fired power plants. It will cost jobs in refineries. It will do real damage to Americans. And yet this is what is on the docket tomorrow.

□ 1545

Now, are there good things on the docket tomorrow? Yes, there are. I will leave it to other people to decide whether it is worth it to pass a monstrosity like this.

So I will say: Always know that sometimes when you are in the game, somebody else playing has an overall long-term strategy, and if you are just playing minute to minute, you are going to be no match for them.

Understand starve the beast. Don't play the game.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I thank the gentleman very much for sharing his wisdom with us and his perspective on those issues that we are confronting in the very near future.

Mr. Speaker, could you tell me how much time I have left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KELLY of Mississippi). The gentlewoman has 23 minutes remaining.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON).

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. I thank the gentlewoman.

Today, we are just about ready to vote on an omnibus spending bill, which is a part of the tax extender bill that we, or that some passed today. I did not vote for it. I was opposed to the tax extender bill, which added \$622 billion to the Nation's long-term debt, unpaid for, and largely tax cuts to the wealthy.

There are some features in the tax extenders bill that were appealing. For instance, it enhanced the child tax credit. It made it permanent, along with the enhanced earned income tax credit. Those are important for middle class people, working people. Those are very important, and we did the right thing on those.

But, unfortunately, they represented a small part of that \$622 billion, two-thirds of which was a giveaway to the wealthy through various tax loopholes. So Congress did that dirty deed today, and it blew a hole in the Nation's long-term debt.

And you know what is going to happen? Because while you have reduced the amount of resources that the Federal Government takes in to be able to give back to the people who are governed, in the form of transportation dollars, healthcare dollars, education dollars, national security dollars, things that we have to pay for; in other words, you can't have the freedoms that we enjoy and the prosperity that we all enjoy, without having a government that lays down this infrastructure, and that is what our tax receipts pay for.

We have been cutting Federal revenues since 1980. It has been almost 40 years we have been on an incessant cutting of government. We have been spending a lot of money. We have been spending without paying for it. That is what has created the debt, largely because of wars, unfought wars, and tax cuts.

So while we have things to pay for, we haven't been paying for them with tax moneys. We have been paying for them with the promise of taking in tax moneys, and we continue to increase the debt by cutting taxes.

So how do you then pay for the government that we need when you are cutting these taxes? Well, we pay for this government every year when we have these spending bills that come up, and they tend to always come up at the

end of the year, when everybody is ready to go home, and when government is about to shut down because it hasn't been funded.

So what did we do this year? We did the same thing we did this year that we did in previous years, and that is to wait till the last minute, put together a 2,000-plus-page spending bill, and then we spring it on Members of Congress in the dead of night, and give us 2 days, 2 full days to be able to read through it, and then vote on it. We are scheduled to vote on it tomorrow.

It is not a great way of doing bills in this country, and that is what we have been doing, giving away resources. We did that today. Tomorrow we will pass this spending bill. They call it two bills, but really it is one bill that has been split into two parts. The first dirty deed was done today. The next dirty deed will be done tomorrow, the spending bill.

Now, the spending bill has a lot of stuff in there that should not be in there. Why should you have a spending bill, and then you turn around and give away the Nation's resources, the Nation's oil? You're going to remove a 40-year prohibition on the production of crude oil to be sent overseas for refinement. You are going to remove that ban in a spending bill that was unleashed on us just 2 days ago, 2,000 pages, a spending bill.

But why are you giving a break to the oil industry? Why are we going to vote to remove that ban on sending our precious oil offshore to be refined, thus costing us good middle class jobs here in America?

Those refinery workers, they are going to lose their jobs because we are going to allow the oil to be exported so that it can be refined in a foreign nation by workers who are not paid commensurate to what we are paid over here, and then we are going to import our own oil back into our country at a higher price. It doesn't make sense, ladies and gentlemen.

We need to be weaned from foreign oil, and we do that through producing our own oil. But if we are going to then send our oil overseas to be refined, then the only person, the only folks that are getting rich off of that are the oil companies. They have been getting rich for a long time, and we are giving them another opportunity to make billions and billions of dollars more. It is the oil that belongs to this country. And so it is wrong that we do that.

This is one of the features in our spending bill tomorrow, and I disagree with that. I think most Americans probably do, and many Members of Congress do also.

But, yet, there will be many who will pass this bill just simply to get out of here and keep the government open, and that is not a great way of doing business. That is not the way we should do business in this country. America deserves better. The citizens deserve better.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I want to thank the gentleman from Georgia. I

appreciate his comments and thank him for sharing his wisdom and experience with us.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my classmate and colleague from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGO).

Mr. GALLEGO. The omnibus has been billed as a compromise, but in reality it is packed with Republican policy provisions that only compromise our values.

The omnibus bill should be about funding the government, not about pushing through policies that would never receive enough votes to pass on their own. Asking us to support this bill is asking us to support bad policy.

Among the legislation's many serious shortcomings is its failure to address the mounting fiscal crisis in Puerto Rico.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Puerto Rico are American citizens. They vote in our elections. They swear allegiance to our flag, they fight, and they die in our wars. Yet, at a time when massive bills are coming due, this Congress has turned its back on Puerto Rico.

Including a provision in the omnibus to allow Puerto Rico to restructure its debt wouldn't cost the American taxpayer one penny. We did not put that in. Every single State in this union can access the protections afforded by chapter 9. Puerto Rico is unfairly denied this ability. That is simply unfair, and our refusal to come to the island's aid is un-American.

Mr. Speaker, the omnibus will also deal a blow to our efforts to save our planet. Less than a week after reaching a historic climate change pact in Paris, Republicans want to undo the progress made by giving Big Oil a major victory, while leaving our brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico behind.

Lifting the oil export ban on the heels of new studies warning against the drastic rates of warming of lakes across the country and around the world is a major blow to all efforts made in Paris.

According to the Energy Information Administration, lifting the ban will increase gross profits of the oil industry by more than \$20 billion annually, at the direct expense of America's wildlife and natural resources. By the oil industry's own projections, lifting the ban will result in more than 7,500 additional wells being drilled annually, resulting in the degradation of more than one million square acres of wildlife habitat.

Increasing drilling without protections for wildlife, and without permanently reauthorizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund, takes us backwards and will harm domestic jobs, while exacerbating the huge challenges we currently face in preserving our outdoor heritage and tackling climate change.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats are being asked to supply two-thirds of the votes for this bill, but this agreement does not reflect even two-thirds of our values. We should reject this bad deal for Americans.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### LAUNCH OF THE BIPARTISAN CUBA WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding and, really, thank the Progressive Caucus for allowing me to use the remainder of this time. Thank you for your very steady and clear and very powerful leadership.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that today, myself and Congressman FARR, we rise to mark 1 year since President Obama's historic announcement that started the process of normalizing relations with Cuba. On December 17, 2014, the President took a very bold step to end more than five decades of failed policy and, instead, chart a new path for relations between the United States and our Cuban neighbors.

For more than half of a century, the United States pursued a shortsighted isolationist policy born of Cold War tensions. This policy was wrongheaded and ineffective. It alienated us from our allies and estranged us from one of our nearest neighbors.

Yet, through the President's persistence and very bold leadership, we are finally making some headway in reversing this, and Congress is finally beginning to catch up. Yesterday, I was proud to join nine of my colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, in announcing the launch of a bipartisan Cuba Working Group that will promote a commonsense United States-Cuba policy that reflects the interests of the American people engaged with Cuba.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend and colleague from Monterey, California (Mr. FARR), who has been such a leader on so many issues, but especially on ending the embargo and normalizing relations with Cuba. He understands that this is good for trade, that this is good for jobs in America, that this is good, basically, for our foreign policy, and it is in our national security interest that we normalize relations with Cuba.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman and congratulate her on probably being the Member of Congress who has been to Cuba more times than anyone else, has done more to lift the nuances of the embargo, and to, essentially, start the end of the cold war that we faced in Cuba.

For Cubans today, I would like to say Feliz Cumpleanos. For the Americans, I would like to also say Happy Birthday. And I would like to include that as a Happy Birthday to my wife, Shary Farr, whose birthday is today, because her biggest wish has been that she could go to Cuba before she dies. And guess what? Now she can go. This is a

great birthday present to her that she will be able to visit Cuba, after 55 years of failed foreign policy where our government prohibited American citizens from traveling to Cuba.

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So with this lift, I would also like to thank President Obama, and I would like to thank President Raul Castro. I think what you saw were two nation leaders getting together and doing what nation leaders should do: figure out how to get along rather than how to fight.

What we have done in Congress has not progressed, not helped.

I would like to have, BARBARA, your comments on this, too, because we imposed legislatively in law these embargoes that say: Americans, you can't travel; Americans, you can't trade; Americans, you can't use your dollars; Americans, you can't use your credit cards; Banks, you can't do it; Farmers, you can't sell.

We have created all these barriers, and the Presidents of each country don't—at least the President of our country doesn't have the ability to just use his administrative authorities as he has in being able to do some wonderful things. Fifty-five years of frozen policy has changed. You can't do it all and change everything in 12 months.

We have been able to open up embassies for the first time. It was delightful to be in Washington, D.C., last night at this celebratory time of the year, holiday season, and have the Cuban Embassy invite all the Members of Congress, staff, and people over to their Embassy for a holiday party and bring one of the best Cuban music groups—exciting, beautiful music—to celebrate all this. We couldn't have done that a year ago. We couldn't have done it a year ago today. But today is the day that will go down in Cuban history as the day that they remember the U.S. beginning to break the cold war relationships.

We have sent Secretary Kerry. And did you know that Secretary Kerry's visit to Cuba was the first Secretary of State visit to Cuba in over 70 years? We have begun bilateral discussions. We have created a bilateral steering commission, and Secretary Kerry was instrumental in getting both countries to sit down and discuss the differences in economic policy, in social policy, and in cultural issues. They have already done some work on joint environmental issues.

Cuba is so close to American soil that the environmental policies in our country affect them and vice versa. It would be great to have them develop some really good ocean standards and marine standards as we are trying to do along the Florida coast.

They have already done some work with law enforcement, of integrating information and trading, particularly on narcotics trafficking and things like that, and opened up mail service from the United States.