

Fifty-six individuals signed the Declaration, though it is possible that few knew the historical significance the document would ultimately bear. Historians suggest that the list of grievances against King George was of the highest importance to the signers, but today, like the revival of nationalism that did follow after the War of 1812, we perhaps find the greatest profundity and timeliness in the Preamble of the Declaration, and I think it bears repeating. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, and that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

These words inspire reflection on our personal independence as American citizens secured through times of tumult and uncertainty.

Not long after these words were handed down, another extraordinary document expressing our rights as American citizens was given unto the people. On September 17, 1787, 39 individuals signed the United States Constitution, a document that changed the history of our nation—and the world.

The Constitution holds special meaning for this body. We placed our hands on a Bible and swore to uphold the Constitution. It is because of that deep abiding commitment to the Constitution that Congress prioritized celebration of the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution many years ago, and why we now celebrate “Citizenship and Constitution Day” each September 17. This 223rd Citizenship and Constitution Day, let us recall the extraordinary circumstances that gave rise to our great nation, and the words of our founding documents that endure as a call of conscience to a world crying out for meaning.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SABLAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KENNEDY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. COFFMAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CULBERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CULBERSON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

COVENANT WITH AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, today I’m here to urge our Democratic leaders to listen to the Republican Party, to listen to the Republican Party’s bipartisan plan for taking immediate action on our already ailing economy.

If we let the Bush tax cuts expire, those tax cuts enacted in 2001 and 2003, Americans nationwide will face the largest tax hike in United States history. Indeed, that tax hike will amount to \$3.8 trillion, and this at a time when unemployment hovers at around 10 percent and our national debt has hit an all-time high at \$13 trillion—yes, \$13 trillion with a “T,” an unbelievable amount of debt.

We need to freeze Federal spending. We need to cut taxes across the board, for everyone at every marginal tax rate level across the board. The state of the economy today is that 16 million people are unemployed. That equates to a 10 percent unemployment rate. Indeed, it is probably close to 17 percent. Mr. Speaker, if you count people who have just given up, who have been looking over 6 months for a job, there are none to be found, and also the number of people who are employed, yes, but underemployed, it would be close to 17 percent. So, indeed, the Republican Party and our leader says we need to freeze Federal spending, indeed, roll it back to the level of 2008, and cut taxes across the board.

And if we don’t do that, Mr. Speaker, many companies that might have been in a position to expand and, therefore, put people back to work will choose not to because of the uncertainties associated with these tax hikes as well as other disastrous Democratic policies like ObamaCare. We need to come together, and we need to pass legislation immediately that cuts spending and kills all of the pending tax increases.

Mr. Speaker, we just returned to Washington, did we not, after 6 weeks in our districts, all 435 of us? I had many opportunities during that 6-week period of time to meet with my constituents face to face, eyeball to eyeball at town hall meetings. We called them America Speaking Out meetings, wanting the American people to know that at least one party wanted to hear from them, wanted to hear from Main Street, and did not want to force-feed on the American people, on our constituents, some grandiose plan that Members of Congress come up with. God knows that plans that Members of Congress have come up with over the last 4 years have certainly not helped one iota.

So I used this opportunity, my colleagues, I used this opportunity to speak to my constituents, but mainly to listen to them and to find out and

write it down and bring it back to Washington to share it with my colleagues so we can make a pledge and make a commitment.

Indeed, one person, Mr. Speaker, suggested that why don’t you call it this time, rather than a Contract with America that we remember from 1994, why don’t you call it a Covenant with America, just like the covenant that God had with Moses and the Jewish people, something that is an absolute pledge of your sacred honor. Sacred honor, you heard my friend from Nebraska, Representative FORTENBERRY just moments ago on the floor, talk about the Constitution, sacred honor and our sacred documents.

And I think that is what the American people want. I don’t think they will accept anything less. They are tired of the same old same old—excessive government spending and higher taxes that are making our country look a lot like Greece, Mr. Speaker.

So, I’m happy to have this opportunity, under the direction of my leadership, to take this time to talk to my colleagues about what we really need to do and what we really need to do in a bipartisan way.

No wonder, Mr. Speaker, that the approval ratings of Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle is 11 percent. People wanted to change 2 years ago.

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People wanted a change 2 years ago. They made a change, but, indeed, it was not quite the change that they expected.

I want to refer my colleagues to this first poster, this first slide that I have here in the way of a cartoon, and hopefully all of you Members in the back of the Chamber can see this. It is a china shop, and it shows this depiction of our President going into the china shop talking to the clerk. And the caption is, as the President is speaking, “Now, give me one good reason why you’re not hiring.” And of course behind the President are all of these bulls, these bulls in a china shop. This bull of cap and trade, this bull of health care reform, breaking all of the china.

Mr. Speaker, to ask the question: Now, give me one good reason why you’re not hiring. Well, the American people can give a lot of good reasons why they are not hiring if indeed they have any capital left with which to hire or to expand their business, to increase the square footage, to put in a new product line, and to bring in additional workers for their small business. It is not happening because of bad policy, bad policy coming from inside the Beltway, not bad policy on Main Street.

Mr. Speaker, again as I did these town hall meetings, and I guess we did six or eight of them across the 11th Congressional District of northwest Georgia, nine counties that I represent, a great district, and I guess I would not be unique among us to say I think I have the best district of all 435, but I