

“in God we trust,” and that there comes a time when human beings, regardless of their party registration, need some help in deciding the crucial issues that actually, actually affect the lives of people. And whether we’re talking about peace or war, with thousands of people being killed, no one can deny that this is a moral issue, if we were asked whether we support it or not. But yet we find that most Members of Congress cannot even give a reason why we’re in Iraq and Libya and Afghanistan.

But having said that, let’s face it. It would be ridiculous to assume that I’m making an appeal for Democrats when what I’m talking about is those people who are vulnerable. When flaws in our financial center caused people to lose their homes, it wasn’t just Democrats. There were Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and those that have no faith in government who woke up in the morning, they have lost their jobs; they lost their homes; they lost their pension funds; they lost their savings; they had to pull their kids out of school; they lost their self-esteem; some lost their homes. I don’t remember anywhere where we’re talking about people who are registered Democrats. These are Americans that expected more from their government than just saying that we will be able to address your needs in the by-and-by.

And the very people that are aged, God knows we’re not talking about a party label. When we talk about our sick, when we talk about Medicaid, when we are talking about Medicare, when we are talking about Social Security, how in God’s name can we say we are just talking about Democrats? No. We’re talking about all Americans that invested in this country that now see that some of them are so hopeless.

We had hoped that we would deal with the debt ceiling which gives the President the ability to say, When America borrows, America pays back. We thought that the integrity of our great country would never be challenged, certainly by Members of the Congress. But that’s not the case. The President is being held hostage. And what’s being held hostage is the budget.

On the other side of the issue is the question of taxes. So it appears to me that wherever you find the vulnerable, somebody should be protecting them since the lobbyists are not knocking on their door saying, Protect the poor. And this is a great opportunity, since the President is being held hostage, that we can reform some of the things that we wanted to do, whether it’s the tax system, Medicare, Social Security. But these things are supposed to go through a process.

I was honored to chair the Ways and Means Committee, which constitutionally deals with all tax issues, all fiscal issues. It deals with trade. It deals with Medicare. It deals with Social Security. And it deals with taxes. So you wake up in the morning, and

you find out that the Congress, 435 of us who now have this important decision to make as we hopefully move forward after the deadline of August 2, and the Senate are to decide these questions by the Gang of Six. Well, I’ll be back because no longer am I making an appeal for the Congress; God bless the Gang of Six in trying to save this great Nation.

□ 1030

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY’S AGRICULTURAL POLICIES

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

Mr. POMPEO. Mr. Speaker, last night this body passed a piece of legislation that takes a first good step toward fixing America’s spending problem, toward taking on our spending addiction and addressing the enormous deficits and debt that our Nation faces.

But we all know there’s a second component to making sure that we solve this deficit and debt crisis, and that’s economic growth. It’s jobs. It’s allowing the American entrepreneur, the American consumer to have affordable products, and in the case of Kansas, the American farmer and agriculture producer to survive, to continue to do the things that they need to do to feed the world.

I’ve been in Congress just 6 months now, and I’ve watched this administration’s Environmental Protection Agency act with respect to our agriculture community with radical indifference or, worse, outright hostility. These are folks who are providing affordable food for our entire world, and yet this administration—this administration—seeks to regulate it. It seeks to harass it. It seeks to impose burdens which will cause this great source of wealth for our Nation to leave. I want to talk about that because it’s so important for the growth of our Nation and the success of our Nation to continue to have that industry thrive, and I want to talk about some of the things I’ve seen in just these 6 months.

The American farmer needs energy. The American farmer needs affordable energy. In this morning’s Wichita Eagle, our primary utility in western Kansas and south central Kansas said that the utility rules that this administration is about to impose will put them in a place where they cannot comply. Now, I’m not talking about increased costs. We know that this administration has driven higher electricity rates. We’re talking about a utility that will not be able to comply with a set of regulations this administration is putting in place. That’s not good for the agriculture community in Kansas. They rely on affordable energy.

The examples go on. This administration, under the Clean Air Act, has attempted to regulate dust. Now, I don’t

know about folks that live out further this way, but in Kansas, on a dry day like today when it’s 110 degrees, there’s a little bit of dust when you drive your truck down the road. Yet they want to say, no, that’s a regulated particulate matter. Where’s the common sense?

Today they’re changing the clean air rules to take a set of chemicals that are already regulated under a set of regulations that have been in existence for decades and saying, no, we want to add another layer. We want you to now have to be permitted to have these chemicals that have already been demonstrated to be safe in their use in agricultural production.

We’ve seen what they’ve tried to do with greenhouse gas regulation as well. We saw this body respond by not giving the President cap-and-trade, and I’m thankful for that. But we’ve now get the Environmental Protection Agency that’s trying to do the same through regulatory fiat. And now the Department of Transportation is chiming in as well, trying to regulate trucks, farm equipment under rules that are normally intended for cross country truckers and trying to regulate them in the same way, putting an additional burden on the agricultural community that has been operating their farm equipment in south central Kansas in an incredibly safe way for decades.

I hope that this administration will reconsider. We cannot continue to drive costs. We cannot continue to regulate the Kansas agricultural community. We cannot harass it into its leaving our country. We know this is important. If we drive up the cost of food, we’ll drive up inflation. That’s good for no one.

I hope this administration will reconsider, that they’ll use some common sense. Our farmers, our agriculture producers want clean air. They make it happen. They need clean water. They ensure that it happens every day. We do not need this administration to harass them into leaving the very profession that is so important to our country.

CUT, CAP, AND CONTINUE WARS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I’m here catching my breath after the debate over the extreme Tea Party legislation that we considered yesterday. It’s easily one of the worst bills I can remember in nearly 20 years of service here in this body. Every time I think they can’t possibly go any farther, the majority blows me away with the audacity of their proposals and the cruelty of their priorities.

H.R. 2560, yesterday’s debt ceiling proposal, almost makes the Ryan budget look progressive. It makes the continuing resolution passed back in April look positively generous. On this side of the aisle, we call it the Cut, Cap, and

End Medicare plan, which is completely accurate. But I'm going to give it another name today, Cut, Cap, and Continue Wars, because throughout the debate over the debt ceiling there's been an elephant in the room, if you'll pardon the expression, that hardly anyone is willing to acknowledge, and that is the impact of waging not one, not two, but three wars is having on our Nation's fiscal health.

Afghanistan alone is costing \$10 billion a month, with the total price tag for Iraq and Afghanistan, going back 10 years, \$3.2 trillion. And that's a conservative estimate, Mr. Speaker. These are staggering figures, especially during a recession when Americans are crying out for Washington to do something about creating jobs and breathing life back into our economy.

And what are the taxpayers getting for their trillions of dollars in war spending? More than 6,100 dead Americans, continued violence in Iraq and a Prime Minister who's cozying up to Iran, and an ongoing civil war in Libya, a corrupt regime in Kabul, insurgents that continue to kill at will, in Afghanistan a nation still under crushing poverty, and an Afghan Government that cannot protect its own people.

By any measure, these wars have been a devastating failure. And yet, with barely any scrutiny, barely any debate, and certainly no outrage from Republican leaders, we continue to write that check. Meanwhile, we have domestic programs that work, proven investments in the survival and prosperity of our people: Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid, school lunches, student loans, food stamps, unemployment insurance. But the majority says these programs have to be cut and capped so we can continue three wars.

Republicans want to cut programs that are keeping Americans alive while they want to continue funding the wars that have killed more than 6,100 Americans. It blows my mind, Mr. Speaker.

How about we ask the American people: Which do they prefer? These wars that have been failing us for 10 years or the guaranteed Medicare benefits that will allow them and their families to retire with dignity?

I ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle: Do you really believe everything should be on the table? Everything? If you do, let's talk about war spending. And if you're really and truly serious about restoring fiscal sanity, where were you when the Congressional Progressive Caucus released a plan that will put us back in the black within 10 years?

The Congressional Progressive Caucus budget proves that we can balance the budget, but we don't have to amend the Constitution to do it. We don't need to shred the safety net to do it. We don't need to tear the heart out of Medicare to do it.

We can do it by bringing fairness back to the Tax Code, by ending subsidies, handouts, and giveaways to peo-

ple and corporations who will do just fine without them, we can do it by passing a clean debt ceiling and putting our people to work, and, Mr. Speaker, we can do it by ending these wars once and for all and bringing our troops home where they belong.

COLOMBIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

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

Mr. CANSECO. Mr. Speaker, there are many concerns on the minds of Americans today. But there's one concern that dominates discussion in every coffee shop, grocery store, barber shop, civic clubs or everywhere else that Americans gather, and that is the need to turn our economy around and create jobs.

The American people are right to be concerned about the economy and jobs. We've had 29 straight months with the unemployment rate at 8 percent or higher, the longest streak since the Great Depression. Fourteen million Americans are unemployed, and month after month the jobs reports show anemic job growth.

□ 1040

Over 2 years ago, the American people were told by President Obama and other Washington liberals that if we would just spend over \$1 trillion on the so-called "stimulus" bill, the unemployment rate would not exceed 8 percent. Well, in the entire Obama presidency there has only been one month—January of 2009—that the unemployment rate did not exceed 8 percent. Every month since the stimulus bill was signed into law in February of 2009 has seen unemployment rates at 8 percent or higher.

It is clear that the approach of attempting to spend and borrow our way to a better economy has not worked. That's why Congress needs to look to policies that will create jobs, like passing the three pending free trade agreements our Nation has with Colombia, Panama and South Korea.

Beyond the fact that the Business Roundtable estimates these agreements will create more than 250,000 jobs and are important for our economy, these agreements are also important to the United States' role in the world. There is no better illustration of this than the agreement we have pending with Colombia. Colombia is an important ally in Latin America, and I do say that today Colombians celebrate Colombian Independence Day. They're serving as an example for other nations and in stark contrast to the dictatorial regimes in Venezuela, Cuba and Bolivia. Colombia should not only enjoy a strategic relationship with the United States, we should also enjoy a strong commercial relationship. Passage of the free trade agreement would build upon the existing relationship and further strengthen it.

Apart from being beneficial for an important ally, this agreement is im-

portant for the U.S. economy. Here are just a few of the benefits that will occur with passage of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement: Duty-free access to the Colombian market for more than 80 percent of U.S. consumer and industrial goods, exports, with remaining tariffs phased out in 10 years; immediate duty-free access to more than two-thirds of current U.S. agricultural exports with the remaining tariffs phased out over time; strengthened intellectual property and investor protections; open services markets; and enhanced transparency in government procurement. However, perhaps the most important reason to pass this agreement is that if we don't, our competitors will.

Our competitors worldwide are aggressively moving to pass trade agreements. We have already seen our market share in Colombia jeopardized. For instance, although Colombia has doubled its agricultural imports over the past 5 years, the U.S. has seen its market share shrink by one-half. In 2008, American farmers held a 46 percent share of the Colombian market. Today, that share has diminished to 21 percent. In 2000, China was Colombia's 12th largest trading partner. Today, China is the second biggest trade partner for Colombia behind the United States.

Failure to pass the free trade agreement will allow our competitors to enjoy an artificial advantage. At this point in our economy, why do we not want to do everything we can to keep the jobs we have and create new ones? We need to put the politics aside and recognize the importance of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, not only for our economy but for our strategic interests. It's time to pass the Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

GANG OF SIX AND CHAINED CPI

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, yesterday the so-called "Gang of Six" on the Senate side—six very important Senators—unveiled sort of an outline about how to save \$4 trillion over the next 10 years. Immediately it was embraced by President Obama. We really don't know much about it, nor does he, but he immediately embraced it.

We know one thing about it. It contains something called a chained CPI. Okay. Well, who cares about a chained CPI? Well, seniors, they care a lot about a chained CPI; middle-income taxpayers, they care about it—they don't know it yet; veterans, and a whole host of other people.

What is a chained CPI? Well, the pointy heads, like Mr. Furman who work for President Obama, say we're understating and overstating inflation with the way we adjust. There is something called substitution effect. So when prices of things go up, you buy something cheaper, so that means