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I look forward to the time when the Republican leadership stops using hunger as a wedge issue and lets this become a bipartisan issue once again.

I understand that we need to balance the budget, Mr. Speaker. But must it be on the backs of the poor and the most vulnerable in our country?

“Hunger Hits Home,” this wonderful film, shows us the problem facing this Nation. The challenge is presented to us. Are we going to end hunger once and for all or not?

So far the answer from the Republican leadership is a resounding “no,” and I regret very much that decision.

Mr. Speaker, hunger is a political condition. If we muster the political will, we can end it once and for all.

SECURING OUR BORDERS

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

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I want to just say before I actually get started, we just saw the space shuttle fly over on the back of a 747, and I salute the end of an amazing era in space exploration, and I look forward to the next day of NASA being able to talk about space exploration and how we’re going to get out there so we won’t have to rely on Russians to get to space to continue to do what I think is a very important role of the Federal Government.

I was in Houston—I actually went through the NASA center there about 3 or 4 days ago—but I was in Houston for military duty. I am a pilot in the Air National Guard. I fly an airplane called a RC-26, which is a reconnaissance plane. I did 9 days of duty. And what we did is we were in Texas flying missions on the border of Mexico in order to help the Border Patrol secure that border, to ensure that those people that want to come in here come in here legally and, just as importantly, if not more importantly, to ensure that the drug trade is not being brought into our country, to reduce the amount of drugs being brought in from Mexico, as well as to ensure that terrorists are not making their way through the border by sneaking in through that border of Mexico.

Now, before I went, I expected to see a border that was basically secure because that’s what I’ve been hearing from the administration, that the border is basically secure. Yeah, there are examples of people coming across outside of that but, for the most part, it’s pretty good to go. Well, what I saw was something completely different.

I’m going to tell you just a quick story about somebody who’s on the border every day trying to protect this country against drugs and against terrorism coming through that border. This guy is a Border Patrol agent affectionately known as Uzi. Uzi is a former marine. He was a marine for about 5

years, started a small business when he got out of the Marine Corps, and made the decision that, you know what, he wants to go continue to serve and protect his country.

Now, I flew missions with Uzi. He was on board my aircraft as we went down and we assisted Border Patrol. And the one thing Uzi said to me is, Congressman, look, we’re out here every day in the heat and the sweltering sun trying to continue to protect this country. Make sure you give us what we need here.

And when you hear the stories about how hamstrung they are from actually enforcing the border, and how there are many tools available to them that they’re not allowed to use, it’s actually pretty sad.

Now, look. We want to be a Nation of immigration. We want to be a Nation of legal immigration. But one thing we don’t want to be is a Nation that wakes up one day and finds out that there was another terrorist attack in a major United States city and that, potentially, that weapon of mass destruction or those terrorists actually came in through an unsecure border with Mexico.

I went down there really believing that there was a fence along the line, and I saw nothing of the kind in southern Texas.

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Let’s tell the American people the truth. The truth is, we want to be a Nation that respects immigration because most of us here actually are immigrants removed ourselves, but we want to be a Nation that has a legal process to do it. When we have an open border, we’re encouraging people to go around that legal process, and we’re opening ourselves up to attack.

Let’s stand together. Let’s say to respect the immigration and the immigrant history of this country, but let’s do it in a legal way. My eyes were opened, as I did military duty on the border, to the fact that we have a long way to go. This can be a bipartisan issue—it doesn’t need to be Republican versus Democrat—but it needs to be something that we actually finally do, and we stand together and we say we’ll be a Nation that is safe once and for all.

TAXES

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today is the deadline for filing tax returns. Even though we were given 2 extra days this year, we are running out of time for the Tax Code.

The tax system doesn’t generate enough money for what America needs and spends today. It’s getting more expensive every year to continue the huge array of tax breaks even as the code itself becomes more unfair, com-

plex, and inefficient. It costs over \$160 billion a year for Americans just to comply with the Tax Code.

The path forward should be simple. First, we should stop making the code more complex, which, sadly, the Republican plan working its way forward will do with \$50 billion of additional unfocused tax breaks. At least if we’re going to borrow another \$50 billion from the Chinese, we should use it to fund job-creating infrastructure. For instance, that \$50 billion would enable us to fund a multiyear transportation reauthorization.

We should also repeal the pernicious alternative minimum tax. It was once designed as a tax on very rich people who didn’t pay taxes. Today, no billionaire hedge fund manager pays the alternative minimum tax. Instead, it falls on upper middle-income families, especially those who pay a lot of taxes.

Every year we find some creative way to avoid the consequence of it not being indexed for inflation. Every year we find some way to have a fix, to have a patch to avoid the alternative minimum tax’s full impact. Unless somehow there is a complete breakdown in the political process, which, sadly, is not impossible, as we saw this last year with the FAA reauthorization. If that were to happen, then at least the full fury of 20 to 30 million of upper middle-income and middle-income households who would be forced to pay it—they would force it to be repealed.

We should combine the alternative minimum tax repeal with the imposition of the so-called “Buffett Rule,” where millionaires at least pay as much as the people who answer their phones and drive them to work. This will get back to the original intent of the alternative minimum tax but in a way that simplifies the Tax Code rather than further complicating it.

We should stop the dangerous practice of suspending some of the payroll tax in the name of economic stimulus. We are uncomfortably close to destabilizing the long-term funding mechanism for Social Security. Instead of the payroll tax cut, let’s target a tax credit for lower and middle-income families that will be fair, affordable, and help nurture our fragile economic recovery without threatening the long-term Social Security stability.

We should target for elimination tax breaks that are out of date, like the subsidy of oil that doesn’t reflect current production techniques or the reality of global petroleum markets. We should instead protect subsidies that are key for our future, especially expiring renewable energy tax credits. We should renew the section 1603 Treasury grant program, which reflects current market realities and would actually be less expensive than traditional tax credits.

On this tax day, we should look for some progress towards building momentum for real tax reform. The Romney-Republican House budget refuses to identify any of the massive tax increases that will be necessary to meet