We don't have time. We've got to act now. We've got to pass bills like this. It's irresponsible not to. We need to continue to call upon the Senate to actually do their job and engage in the people's work. The country will be better off.

I encourage my colleagues to join in support of Representative HANNA's bill. It's a good, commonsense, bipartisan piece of legislation with broad support. It's H.R. 6324, and I urge my colleagues to vote ''yea.''

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6324.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

BUFFETT RULE ACT OF 2012

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6410) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for taxpayers making donations with their returns of income tax to the Federal Government to pay down the public debt.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6410

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Buffett Rule Act of 2012''.

SEC. 2. DONATION TO PAY DOWN NATIONAL DEBT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter A of chapter 61 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new part:

''PART IX—DONATIONS TO PAY DOWN NATIONAL DEBT

''Sec. 6097. Donation to pay down national debt.

''SEC. 6097. DONATION TO PAY DOWN NATIONAL DEBT.

''(a) GENERAL RULE.—Every taxpayer who makes a return of the tax imposed by subtitle A for any taxable year may donate an amount (not less than $1), in addition to any payment of tax for such taxable year, which shall be deposited in the general fund of the Treasury.

''(b) MANNER AND TIME OF DESIGNATION.—Any donation under subsection (a) for any taxable year—

''(1) shall be made at the time of filing the return of the tax imposed by subtitle A for such taxable year and in such manner as the Secretary may by regulation prescribe, except that—

''(A) the designation for such donation shall be either on the first page of the return or on the page bearing the taxpayer's signature, and

''(B) the designation shall be by a box added to the return, and the text beside the box shall provide:

''By checking here, I signify that in addition to my tax liability (if any), I would like to donate the included payment to be used exclusively for the purpose of paying down the national debt.'', and

''(2) shall be accompanied by a payment of the amount so designated.

''(c) TREATMENT OF AMOUNTS DONATED.—For purposes of this title, the amount donated by any taxpayer under subsection (a) shall be treated as a contribution made by such taxpayer to the United States on the last date prescribed for filing the return of tax imposed by subtitle A (determined without regard to extensions) or, if later, the date the return is filed.

''(d) TRANSFERS TO ACCOUNT TO REDUCE PUBLIC DEBT.—The Secretary shall, from time to time, transfer to the special account established by section 3113(d) of title 31, United States Code, amounts equal to the amounts donated under this section.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of parts for subchapter A of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''PART IX. DONATIONS TO PAY DOWN NATIONAL DEBT.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to returns for taxable years ending after December 31, 2011.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the subject of the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6410, a bill to provide a simple way for individuals to voluntarily donate funds to pay down the national debt. Under current law, you can contribute to debt reduction, but like all things with the IRS, it isn't easy. If you dig deep into the 189 pages of instructions that accompany the 1040, you'll find, on page 88, the following:

Do not add your gift to reduce debt held by the public to any tax you may owe.

To contribute to deficit reduction, one must send a separate check or money order to the Bureau of Public Debt, or they can go online at the Web site and use a credit card. Warren Buffett, who says he wants to pay more in taxes to pay down our debt, can't actually do so when filing his taxes.

H.R. 6410, however, gives Mr. Buffett and generous Americans like him a simple, easy way to help pay down our debt. This legislation adds to appropriate tax forms a box with the captions, and I am quoting:

By checking here, I signify that in addition to my tax liability (if any), I would like to donate the included payment to be used exclusively for the purpose of paying down the national debt.

The Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that H.R. 6410 reduces the public debt by $135 million over 10 years. It makes it easy for those who want to donate money to the Treasury for debt reduction to voluntarily do so without raising taxes on entrepreneurs and job creators. If Warren Buffett wants to give, then H.R. 6410 allows him to give to his heart's content, and the payments will go directly to an account at the Treasury dedicated exclusively to debt reduction.

Mr. Speaker, it's not enough to speak in political platitudes about what we can do to reduce our debt. Now you can put your money where your mouth is. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in passing this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Well, there's nothing wrong with this bill except the label. If there were a fine, I would say, for House legislative mislabeling, House Republicans would have a very large fine to pay. This bill has nothing—zero—to do with the Buffett rule. It has everything to do with the absolute refusal of Americans to face the basic issue. The present tax laws give an inordinate tax break to the very wealthy. The Buffett rule is provided and proposed by President Obama and congressional Democrats.

In addition to reducing the deficit by $46 billion, it would address a significant inequity in the Code that allows a quarter of taxpayers earning more than a million a year to pay a lower tax rate than millions of middle class families. One of those taxpayers is the Republican Presidential nominee, Governor Mitt Romney, who paid an effective tax rate lower than 15 percent in 2010 and refuses to let the American public see his tax returns for any earlier years.

Indeed, the so-called tax reform legislation from Republicans would do just the opposite: provide massive tax cuts for the very wealthy, doubling down on the Bush tax cuts that have added billions to the deficit and contributed to growing income inequality.

What's more, their idea of tax reform is to heap new taxes on the backs of middle- and lower-income families to pay for all of this. A recent report found that the so-called tax reform outlined in the Ryan budget would give those making over a million dollars a year an additional average tax cut of $331,000, while those making less than $200,000 would see a tax increase of $4,500.

Taxpayers can do exactly what is provided in this bill if they want to donate some of their taxes on the income they have to deficit reduction.

Republicans, who will recess in 2 days for 2 months with an incredible amount of unfinished business, not the least of which is the extension of the middle class tax cuts and the looming fiscal cliff, we need hard work, not chicanery.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMP. I yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. SCALISE).

□ 1630

Mr. SCALISE. I thank the gentleman from Michigan for yielding and for bringing this legislation to the floor.

The Buffett Rule Act that we're debating now will set up a process where citizens all across the country, rich, poor, whatever their income level, if they feel that they haven't paid enough money into the Federal Treasury, then they can just check off a box and submit the amount of money that they want to pay in addition to what the normal tax liability is, and the assurance will be that that money will be used specifically to pay down the national debt, which, of course, just a few weeks ago, broke the $16 trillion mark under President Obama.

I think if you look at the Buffett Rule Act that we bring forward and contrast that with President Obama's proposed Buffett rule that he's talked about, what the President's talked about is actually raising taxes on the very small business owners that we need in our country to help create jobs to help get our economy going back again. In fact, even President Obama himself acknowledged that if you raise taxes on anybody in a bad economy, it will make the economy even worse.

And make no mistake about it, we are living right now in a bad economy, in many cases because of the President's policies, because of the so many tax increases that this President has already imposed. Just in ObamaCare alone, President Obama has imposed more than 20 new taxes on middle class families. Many of them haven't kicked in and they don't kick in until after the election, conveniently, but those taxes are on the books, and it's going to make it even harder for American families who are struggling to get by in a tough economy.

And so what's the President's latest answer in his version of the Buffett rule? It's to raise another $30-plus billion on the backs of our small business owners. By his own admission, that would make the economy even worse. And I think most people recognize the President would just use that money to go and spend even more money on a government that's already too big.

So the question is: Do we set up a process under President Obama's approach where he would raise taxes on small business earners, further hurting the economy, just so that he can have more money to spend in Washington, where there's already too much wasteful spending, or do we have a process like we establish here in this bill, the Buffett Rule Act, which says that if somebody truly does not feel they're paying enough in taxes, then they can simply check a box and there will be a format that they can lay out however much they want to spend more and that money will be used not to grow the size of the Federal Government but to reduce the national debt?

Again, it's a very clear contrast in approaches. If you look at the record that we've seen so far, the tax-and-spend approach under President Obama, it hasn't worked. We've had more than 8 percent employment literally since the President took office. And it's only gotten worse, to the point where millions of Americans have just given up looking for work. And the President's answer is to keep raising more taxes and spending more money and borrowing it from China because we don't have it.

We need a better approach. We need to address the mushrooming deficit that broke the $16 trillion mark. And if people like Warren Buffett and others like him feel they're not sending enough to Washington, let them put their money where their mouth is. Give them that action by giving them this check box, but knowing that if they do send in more money, it's not going to be used to keep growing a bloated Federal Government and spending money we don't have. It's going to be used to finally start paying down this national debt that's out of control and that's a burden to the opportunities of today's workers and the unemployed who are looking for jobs, but also to future generations—to our children and grandchildren who the big spenders in Washington are borrowing that money from and sending the bill to our children. They've got to stop doing it.

We've got to stop the way things are going now and get the economy back on track. And you don't do it by raising taxes. Again, President Obama even acknowledged that, even though his proposal is to raise taxes on our small business owners. You do it instead this way, by saying if you really feel like you want to send in more money to Washington, use it to pay down the national debt so we can finally get control over spending here.

AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM,
Washington, DC, October 5, 2011.

Hon. STEVE SCALISE,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN SCALISE: On behalf of Americans for Tax Reform, I am pleased to support your new legislation, the "Buffett Rule Act of 2011." This bill would instruct the IRS to provide a prominent, convenient checkbox line on 1040 forms to allow those so inclined to pay extra income tax.

Famously, Warren Buffett complained that his average effective tax rate was too low compared to his secretary. This is probably not true given the fact that Mr. Buffett has failed to release his own tax return for verification, and considering the average effective tax rate of his secretary is quite low based on her purported income. Nonetheless, Mr. Buffett should be able to voluntarily pay extra income taxes if he feels the need to—without imposing broad, job-killing tax hikes on our nation's small employers.

These "tax me more" lines have been particularly-effective in flushing out the serious from the posturing on the state level. States that have a "tax me more" line repeatedly report almost no additional voluntary contributions to state tax coffers. This is despite the fact that there is no shortage of people who have already earned (or inherited) their wealth who want to see taxes raised on those still pursuing the American dream. In short, the limousine liberal set doesn't put their money where their mouth is.

Taxpayers are calling Mr. Buffett's bluff with this legislation. It's his move.

Sincerely,

GROVER NORQUIST.

Mr. LEVIN. It is now my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the ranking member on the Budget Committee, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN).

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. I thank my colleague, Mr. LEVIN.

I was just listening to the previous speaker. The issue is not whether we reduce our long-term deficits. We've got to do that. The question is: How? And every bipartisan group that has looked at this issue has said in order to do this in a smart and credible way, we have to make some additional tough cuts in reforms. But we also need to raise additional revenue. And if we don't raise any more revenue, it means that everybody else is going to get hit even harder. Seniors on Medicare will have to pay more through the voucher plan than our Republican colleagues have proposed. Kids' education grants and loans will be cut. Our investment in infrastructure will be cut.

So what we've said is, Let's take that balanced approach to reducing the deficit and that folks who have done very well should contribute a little bit more toward helping our Nation in that way. Our Republican colleagues have said, No, no, no, no, we're not going to ask people like Warren Buffett or Mitt Romney or very wealthy people to pay one more penny—not one—toward reducing our deficit.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've got to say it's astounding that our Republican colleagues would bring this bill to the floor of this House any day, but especially today. There is apparently no embarrassment factor about the fact that just yesterday this tape surfaced with Mitt Romney talking about the fact that 47 million Americans are not paying enough Federal taxes, that they're somehow not taking personal responsibility. You might as well name this piece of legislation: Give Mitt Romney Another Big Tax Break. Because as the gentleman from Michigan pointed out, the real Buffett rule says to people like Warren Buffett and people like Mitt Romney and to people who have done very well: We need you to contribute a little bit more toward deficit reduction, just like you were doing when President Clinton was President. Just go back to paying the same rate as when President Clinton was President.

And, by the way, President Obama has called upon this Congress to immediately extend tax relief to 98 percent of the American people and 97 percent of all businesses that do business pass-throughs. What our Republican colleagues want to do is to say to Bain Capital and some of the Fortune 100 companies: You don't have to pay any more to reduce our deficit. And they use the language of small business as a cover for that.

Now let's look at who was among those 47 percent of Americans that Governor Romney was talking about yesterday. Seniors who paid into Medicare, who paid into Social Security, who don't have any Federal income tax liability. They're being under-taxed, apparently, or they're not taking personal responsibility. How about our soldiers? We decided that soldiers should not be taxed on their combat pay.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield the gentleman an additional 2 minutes.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. I thank the gentleman.

Soldiers who are fighting in Afghanistan, we decided that they shouldn't have to pay taxes on their combat pay. Apparently, Mitt Romney wants them to have to pay taxes on that money where they're not taking personal responsibility. Millions of other Americans are working hard every day to make ends meet. They may be making $25,000, have two kids. And you're right, we have standard deductions and we have personal exemptions so that people making $25,000 a year don't get hit really hard with income tax. And yet those individuals are paying an effective tax rate more than Mitt Romney.

As the gentleman from Michigan pointed out, if you combine the different parts of the payroll tax, they're at 15 percent. Mitt Romney is at 13 percent. And you know what the Buffett rule would do, the real one? The real one would say for people like Warren Buffet and Mitt Romney, they should at least pay 30 percent over $2 million. There's a phase-in between $1 million and $2 million. That's what the real Buffett rule does.

And what adds insult to injury is that while Mitt Romney and Republicans are proposing a tax plan that would give a break for folks at the very top, the nonpartisan, independent Tax Policy Center says they want to pay for that by increasing taxes on middle-income Americans to the effect of about $2,000 a year more for an average middle class family. Those are people on top of the 47 percent who are just paying payroll taxes.

So here we have a proposal by our Republican colleagues to provide big tax breaks to folks at the very top, and they want to come and make a mockery of the real Buffett rule. The real Buffett rule would actually generate $47 billion. Is that going to solve our deficit problem? Of course not. Will it contribute to helping it? Yes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has again expired.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. That would actually raise some money to help reduce the deficit and ask for some shared responsibility.

This bill is the ''pretty please'' bill. Pretty please, Warren Buffet, pretty please, Mitt Romney, won't you help contribute a little bit more toward reducing our deficit?

□ 1640

I can understand why people like Mitt Romney would love this bill because it asks nothing more of them at a time when we should be taking a balanced approach to reducing our deficit.

Just last week, we had a debate here about sequester. Everybody agreed, Republicans and Democrats, it would be really bad to have these across-the-board cuts take place. Buzz saw cuts. Our Republican colleagues and we both talked about the negative impact on defense, also on the FBI, on border security.

You know what? We had a proposal to pay for part of that to prevent the sequester with the Buffett rule and some other cuts. Our Republican colleagues talked about the terrible consequences of the cuts, but they just don't want to pay for them. They don't want to ask very wealthy Americans to contribute one more penny.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I advise my colleague that I am prepared to close.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield myself the remaining time.

You know, as I've heard this debate, I've been thinking. This is really mislabeled. Why don't we call it the Mitt Romney Rule Act of 2012? He paid the return he indicated less than 15 percent. He earned many, many, many millions. He knew what the code now says. He could have sent some of the money that was not taxed to the government. He could even use a credit card. But he hasn't done that.

This is mislabeled. This has nothing to do with Mr. Buffett.

There's been some reference here to small business. The very nonpartisan entities indicate that 97 percent of people who are in small business and beyond have income actually around $250,000 or less.

All this bill does is to indicate what's already in the code. So, there's nothing wrong with the bill. What is wrong is this frightful mislabeling to try to cover up a refusal of the Republican Party in this institution to face up to what is really necessary to be done.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I can understand why my friends on the other side are talking about everything but the bill before us. And that's because this administration's record on the deficit is so dismal. We're going on our fourth year of trillion-dollar deficits. The deficit under their watch is now $16 trillion.

You know, what we really need to do is grow this economy and create jobs, and we know that their tax increases that they love so much would cost us 700,000 jobs. Look at this: 43 months of unemployment of 8 percent. That's why they want to talk about everything but this.

They've said the question is how to reduce the deficit. The fact of the matter is this bill does reduce the deficit, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation, by $135 million. Now, they might not think that's much, but to most Americans, every million dollars counts.

So, I think it's important that we move forward on this, that we grow our economy, that we grow our economy to create jobs. And we know that taxes on small businesses that they propose cost us jobs.

So let's pass this bill. It's a step forward. It allows those Americans—we all hear it as we go around the country—people say, ''I'd like to give more. How do I do it?''

This makes it easier, it makes it straightforward, and actually is scored as reducing the deficit.

Let's vote to make a step for reducing the deficit. We have bigger issues we need to deal with. We're going to deal with those. That's why this committee, Ways and Means, has been focused on tax reform this year, more than 20 hearings. I hope we can move forward on fundamental tax reform. Let's vote for this bill. Let's give those Americans who want to be more generous, who want to check a box and contribute more specifically to deficit reduction, a very transparent, straightforward, and easy way to do that.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6410.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANDREW P. CARPENTER TAX ACT

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5044) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income any discharge of indebtedness income on education loans of deceased veterans, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5044

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,