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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2011, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

GOVERNMENT'S AUTO PILOT DOWNWARD SPIRAL

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. For weeks now, we've faced the artificial Republican debt crisis, which was a crisis of Republican choice. And now with an agreement coming forward, we should ask the question: Is this worse than the default scare? Well, it's hardly clear. What about a government on auto pilot, locked into a slow downward spiral?

First, this empowers the most reckless and extreme elements, not just in the House Republicans today but is a blueprint for mischief for either party in the future. Next, we are starting down a path of budget cuts that all experts assure us will weaken the economy at exactly the time we need to strengthen economic growth, not reduce demand. Clearly it is a step backwards from reforming how the country does business.

The fixation on triggers, formulas, and supercommittees will make it easier for Congress to duck the difficult policy work and harder to do it, if Congress wants to try.

Even as it would appear we avoid outright default, this agreement casts a long-term shadow over our Nation's reasonableness and our reliability for the next 2 years and beyond. And remember the drama over the continuing resolution earlier this year? There are still two potential government shutdowns over the next 14 months that will invite more legislative blackmail over an extreme agenda since it's clear that recklessness works.

This is all the more frustrating because the path forward is clear. The public strongly supports a balanced approach which would include tax reform that would raise money while making the Tax Code more fair and simple.

Everyone knows we must deal with health care costs; and until recently, there was bipartisan agreement as to how to do that. We should accelerate the health care reforms which are already enacted into law but do it faster to improve care and lower costs.

Do we need to require a commission to implement bipartisan suggestions to right-size the military, both its mission and its budget? Absolutely not. There are ideas floating around and support on both sides of the aisle to do that now.

Most important, perhaps, we should revitalize the economy by rebuilding and renewing America, financed by modest increases in user fees. One of the things that is actually the most simple would be to implement bipartisan suggestions to reform agriculture, to save money while helping people who farm and people who eat by reducing massive unnecessary subsidies to large agribusiness.

This agreement delays the important work while it weakens both the economy and the decision-making process. Government on auto pilot in a slow downward spiral is not a victory.

THE REPUBLICAN SOLUTION TO THE DEBT CRISIS

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, here we are, after a long weekend of hyperbole and backroom deal cutting at the White House, and here's the product right here.

If you look through it, it's pretty interesting. There's no balance. There are no revenues. God forbid we would ask, as the Republicans call them, "the job creators," the millionaires and billionaires, to pay anything toward further supporting our country, to close some of the tax loopholes that allow hedge fund managers to pay taxes at half the rate of their clerks, you know, things like that. No, that would be a reach too far to ask them to share in the sacrifice.

What we do see here is that there will be cuts, and very few are specified. But strangely enough, there's one that the Republicans always go after because, you know, they hang out at the country club, and at the country club, nobody's worried about putting their kid through college. But the one specified cut in here is in graduate school financial assistance.

Now, that's kind of peculiar. We have a doctor shortage looming, and medical school is phenomenally expensive. But I guess it's just going to be the rich kids who are going to go to medical school in the future, not the middle-class kids, not the struggling kids. Just the rich kids. So that's the one specified cut, the "one" specified cut. The rest, we don't even know.

Talking about a pig in a poke, this is a pig in a poke. Where's that \$1 trillion of cuts going to come from? First round, second round, another \$1.5 trillion, and not one penny in revenues. And the grand result is about \$2.5 trillion of deficit reduction.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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