

workday until sequestration is resolved.

The House has passed numerous sequestration solutions. It is long past time for the Senate to wake from its slumber, respond to the clarion call of the American people, and pass a sequestration solution.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico. Madam Speaker, in recent years we've seen an increase in major weather events, especially in the continental United States. From record-setting superstorms to severe droughts and devastating wildfires, the recent impact of climate change cannot be ignored.

In my home State of New Mexico, ranchers and farmers are struggling to maintain their livelihoods in the face of drought conditions, while last year wildfires threatened communities that have still not fully recovered.

A rapidly changing climate affects everyone on the planet. Climate change impacts agriculture, water supplies, power and transportation systems, and even our health and public safety.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy and one of the worst wildfire seasons in the western United States that we've ever seen, it's time to work together on commonsense solutions that will allow us to use power in a smarter manner, produce clean and abundant renewable energy, and reduce emissions through energy efficiency. These are things we should be able to agree on and work together on in a bipartisan manner.

It is critical that we move forward with a sense of urgency and take meaningful action that addresses the very real threats of climate change that are already impacting our country.

Sequestration is devastating America today. Madam Speaker, we just heard from one of my colleagues. This week we're scheduled to go on recess on Friday. I hope that my colleague that spoke today, Madam Speaker, reaches out to Speaker BOEHNER and ERIC CANTOR and says, Keep us in session. Let's stop this sequestration from happening. And it's quite simple. The fix to this legislation could be put together in one sentence: Stop it. I guess even better, in two words.

Madam Speaker, we have a sense of urgency across the country when it comes to working on climate change legislation, but as we talk about the impacts to each and every one of our districts with what sequestration will bring with job losses, let's stand together and stop this. Let's ask our leadership to allow us to vote on a simple couple of words: Stop sequestration, and let's prevent it from happening.

SEQUESTRATION: THE LAST TOOL WE HAVE

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

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Madam Speaker, the decline and fall of the Roman Empire offers us a sobering warning of a great nation that became overextended and war-weary abroad while it became utterly profligate and decadent at home. Its economy in shambles and its treasury bankrupt, the mightiest military power on Earth fell prey for backward hordes that had previously existed only on the fringes of civilization.

Now, 3 years ago Admiral Mike Mullen warned our Nation that our national debt is our biggest national security threat. Now, that was 3 years ago when our debt stood at \$13.5 trillion. Today we owe over \$16.5 trillion. In other words, just since he issued this warning, we've added more to our country's debt than we did in our Nation's first 200 years of existence.

No nation has ever taxed and borrowed and spent its way to prosperity, but many nations have taxed and borrowed and spent their way to economic ruin and bankruptcy, and history today is screaming this warning at us, that bankrupt nations aren't around very long because before you can provide for the common defense, you have to be able to pay for it, and the ability of our Nation to do so is now coming into grave question.

□ 1010

Now, just in the first 4 weeks of this year, Congress added more than a third of a trillion dollars of new spending to this already crushing burden. The fiscal cliff deal added \$300 billion and the Hurricane Sandy bill another \$50 billion, more than 90 percent of which had nothing to do with emergency relief for storm victims.

Earlier this month, Congress simply did away with the debt limit altogether until mid-May. Two years ago, Congress passed the Budget Control Act that authorized the biggest single expansion of debt in our Nation's history; but Congress at least also agreed to reduce the projected deficit by \$1.2 trillion over the next 10 years, either through the supercommittee or, failing that, through automatic budget reductions called "the sequester."

Now, the sequester doesn't actually cut spending in any conventional sense of the word. After a decade in which spending has grown 64 percent, or nearly twice the rate of inflation and population growth, the sequester merely limits the increase next year to about one-half of one percent.

I opposed that act, in part because the sequester was less than one-third of what officials at Standard & Poor's warned was the minimum deficit reduction necessary to preserve our Nation's AAA credit rating. I also objected to across-the-board cuts that treat our highest priorities the same as

our lowest priorities and to the disproportionate impact that it would have on our defense budget. Those warnings fell on deaf ears at the time.

But since then, twice the House has tried to correct these shortcomings with legislation to replace the worst of the defense cuts with long-term entitlement reform. Ultimately, that's the only way we're going to bring our fiscal crisis and its spiraling debt under control.

Both measures died in the Senate; and after the November election, the likelihood of entitlement reform over the next several years is exceedingly remote, which means that however imperfect the sequester may be, it is at this moment in our history the only tool currently available to us to begin to point our Nation back toward fiscal solvency and away from the perilous fiscal path that we are now upon.

We need to give administrators, especially the military command, the flexibility to set priorities and manage our money accordingly; but the overall sequester reductions must be maintained.

A few months ago, the chief of sovereign debt for Standard & Poor's made this point: that although the sequester was insufficient to justify maintaining our AAA credit rating, it was at least a step in the right direction. He said:

The sequester was an agreement that Congress made with itself, and we would view any step back from that agreement very negatively.

Madam Speaker, when the history of our era is written, let it not be said that ours was a generation of locusts that consumed not only the wealth we inherited from our fathers and mothers, but also stripped bare the futures of our sons and daughters. Let us instead begin a new direction for our Nation, stepping back from the fiscal precipice that threatens to destroy our Nation from within.

INSURANCE PREMIUM PRICE CHANGES

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, I rise to talk about the health insurance industry and its role in our greatest national achievement: full implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

In the last few weeks, insurance companies, companies that reported \$12.7 billion in profits, had been running a scare campaign arguing that premiums will increase later in the year. They tell us that when they roll out their 2014 health care coverage plans, they will increase premiums unless we weaken the Affordable Care Act's key consumer protections.

The insurance companies didn't get 100 percent of what they wanted, but they got a lot. They blocked the public option, secured an individual mandate guaranteeing that 30 million Americans soon will be customers. That's one