

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I'm deeply saddened for the American people that we are unable to bring this bill to the floor and stop the loss of 2 million American jobs.

SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. The sequester drama that we are watching play out this week is exactly why I voted against the New Year's Day budget package.

Two months ago, all of the forces were aligned to force a bigger agreement, but we set our sights too low. It generated too little revenue, and, most importantly, there was not a fundamental reform in the way that we do business.

We merely put off the fiscal cliff in order to have not one, not two, but three such dramas between now and next summer. Friday is the sequestration; March 27, the continuing resolution runs out; and sometime this summer, the Treasury Department is going to run out of capacity to keep juggling the national debt, and we face that drama all over again.

Actually, there's a fourth cliff if you count the so-called "dairy cliff" which will potentially double milk prices in September.

The path forward is to focus on areas of potential agreement between the right and the left. A great place to start is health care. Reform is taking place around the country. And, in fact, nowhere is it more exciting and promising than what is happening in Oregon where we are working in concert with the implementation of the Health Care Reform Act to squeeze out waste and inefficiency. We are working to reward value instead of volume, and the Federal Government has bet \$1.9 billion that we will be able to reduce health care inflation at least 2 percent a year and maintain quality.

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Helping people stay well rather than paying people for disease and illness is a logical way to go. After all, the Affordable Care Act embedded every one of these major reforms that used to be bipartisan, that had been implemented by business, health care plans in red States and blue States, that had been advocated by Democratic and Republican Governors alike, and, indeed, supported by Members of the House and Senate in both parties. Instead of fighting health care reform, we ought to accelerate it. If we can deliver on the Oregon promise, it in and of itself will save more money nationally over the next 10 years than we're arguing about with the sequestration.

We also must address the huge budget challenges that are facing the Pentagon, in large measure because neither it nor Congress has insisted on

change and, indeed, in some cases, has institutionalized bad decisions.

We haven't scaled back our horribly expensive, outmoded, inefficient nuclear deterrent program, maintaining perhaps 8–10 times the warheads for what we need for actual deterrence today with three massive, expensive, redundant delivery systems that are out of sync with today's threats. We haven't used nuclear weapons for the last 68 years. We probably won't use them for the next 68 years, and there is no imaginable circumstance when we would use even a fraction of the weapons we have. And the cost for that conservatively is in excess of two-thirds of \$1 trillion over the next 10 years.

We've never come to grips with the cost of an all-volunteer Army. Our forces are significantly above what we had a decade earlier when we were supposedly staffed to fight two wars simultaneously. We need to scale that down, to refocus it, to supplement reductions in troop levels with beefed-up support to the National Guard, which is far more cost-effective and easier on our troops.

We need to reform our bloated, fossilized, outdated farm bill to spend less, help more farmers and the environment, and show that we can rise above politics and habits to have a farm program for this century, not 1949. The majority of farmers and ranchers in the United States get nothing. The majority of the support flows to the top 10 percent, who don't need it at all, and it distorts our international trade posture.

The final looming threat is the dysfunction, unfairness, and inefficiency of our tax system. It costs us huge sums to administer. It leaks hundreds of billions of dollars in tax avoidance, evasion, and mistakes, to say nothing of misplaced incentives, and it costs over \$160 billion a year to administer.

Now, clearly there's a need for more revenue in a growing and aging population, but fundamentally, we need a new broad base of support that will help us pay the transition necessary for a reformed system.

Madam Speaker, this is not rocket science. This is within our capacity. We ought to get started on it now.

SEQUESTRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. MAFFEI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MAFFEI. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Since becoming central New York's new Representative, I have met with over a hundred business owners and development leaders in my community. I've visited universities, the hospitals, the factories, the public schools, and I've met with local leaders and law enforcement and public safety. The one message I keep hearing throughout my district is that we need to work together to grow and strengthen our middle class and create jobs. Work to-

gether. Now, more than ever, that's what Congress and the President needs to do. That's what the American people and my constituents overwhelmingly want.

If people do not come to the table and work together by March 1, this Friday, more than 70,000 jobs are at risk in my State alone. At Hancock Air Base, New York National Guard employees, 280 of them are at risk. Two hundred eighty National Guard employees at the 174th Attack Wing will be furloughed, notwithstanding the fact that this unit is flying missions in Afghanistan as we debate these issues.

Automatic spending cuts will force the FAA to cut air traffic controller shifts and potentially eliminate overnight shifts at the Syracuse Hancock International Airport and other upstate New York airports. Cuts will also force TSA to cut back on personnel, increasing wait times by an hour or more at many airports. This will have a chilling effect on a still-fragile economic recovery.

Seventy thousand New York college students will lose tuition assistance, and across the country, 70,000 deserving children will lose Head Start. Now, to keep America strong we are told that we need to make sure for our national security and our economy that we improve STEM education, science and technology. This is doing the opposite.

We need to take a balanced approach, trimming where necessary instead of these arbitrary sweeping cuts that hurt middle class families.

This is not a partisan issue. The Republicans on this floor have spoken about how bad these arbitrary cuts are and how damaging they might be. Our Nation needs to get its fiscal house in order, and we need to do it right away, not on the backs of our middle class and seniors, and not at the expense of thousands of jobs.

Now, there is a specific plan to do that. It balances cuts with revenue increases.

Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to bring up H.R. 699 with this balanced approach.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the House is in session solely for the purpose of conducting morning-hour debate. Therefore, the gentleman's request cannot be entertained.

Mr. MAFFEI. Well, Madam Speaker, I do understand that, but I do hope that the leadership of this House considers just doing a vote, a regular up-or-down vote, on this or any plan to avoid these arbitrary cuts.

We need to institute better programs and methods to root out waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used most efficiently. There's no question about that. We also need comprehensive tax reform that finds revenues in ways that don't hurt the middle class, like ending the tax loopholes for corporations that ship jobs overseas and ending the tax breaks for big oil and gas companies.