

Madam Speaker, the National Grain and Feed Association has longstanding history and notoriety for their continual efforts toward supporting American producers and ensuring their competitiveness in agriculture.

Madam Speaker, I want to say congratulations on 125 years.

#### COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, November 3, 2021.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,  
Speaker, House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on November 3, 2021, at 9:57 a.m.:

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 1510.

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 2093.

With best wishes, I am,

Sincerely,

CHERYL L. JOHNSON,  
Clerk.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

#### FISCAL STATE OF THE NATION RESOLUTION

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 44) providing for a joint hearing of the Committees on the Budget of the House of Representatives and the Senate to receive a presentation from the Comptroller General of the United States regarding the audited financial statement of the executive branch, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 44

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring),*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This resolution may be cited as the "Fiscal State of the Nation Resolution".

#### SEC. 2. ANNUAL JOINT HEARING OF BUDGET COMMITTEES TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 45 days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays) after the date on which the Secretary

of the Treasury submits to Congress the audited financial statement required under paragraph (1) of section 331(e) of title 31, United States Code, on a date agreed upon by the chairs of the Committees on the Budget of the House of Representatives and the Senate (hereafter referred to as the "Budget Committees") and the Comptroller General of the United States, the Budget Committees shall hold a joint hearing (hereafter referred to as the "Joint Hearing") to receive a presentation from the Comptroller General reviewing the findings of the audit required under paragraph (2) of such section and providing, with respect to the information included by the Secretary in the report accompanying such audited financial statement, an analysis of the financial position and condition of the Federal Government, including financial measures (such as the net operating cost, income, budget deficits, or budget surpluses) and sustainability measures (such as the long-term fiscal projection or social insurance projection) described in such report.

(b) PRESENTATION OF STATEMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH GAO STRATEGIES AND MEANS.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall ensure that the presentation at the Joint Hearing is made in accordance with the Strategies and Means of the Government Accountability Office, so that the presentation will provide professional, objective, fact-based, nonpartisan, nonideological, fair, and balanced information to the members attending the Joint Hearing.

(c) RULES APPLICABLE TO JOINT HEARING.—(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraphs (2) and (3), the Joint Hearing shall be subject to rules agreed to by the chairs of the Budget Committees.

(2) OPEN HEARING.—The Joint Hearing shall be open to the public, including to radio, television, and still photography coverage.

(3) ATTENDANCE.—The Joint Hearing shall accommodate non-participatory attendance by any Senator and any Member of the House of Representatives, including any Delegate or Resident Commissioner to the Congress.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The requirement under subsection (a) shall apply with respect to any audited financial statement submitted on or after the date of the enactment of this resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the measure under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I don't have to tell you that these are partisan times. We don't often get to consider something that is supported by both Democrats on the Rules Committee and Republicans on the Rules Committee. Not only that, an idea that was also recommended by the truly bipartisan Se-

lect Committee on the Modernization of the Congress.

That is what we have before us with H. Con. Res. 44, the Fiscal State of the Nation Resolution.

This measure from Congresswoman RICE of New York is coming before us at an especially important time, a time that finds us discussing matters like the debt ceiling, government spending, transportation, and reconciliation legislation.

It requires the director of the Government Accountability Office to deliver an annual address to a joint hearing of the House and Senate Budget Committees on the financial position and condition of the Federal Government.

Members of the media would be able to cover the hearing so the American people and not just the Members of Congress can better understand the realities about what we face today; all with the goal, Madam Speaker, of promoting greater transparency surrounding our Nation's fiscal health. That way, we have more clarity as Congress makes spending decisions in the months and years ahead that will impact every single American.

A companion measure has already been introduced in the United States Senate, since the House alone cannot tell our friends on the other side of the Capitol what to do; although, I must admit, sometimes I wish we could, Madam Speaker.

There are more than 100 cosponsors of this resolution. As I said earlier, the Select Committee on the Modernization of the Congress has already recommended this concept in their final report of the 116th Congress. I think that is because of a simple reason: We all want to make the most informed spending decisions and develop the most sensible ways to combat our debt.

You can't properly address these issues unless you fully understand them. With this resolution, through the work of the House and Senate Budget Committees, we can all better understand the fiscal reality that we face.

Don't get me wrong, Madam Speaker, I am sure we will still have many debates on this floor about what to do in response. I sure as hell would never support anything that punishes the very Americans who can least afford it.

For example, when we talk about fiscal health, I want us to acknowledge that America's tax code rewards wealth and power at the expense of working families. There has been a dramatic reduction in taxes paid by the very rich in this country over the last 60 years.

So when some say all we need to do is cut, cut, cut, I have to say I get a little confused. I think cutting Medicare, privatizing Social Security, and slashing funding for important programs that help working families is an awful idea.

Instead, I want those at the top to contribute their fair share and pay it

forward so everyone else can access the opportunities and possibilities they get to enjoy.

Let me also say, taking on big problems will cost money. But in the long run, the consequences of an action oftentimes will be more expensive. Hunger is an issue that I deeply care about. It is estimated to cost Americans over \$160 billions every year in lost productivity and poor healthcare outcomes.

In contrast, it would cost us just a fraction of that number to completely end hunger in America. By investing in solutions up front, we can often save a boatload of money and pass on those savings to the American taxpayer.

□ 1245

Now, many Members on my side feel the same way. But I get it. Many of my Republican friends probably view things differently. We can have those debates here on the floor and in the relevant committees. But because of this resolution, hopefully, Democrats and Republicans and Members of the House and Senate would at least be dealing with the same set of facts.

John Adams called facts stubborn things, and I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, he was absolutely right. But sometimes, it can feel like each side uses different statistics to talk past each other.

This measure will, hopefully, help ground our discussions about fiscal policy, so I urge all of my colleagues to join with the more than 100 Members of this body who support this resolution and with the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, which recommended this idea.

Let's allow Members of the House and Senate to hear directly from the GAO so that we can follow the facts and make better informed decisions about our Nation's bottom line.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, H. Con. Res. 44 provides for an annual joint hearing of the House and Senate Budget Committees to hear a presentation by the Comptroller General of the United States reviewing the findings of the audited financial statement of the Federal Government.

I serve both on the House Budget and the House Rules Committees, and I am an original cosponsor of this legislation. It is long past time for the congressional Budget Committees to hear from the Comptroller General, who is the head of the Government Accountability Office. This should be done on an annual basis about the fiscal state of our Nation.

We already hear annually from the executive branch through the head of the Office of Management and Budget. To complement this information, we should also hear an unvarnished, non-political perspective from the head of Congress' legislative support agency

about the many factors contributing to the Nation's debt and deficit in order to develop sound fiscal policies and meet our long-term debt and deficit reduction goals.

Unfortunately, we are in the middle of a spending crisis, with well over \$1 trillion in taxpayer money spent largely on partisan priorities, and the bad news is there is more on the way. The financial effect of this spending on the Federal Government's balance sheet may not be fully realized for several years. It is imperative that we keep close tabs on how our revenues, spending, and debt level are faring.

Congress receives information piecemeal from the executive branch and from the legislative support agencies, so we should have a comprehensive, data-driven analysis and presentation to ensure that our fiscal policies are, in fact, working to ensure the financial health of our Nation, not just in the next 2-year cycle, but for decades into the future as well.

While the legislation before us today was introduced by my Democratic colleague from New York (Miss RICE), it is rooted in the Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform from the 115th Congress chaired by my colleague from Arkansas (Mr. WOMACK).

This is clearly not a partisan issue, as the legislation has more than 100 cosponsors from both parties. Financial success and longevity begin years before they are realized. We must not be reckless with our Nation's financial future now, and the best way to ensure that is to enact the Fiscal State of the Nation Resolution.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 44, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from the State of Washington (Mr. KILMER), who is the distinguished chairman of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress.

Mr. KILMER. Madam Speaker, I thank Chair MCGOVERN for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I am going to start with a bit of an embarrassing admission. For a number of years, I avoided stepping on a scale because I was about 90 pounds heavier than I am now. Madam Speaker, eventually, I figured out that you can't really get a handle on things by ignoring them. So, occasionally, you have to step on that scale, and that is really the ethic that this bill embraces.

It simply says that if we are going to get a handle on our long-term fiscal challenges and have an economy that works better for everyone, then we have to occasionally hear a clear statement of how we are doing and a clear statement of the Nation's financial realities from a nonpartisan, unbiased source. That is what a fiscal state of the Nation address would do.

As the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress looked at pro-

posals to improve the budget and appropriations process in the 116th Congress, all 12 members of the committee unanimously recommended this as an important reform. I would acknowledge that there was great bipartisan and bicameral support for this notion as part of the Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform as well.

The Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress believed that providing Members of Congress with access to nonpartisan information about the many factors contributing to the Nation's fiscal challenges would allow Congress to develop sound fiscal policies and meet the long-term needs of our Nation. In its final report from the 116th Congress, the committee noted that a fiscal state of the Nation address would also encourage communication between the executive and legislative branches and improve the ability for all parties involved in the budget and appropriations process to make decisions based on a common set of facts. That is why this bill has such strong bipartisan support.

I want to congratulate Congresswoman RICE and Congressman BARR for their progress on this effort. I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, Democrats and Republicans, to support this bill.

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH), who is the respected ranking member of the House Committee on the Budget.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding.

Madam Speaker, this resolution about the fiscal state of the Nation is an important step in the right direction. Now more than ever, Congress needs to take an honest look at government spending and the role it is playing in this inflation crisis.

All across America, families are struggling. Consumer prices rose 5.4 percent in September year over year. Inflation is on pace to hit the highest level in 40 years, and the Congressional Budget Office has confirmed that inflation has eroded the purchasing power of families.

Is it any wonder now that only 35 percent of Americans say that the economy is good? I will note that is just a bit smaller than the 37 percent of Americans who believe that President Joe Biden is competent as President.

Make no mistake, the high prices Americans are paying at the grocery store and at the gas pump are a direct result of the Democrats' reckless spending agenda. So it is a little laughable that my Democrat colleagues would bring up this resolution now when for the last 9 months they have rammed through trillions in new spending and debt. As we speak, they are trying to pass the largest tax-and-spending bill in the history—in the history—of our country without even a score from the Congressional Budget Office.

Here is a tip: Be honest with the American people about the price tag of your agenda and the higher prices that will be inflicted. Then a hearing on the state of our Nation's fiscal health will be much more successful.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I would just say to the gentleman I would hate to hear what he would say if he actually opposed the bill. But the bottom line is the bills that we are trying to move through this Chamber right now that would be transformational are fully paid for. I just can't be lectured by anybody who advocated for a tax cut bill that benefited mostly the wealthy and well-off in this country that was not paid for at all and that added \$2 trillion right to our debt. So spare me the lectures.

I reserve the balance of my time, Madam Speaker.

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WOMACK) in order to continue the lectures, and who is a valuable member of the Appropriations Committee.

Mr. WOMACK. Madam Speaker, my thanks to my colleague from Texas for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important subject.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution, though I have to admit that it is easy to be somewhat pessimistic about its potential effectiveness. But I am willing to try anything—anything—that might work in elevating the Nation's debt situation in the minds of the people we all represent.

The people I represent in Arkansas don't have a choice but to balance their checkbooks, and if they can't, then they are limited in how much they can borrow and for what. Sadly, the Federal Government doesn't play by the same rules.

Madam Speaker, we are \$29 trillion in debt. We have budget deficits as far as the eyes can see. We are mortgaging the futures of our kids and our grandkids. And it is painfully obvious to me that the governing majority doesn't really care much about deficits and debt. But Third District Arkansans do.

I had the honor of co-chairing a joint select committee in 2018 that tried to address the budget and appropriations process that has tripped up the Congress every year since I have been here, and to think that we are only funded through the third day of December, with no assurance of a full year's appropriation by then, something has to be done.

A fiscal state of the Union is one of the recommendations that came from our joint select committee, but I will remind everyone that we need three more—count them, three more—Democrat votes to move those recommendations. And four, Madam Speaker, four Democrats voted “present.”

So forgive me if I don't sound terribly optimistic that Congress will get its act together. But maybe, just

maybe, something like this will force a rational discussion before we have what is coming: a sovereign debt crisis.

So, I am willing to try, and I encourage my colleagues to support it.

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

Madam Speaker, I would just remind the gentleman this is a bipartisan bill put forward by a bipartisan commission, and I am glad to hear him talking about the debt. I wish some of my colleagues would have talked about it when they controlled the House and the White House, but the debt that we are talking about was accumulated by Republican Presidents and Republican Congresses and Democratic Presidents and Democratic Congresses.

President Biden has only been in office 9 months, and the spending that he is proposing is to be fully paid for, with a recognition that we do not want to see an increase in our deficits and our debt.

But this is a bipartisan moment, and we should celebrate it. But maybe I am sounding a little eccentric when I say that.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

So, Madam Speaker, in closing, this legislation will provide the congressional Budget Committees with an unbiased, analytical understanding of the audited financial statement of the Federal Government.

We know problems remain in completing this audit, as the Department of Defense has yet to receive a full financial audit opinion. To ensure that this statutorily required audit is achieved and to gain a comprehensive understanding of the financial health of the Federal Government, we certainly must pass the Fiscal State of the Nation Resolution.

Madam Speaker, I urge support of the resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, this is a bipartisan resolution. It was presented to us by a bipartisan select committee. I think we should all appreciate this particular moment.

It is about making sure that Congress is provided a presentation of the facts about our Nation's fiscal health as we make decisions that will impact America's bottom line. Democrats and Republicans could then fight it out over the next steps. We have different priorities and different values on a lot of things.

□ 1300

But there should be no disagreement about this resolution right now. And, surely, even in this day and age, we can all still agree on the need to get the facts in the light of day for us and the people who we represent.

Again, I want to thank Congresswoman RICE from New York for her

leadership on this issue, and I want to thank my colleague on the Rules Committee Congressman BURGESS for cosponsoring this legislation. There should be no controversy over this.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Miss RICE of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of my legislation, H. Con. Res. 44, the Fiscal State of the Nation resolution.

This resolution would require the Comptroller General of the United States to present an annual report on the fiscal health of the federal government to a joint hearing of the House and Senate Budget Committees, open to ALL members of Congress.

This nonpartisan presentation will offer an objective analysis of the nation's finances and allow Congress to demonstrate to the public that we are serious about improving our fiscal decision-making.

As we finalize historic investments to rebuild our infrastructure and help families and small businesses recover from this pandemic, it is more important than ever that we act as responsible stewards of the American people's tax dollars.

Every lawmaker, citizen, and media outlet should be able to reference a single, unbiased source when discussing the current and future fiscal health of our country. And the Fiscal State of the Nation would provide that valuable information with transparency and accuracy.

I'm incredibly proud this bipartisan resolution has garnered over 100 cosponsors, almost evenly split between Democratic and Republican members.

I'd like to thank my friend, Representative ANDY BARR from Kentucky, for co-leading this legislation with me, and I urge its swift passage on the Floor today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 44, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### HAZARD ELIGIBILITY AND LOCAL PROJECTS ACT

Mr. PAPPAS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1917) to modify eligibility requirements for certain hazard mitigation assistance programs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1917

*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 “Hazard Eligibility and Local Projects Act”.

#### SEC. 2. AUTHORITY TO BEGIN IMPLEMENTATION OF ACQUISITION OR RELOCATION PROJECTS.

(a) ELIGIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE FOR INITIATED PROJECTS.—