

WASHINGTON, DC - House Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer (MD) joined the Congressional Out of Poverty Caucus on the House Floor today to discuss the need to protect Americans in poverty who would be most affected by failure to ensure we pay our nation's bills. See below for his remarks and a link to the video.

Click [here](#) to watch the video.

"Mr. Speaker, ladies and gentlemen of this House, I am pleased to rise with my colleague and dear friend, Barbara Lee, to focus on an issue that all too frequently is ignored. I rise to speak as we are engaged in an extraordinarily important discussion, debate, and responsibility. That responsibility is to ensure that America pays its bills; that America's creditworthiness is not put at risk; that America, which has incurred obligations, meets those obligations, to individuals and to others. As we have made policies which have cost money, it is now necessary to pay the bills that we have already incurred.

"But as we engage in that debate and discussion, we must remember that in our country one child out of every five is living in poverty, is worried about proper food, proper housing, proper medical care. These are children who are, in fact, at risk. In America, the richest nation on the face of the earth, we have the largest number of people living in poverty that we have had in over seven decades. And so as we engage in this debate, it is important that we take time to focus on those who all too often are invisible, who all too often are not the center of our discussion, who all too often are perceived to simply be those who will not matter at the voting booth.

"Each of us in this House has a compass formed in many respects by our faiths. My faith teaches me that I have a responsibility to my God to reach out to the least among us, to lift them up, to care for them, to clothe them, to feed them, to house them, to make sure that, as a part of our American family, they are not forgotten, that are not by negligence driven more deeply into despair, poor health, sickness, and a negative lifestyle.

"I come from the state of Maryland, and I worked with somebody you may think is unusual for me to quote. But I was elected to the state Senate in 1966, and Spiro Agnew was elected governor, and in his inaugural address he said this: "The cost of failure far exceeds the price of progress." And what he meant was that the failure to invest in the welfare of our people, as well as our infrastructure and the creation of jobs and the expansion of opportunity, would in the long run cost us far more than the investments would cost us in the short run. My colleagues, I suggest to you that our failure to invest in the welfare of all of our citizens will cost us far greater sums in the long run. So I congratulate Barbara Lee from California for making sure that the least of us are not forgotten.

"In this very important debate, do we need to bring down spending? We do; but one of the interesting facets of every report that's been issued in a bipartisan way—the so-called Gang of Six, the Simpson-Bowles Commission, the Domenici-Rivlin Commission—is the premise that we must not take action that undermines the most vulnerable among us. I know my friends on the Republican side of the aisle, who pride themselves on being the party of Lincoln, understand Lincoln's message of healing, of bringing us together, of making sure that we lifted up our fellow citizens and cared for the sick and for the homeless, for the young, and yes, for the old. So I thank Chairwoman Lee, such an extraordinarily courageous and powerful voice on behalf of those who sometimes have no voice. I am pleased to join my voice to hers and hopefully to all 435 of us who have been given the privilege of serving in this body—to raise our voices on this day on behalf of a nation that has been perceived around the world as being a nation of hope, of opportunity, of heart, and of soul. Let us reflect that in whatever way we go forward in ensuring the fiscal health of our nation, the health of our people—physically, mentally, financially—is equally important."

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