

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) spoke on the House Floor today against the debt limit resolution of disapproval. Below are his remarks and a link to the video.

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

“According to a new poll by The Washington Post and ABC News, 84% of Americans disapprove of the way Congress is doing its job. I don't know that the other 16% are paying attention, because we're not doing our job well. And this certainly is not doing our job well. The reason it's not doing our job well is because it is a pretense. A sham. This legislation is to pay bills that we've already incurred. Whether it was incurred with your votes or our votes, we have incurred those expenses.

“This is about whether America will pay its bills. The previous gentleman said nobody has done anything about the debt, but, point of fact, we did something about the debt. We put revenue at levels commensurate with our spending. And as a result, in 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001, in 1997, we brought the deficit down to \$25 billion and for the next four years we had a surplus. Now, a couple of those years were not real surpluses because we counted on Social Security revenue, but two of those years were real surpluses.

“This is about whether we pay our bills that we had incurred. Not doing this would be irresponsible and would lead, I think, to further disrespect by the public, and properly so. One of the reasons for this feeling by the public is that Americans are tired of political games. This is a political game. This is a game that will say, ‘See, I voted against debt.’

“Now, let me tell you how to vote against debt. When you cut taxes in 2001 and 2003, I agree with my friend, it's not about blame, it is about learning, however. When we cut taxes in 2001 and 2003, 2001 under George Bush, we didn't pay for them. We pretended they would pay for themselves. They didn't. Alan Greenspan said they won't. We ought to learn from that. Learning from that, we ought to say, yes, we'll pay our debts. The President doesn't want this money. It's

not for the President. It's for bills that we incurred in fighting two wars, in giving tax cuts, primarily to the wealthiest in America, to passing a prescription drug program that, frankly, all of us now support, but we didn't pay for it. As a result, we got deeply into debt.

“We have to show courage, wisdom and, hopefully, intellectual honesty in getting to that. The American public is tired of seeing Republicans spending time because of electoral positioning, and they would be tired of us doing the same thing. That's what this is. This is not our debt. We voted against it. But that's not responsible. It's not honest. And I think most of you know that.

“The resolution before us today is simply another waste of time. More than that, it undermines confidence here and around the world. Some of that debt, of course, we owe to people around the world. It is the essence of political gamesmanship and does nothing to reduce the debt or create jobs, and we spent the whole day on it. This is the only full day we will spend in January debating any issue. Americans know that we ought to pay our bills. They know we reached a deal in August that said both parties would work together to reduce our deficits in order to provide certainty to our businesses, to our markets, and to families around the dinner table.

“This would only provide more uncertainty at a time when our people need to see us working together on a big, balanced deal to meet our fiscal challenges. My friend and I are both for that effort. I am very much for that effort. But I don't pretend that not paying the bills that we incurred are going to solve that problem.

“The only thing that's going to solve that problem is we are going to ask everybody to contribute their fair share. Yes, we are going to have to make some cuts and make some cuts that neither side will like and raise revenues that neither side will like. But I will tell my friend, who is waiting for his grandchildren, I have three grandchildren now, and I have two great grandchildren, and he's right. They're the ones who are going to have to pay this bill. And I saw my young friend and new member from South Carolina passionate about not passing this to his children. I could have given that speech. I voted against the AMT – the one without paying for it. We paid for it later when we set the AMT. I think it needs to be fixed and we'd pay for it.

“I would vote no on this resolution, and I strongly encourage my colleagues to do the same. Why? America is disheartened because they do not believe we are honest in dealing with them. They believe we play political games. They believe that we are not addressing the issues they know are of importance and know do not have easy, simplistic answers. I hope that Democrats who vote no are joined by a large number of Republicans, not because you like debt, not

because any of us like that. And, very frankly, I voted for the Clinton revenue increases in 1993. The prediction on your side of the aisle was it would destroy the economy, unemployment would spike, and the deficit would explode. None of that happened. You were wrong. All of us are wrong from time to time. Dead wrong.

“As a matter of fact, we enjoyed the best economy I have seen in my adult life in the 1990's. And we have seen the worst recession in my life after pursuing the Bush policies for eight years. Yes, we were in charge of Congress for the last two but we couldn't change policies because the President had the veto and the votes to sustain that veto on this Floor.

“So, ladies and gentlemen, let's be honest with the American people. We've all incurred a debt. We all spent the money. We drove on the roads. We were defended abroad. We invested in health care, research. We all incurred these debts. We know we need to solve it. We know that will be tough, but honesty will make it easier. Honesty between ourselves, honesty with the American people, and honesty, integrity, and courage.

“Around this country I talk about Greece having a real problem. They are at 128%. I think we are at 100%. The problem with Greece is they don't have the resources to solve their problem. America, the good news for us is we have the resources to solve our problems – if we have the courage and political will to do so. This vote is a small token of showing that we have the courage, the wisdom, and the political will to do so.

“We need to pay our bills. Vote no on this resolution. Show the American people that we have courage, that we have wisdom, and we can have the political will to make America continue as the strongest country on the face of the earth, and I yield back the balance of my time.”

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