

**WASHINGTON, DC - House Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer (MD) gave the following statement on the House Floor today urging Republicans to work with Democrats towards a balanced, bipartisan solution to avoid the upcoming fiscal cliff. Below are his remarks and a link to the video:**

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

“Thank you, Madam Speaker. First I want to of course associate myself with the remarks from [Rep. David] Dreier and [Rep. David] Price, who have done such terrific work in the spread of democracy, but also to lament the tragic loss of life and the courage displayed by our men and women in our foreign service and who are deployed abroad to represent the United States, its democracy and its principles.

“Madam Speaker, I regretfully rise, however, to talk about another unhappy subject. Our fiscal house is burning and in Washington we continue to play and fiddle. We have another eight, perhaps 13 days left, less than that. I don't know whether we're going to be here in October but I do know we are going to be here for a very short time this week frankly doing message bills.

“The middle class tax cut which passed the Senate lays fallow somewhere, not brought to this Floor. To assure that our middle-class citizens would understand they weren't going to get a tax cut on January 1, give them confidence, give our economy confidence to help grow our economy. We have not ensured our doctors that the payments for Medicare services to patients will in fact be available. We have not taken substantive action to set aside the sequester with a balanced plan.

“There will be a bill on sequester and that will be largely opposed on our side of the aisle because it does not provide for balance, it simply says set aside the sequester which is the direct result of the Republican policies.

“In fact, the Republicans have offered two bills on the Floor which say that sequester is the option of choice if you don't meet certain numbers. They did that in their Cut, Cap and Balance bill which was enforced - how? - through sequestration.

“We understand that sequestration is an irrational act. Why is it an irrational act? Because it is as if you have a food budget and a movie budget at home. And you have tight finances that week, that month, that year. You don't cut your food budget exactly the same as you cut your movie budget. You say we are going to forgo a movie and make sure we have healthy food on the table. That's what we ought to do. We ought to have a strategic way and a balanced way to get this deficit that is out of control, and needs to be handled, under control. And the best way to turn off the sequester is a balanced plan. But what we will see offered on this Floor is not a balanced plan but a plan which says, ‘do it our way or no way.’

“Now, very frankly that's been the history of this Congress. I've served in 16 Congresses. This is the least productive congress in which I have served. Now, that view is shared by two scholars, Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein, who wrote in a book and in an op-ed: ‘We've been studying Washington politics and Congress for more than 40 years and we have not seen them’ - meaning the Congress of the United States – ‘this dysfunctional.’ The American public share that view, of course, and our poll numbers reflect it, properly so.

“In our past writing' Mr. Mann and Mr. Ornstein go on, ‘we have criticized both parties when we believed it was warranted. Today, however, we have no choice but to acknowledge that the core of the problem lies with the Republican party. The GOP,’ they went on to say, ‘has become an insurgent outlier in American politics. It is ideologically extreme; scornful of compromise; unmoved by conventional understanding of facts, evidence and science; and dismissive of the legitimacy of [its] political opposition.’ And therefore unwilling to compromise. That's what our gridlock is caused by. An unwillingness to compromise.

“The Senate's passed a Farm bill. Senate passed a Farm bill which would help farmers threatened by drought. As a matter of fact, their own committee has reported out a Farm bill. But that Farm bill has not been brought to the Floor because apparently the majority of Republicans aren't for a Farm bill. So even their own bill is not brought to the Floor, much less a bipartisan-passed Farm bill passed in the United States Senate which could be passed and would get a significant number of Democratic votes, not because we believe that's exactly what we want but because we believe it's a compromise that will work for America and America's farmers.

“Ladies and gentlemen, Madam Speaker, the American public ought to know that in the next few days we are not going to be doing much of anything. Not on jobs for Americans, not on the fiscal cliff that confronts us, not on Farm bills, not on the Violence Against Women Act which also passed the United States Senate in a bipartisan overwhelming fashion.

“No, we fiddle. We fiddle while the fiscal fires burn. I would urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, my Democratic colleagues and my Republican colleagues. I don't think we're going to get anything done before November 6. I think it's going to be politics, politics as usual. The American public and America will suffer for that. But I think that's what's going to happen.

“But I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and Madam Speaker, I would urge the American people to demand of us that we not perceive the lame-duck session as simply a time to further fiddle. It ought to be a time, my colleagues, when we act, we come together, we adopt a balanced, fair plan to get the fiscal house of America in order, to put ourselves on a fiscally sustainable path that is credible, that people believe in so that the rating agencies which are now talking about perhaps downgrading the United States of America, the most credit-worthy nation on earth. Why? Not because we don't have the resources to solve our fiscal problems but because they do not perceive that we have the political will and willingness to do so or the courage.

“My colleagues, Americans expect more of us. We ought to expect more of ourselves. We have an obligation, a responsibility. We swore an oath to protect and defend, not only the Constitution, but the welfare of this country. Putting our country on a fiscally sustainable path is absolutely essential. I don't think we're going to do it before November 6 but I would hope that every one of us who comes back here the [third] week of November will pledge ourselves to work together as Americans - not as Democrats, not as Republicans, not as conservatives, not as liberals or moderates but as Americans - understanding that the only way every commission that's reported has said we're going to get our house in order is to come together and do so in a balanced way.

“And yes, ladies and gentlemen, that means making sure that we deal with revenues. We pay for what we buy. That's what revenues are about. We pay for what we buy. And then we deal with the spiraling cost of health care. Everybody's talked about that. We have to do it. President Clinton talked about that. Paul Ryan talks about that. We have to do it. But we could keep the guarantee of Medicare. We could keep the guarantee of Social Security in the process while getting our fiscal house in order on the entitlement side.

“Ladies and Gentlemen of this House, we owe it to the American people. The American people expect us to act responsibly. We are fiddling while the fiscal house of America burns. Let us summon the courage, the judgment and the personal responsibility each one of us has, that when we return here after the election and hopefully the politics is behind us, those 30-second, 60-second ads which misinterpret, misinform and dissemble are behind us and we say to all of our citizens that we represent that we are prepared to exercise the courage and judgment to put our country on a fiscally sustainable path that is credible. Not only will rating agencies believe in it, our citizens will believe in it, our businesses will believe in it and the international community will as well. I thank you, Madam Speaker, and I yield back the balance of my time.”

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