

It was Winston Churchill who noted our country's penchant for brinksmanship during times of crisis. "Americans can always be counted on to do the right thing... after they have exhausted all other possibilities." Given the showdown currently underway in Washington over raising the government's debt ceiling, it's hard to see how we will be able to find a way to agree. Yet, the imperative to do so is not to score a political victory, but to rescue our country from an abyss of crushing debt that threatens our way of life.

With Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner's proclaimed August 2nd deadline to raise the nation's credit limit a mere two weeks away, the president and congressional leaders are meeting almost daily to find common ground. The standoff illustrates the two schools of thought that prevail at each end of Pennsylvania Avenue. One sees lifting the debt ceiling as simply a necessary bureaucratic step in order to continue our government's ability to operate on borrowed funds. The other side views the debt limit as a boundary which cannot be crossed unless we make fundamental changes to curb reckless overspending which will ultimately lead to economic collapse.

Any time people are involved in tense negotiations there will be drama. It is not surprising that both sides have been accused of giving in to frustration and pushing away from the table. Conservatives have accused the president of failing to take the matter seriously and not negotiating in good faith. Meanwhile, President Obama has painted Republicans' refusal to give into higher taxes and more government overspending as akin to school children ignoring their homework duties.

For me, it has been very disappointing to see the president go beyond finger pointing and actually attempt to frighten America's seniors with warnings that the government might not be able to pay Social Security checks on time if a debt limit agreement is not reached by August 2nd. This is the most cynical of demagoguery, and it is just not true. My office has received quite a few calls from seniors disturbed about the status of their benefits. In fact, there are sufficient funds in the federal treasury to not only meet our nation's debt obligations should the debt ceiling not be raised within two weeks, but also to make Social Security and Medicare payments in full and on time.

Last Thursday, I joined 55 of my House colleagues in calling on the president to cease such irresponsible rhetoric. Furthermore, we pointed out that there is enough money in the federal coffers to meet our debt obligations and our commitments to our nation's seniors and ensure that our military also receive their paychecks on time. Scare tactics to the contrary by the White

House are uncalled for and, frankly, also further jeopardize our citizens' faith in their leaders.

Opinion poll after opinion poll reflects Americans' alarm at the meteoric rise in federal debt and Washington's failure to curb it. A \$14.3 trillion national debt fueled by year after year of government red ink spending – including \$3.7 trillion since President Obama took office three short years ago – is like a 200-foot tsunami racing toward our shores. It cannot be ignored.

To slow down the growth of our nation's disastrous debt, Republican negotiators have called for federal spending cuts that exceed the \$2.4 trillion increase in the country's borrowing limit. In response, the president has essentially offered less than \$2 trillion in cuts, unenforceable future spending caps and tax increases.

Americans want their government to live within its means just as we must do each month. Government overspending undermines our country's economy and places even more jobs at risk. It is time to do the right thing and not continue to pass the buck.

Gulf Claims Facility Audit Advances in House:

With the one-year anniversary of the creation of the Gulf Coast Claims Facility approaching, BP has recently called for the scaling back of claims payments. The Alabama Gulf Coast is still recovering from the unprecedented blow that last year's BP oil spill dealt to our economy and even today many have yet to receive fair treatment of their damage claims.

I have long called for an audit of the GCCF, and I personally reiterated that request to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder when he visited Orange Beach in late June. Last week, the House Appropriations Committee included language in its fiscal year 2012 Justice Department budget calling on that agency to identify an independent auditor to evaluate the GCCF's procedures and the qualifications of its employees.

This action is a critical step forward in gaining answers to lingering questions about the fairness of the GCCF's claims approval process, which has, so far, avoided scrutiny.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

For Release: July 18, 2011