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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

All powerful and ever-living God, Your Divine Providence has blessed this Nation from its beginning. Your Divine Providence is evidenced in our Declaration of Independence and speaks through our Constitution to the rest of the world.

Lord, help us to embrace this same truth of Your Provident Love as this country wrestles with national issues today and desires to address problems facing the international community of nations in our times.

May every individual working in Congress see that every moment is given to us by You, Loving Lord, and thereby bears Your holy will for us now.

May each of us seek Your divine purpose for us and be disposed to become Your instrument to accomplish the great task of establishing Your kingdom of peace, Your reign of truth and Your rule of justice by every word we utter, every decision we make and every action we take this very day. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. ALTMIRE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to ten 1-minutes on each side.

OVERSIGHT FINALLY IN THE HOUSE

(Mr. ALTMIRE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, with Democrats now in control of Congress, oversight is finally being conducted. The new Democratic Congress has already held 81 separate hearings on important issues involving the war in Iraq, including the billions of dollars that are unaccounted for. The documented pattern of neglect at Walter Reed goes back at least 3 years, yet previous Congresses did nothing. But just this week the new Congress held four separate hearings on the treatment of our wounded soldiers.

Also, this week the House held hearings on the firing of seven U.S. attorneys for purely political reasons. Partisanship and politics have no place in our justice system, and this House is going to aggressively investigate this situation.

Madam Speaker, this level of oversight is part of the Democrats' effort to bring real change to Washington. Two months into the new Congress, we are already delivering on that promise.

CONGRESSIONAL INACTION JEOPARDIZES MALHEUR COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES

(Mr. WALDEN of Oregon asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, the failure of Congress to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act will have an extensive and extreme impact on more than 1,800 local governments that receive ''Payments in Lieu of Taxes'' funds, also known as PILT. The loss of the county payments program means these counties can now apply for the limited PILT fund, thus reducing funds to counties reliant on PILT, and many counties will see a 20 percent reduction.

For Malheur County, Oregon, which is nearly 10,000 square miles and is 72 percent under Federal ownership and is larger than the States of Vermont, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware and Rhode Island, it can mean real problems.

As we all know, rapid response for emergency services is a life-and-death issue. In many areas of Malheur County, it can take well over an hour to respond to a situation. Loss of critical PILT funds will mean a reduction in vital public services, and that is unacceptable.

County Judge Dan Joyce, who is in Washington today, says loss of PILT funds will devastate our ability to respond rapidly in emergency situations. I call on the new Democrat majority to move H.R. 17. Services are being lost. Libraries are closing. Teachers are being given notices they won't be rehired. It is time for action.

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN AGAINST INTERNET PREDATORS

(Mr. LAMPSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, last month I was proud to be part of an important announcement concerning the safety of our children. And thanks to the tremendous generosity of Quest Foundation, the National Center For Missing and Exploited Children was able to establish netsmartz411.org, a first of its kind online service.

NetSmartz411 provides a direct line for experts at the National Center for

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