

APPOINTMENT OF HONORABLE  
ROSCOE G. BARTLETT OF MARY-  
LAND TO ACT AS SPEAKER PRO  
TEMPORE TO SIGN ENROLLED  
BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS  
ON TODAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid be-  
fore the House the following Commu-  
nication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,  
November 25, 2003.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ROSCOE G.  
BARTLETT to act as Speaker pro tempore to  
sign enrolled bills and joint resolutions on  
this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,  
*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without  
objection, the appointment is ap-  
proved.

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF HONORABLE  
TOM DAVIS OF VIRGINIA OR  
HONORABLE MAC THORNBERRY  
TO ACT AS SPEAKER PRO TEM-  
PORE TO SIGN ENROLLED BILLS  
AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS UNTIL  
THE DAY THE HOUSE CONVENES  
FOR THE SECOND SESSION OF  
THE 108TH CONGRESS

The Speaker pro tempore laid before  
the House the following communica-  
tion from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,  
November 25, 2003.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM DAVIS  
or, if not available to perform this duty, the  
Honorable MAC THORNBERRY to act as Speak-  
er pro tempore to sign enrolled bills and  
joint resolutions until the day the House  
convenes for the second session of the 108th  
Congress.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,  
*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without  
objection, the appointment is ap-  
proved.

There was no objection.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant  
to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair  
declares the House in recess subject to  
the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 6 min-  
utes p.m.), the House stood in recess  
subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1315

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House  
was called to order by the Speaker pro  
tempore (Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland)  
at 1 o'clock and 15 minutes p.m.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2673,  
CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIA-  
TIONS ACT, 2004

Mr. YOUNG of Florida submitted the  
following conference report and state-  
ment on the bill (H.R. 2673) making ap-  
propriations for Agriculture, Rural De-

velopment, Food and Drug Administra-  
tion, and Related Agencies for the fis-  
cal year ending September 30, 2004, and  
for other purposes:

[The conference report will be avail-  
able in Book II of the CONGRESSIONAL  
RECORD.]

COMMENTS REGARDING  
CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2673

(Mr. OBEY asked and was given per-  
mission to speak out of order for 7 min-  
utes.)

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to  
take this time to comment on the leg-  
islation just filed. The legislation just  
filed would complete the work of the  
Committee on Appropriations and the  
Congress on a number of appropriation  
bills which were not able to get  
through the system one by one, as is  
the usual process. But in the process of  
putting together this omnibus appro-  
priation bill, the House has, I think,  
reached a new low in terms of its will-  
ingness to reflect the will of the mem-  
bership.

We elect in this country 535 people to  
come to this Congress, 435 of them in  
this institution; and the idea is that  
those Members are supposed to vote on  
various issues, and after those Mem-  
bers have voted, then a conference  
committee between the Senate and the  
House is supposed to iron out whatever  
differences remain between the House  
and the Senate in the consideration of  
that legislation.

That is really not what happened on  
this legislation this year. Time and  
time again, the conferees simply dis-  
regarded the will of Members of both  
Houses, went into a back room, and de-  
cided on their own, without consulting  
anybody but themselves and the White  
House, that they were going to cut the  
cards a different way and deal a new  
hand to everyone.

So we find, for instance, that in the  
legislation just filed, even though both  
Houses of Congress in public, on-the-  
record votes made the decision to try  
to scale back the expansion of the abil-  
ity of large businesses in the commu-  
nications industry to own television  
stations, despite the fact that both  
branches of the Congress voted to put a  
35 percent cap on the percentage of  
American homes that should be reach-  
able by any one corporate entity in the  
television business, despite that fact,  
the conferees produced legislation just  
filed at this moment which changes  
that cap and raises it to 39 percent. No  
votes taken in either House to do that,  
just an arbitrary judgment because the  
White House said, "If you do not do it  
our way, we are going to hold our  
breath and turn blue."

So the conferees caved and went  
against the position of both Houses. I  
think that is a national scandal. This  
is a backroom deal to strengthen the  
hands of the national media giants  
against local control of television. It  
allows ABC and NBC to acquire addi-  
tional stations up to the new 39 percent

limit, and it takes Fox and CBS off the  
hook so that they do not have to divest  
as they would have had to if the will of  
the House and the Senate had pre-  
vailed.

I am also concerned about what has  
happened here with the across-the-  
board cut that is being provided in this  
legislation because, as I understand the  
impact of that cut, that is going to  
mean a reduction of \$178 million in cru-  
cial veterans medical care; and it is  
going to, as I understand it, severely  
hamper the VA in its ability to reduce  
the backlog in handling cases brought  
to them by veterans. It now takes  
about 157 days to process a veteran's  
claim; and this across-the-board cut in  
the operations of the VA will, I am  
afraid, result in seeing those delays ex-  
panded rather than contracted.

I also want to take just a moment to  
point out that this institution has en-  
gaged in a very questionable practice  
with respect to congressional ear-  
marks. In the past, there is no question  
that Congress had provided significant  
numbers of earmarks. But in the past 4  
or 5 years, in my view, that has gotten  
incredibly out of control. There is  
nothing wrong with Congress deciding  
to take a reasonable number of  
projects through earmarks in order to  
give this institution an opportunity to  
define what activities it considers to be  
very important; but when the practice  
explodes to such a degree that virtu-  
ally every university hires a lobbyist  
to try to obtain funds through the po-  
litical process rather than the process  
of peer review, then the Congress aban-  
dons all pretext of taxpayers' moneys  
being used in rational fashion.

The other problem, Mr. Speaker, is  
that when earmarks change in char-  
acter from being a convenience to  
Members to a weapon in the hands of  
the majority party to punish Members  
of the minority party who oppose those  
appropriation bills, then we have, I  
think, fundamentally corrupted the ap-  
propriations process of the House, and  
I think it becomes a source of shame  
for the House in many ways. We have  
had a huge explosion in the amount of  
Member-directed earmarks over the  
past 4 or 5 years; and I would say that  
when that is accompanied by the idea  
that Members will be punished if they  
vote on the basis of substance, then I  
think this Congress ceases to be a body  
which can earn the respect of the  
American people. It seems to me that if  
we are going to allow earmarks to be  
used as a partisan threat, then what we  
will do is eliminate the ability of the  
appropriations process to be considered  
on the merits, and the only thing Mem-  
bers will be focused on will be their  
local pork projects rather than the  
broader welfare of the country; and I  
think that will demean the process of  
the Congress and demean the American  
people in the process.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr.  
BARTLETT of Maryland). Pursuant to

clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 24 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1521

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland) at 3 o'clock and 21 minutes p.m.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair lays before the House the following privileged message from the Senate.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment:

Page 1, line 2, strike out all after "*concurring*," over to and including line 3 on page 3 and insert: *That when the House adjourns on any legislative day from Tuesday, November 25, 2003, through the remainder of the first session of the One Hundred Eighth Congress, on a motion offered pursuant to this concurrent resolution by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand adjourned sine die, or until such day and time as may be specified by its Majority Leader or his designee in the motion to adjourn, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 2 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first; that when the Senate recesses or adjourns at the close of business on any day from Monday, November 24, 2003, through the remainder of the first session of the One Hundred Eighth Congress, on a motion offered by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand adjourned sine die, or stand recessed or adjourned until such day and time as may be specified by its Majority Leader or his designee in the motion to recess or adjourn, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 2 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first.*

The Senate amendment was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### SENATE BILLS REFERRED

Bills and a concurrent resolution of the Senate of the following titles were taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 391. An act to enhance ecosystem protection and the range of outdoor opportunities protected by statute in the Skykomish River valley of the State of Washington by designating certain lower-elevation Federal lands as wilderness, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 425. An act to revise the boundary of the Wind Cave National Park in the State of South Dakota; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 434. An act to authorize the Secretary of agriculture to sell or exchange all or part of certain parcels of National Forest System land in the State of Idaho and use the proceeds derived from the sale or exchange for National Forest System purposes; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 435. An act to provide for the conveyance by the Secretary of Agriculture of the Sandpoint Federal Building and adjacent land in Sandpoint, Idaho, and for other pur-

poses; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and in addition to the Committee on Resources for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

S. 452. An act to require that the Secretary of the Interior conduct a study to identify sites and resources, to recommend alternatives for commemorating and interpreting the Cold War, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 551. An act to provide for the implementation of air quality programs developed in accordance with an Intergovernmental Agreement between the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the State of Colorado concerning Air Quality Control on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce and in addition to the Committee on Resources for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

S. 714. An act to provide for the conveyance of a small parcel of Bureau of Land Management land in Douglas County, Oregon, to the county to improve management of and recreational access to the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 1003. An act to clarify the intent of Congress with respect to the continued use of established commercial outfitter hunting camps on the Salmon River; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 1279. An act to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to authorize the President to carry out a program for the protection of the health and safety of residents, workers, volunteers, and others in a disaster area; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

S. 1499. An act to adjust the boundaries of Green Mountain National Forest; to the Committee on Agriculture.

S. 1531. An act to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of Chief Justice John Marshall; to the Committee on Financial Services.

S. 1947. An act to prohibit the offer of credit by a financial institution to a financial institution examiner, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

S. Con. Res. 77. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress supporting vigorous enforcement of the Federal obscenity laws; to the Committee on the Judiciary and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

#### ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Mr. Trandahl, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled bills of the House of the following titles, which were thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 421. An act to reauthorize the United States Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1367. An act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a loan repayment program regarding the provision of

veterinary services in shortage situations, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1683. An act to increase, effective as of December 1, 2003, the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1821. An act to award a congressional gold medal to Dr. Dorothy Height in recognition of her many contributions to the Nation.

H.R. 1828. An act to halt Syrian support for terrorism, end its occupation of Lebanon, and stop its development of weapons of mass destruction, and by so doing hold Syria accountable for the serious international security problems it has caused in the Middle East, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1904. An act to improve the capacity of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands and Bureau of Land Management lands aimed at protecting communities, watersheds, and certain other at-risk lands from catastrophic wildfire, to enhance efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, across the landscape, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2115. An act to amend title 49, United States Code, to reauthorize programs for the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2417. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2004 for intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the United States Government, the Community Management Account, and the Central Intelligence Agency Retirement and Disability System, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3038. An act to make certain technical and conforming amendments to correct the Health Care Safety Net Amendments of 2002.

H.R. 3140. An act to provide for availability of contact lens prescriptions to patients, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3166. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 57 Old Tappan Road in Tappan, New York, as the "John G. Dow Post Office Building".

H.R. 3185. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 38 Spring Street in Nashua, New Hampshire, as the "Hugh Gregg Post Office Building".

H.R. 3349. An act to authorize salary adjustments for Justices and judges of the United States for fiscal year 2004.

H.R. 3419. An act to establish within the Smithsonian Institution the National Museum of African History and Culture, and for other purposes.

#### SENATE ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to enrolled bills of the Senate of the following titles:

S. 189. An act to authorized appropriations for nanoscience, nanoengineering, and nanotechnology research, and for other purposes.

S. 579. An act to reauthorize the National Transportation Safety Board, and for other purposes.

S. 1152. An act to reauthorize the United States Fire Administration, and for other purposes.

S. 1156. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve and enhance provision of health care for veterans, to authorize major construction projects and other facilities matters for the Department of Veterans