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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: Eternal Father of all and well-spring of youthful dreams, bless the young women and men who have served these past months as pages of the U.S. House of Representatives. As their term of service comes to an end, inspire each of them with expansive hopes and fill them with great aspirations to create powerful futures both for themselves and for this Nation.

We praise You and we thank You for their families and all of those who have mentored the pages in their program: their work, their school, and in their dorm. May this experience of government at work deepen their commitment to learning and their ability to make friends with diverse people from across the Nation, forming them into leaders for tomorrow.

May the Members of Congress surrounded by such youthful presence grow in their tender understanding of America's young people, their needs, their dreams, their problems, their values, and their abilities.

Ever-living Lord, help young and old Americans alike develop skills to cross the generational divide, that we may all grow up to be one Nation under God. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Mr. FLAKE 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 10 1-minute speeches on each side.

BANNING BOOKS

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, a 10-year-old Knoxville, Tennessee child, Luke Whitson, and some of his friends chose to read the Bible to each other during recesses instead of playing on the jungle gym or kickball. Luke's principal was not amused. She put a stop on this terrible practice at once and told the students not to bring their Bibles to school again.

Now, we expect principals to protect kids from bullying and ensure a healthy learning environment. We do not expect them to dictate issues of faith or, worse, mandate a faith-free environment. However, this principal is a ground soldier in a national campaign to remove faith, even voluntary expressions of it, from publicly funded programs and facilities.

School children, all people, should have the right to read freely in their own free time, whether it is during recess at school or in the break room during lunch at work.

Our government buys and provides copies of the Koran and prayer rugs to terrorist prisoners at Gitmo. We expect our soldiers to honor a terrorist's right to worship freely, but will we stand for the right of an American child to do so as well? Sounds like somebody is paranoid.

PRINCIPLES OF TAX REFORM

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, we have a tax system that is needlessly complicated and burdensome to the middle class. It is time for fundamental tax reform that reflects the values and the interests of all Americans, not the special interests.

When President Bush announced his tax reform commission, he said his core principle was that it should not hurt government revenues.

Democrats believe that the core principle of tax reform is that tax reform should help the middle class achieve their goals. Tax reform is about the middle class and economic growth, not about government revenue.

In the last 4 years the Tax Code has been filled with special breaks for special interests. At the same time, the tax burdens have shifted from the wealthy to those who work, from dividend to wages.

What should we do?

Combine the five educational tax breaks to one tax break for higher education for \$3,000 for everybody going to college; unify the various child credits and earned income tax credit to a single simplified tax family credit; simplify the 16 different versions of the Tax Code for savings to one universal 401(k) pension; and, finally, encourage homeownership. We should create a universal mortgage deduction for all taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, we need a tax system that reflects the American values and fosters the American Dream, not the current system written by and for the special interests.

SOCIAL SECURITY PROPERTY RIGHTS

(Mr. MILLER of Florida asked and was given permission to address the

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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