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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER of Michigan).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC.
March 16, 2006.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CANDICE S. MILLER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

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

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: Lord God, how poignant is the Pentateuch story when the father-in-law of Moses boldly approaches the great law-giver and says:

“You are not acting wisely. You will surely wear yourself out, not only yourself but also the people around you. The task is too heavy for you. You cannot do it alone.

“Now listen to me, and I will give you some advice that God may be with you. Act as the people’s representative before God, bringing to God whatever they have to say.”

Then his father-in-law outlines for Moses how he is to delegate his work of overseeing and communicating with the people. He tells Moses to select “God-fearing and trustworthy helpers who hate dishonest gain for themselves. Moses is to form them into a pyramid of dialogue and decision-making that will reach down to the weakest voices in the community.

“Moses followed the advice of his father-in-law and did exactly what he said.”

Lord God, help our brothers and sisters in Congress to go and do likewise,

seeking “not to be served but to serve” in Your holy name. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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 pro tempore. Will the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. MCHENRY 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 PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain requests for 10 one-minute speeches on each side.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY STING

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

Mr. FOLEY. Madam Speaker, let me commend the administration, particularly Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, for his investigation that has busted a ring of 27 charged in a child pornography sting. Images traded worldwide on Internet chat room, despicable, disgusting, disgraceful conduct. Agents from the Justice Department, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and law enforcement authorities in several countries participated in this sting.

This is disturbing news about pedophilia at the youngest, youngest

age of children and victims. I urge the Senate to take up the House bill that was sent over in messages to help us rid this society of the scourge of child pornography, sexual exploitation, child molestation and finally get tough with the people that commit these heinous crimes against our most vulnerable. We have sent it overwhelmingly by voice vote to the other Chamber.

I urge Senator FRIST to bring his Chamber together to pass this vital legislation so we can continue to crack down on these monsters.

HUMAN HEALTH IN THE WORLD

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, yesterday we heard the new president of Liberia, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, discuss the challenge her country faces from the greatest threat to human health in the world. It wasn’t AIDS, tuberculosis, even the people shot and bombed in armed conflict. It was the needless death from water-borne disease. It is why one half the people who are sick today are ill. It has claimed more lives than all the wars in human history.

Today we start the World Water Forum in Mexico City. Currently, the State Department is at work preparing a plan for the United States to meet its commitment to safe drinking water and sanitation around the world. I hope our Congress reflects upon our responsibility to prevent this needless death, and that we step up to adequately fund these important programs in our foreign aid budget.

SOLUTIONS TO THE IMMIGRATION PROBLEM

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

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

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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Mr. KELLER. Madam Speaker, I am here to talk about border security solutions. I recently spent a week along the Mexican-California border to see firsthand how bad the problem of illegal immigration is, and, more importantly, what Congress can do to fix it. So how do we fix the problem?

First, we need to crack down on employers who knowingly hire illegal workers. Jobs are the magnet drawing illegal aliens across the border.

Second, we need to complete construction of the double fence for 700 miles along the border near populated urban areas. It worked in San Diego.

Third, where mountains and rugged terrain make completion of a double fence impossible, we need to have a virtual fence which consists of infrared cameras that enable agents to see the entire border.

Finally, we need more Border Patrol agents. Although Congress has already tripled the number of Border Patrol agents since the late 1980s, more are still needed. Madam Speaker, the House recently passed a tough border security bill that implements these solutions. I urge the Senate to act now.

NEED TO EXTEND RX DRUG DEADLINE

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Madam Speaker, America's seniors are looking for some relief with the high cost of prescription drugs. The vast majority of seniors remain skeptical that the new Republican prescription drug plan will work for them, and therefore, many have not signed up and refuse to.

Congressional Republicans and the Bush administration did not only make this plan confusing to understand, but they also included a provision that will financially penalize seniors if they don't sign up for the plan by May 15. While most Democrats would rather replace the plan for a simpler one within the Medicare system, we do not want to see seniors penalized any further.

Without a deadline extension, seniors will encounter a 1 percent increase on their premiums for every month after they wait to sign up after the May 15 deadline. Since seniors would not be able to begin coverage after the deadline until January of next year, seniors would encounter a 7 percent Bush Medicare tax that would stay with them the rest of their lives.

This is simply not fair. Seniors are already having to pay enough for their prescription drugs. Mr. President, you have 2 months to change your mind. Don't punish our seniors, Mr. President.

COYOTE VS. COYOTE

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

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, the Old West shootouts continue in Texas. The border war has moved from the rural vastness and wide open spaces of the Rio Grande River to the big city.

Gunfire in the fourth largest city in America occurred this week in urban Houston. A blazing gun battle ensued between rival human smugglers, or coyotes, as we call them, fighting over turf. The outlaws were fighting over the precious cargo of illegal aliens. After the bullets stopped, 21 people were arrested.

The Houston Chronicle reports, the battle for human cargo occurred at a drop house where illegals are stored. "They are held until relatives pay the ransom to set them loose in America," according to officials.

It is reported the fees coyotes charge for smuggling individuals is anywhere from \$1,500 to \$70,000. Criminals make a profit off of illegals who unlawfully enter the United States. Agents report there is more money in smuggling illegals into the United States than smuggling drugs.

Until America secures the open southern border with Mexico, the lawlessness on the border will spread and breed more lawlessness in urban Americans. Americans and our government must have the moral will to protect the sovereignty of this Nation. And that's just the way it is.

REPUBLICAN DRUG BILL: DRUG COMPANY PROFITS BEFORE AMERICA'S HEALTH

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, the confusing and complicated Republican prescription drug plan will penalize seniors forever if they do not pick a plan by May 15. Unless the administration or Congress acts, 2 months from today, seniors will face a Bush prescription drug tax that will be added to their prescription drug premiums. We simply cannot allow this tax to take effect.

President Bush was in New York this week conceding a lot of problems with the drug plan so far. However, the President refuses to extend the deadline for seniors to sign up. If he doesn't change his mind, Congress must act.

Seniors are only looking for help for these skyrocketing prescription drug prices. They didn't ask for this confusing drug plan, nor is it to help them. But they need the help. This is both a critical health and financial decision for seniors who rely on prescription drugs to be healthier.

Democrats have a plan that would extend the drug enrollment period and eliminate penalties to the end of this year. It is time for us to join together and save American seniors a prescription drug tax that they cannot afford and simply do not deserve.

CONTRASTING ESTONIAN PRESIDENT MERI TO BELARUS DICTATOR LUKASHENKO

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, I have time to speak about the death and passing of President Meri from Estonia who died Tuesday in his sleep. Deported to Siberia at the age of 12, he worked as a lumberman, a potato farmer. He got back to Estonia, graduated as a professor of history cum laude, was not allowed by the Soviets to practice that profession, became a playwright, was involved in the "Singing Revolution" and became the second president of the country of Estonia.

This is in contrast to the dictator Lukashenko, who as of today, has blocked European election monitors, has thrown out eight Scandinavians for doing polling, and has again arrested Alexander Milinkevich for campaign activities.

President Meri will be able to rest and sleep in a free, sovereign, democratic Estonia, while dictator Alexander Lukashenko will just have sleepless nights by depriving his country of freedom and democracy.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE OF ITALY

(Mrs. MALONEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MALONEY. Madam Speaker, today I pay tribute along with my dear friend and colleague, Representative HENRY HYDE, to the wonderful people of Italy.

In the hours and days following the horrific terrorist attacks of September 11, hundreds of thousands of Italians rallied in Rome in sympathy with and in support of America.

Prime Minister Berlusconi visited the United States and in his public statements expressed these same sentiments. He rightly stated that these attacks were attacks against all nations.

A great honor bestowed upon visiting heads of states to the U.S. is the opportunity to speak before a joint session of Congress. During that appearance, he emphasized goals we all share; promoting democracy and protecting human rights. He called for continuation of the global efforts to fight terrorism.

Italy is a great ally of the United States, and I believe we should continue efforts to bring the people of both nations closer together.

As the representative for thousands of Italian Americans, I know, as they do, that our society has benefited strongly from the many contributions made by this vibrant community.