



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 152

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2006

No. 51

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BONNER).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 3, 2006.

I hereby appoint the Honorable Jo BONNER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

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

PRAYER

The Reverend Frank M. Deerey, Jr., Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, LaBelle, Florida, offered the following prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, this morning I ask Your blessing upon the men and women who are gathered to conduct business as representatives for the people of this great Nation. God, each of these leaders has a need on his or her heart, and I pray that You will be recognized as a God who will meet every need as You are called on to provide strength, wisdom and the discernment to make difficult decisions that will affect so many people of the United States.

Father, I pray for these leaders, who have been given the awesome responsibility to lead, that You will guide them to lead in a way that pleases You and strengthens Your plan for this country. You have blessed the United States incredibly, and we give You praise for these blessings. Father, guide us to remember the words of the Psalmist to, "Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida 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.

WELCOMING THE REVEREND FRANK M. DEEREY, JR.

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

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome our guest chaplain, the Reverend Frank Michael Deerey, Jr., who is currently serving as senior pastor at the First Baptist Church of LaBelle, Florida.

I first met Pastor Deerey during a visit with Governor Jeb Bush after Hurricane Wilma hit south Florida, and we witnessed First Baptist Church of LaBelle's humanitarian operation for the hurricane victims who were in need of a hot shower, meals, clothing and other resources. LaBelle is a small city with a big heart, and that was truly visible under Pastor Deerey's leadership, as his church rallied along with the community to help those who were adversely affected by the wrath of Hurricane Wilma.

Pastor Deerey was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, and lived there until

1995, when he came to Florida to serve in LaBelle. He received a bachelor of arts in 1979 from Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, Louisiana. In 1982, he received a master's of divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Pastor Deerey was licensed and ordained as a minister and has served as youth pastor, associate pastor and pastor at four Louisiana churches.

Since moving to Florida, Reverend Deerey has been actively involved in the community as president of the local unit of the Salvation Army and is currently serving the Hendry County Sheriff's Office as chaplain.

Pastor Deerey is married and has two children. His wife, Cathy, joins us today, and has taught in public schools for 27 years and currently is a school guidance counselor. His son is a graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautic University in Daytona, Florida, and his daughter is currently enrolled in Edison College in Fort Myers, Florida.

It is a great pleasure to join our friends in LaBelle in welcoming Pastor Frank to the House Chamber to open our legislative day with prayer and thank him for all his services, not only to LaBelle but all of Florida.

COSPONSOR H.R. 4992, PUT VETERANS' NEEDS FIRST

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

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, we must always keep the promises we have made to our veterans who have dedicated themselves to faithfully serving our country. However, under current law, veterans are being prohibited from using Medicare coverage at local VA hospitals. They can only use Medicare at non-VA hospitals, and they lose out on the personalized care they prefer to receive at VA hospitals. This forces

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veterans to choose between cost and comfort. That is not the way our veterans should be treated.

I have introduced the Veterans Medicare Assistance Act to correct this problem. Our laws should be working for veterans, not against them. I urge my colleagues to join me in this effort to enable our veterans to use their Medicare benefits to help them pay their bills at VA hospitals.

Most veterans pay into Medicare for most of their lives. This law should not prohibit them from using those Medicare benefits at VA hospitals later on in their lives. Cosponsor H.R. 4992 and show our veterans that we are putting their needs first.

We need to work together in Congress to enhance health care options for our veterans, not take them away.

RAISING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S FLU PLAN

(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, later this morning, the President will unveil his plan for responding to a flu pandemic. The Homeland Security Department will be playing a key role in the response. That is right, the pandemic flu response will be brought to you by the same people who gave us one heck of a job in responding to Hurricane Katrina.

The other great initiatives were duct tape as a national response to chemical weapons and the Dubai Ports fiasco. According to reports, the President's plan predicts chaos, quote-unquote, with a scenario of nearly 2 million American deaths. Given the Department of Homeland Security's track record, are these really the folks you want in charge of managing our response to a crisis of this magnitude?

The Homeland Security Department had a plan for New Orleans: they just ignored it. And the parts they did follow were so bungled and mismanaged, we are still dealing with the aftermath.

Mr. Speaker, no well-funded plan can go forward without a good general. At a time in which we need Grant, we have got McClellan. Forget the compassionate conservative this President promised; at this point, I would settle for a competent conservative.

BIGGEST REFINERY IN TEXAS

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, part of the reason gasoline prices have jumped to record highs is because there have been no new refineries or major refinery expansion in America. United States refineries are at 97 percent capacity turning that black gold into gasoline at a rapid rate, but there is a tremendous demand for more refining capacity.

Royal Dutch Shell has announced that the Motiva Refining Plant in Port Arthur, Texas, will expand to become the biggest refinery in the United States. Construction will begin next year. Currently, ExxonMobil, in Baytown, Texas, is the biggest refinery in America. By the way, Mr. Speaker, both of these refineries are in the energy belt of the Texas gulf coast.

To get back on the path of energy self-reliance, the United States needs more American refineries and more offshore drilling. The country has not built a new refinery in over 25 years because of burdensome bureaucratic Federal regulations and environmental energy obstructionists. Congress needs to encourage refinery development and offshore drilling. That will increase supply so that the gasoline price at the pump comes down to an acceptable American consumer level.

The people of southeast Texas welcome Motiva's new progress, and we congratulate them on this endeavor. That's just the way it is.

REPUBLICAN CONGRESS CONTINUES TO WASTE OPPORTUNITIES

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. We have just heard an example of the Republican line of why there is an energy problem: We haven't built new refineries because of burdensome environmental regulations. Hogwash.

We have had the industry actually close refinery capacity. There is no evidence that there is an inability to build refineries. Sadly, we are continuing the spectacle of the Republican control in Congress to waste opportunities and try to change the subject, whether it is wasting subsidies on oil companies that don't need them or starving renewables and conservation.

The latest debacle is scheduled here on the floor in a few hours, where they will force communities to accept refineries on closed military bases, with no committee markups, no hearings and no meaningful records.

There will come a time when Congress will act like a Congress, will legislate on energy, on conservation, on innovation and prepare for the future, but, sadly, not with this Republican leadership.

CONDEMNING MEXICAN PRESIDENT FOR LEGALIZING DRUGS

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

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, Vicente Fox, the president of Mexico, is at it again. Yesterday, he said he would sign into law an irresponsible law legalizing the possession of drugs. As a result, millions of American young people who

travel to Mexico for summer vacation will now legally be able to use cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, and marijuana.

How much is okay? Two ecstasy pills, four joints, four lines of cocaine and 25 milligrams of heroin are now all allowed, according to Vicente Fox. Who is advising this guy, Courtney Love?

What a year President Fox is having. Earlier this year, his Mexican government provided maps to illegals to help them cross our borders. Then, his Mexican military soldiers got caught providing an armed escort to Mexican drug smugglers into Texas. Now he wants Congress to reward millions of illegal aliens with amnesty and permanent citizenship so they can earn money here and send it back to Mexico.

Vicente Fox says he's our friend. With friends like these, who needs enemies?

SOARING GAS PRICES

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

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, it seems almost everyone these days is rightfully outraged at the massive profits of oil and gas executives and companies. While they are raking in record profits, gas prices hit historic highs. That is, everyone except House Republicans.

It is not enough that Republicans supported provisions in the energy bill last year that provided oil companies with \$20 billion in special interest gifts while neglecting to include any real initiatives that would lower gas prices, but House Republicans then repeatedly refused to support Democratic efforts to give the Federal Trade Commission the authority to investigate all price gouging at all points of the supply chain. And last week, House Republicans had the opportunity to roll back \$5 billion in additional tax breaks for oil companies over the next 5 years but voted overwhelmingly to reject this Democratic proposal.

Are House Republicans that far out of touch? Don't they realize that companies with profits of \$130 billion last year do not need tax breaks? Mr. Speaker, the cozy relationship House Republicans have with oil and gas executives is hurting everyday Americans who are struggling to pay record prices at the pump.

U.S. LEADS WORLD IN COAL

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, the problem we have is our reliance on imported crude oil. The way we try to address this solution is through renewable fuels, conservation, additional exploration and new technologies. I want to talk about one of those new technologies today, which is coal-to-liquid application, called Btu conversion.