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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 15, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MICHAEL R. TURNER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2011, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 2011

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, the greatest threat to our democracy is unemployment. We all know the numbers. We all have far too many constituents who don't have jobs and can't provide for their families.

Too many Americans are without work, and more and more of them are losing hope. Unemployment benefits are running out. Fear is creeping in. But for some of the unemployed, their tireless job search has been coming up

empty because some employers won't even consider them for openings.

Recently, The New York Times reported that one employer listed a job that included the caveat: "No unemployed candidate will be considered at all," and a Texas electronics company said that it won't "consider/review anyone not currently employed, regardless of the reason." It is reminiscent of a time when signs read: Blacks need not apply, or Women need not apply.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's high time that we fix that. How are the unemployed supposed to find work if they don't even get considered for a job? How do we expect the unemployment rate to go down when the unemployed aren't even available or allowed to compete for a job?

Along with Congressman JOHN LEWIS, I'm introducing legislation that will amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to make it illegal for employers to discriminate against applicants because they are currently or were currently unemployed.

The Civil Rights Act of 2011 will not give a job to those who are unemployed, but it will give those who are unemployed through no fault of their own the opportunity to compete for a job on the merits of their ability.

Mr. Speaker, we talk in pleasantries and political correctness about "these difficult economic times." We debate policy and hold hearings on how to move America forward, but recently the Bureau of Labor Statistics had to modify its current population survey to be able to include responses reporting a duration of unemployment over 2 years.

We are making room for the reality of chronic unemployment in America in very real ways, while promising it will get better. I think we need to do more to make sure that people have opportunities.

Nearly 9 percent of Americans right now are unemployed. That's 13.9 mil-

lion Americans that we represent as Members of Congress who are looking for the opportunity to pursue the American Dream. They are looking for Washington and to Washington for leadership and to keep things from getting any worse.

They are writing our offices begging us to help them jump-start America. They are not just looking for a hand out. They are looking for a way out, just a chance so that they can take care of the rest. They are hoping that the next interview will mean a new start.

Mr. Speaker, the job market is troublesome; but we cannot allow companies to arbitrarily pick who will come out of the economic crisis by disqualifying unemployed workers. It should not be their right to discriminate this way.

We, as a Nation, face triumphs and challenges together. It seems to me that to allow such a practice is counterintuitive to everything that Congress is working towards. Why create jobs if those Americans currently without jobs are not eligible?

Just because an individual was unlucky to be laid off or had the misfortune to graduate into a jobless market does not mean that we should just cast them aside.

This employment practice adds insult to injury for Americans who are desperately looking for jobs, for college graduates who debate if their education was worth the cost, for families who are trying to make more on less.

Those who live on Main Street of America had very little to do with the onset of our economic crisis. In response, they are doing what generations before us have taught, carrying on, hoping that the darkness will give way to light.

Mr. Speaker, if we allow employers to block consideration for those who are unemployed, we let that light get a little dimmer. We allow the American

□ 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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