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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. PAULSEN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC.

November 2, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ERIK PAULSEN 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.

UMWA UPPER BIG BRANCH REPORT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, Members of the House, last week the United Mine Workers of America released the results of their investigation into the deadliest coal mine tragedy in four decades. The report describes the conditions on April 5, 2010 in Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch mine that led to a colossal explosion killing 29 miners. It confirms

the findings of two other independent investigations.

In short, Massey's failure to eliminate explosive coal dust throughout the mine converted an otherwise manageable methane fire into a catastrophic explosion. The force of this explosion traveled more than 7 miles underground, destroying everything in its path. Miles of coal belts were decimated, railroad tracks were twisted like pretzels, and massive mining equipment was tossed underground like lawn furniture during a hurricane.

The report noted that in the 15 months before the explosion, the mine was cited 645 times for violations of mine safety laws. They faced \$1.2 million in potential fines. However, rather than improving safety, Massey challenged three-quarters of the fines. And in the month before the explosion, miners had asked that the accumulation of explosive coal dust be addressed 560 times. However, management only responded 65 times.

The Upper Big Branch mine was literally a powder keg. The mine workers' investigation concluded that 29 miners died because of a corrupt corporate culture that put production ahead of human life. Massey Energy's top management was well aware of the conditions at Upper Big Branch mine. They knew of the mountains of citations for dangerous conditions, but all they had to do was file an appeal to get Federal safety officials to back off.

Massey also obstructed mine safety inspections by illegally alerting operations of an inspector on the property so they could cover up any noticeable problems. And management knew that workers were complaining about the conditions below ground. But all Massey had to do was remind these miners that they were free to find other employment if they continued to speak up.

Corporate officers didn't mince words when it came to production over safe-

ty. In a "RUN COAL" memo from CEO Don Blankenship in 2005, he told his workers their only concern was to produce coal. The message was clear from the very top: produce coal, disregard safety problems or find another job. Miners of Upper Big Branch and other Massey mines have told Congress and investigators similar stories. To enforce their perverse philosophy, top management demanded reports every 30 minutes on how much their mines were producing.

It is clear that Massey Energy management actively disregarded their workers' health and safety. Unfortunately, the knowing violation of a mandatory health and safety standard is only a misdemeanor, no matter how many miners are killed. This kind of conduct needs to be made a felony, but efforts to increase sanctions have been stifled by the mining industry's lobby. Instead of being held accountable for the decisions that caused 29 deaths, Massey Energy executives got a massive \$195 million payout when they sold off their company, according to the United Mine Workers report.

Even though Don Blankenship was forced to resign following the Upper Big Branch tragedy, he pocketed \$86 million in the golden parachute when 29 of the miners under his jurisdiction and responsibility were killed. If you wonder why people are talking about the 1 percent and the 99 percent, the 99 percent in the mine had their lives put in danger every day they went to work for Massey. And every day they questioned it, they were threatened with job loss. But the 1 percent—the 1 percent—walked away with \$195 million for overseeing one of the most dangerous mining operations in the history of this country.

What about the families of the breadwinners of the 99 percent? They lost their breadwinner, they lost their husband, they lost their father, and they lost their brother. Now we understand

□ 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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the disparity that motivates people to occupy Wall Street. We know why people are occupying hometowns all over the country. We understand this. But we also know that these miners had to simply go to work. This was the job that was available to them, but they were ridden roughshod over by Massey.

These families are now simply left to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives and may receive some scraps later on in some final determination. It's a familiar story in an era where Wall Street companies and their executives took big payouts after wrecking our economy. But Massey Energy executives' decisions resulted in the destruction of 29 lives and 29 families. This makes Massey's payout even more disgusting.

Massey Energy was recently sold to Alpha Natural Resources. I have been personally assured that these corrupt practices won't reappear with the new owner. However, there are some troubling contradictions that merit a careful watch. Despite stating their intention to fully cooperate with the government investigations, Alpha has been keeping some senior Massey managers who have invoked their Fifth Amendment rights. And Alpha's recent actions to fight potential pattern of violation sanctions at former Massey mines don't set well either.

Yes, mining is a dangerous job; but not every mining company operates like Massey, nor should they, nor should we tolerate the Masseys of the coal industry.

BRING OUR TROOPS HOME

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, a couple weeks ago, I had the privilege and the honor to visit our wounded at Walter Reed-Bethesda. It so happened that five marines from Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base in my district were there. Four of the five had lost both legs—double amputees. And the one kid that had his leg blown off by an IED, I went into his room, as I did the other four, but this one had a question for me. His mom was sitting in the room. And he said, Congressman, why are we still in Afghanistan? And I told the young lance corporal, I don't know, I cannot answer it. I don't understand why we are not pushing the President to bring our troops home before 2014.

And that leads me to a quote by Ronald Reagan from his book entitled, "An American Life: The Autobiography," based on Reagan's life. And it dealt with Lebanon, and he was the President at the time. "Perhaps we didn't appreciate fully enough the depth of the hatred and the complexity of the problems that made the Middle East such a jungle. Perhaps the idea of a suicide car bomber committing mass murder to gain instant entry to paradise was so foreign to our values and consciousness that it did not create in us the concern for the marines' safety that it should have.

"In the weeks immediately after the bombing, I believed the last thing that

we should do was turn tail and leave. Yet the irrationality of Middle East politics forced us to rethink our policy there. If there would be some rethinking of policy before our men die, we would be a lot better off. If that policy had changed towards more of a neutral position and neutrality, those 241 marines would be alive today."

I thank Mr. Reagan for his service to our Nation, and I thank him for those words. I wish both parties would listen to leaders like Ronald Reagan who understood that you're not going to change the Middle East no matter what you want to do or hope to do or pray to do. You can't do it, and you won't do it.

Mr. Speaker, beside me are two little girls, one named Eden and one named Stephanie. They are at the graveside of their father, Sergeant Kenneth Bladuf, sergeant in the United States Marine Corps.

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About 2 months ago, he was sent to Afghanistan, along with a Colonel Benjamin Palmer from Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station, which is in my district also.

One night, when they were having dinner with the Afghan trainees, one of the trainees pulled out a pistol and killed both of them. It is so ironic that the day before Sergeant Bladuf was killed, he had emailed his wife and he said, "I don't trust them, I don't trust them, I don't trust any of them," and yet we keep spending \$10 billion a month. We're going to cut programs from senior citizens and children in America. We can't balance the budget. But old Mr. Karzai, he'll get his \$10 billion a month. The Congress needs to look at this and start bringing our troops home before 2014.

Mr. Speaker, also in Sunday's paper, it says: "Suicide bomber hits NATO bus; 17 people, including 12 Americans, are killed in the deadliest attack since the war began."

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we don't have to continue to go to Walter Reed-Bethesda and see all of these broken bodies. If we're going to be there until 2014, there are going to be a lot more broken bodies and dead young men and women. I hope the leadership of both parties will start joining those of us in both parties and bring our troops home before 2014.

Mr. Speaker, again I state to all the children like Eden and Stephanie, be proud of your moms and your dads. But for those of us who are policymakers, we have the responsibility—not the generals, but we the policymakers—of sending our young men and women to die and lose their limbs for absolutely nothing but a corrupt leader.

Mr. Speaker, I will close right now with the same closing I do all the time: God, please bless our men and women in uniform. Please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. God, in Your loving arms, hold the families who have given a child dying for free-

dom in Afghanistan and Iraq. God, please bless the House and Senate, that we will do what is right in Your eyes. Please bless President Obama, that he will do what is right in Your eyes for his people. And three times I will say, God please, God please, God please continue to bless America.

COMMENDING AMERICA'S VETERANS

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

Mr. DONNELLY of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the veterans from my State of Indiana and across the United States for Veterans Day. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their service to our country and for their selfless devotion. They put their lives on the line to defend our freedom, and there is no way that we can ever thank them enough.

Over 52,000 veterans live in the congressional district that I am honored to represent, Indiana's Second District. Meeting them is an inspiration because of their humility and professionalism. When you thank them for their service, they usually modestly say, Sir, I was just doing my job.

Veterans embody the definition of patriot—selfless sacrifice in order to defend the freedoms that we enjoy in the United States. Veterans such as Mr. Marion Minks from Logansport, Indiana, who served as a PFC with the U.S. Army during World War II. My office was honored to represent Mr. Minks and also to present him with the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, and other military service medals that he earned.

Veterans such as Mr. Gary Whitehead from Elkhart, Indiana, who served in the Navy for more than 20 years and then served his fellow veterans as the Elkhart County Veterans Service Officer. For over two decades, my office was honored to work with Gary to open a VA clinic to serve veterans in north central Indiana in his own county, something he had fought for for years and years.

Veterans such as Rich Mrozinski from La Porte, Indiana, who served in the Air Force during the Vietnam War and later became commander of his local VFW post. I had the honor to interview Rich for the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve the veterans of Indiana's Second Congressional District. It is incumbent upon us to see that our veterans receive the best quality care and the benefits that they have earned through their sacrifice to our country. We must see that those services are provided to our veterans with the promptness and the respect that they deserve. That's why, while in Congress, I've worked on legislation relating to veterans health care, educational benefits, life insurance, and the disability claims process.

We still have much more work to do on behalf of our veterans. I urge my