



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 158

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JULY 18, 2012

No. 108

House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 18, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JEAN SCHMIDT 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 17, 2012, 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.

PUBLIC BROADCASTING

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. There is a sad, unnecessary battle shaping up again over the future of public broadcasting. It's not an exaggeration to say that this battle is about the very future, the very existence of public broadcasting. You might have thought that we were past this when, 15 months ago, the Republican House leadership targeted NPR and tried to defund the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Luckily, last year, the 170 million people who don't just listen or watch public broadcasting but depend upon it, unleashed an unprecedented show of support. As a result, the Republican leadership walked back. They cut, but did not kill, the Federal support for public broadcasting despite the rhetoric. And there was actually a constructive sign in last year's appropriations bill that requested a study to examine alternatives to funding public broadcasting with Federal funding so that people would have hard facts to operate on this year.

Ironically, that study—requested by our Republican colleagues—now being circulated, clearly shows that there is no viable alternative to Federal funding for public broadcasting. Many of the proposals that have been suggested would actually end up with less overall revenues in the long term.

The House appropriations bill being marked up this morning would slash funding now, defund NPR Federal support, and end public broadcasting as we know it, within 2 years. At the same time, we have a Republican Presidential nominee who singled out public broadcasting as one of the five programs that he would eliminate.

This is because Governor Romney and the Republicans listen to a tiny fraction of the American public that is even a minority in their own party. A recent poll showed that two-thirds of the Republicans surveyed would either keep Federal funding as it is, or increase it. What resonates with Republican primary voters is not what America wants, needs, or believes.

The unprecedented threat comes at exactly the time America needs public broadcasting most. NPR News, the object of greatest Republican scorn, is the most trusted brand in the American news media. Listeners learn something, unlike Fox News viewers, who, surveys show, actually know less about the facts than people who listen to no news at all.

NPR News has again the highest rating for the ninth year in a row. PBS shows like "Sesame Street" have helped three generations of parents raise their children with effective, commercial-free educational programming.

Locally owned news is becoming only a memory for most of America as larger corporations buy up radio and television stations and local newspapers. There's no money to be made by commercial stations that cater to the special needs of rural and small-town America. But public broadcasting is there because their mission is to serve, not make money. Often, these locally owned and managed public broadcasting stations are the only source that is direct news, education, and entertainment locally managed for local needs.

We must stop the attack on this critical service for rural and small-town America. It's time for the 170 million Americans who depend on public broadcasting every month to speak out again and for Congress to finally listen.

The radical proposal to slash public broadcasting, defund NPR, and terminate public broadcasting as we know it, is the most powerful symbol of how out of step the Republican leadership is from the country they are supposed to represent.

There's no reason to make public broadcasting a partisan issue. The American public has broad support for it, Republicans, Independents and Democrats alike, especially when PBS and its member stations were named number one in public trust and an "excellent" use of taxpayer dollars for the ninth consecutive year.

Since I've been in Congress, we've beaten back this destructive effort, but our challenge now has never been more urgent. It's time for people who believe in public broadcasting to stand up to what can only be termed extremism and settle this question once and for

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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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all about the future of public broadcasting. For unless we fight it now, there may be nothing left to protect.

RUSSIA'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, the cover of this week's Economist magazine covers it very well. Rebuilding America's economy is its point. We all want to do everything we can to create good, American jobs. Well, unfortunately, we're on the verge of losing a potential market of 140 million consumers. And the reason I say that is that just last week and today, debate is taking place in the Duma, the Russian parliament. The Duma is the lower house, and the Federation Council is the upper house. The Duma has passed it, and the Federation Council today is debating. They may have already voted on it. They are going to be joining the World Trade Organization.

This Economist publication talks about the fact that the way we rebuild our market is through expanded exports. Well, we know that forcing Russia to live with a rules-based trading system is something that could inure to the benefit of U.S. workers. And that's what accession to the WTO is.

Guess what? Russia is going to be a member of the World Trade Organization within 30 days. The question is whether or not the United States of America will be able to have access to that market. We all know that Putin engages in crony capitalism. They have a massive bureaucracy and a corrupt court system. Forcing them to live with a rules-based trading system is the right thing for us to do.

Now, I'm happy to say that there has been an effort led by my colleagues, Mr. LONG and Mr. REED, within the freshman class that has brought 73 Republican Members to send a letter to the President of the United States urging support of permanent normal trade relations with Russia and urging this institution to support that. I'm happy it's a bipartisan effort. My friend, Mr. MEEKS, has joined in this effort, as well.

I would like to, at this point, yield to my good friend from Missouri (Mr. LONG) and thank him for the effort that he has made to tackle this important issue. I'm happy to yield to my friend.

Mr. LONG. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, we agree that we need to get our Nation's economy growing again in order to create jobs for American families. Increasing our Nation's exports is one area that would help grow the economy and create jobs without costing one thin dime. I support free trade because more exports equal more jobs.

I recently led an effort, as Mr. DREIER mentioned there, to rally my

freshman class to support permanent normal trade relations with Russia. After nearly two decades of negotiations, Russia is poised to join the World Trade Organization this summer, and without repealing a Cold War-era trade restriction, American businesses will be at a severe disadvantage to international competitors. While the U.S. already trades with Russia, the repeal of the Jackson-Vanik provision would level the playing field for U.S. exports after Russia joins the WTO.

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The media and some in this country like to portray my freshman class as a group that's not willing to work for the benefit of the American people or work in a bipartisan spirit. We can put those portrayals to rest. The President has shown an interest in increasing American exports, and the purpose of my letter was to show the President that 73 Members of the Republican freshman class are willing to work on this issue to help support American jobs.

I will continue to support efforts that will boost trade opportunities for American manufacturers and businesses. This is about doing what is right for our country and supporting efforts to create jobs for American families.

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, let me thank my friend for his very thoughtful contribution and, in fact, disabusing people of this notion that somehow this group of 87 new Republicans who have come to Congress are not willing to tackle important issues. They led the effort to bring about passage of the Panama, Colombia, and Korea Free Trade Agreements. And once again, they're providing tremendous leadership on our goal of creating good American jobs by prying open that market and ensuring that the United States worker will have access to it.

If you think about not only creating jobs here, but dealing with the problems of crony capitalism, dealing with the problems of a massive bureaucracy, and dealing with a corrupt court system—which is what exists under Vladimir Putin today—this is the right thing for us to do. We should not lose access to the market.

I also want to note that my very good friend, Mr. HERGER, who has been a great leader on the issue of trade, is here. Mr. BERG is here as well, who's been very involved in this.

I would be happy to yield, if I might, to my friend from New York (Mr. REED), who has played such an important role on the trade issue.

Mr. REED. I thank the gentleman, and I rise today in strong support to join my friend from California. As he knows, we've been supportive of free trade from the moment we got here, and I was so pleased to see Colombia, Panama, and South Korea be passed.

WHAT WOULD RONALD REAGAN DO?

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, this month, as American families and businesses anxiously await Congress' action on the expiration of any number of tax cuts, I thought it would be a good idea to ask ourselves again that question: What would Ronald Reagan do? Let's query the Gipper. After all, for the past 3 years all we've heard from Republicans is the claim that President Obama taxes too much.

When the Tea Party started its lobbying efforts in 2009, their name "tea" actually was an acronym standing for "taxed enough already." So just like the Republican Party, the Tea Party expressed an apoplectic furor about what they thought was happening to taxes.

But while blind conjecture and pithy slogans are useful in getting attention, they ultimately fail unless they're backed by facts. Thankfully, the non-partisan Congress Budget Office recently came out with its comparison of the average Federal tax rates paid by American families over the past 31 years. I'm sure Republicans and the Tea Party were all as surprised as many of us to learn that since 1979 Americans paid the lowest average Federal rate in 2009 under President Obama. That's right. Thanks in large part to the Recovery Act's \$243 billion in middle class tax cuts—which my friends on the other side of the aisle opposed to a person—the average Federal tax rate fell to a 31-year low.

The average Federal rate since 1979 is 21 percent—meaning that, on average over the past 31 years, Americans paid 21 percent of their yearly income to the Federal Government each April. The previous low for the past 31 years was 18 percent. But in 2009, President Obama's first year in office, the average Federal tax rate actually fell to 17.4 percent, the lowest since 1979 when Jimmy Carter was in the White House. That means a lower percentage of taxes paid than under Bill Clinton, lower taxes than under both of the two George Bushes, and, yes, a lower average Federal tax rate than under the Gipper, Ronald Reagan.

Throughout President Reagan's 8 years in office, the average Federal tax rate was 20.9 percent, never dropping below 20.2. In contrast, in his first year, the average rate under President Obama was 17.4. In other words, after taking into account all the tax breaks and tax loopholes—especially the Recovery Act's Making Work Pay tax cut—Americans, in 2009, paid 2.8 percent less of their income to the Federal Government than they paid during Ronald Reagan's best year. Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Bill Clinton, the other George Bush, and President Obama. By far, President Obama has the lowest tax rates.

Perhaps if the average Federal tax rate under President Obama was as