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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, 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 1:50 p.m.

AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday when I turned 70 years of age, I read in the North Carolina paper, known as the News and Observer, the article that I would like to quote:

More than 100 family members, friends and uniformed servicemembers marched slowly and quietly Friday down a hill at Arlington National Cemetery following Army Sergeant Aaron X. Wittman's coffin, draped with an American flag and carried on a horse-drawn caisson.

Mr. Speaker, there are probably not many Members of Congress or Americans who know that Sergeant Wittman became the first American to lose his life in Afghanistan in 2013.

I do not know how many more Americans will have to die between now and the end of 2014. One American life is already one too many. We have done enough in Afghanistan. It will never change, as history has proven time and time again.

Obviously, there is nothing more important than an American life. But there is a second part of this sad situa-

tion, and that is the \$28 million a day we are spending to rebuild Afghanistan. We could use that \$28 million a day to fix our own roads and our own schools right here in America.

Yesterday on C-SPAN, I heard the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction, John Sopko, speak about how much money we are spending in Afghanistan and the fact that it is impossible to give the American taxpayers an account of where the money is going. I think Mr. Sopko and his team are doing the best they can; but taxpayers are still being shortchanged, especially with the looming issue of sequestration and a pending continuing resolution.

I hope that my colleagues in the House can join in the effort to bring our troops home by the end of 2013 and to put an end to the wasteful spending in Afghanistan. Most importantly, above all else, put an end to the loss of American lives. I will quote from my friend, former commandant of the United States Marine Corps:

What do you say to the mother, father, wife of the last soldier or marine killed in Afghanistan?

My question is, Was it worth it? My answer is, No, not one life is worth it to be lost in Afghanistan. It is time to bring our troops home.

Mr. Speaker, this poster beside me shows a casket on top of a caisson getting ready to walk to the grave at Arlington National Cemetery.

May God continue to bless our troops, our men and women in uniform. May God continue to bless America. And please, God, touch the hearts of those in the House and let's bring our troops home in 2013.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER LEVEE

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, one of the few areas where Washington agrees with the general public is that our current path is not sustainable. It is not merely a case of spending too much or taxing too little, although we need to control spending and we must and will be raising revenue to meet the needs of an aging and growing population.

The key is to do business differently, to extract more value out of our programs. We need to have the courage to pivot, to do things better, to not follow the reflex of the usual economic and political groups fighting to continue to protect the status quo and the continuing trend lines.

In a world already impacted by climate change and global weather instability, these forces are going to intensify. One of the best examples of why we must change is how we deal with re-engineering nature as a response to natural disasters.

I salute Governor Cuomo for the use of some of the Hurricane Sandy money from the Federal Government to move people out of harm's way, not just throw good money after bad by relocating and rebuilding in exactly the same way, in exactly the same place, where nature repeatedly shows that people are not wanted.

I was before the Rules Committee arguing for greater reform in the Federal spending, but the Governor is pointing in the right direction.

This week we are watching another chapter in the same drama play out in the lower Mississippi, where there is an argument to continue the self-defeating effort to fortify the Mississippi River, closing a gap in the levee, spending hundreds of millions of dollars to prevent an area in the flood plain from flooding every now and then.

The Federal Government has already made periodic flooding in that area as part of its relief valve, to take the excess water and avoid more flooding

□ 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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