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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. WEBSTER of Florida).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
April 16, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DANIEL WEBSTER 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 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 11:50 a.m.

THE McLELLAND-HASSE LINE OF DUTY ACT

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on January 31, Kaufman County, Texas, Assistant District Attorney Mark Hasse had just pulled into work at the courthouse. He got out of his car and he started walking through the parking lot like he did every day, but Mark never made it to the courthouse to prosecute any other cases. He was ambushed, sprayed with bullets, and murdered in the parking lot. Officials are still uncertain of who murdered him.

Then on March 19, just after supper-time in Colorado, the top prison chief, Tom Clements, heard a knock at his door. When he opened the door, he was shot point blank; and he died in the doorway of his own home in his own blood. Clements' suspected killer, Evan Able, resurfaced in Texas weeks later and died in a shootout with law enforcement officers in north Texas because he promised that he would not ever return to prison.

Just 11 days later back in Kaufman County, Texas, District Attorney Mike McLelland and his wife, Cynthia, were sitting at home when their home was invaded by intruders. Mike was shot 20 times, and his wife, Cynthia, was also murdered. They were assassinated and murdered in their own home. District Attorney Mike McLelland had vowed to bring the scum to justice that had killed his assistant district attorney, Mark Hasse, but the assassins got all of them first: three fallen law enforcement officers and one family member.

And just yesterday, a woman in jail in Texas is accused of trying to hire a hit man to kill Assistant District Attorney Rob Freyer, a friend of mine, and to also injure the district attorney in Montgomery County, Texas, to mimic the Kaufman County shootings.

These attacks, Mr. Speaker, are really attacks on the symbol of the rule of law in the United States. These attacks also hit home for me and others of us who have worked at the courthouse. I spent part of my life as a prosecutor and a judge in Texas.

Bad guys come through the courthouse charged with everything from stealing to killing. And I, like many others, had threats on several occasions; but fortunate for me, law enforcement officers in Houston, Texas, made sure those threats were never carried out. But as we've seen this year, sometimes the bad guys are successful in attacking and killing folks that work at the courthouse.

Law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and judges do the work that many people just don't want to do, or will do. They deliver justice to criminals knowing that they face the threat of retaliation when they administer justice. These public officials enforce the rule of law for those who live outside the law.

That's why I'm introducing the McLelland-Hasse Line of Duty Act. Senator CORNYN has introduced a similar bill in the Senate. This bill would beef up protections for prosecutors and judges who are in danger of retaliation and who are threatened with intimidation. It boosts the punishment for killing these officials or their family members or conspiring to commit these crimes against these individuals. The legislation also allows them to carry firearms in Federal facilities and Federal courts and other jurisdictions for their own self-protection.

Courthouse prosecutors and judges risk their lives every day to administer justice and create order in our communities. This legislation promotes security for those that secure justice for the rest of us.

Because justice is what we do in America.

And that's just the way it is.

PREVENTABLE PATIENT DEATHS

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

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I want to come to the House floor today to address what I think is a serious issue facing all Americans without regard to race, color, party, region of the country, or anything like that. The issue that I want to talk about is trying to prevent patient deaths.

Back in 1999, the statistics show that about 98,000 people a year died from preventable medical deaths, preventable deaths in hospitals and things like

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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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that. That number has grown. We're now at about 200,000 people a year who die in hospitals because of preventable death. That's about 3,800 people every week, which is basically the equivalent of two jumbo jet passenger airplanes crashing and killing all of the passengers.

The fact of the matter is that this is something that we as a Nation need to step forward and do something about. It's something that is in our power to do something about. The thing that we need to do to prevent these preventable deaths is to coordinate. It is possible to eliminate these deaths. It is possible through a series of measures to even eliminate them completely.

What we need to do is first of all look at this problem in a holistic way. There's not one magic thing that is going to stop all of them, but a series of small things that are going to prevent and eradicate these preventable deaths.

The first thing I think we need to do is to come together to figure out how to connect our technology, the people and ideas and figure out how to cooperate and, most importantly, make a commitment to prevent these deaths from happening.

Ten years ago, there was a young woman named Lenore Alexander, who had a healthy 11-year-old girl, Leah. Leah underwent elective surgery to correct pectus carinatum at a prestigious southern California hospital. Though the surgery went well, Lenore awoke at around 2 a.m. on the second postoperative night to find Leah dead, the victim of undetected respiratory arrest caused by a drug that was intended to ease her pain. If Leah had been monitored continuously after the surgery, hospital staff and Lenore may have been alerted, and Leah would probably have been rescued.

There are also other sorts of preventable deaths that have to do with the transfer of infections when hands aren't washed properly. Monitoring was already pointed out by Lenore's tragic situation. The fact is that Lenore's situation is not unique, unfortunately. The Patient Safety, Science & Technology Summit is a gathering of people who came together to figure out what we can do to solve the problem—going back to that coordination and cooperation that I spoke about earlier.

The fact is that at this Patient Safety, Science & Technology Summit trained professionals came together to figure out what we can do about it. They came together to talk about, yes, technology, but also just more safe procedures to protect, eliminate, and save people from preventable deaths.

These preventable deaths are tragedies for the families that suffer them. Imagine going into a hospital for a routine procedure that you don't think is going to be serious only to get the tragic news that your loved one has passed away in the course of it.

So today I want to bring attention, Mr. Speaker, to this situation that is

within our power to eliminate and stop. I want to salute the people who attended the Patient Safety, Science & Technology Summit, who came together to try to bring real attention to this problem.

A good friend named Joe Kiani brought this issue to my attention. He's a person who has given a lot of time and attention to try to figure out how we can save families from tragic incidents such as what happened to Lenore's family. And, of course, everyone has something that they can do to prevent these serious problems.

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At the end of the day, our goal should be to make zero the number of deaths in hospitals, to make preventable deaths something of the past, and to bring Americans to attention so that we can focus our technology, our procedures, our energy, and our love and attention on trying to make sure that no family suffers these tragic incidents anymore. 200,000 deaths is too many. One is too many. Zero should be our goal. Let's stop preventable hospital deaths.

KEEP CRUSHABLE PAIN PILLS OFF THE MARKET

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

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, today marks a critical turning point in our country's battle against prescription drug abuse—what CDC has called a national epidemic. It takes more American lives than car crashes.

Unless the Food and Drug Administration takes action today, generic drug-makers will be free to dump cheap painkillers, lacking abuse deterrence, back into U.S. markets—pills that can be easily crushed and which are to be blamed for tens of thousands of emergency room visits and accidental overdose deaths in the last decade.

Two weeks ago, at the National Rx Drug Abuse Summit, FDA Commissioner Peggy Hamburg acknowledged the many "individuals and their families whose lives have been shattered by prescription opioid abuse, misuse, and addiction." She also affirmed that FDA has the authority to keep these crushable pills off the market when abuse-deterrent technologies are available.

It is time to execute that authority, FDA. On behalf of the thousands of families in my region and all over this country, keep crushable pills off our streets and out of our children's hands.

SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISAS

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. In the aftermath of the 10th anniversary of the war in Iraq this spring, those of us who op-

pose the war, as those who thought it justified, are all sorting through what happened. More important, we are united in our support for our men and women in uniform who fought that heroic effort regardless of our feelings about the war's justification or history's verdict.

We have an obligation to all those who served to smooth their reentry and to minimize the price they paid for that war.

But there is another group who put themselves at risk for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am speaking of the Iraqi and Afghan nationals who worked with the American soldiers—thousands who were shoulder to shoulder with our troops, often in the most difficult of circumstances. They provided services as guides and interpreters that literally made the difference as to whether our soldiers lived or died.

I've talked to returning servicepeople who made clear how important it was that they had that help and how grateful they were to the Iraqis and Afghans who played those vital roles. I've worked with some of those soldiers to try and bring to America—to safety—some of those people who worked with them.

There is another group who knows about their contributions—the hostile elements still on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan. These are people with long memories, who have vowed to take retribution for what they felt was an act of betrayal. Countless foreign nationals who worked with us have paid the price. They, along with members of their families, have been attacked, kidnapped, and killed.

We have an obligation to get them out of harm's way.

That is why I worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and on both sides of the Capitol in 2007 to create a special immigration visa program to enable them to come safely to the United States. It's a program not just for Iraqis; but starting in 2008, it was extended to Afghans as well—anyone who faced an ongoing and serious threat as a result of their employment for and on behalf of the United States Government. These two programs have enabled us to save the lives of these brave Iraqis and Afghans who often were in the heaviest fighting and whose contributions were most critical.

But we're facing two serious problems:

One, the programs are set to expire—for Iraq, September 30; for Afghanistan, 1 year later. Even more critically, we need to make sure that the special immigration visas, the SIVs, that have already been authorized are utilized. The processing has been incredibly slow.

Recently, joined by 18 of my colleagues of both parties, including six of our colleagues who were veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, we urged the administration to work with us to extend and reform the visa program. Let's cut through the extensive paperwork, the numerous agencies and timelines involved with all the background checks,