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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. LAMALFA).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 11, 2014.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DOUG LAMALFA 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 7, 2014, 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, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

WHAT IS MORE DANGEROUS, MARIJUANA OR METHAMPHETAMINES?

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, last week, during a hearing with the Deputy Director of the Office of Drug Policy, there was a moment of clarity for me. I was struck by the realization that our own office, charged with drug policy, discouraging or eliminating drug use, might well be part of the problem.

The poor witness was unable to answer my simple question, What is more dangerous, marijuana or methamphetamines? I asked, How many marijuana overdose deaths were there last year? No clear answer.

The United States does have a drug problem—make no mistake—and it appears to be getting worse: 100 people per day die of drug overdoses. About 9 of them are from heroin; 60 percent of the deaths are from prescription drugs; pharmaceuticals, over 22,000 in 2010, the most recent year we have available, almost three times higher than in 1999.

Why is the \$25 billion we spend fighting drugs each year so ineffective in stopping, much less reversing, the trend? Are our policies and programs misguided? Could it be that too many of the wrong people are spending far too long in jail, wasting lives and money? The States seem to think so. They are reducing sentences and releasing prisoners. Now even the Federal Government is starting to do that as well.

I think part of the problem is that we aren't honest about the impacts and dangers. Nothing better illustrates that than the continued misclassification of marijuana under Federal law as worse than cocaine and methamphetamines. That's according to Federal law.

Is it possible that this Federal dishonesty means that people don't take drug warnings seriously? No one knows anybody who ever died from a marijuana overdose. The failed marijuana prohibition could actually make the real drug problem worse.

Since all marijuana sales are, by definition, illegal, in the shadows, the money, the income, the profits help finance a drug trade that destroys life, like heroin, cocaine, illegal prescription drugs, and methamphetamines.

How easy is it for the distributor, who has no license to lose, who never

checks ID, to offer his marijuana customer something else, something worse, something more dangerous?

I fear spreading misinformation and wasting resources, arresting two-thirds of a million people for something that most Americans now think should be legal, undermines what could be an effective approach. Think for a moment. Unlike marijuana, tobacco is a highly addictive killer—over four hundred thousand people a year die from it yet tobacco use has declined almost two-thirds in the last half century. How did that happen?

We don't arrest people who smoke. We didn't try tobacco prohibition. What we did was research. We found out the facts. We told the truth. We controlled the product. We taxed it heavily, raising the cost, especially to young people—all the steps exactly the opposite of our failed marijuana approach.

I will be clear. For me, this goes beyond issues of marijuana policy. It is a symbol of a political process that is not thoughtful, not rational on dealing with things from the national debt, to our failing infrastructure, to climate change. Isn't it time for us to face some facts, adjust some policies, and move ahead?

CELEBRATING THE WORLD WAR II WOMEN AIRFORCE SERVICE PILOTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, we had beautiful skies in Miami. It was a perfect day for flying. I was given the opportunity to visit the Wings Over Miami Air Museum to revel in the history of aviation with veterans, fliers, and the families of World War II Women Airforce Service Pilots celebrating the life of one special WASP, Fran Sargent.

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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