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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Merciful God, we give You thanks for giving us another day. We pause in Your presence and ask guidance for the men and women of the people's House.

As the Members take this time to consider far-reaching legislation, give them wisdom and discernment. Help them to realize that Your congregation is wider and broader than ever we could measure or determine.

Help them, and help us all, O Lord, to put away any judgments that belong to You and do what we can to live together in peace.

As we approach this next recess, bless our great Nation and keep it faithful to its ideals, its hopes, and its promise of freedom in our world.

Bless us this day and every day, and may all that is done be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's pro-

ceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

NOTICE

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By order of the Joint Committee on Printing.

GREGG HARPER, *Chairman*.

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 SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentlewoman from Indiana (Mrs. WALORSKI) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. WALORSKI led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to five requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

(Mrs. WALORSKI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. WALORSKI. Mr. Speaker, our country is in the midst of a prescription drug epidemic. Fifty Americans die each day from prescription drug overdoses. The epidemic is also affecting our Nation's veterans, who, in some VA facilities, are being overprescribed medications.

To combat this growing problem, my home State of Indiana and others have created statewide databases that collect data on medications prescribed to patients. It requires doctors and nurses to check patient records in the database before prescribing painkillers.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, VA facilities are not required by law to participate and have been known to overprescribe powerful medications.

Today, I introduced legislation requiring all Veteran Administration Medical Centers to participate in their corresponding statewide drug monitoring program. Requiring VA facilities to comply will help ensure that veterans are not being overprescribed powerful pain medication.

As a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I take the well-being of each Hoosier veteran very seriously, and they deserve high-quality health care.

I also want to thank Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller for his commitment to fighting this epidemic in our State.

CALIFORNIA WATER LEGISLATION

(Mr. COSTA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express the urgency to get California water legislation passed sooner

rather than later. After 4 consecutive dry years, drought conditions have become even more devastating. If you look at the NASA photos that have depicted, from outer space, the drought conditions, you see over 1 million acres that have laid fallow this year.

Many of us are fearful that if we receive the El Nino rains and snows that are predicted in the next 4 months, California will still not have the ability to move that water through the delta, where it is desperately needed, to other parts of the State; and many of our farm communities will continue to end up with another year of a zero—zero—water allocation, which would make the third year in a row. This would be devastating. It is both unacceptable, and it is avoidable.

Mr. Speaker, we in California can all retreat to our political corners and point fingers to lay blame, but that will not deliver an additional drop of water that is desperately needed, nor will it address the real harm done to the very people whose lives have been impacted and whose jobs have been lost.

The fact is we have to work together, and I will continue to work with multiple parties involved in the negotiations to try to bridge the gap and to get California water legislation passed. It is time to fix our broken water system, and it is long overdue.

WATERS OF THE UNITED STATES

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, bipartisan majorities in the House and Senate, a majority of the States, and two Federal courts have rejected the administration's waters of the United States proposal by the EPA to reinterpret the Clean Water Act in order to seize authority over virtually every waterway, dry streambed, ditch, and puddle in the Nation. One Federal court found the proposal so excessive and so outside the President's authority that it issued a nationwide stay.

This week, the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office confirmed what we already knew: the administration not only violated Federal law when preparing this proposal, but also engaged in an illegal propaganda campaign to misinform the public, soliciting skewed comments in favor of their proposal using social media, even so far as using general comments on Twitter in order to skew their view.

Mr. Speaker, when is enough going to be enough? When the administration spends Americans' own tax dollars to solicit and persuade them to give up their rights, should that not be a wake-up call, that it has crossed a very bright ethical line?

It is time that the administration admit that the waters of the United States rule is an illegal power grab, an overreach, and withdraw it immediately.

PUERTO RICO

(Mr. GUTIÉRREZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I can't vote for the omnibus bill because it doesn't give the people of Puerto Rico some hope for a better future.

The omnibus bill does not provide a path forward amid budget cuts, cuts in services, growing unemployment, and the greedy banks and bondholders who demand more and more, even as the people of Puerto Rico have less and less.

Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States. Its sovereignty rests here in the Congress of the United States, and we will not do anything to help them.

(English translation of the statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

So tomorrow I tell the people of Puerto Rico, I will be with you.

I will vote against this omnibus budget because if there are no schools in Puerto Rico, if there is no law enforcement to protect the people on the streets, if there are no doctors or nurses healing the sick, there won't be a vote on this budget until there is justice for the people.

And I tell every Representative that votes in favor of this budget, you are denying a future for Puerto Rico and you are betraying the people of Puerto Rico.

Así que mañana le digo al pueblo de Puerto Rico, yo estaré con ustedes.

Votaré en contra de este presupuesto porque si no hay escuelas en Puerto Rico, si no hay policías para defender a la gente en la calle, si no hay doctoras o enfermeras para curar a los enfermos, tampoco habrá un voto para este presupuesto hasta que haya justicia para el pueblo.

Y le digo a todo Congresista que vota a favor de este presupuesto, que le niega un futuro a Puerto Rico y le traiciona al pueblo de Puerto Rico.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE of Texas). The gentleman from Illinois will provide a translation for the RECORD.

HONORING ARMY HELICOPTER PILOT KEVIN WEISS

(Mr. HULTGREN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HULTGREN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Chief Warrant Officer Kevin Mose Weiss of McHenry County, a U.S. Army helicopter pilot who lost his life in service to our Nation. Returning to service just after Thanksgiving, Weiss and his copilot were flying a routine training exercise out of Fort Campbell in Kentucky on December 2 when the helicopter they were piloting went down, killing both men in the crash.

Mr. Speaker, Weiss dreamed of joining his World War II veteran grandfather in flying as a pilot for his country and was known by his grandfather's nickname, "Mose." Weiss was an avid outdoorsman and served our Nation overseas, flying a tour of duty in Afghanistan and earning numerous commendations and decorations.