

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Tuesday, April 20, 1999

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BASS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
April 20, 1999.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHARLES F. BASS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed without amendment concurrent resolutions of the House of the following titles:

H. Con. Res. 52. Concurrent resolution authorizing the use of the East Front of the Capitol Grounds for performances sponsored by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

H. Con. Res. 81. Concurrent resolution permitting the use of the Rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony in honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and welcoming the three newest members of NATO, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Hungary, and the Czech Republic, into NATO.

The message also announced that the Senate had passed bills of the following titles, in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 249. An act to provide funding for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, to reauthorize the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, and for other purposes.

S. 330. An act to promote the research, identification, assessment, exploration, and development of methane hydrate resources, and for other purposes.

S. 361. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to transfer to John R. and Margaret J. Lowe of Big Horn County, Wyoming, certain land so as to correct an error in the patent issued to their predecessors in interest.

S. 426. An act to amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, to provide for a land exchange between the Secretary of Agriculture and the Huna Totem Corporation, and for other purposes.

S. 430. An act to amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, to provide for a land exchange between the Secretary of Agriculture and the Kake Tribal Corporation, and for other purposes.

S. 449. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to transfer to the personal representative of the estate of Fred Steffens of Big Horn County, Wyoming, certain land comprising the Steffens family property.

S. 531. An act to authorize the President to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress to Rosa Parks in recognition of her contributions to the Nation.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

EARTH DAY 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this week, we celebrate Earth Day, Thursday, April 22. Many will use this occasion to highlight major policy issues, as well they should, issues dealing with greenhouse gases, the effects of global warming, and the pollution of our world's oceans.

However, I feel that the real power to be demonstrated is at the other end of the spectrum, dealing with individual actions. Many of us here on Capitol Hill will celebrate Earth Day with a bike ride. People from the Capitol, commuters, business people from all over the region, will converge on Freedom Plaza on Pennsylvania Avenue, illustrating the impact that people can have dealing with this very simple and efficient mode of transportation. Yet, we do not need to have everybody trade their car in for a bicycle. If people in our community will choose to take just one less trip a week, whether that is by foot, by transit, by bicycle, or simply consolidating their other journeys to produce that one trip reduction, it can have a phenomenal impact in terms of reducing air pollution, congestion, and the requirement for more investment in infrastructure.

The most important thing is for people to think about their behavior and think about the little things we can do to make things better: Shopping locally, or treating their own yard like they would like farmers and industry to conserve their property. Whether it is conserving water, dealing with native vegetations, using less toxic herbi-

cides or fertilizer, we can all make a big difference.

Mr. Speaker, I think there is plenty of room for us in Congress to have an impact on the environment. To be sure, I hope this session will deal with things like water policy, spending our money in more environmentally responsible ways, in Superfund reform, but I would hope that this Congress will also continue the effort to try and focus on the little things that we can do to make a difference.

I am pleased that this year we have finally caught up with the rest of America, as the Federal Government has for years told the private sector to reduce employee commute trips by single-occupant vehicles. Congress has finally started to do what we have asked the private sector to do by providing an opportunity for our employees to have subsidized Metro passes.

I am, however, continually embarrassed, as I know most Members of Congress are, when the reports come out, as they did last week, about our abysmal record of recycling here on Capitol Hill. In the 3 years I have been a Member of Congress, the total proceeds from all of our recycling effort for over 8,000 employees on Capitol Hill has been less than \$27,000. I am sure that there are Boy Scout troops in my community that have raised more money from recycling Christmas trees, bottles and cans than the entire U.S. Congress did in those 3 years. For the year of 1997, the net proceeds was \$7.51 for recycling high-grade paper. There are homeless people around Capitol Hill that make more than that in a day recycling bottles and cans.

Mr. Speaker, I hope as we have a lot of rhetoric around Congress that we want to live by the rules that we apply to other people. I hope that in the final analysis we will apply that to our individual offices, and step up to behave the way we are asking the rest of America to behave in terms of recycling. I think our record ought to be something that we ought to be proud of, not something that makes us cringe, and I hope that each Member of Congress will dedicate themselves this Earth Day to make it a record that we can, in fact, show to the American people and be proud of.

SOCIAL SECURITY DEBT LIMIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized

□ 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.

during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, there is good news in terms of this Congress, this President, acknowledging that we must solve the Social Security problem.

Social Security was started back in 1935 with the anticipation that there would be a continuing growth in the labor force. What has happened with this pay-as-you-go program where existing workers are paying in their Social Security taxes, and that tax is immediately sent out to existing retirees, is the demographic changes. The number of individuals working and paying in that tax in relation to the increasing number of retirees is creating a situation where Social Security is becoming insolvent. It cannot be sustained.

Let me just give a couple of examples. In 1940 we had 41 individual workers paying in their tax for every one retiree. By 1950, it went down to 17 workers paying in their Social Security tax for every one retiree. Guess what it is today. Today there are three workers paying in their Social Security tax to pay the benefits for every one retiree.

The estimate is that by the year 2030 there will only be two people working. So we can see a huge problem in continuing to ask the fewer and fewer number of workers to pay in a higher and higher tax to accommodate every retiree. Taxes have already significantly increased over the last several years.

Since 1971, Social Security taxes have been increased 36 times. More often than once a year, we have increased the rate of the base for Social Security taxes to accommodate the increased requirement to pay benefits for existing retirees from a fewer number of workers.

So the question that we are now faced with is how do we change the Social Security system to keep it solvent? How do we either increase revenues coming into the system or reduce benefits so that the Social Security system can last for tomorrow's retirees and not put a huge burden on future generations to pay more and more taxes for Social Security?

I think the President suggesting that we have to put Social Security first has increased the awareness that something has to be done. In the next several days and weeks, I will be introducing my Social Security bill. It will be the third Social Security bill I have introduced that will keep Social Security solvent. Other Members, such as the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM), will be introducing the bill that they worked up to keep Social Security solvent. Some are suggesting only temporary solutions.

I see problems in temporary solutions. I see even greater problems in solutions such as those proposed by

some Democrats, the President, that have suggested that we simply add a new giant IOU to the Social Security Trust Fund and therefore somehow it is calculated that that is going to keep Social Security solvent without any changes in the program. It cannot happen. It will not work. Simply adding another IOU to the Social Security Trust Fund, in effect mandates that taxes will be increased on our kids and our grandkids to pay future benefits.

Mr. Speaker, we can only raise taxes so high, and right now taxes in this country are the highest in history. Partial solutions divert attention for long term solutions and also increase the likelihood of future tax increases.

Both Republicans and Democrats have suggested that until we come up with a long term solution, the Social Security Trust Fund surplus be used to pay down the public debt. However, some people in Washington want to replace the current public debt limit with two debt limits, one for Treasury securities held by the public, and one for IOUs held by the Social Security Trust Fund. This is a bad idea that would send a message that debt owed to the trust fund is less important than the debt owed to Wall Street.

Some want the new statistics so that they can brag about reducing the debt held by the public. That is true, but it does not matter because the total government debt would continue to increase. Others suggest that we could consider writing off the debt owed to the trust fund because really that is just what government owes itself. That is wrong and dangerous.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to fight against any proposal that simply adds a new giant IOU to the trust fund but does not change the system to keep it solvent. I ask my colleagues to oppose temporary solutions which again just demand a tax increase in some future years. Let us step up to the plate, let us do what is necessary to solve Social Security now and keep it solvent for future generations.

A STRONG U.S.-ARMENIAN PARTNERSHIP IS NEEDED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, among the international dignitaries coming to Washington this weekend to take part in the NATO summit will be President Robert Kocharian of the Republic of Armenia. Although Armenia is not currently a member of NATO, President Kocharian, like other leaders of new democracies that were captive nations under the Soviet bloc, has been invited to Washington as part of the Partnership for Peace program.

As NATO celebrates its first half century, and particularly now, with NATO forces involved in the first combat operation in the history of the alliance, it is important for us to consider how we can make NATO a meaningful force for peace and security in the next century. We recently took our first major step towards changing the composition of the alliance to recognize the realities of the post-Cold War by admitting three former Warsaw Pact nations: Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. We need to continue this momentum by identifying other democratic nations whose security is important to the United States, who may wish to join NATO in the future.

While Armenia may be a small country, its importance as a strategic asset for the Western alliance should not be minimized. In the months and years following the summit, I hope we will see greater efforts to build on the U.S.-Armenian relationship, and along these lines, I will be circulating a letter among the Members of the House asking the President to devote greater attention to establishing a strong U.S.-Armenian partnership.

□ 1245

Mr. Speaker, Armenia would be a logical candidate for future NATO expansion, and in the short term, as a closer partner on a wide range of security issues. Armenia is a pro-western Nation, despite its years as part of the Soviet Union. President Kocharian is a legitimately elected head of state who must answer to a democratically-elected parliament and be held accountable to a free press.

Despite a lack of experience with democracy and despite the security threats posed by hostile nations, Armenia is moving rapidly to establish the institutions of civil society and democratic governments.

On the domestic economic front, Armenia has moved aggressively with a privatization campaign. Small businesses are blossoming. Armenia's success as a free democracy in a region of the world where both of these qualities are lacking makes it a notable example of an emerging Nation that has embraced many of our values against very daunting odds.

On the security front, Mr. Speaker, NATO Secretary General Javier Solano has already met with Armenia defense and national security officials. Armenia's central location at the crossroads between Asia and Europe has been recognized by American officials and our allies, but we need to pay more attention.

Armenia has also earned increased respect from the United States and the Western alliance for its constructive role in the Nagorno Karabagh conflict.

As I have mentioned in this Chamber on several occasions, Nagorno