

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Thursday, December 12, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. FOXX).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 12, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable VIRGINIA FOXX 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, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

UPDATE THE GAS TAX

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, last week I was proud to stand with representatives of the U.S. Chamber, the AFL-CIO, contractors, local government, transit, truckers, AAA, engineers, and environmentalists, all supporting my legislation, H.R. 3636, to update the gas tax.

It inspired the predictable firestorm. There was a rant from a shouting head on Fox who thought not only did we not need transportation money, but thought that the previous money had somehow disappeared. Even the people who supported the gas tax said it was a horrible idea, like the article in Slate saying it is the best least-popular idea in politics. It provoked a torrent of reaction—some laudatory, some inflammatory. But it boiled down to basically three major points:

Where did this idea come from?

Well, it came from my decades of work in transportation, studying, listening to people from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon; North Carolina to

Seattle to California. It was 10 years of experience that I had directing the transportation functions at the city of Portland as the Commissioner of Public Works where I saw firsthand the impact of poor and declining infrastructure. It is every single major independent study that says we need more money for transportation, not less, and it is a disaster that we are poised to slash transportation funding October 1 unless something happens.

The question was asked: Isn't this unfair to lower-income Americans?

Well, actually no. Lower-income Americans stand to benefit the most, people who are at the mercy of oil companies and foreign producers who don't know how much they will pay for gasoline next week, whether it is \$3.35 as it was when I left Portland earlier this week, or \$4.25. That is why they think the gas tax goes up every year, but it hasn't increased since 1993.

Lower-income people are more transportation dependent. They work, in the main, by the hour. A traffic delay or deteriorating transit hits them harder because they have fewer choices. Terrible road conditions costs them money as it wastes fuel, it damages tires, and shakes their cars out of alignment. And lower-income people stand to benefit from the hundreds of thousands of family-wage jobs that will be created.

Well, my favorite question is: If this is so unpopular and such a remote possibility, why even bother?

Well, it is remote, but it is not impossible. Look at the user-fee increase that Ronald Reagan could sign, a nickel a gallon in 1982. We need leadership today if we are going to meet serious transportation challenges and help jump-start our economy. It may sound quaint, but I think leadership is not what you do when an idea is popular. Leadership is what you do when it is needed.

I hope Congress will lead on transportation funding.

OBAMACARE AND IDENTITY THEFT

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

Mr. HOLDING. Madam Speaker, the disastrous rollout of ObamaCare has shown that those who were quick to sing its praises were not prepared to actually implement it. It quickly became apparent after the online exchanges opened that healthcare.gov

was unworkable. Folks who were trying to create accounts and pick a plan were receiving error messages, being kicked off midway through the process, only to be sent back to the beginning, experiencing many glitches.

Madam Speaker, the administration and the agencies responsible clearly were not prepared for the launch of healthcare.gov. They blamed issues with the Web site on unexpected volume, which simply does not make sense. ObamaCare requires all Americans to have health insurance or face a fine. There are over 313 million people in the United States, so how could they not expect a high volume?

Madam Speaker, the American people are paying for a Web site that doesn't even work, and they are paying an outrageous amount. In her testimony before the Energy and Commerce Committee yesterday, Secretary Sebelius said that the administration has currently spent \$319 million on healthcare.gov so far, and Health and Human Services has budgeted \$667 million for the Web site through October of next year. At a time when we are over \$17 trillion in debt and the government continues to borrow and spend at an unsustainable rate, this is simply unacceptable.

Madam Speaker, the unworkability of this Web site goes beyond error messages and technical problems; it is vulnerable to security breaches as well. In late October, a Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services memo showed that administration officials were concerned, due to a lack of testing, healthcare.gov had potential high security risks. And yet they went ahead and launched the Web site anyway.

When an individual uses the Web site to sign up, they enter much of their personal information such as Social Security number and address and so forth. Many individuals who have had problems with the Web site may have entered it several times, and they could be a victim of fraud or identity theft if the Web site is not secure.

Madam Speaker, it is out of concern for the security of people's personal information on healthcare.gov that I have introduced H.R. 3652, the No Identity Theft in Health Care Act, which would increase penalties for navigators or other agency employees who commit identity theft by using information submitted for the purposes of signing up for ObamaCare. Under current Federal law, aggravated identity theft carries a 2-year sentence. My bill would

☐ 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.