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House of Representatives

The House met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. HOBSON].

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 4, 1997.

I hereby designate the Honorable DAVID L. HOBSON to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

As we observe our communities and world, O God, we see all the contrasts that reflect the good and the profane, the generous and the outrageous, the acts of charity and the feelings of enmity. We pray, gracious God, that whatever our situation, whatever our responsibility, whatever our opportunity, we will rely on Your providence to show us the way of mercy and of justice. As we cannot control all the events that touch our lives, yet we can rely on those gifts of grace that You freely give to us, those blessings that sustain us and give us hope for each new day. This is our earnest prayer. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands [Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN] come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN 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.

A COMMONSENSE PROPOSAL

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

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, during the 104th Congress, after the conflict over the Balanced Budget Act of 1995, the President came down to this very Chamber to plead, to beg, that we never, never, ever shut down the Government again.

Well, apparently there has been another change of heart over at the White House. Apparently the White House actually sees value in shutting down the Government. They believe this so passionately that they are willing to block disaster relief for flood victims in the Dakotas and Minnesota.

The Gekas-Wynn provision would maintain 100 percent of 1997 funding levels for the Government programs in the event that the President and Congress could not agree on appropriations bills.

But somehow, incredibly, the President is rejecting this commonsense proposal. Why? Would the President really block disaster funding in order to shut down the Government? Apparently the answer to that question is yes.

PETITIONS AGAINST ANTI-IMMIGRANT WELFARE LAW

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

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, some distinguished visitors are seated in the House gallery today. More than 100 Jews from the former Soviet Union, many of whom helped fight with America against fascism in the 1940's and crushed communism in the 1990's.

It is an honor to welcome them here and to speak on their behalf.

In addition to those 100 people, I also speak on behalf of 100,000 other Americans who are not here with us today but whose names are here on these petitions.

Yes, 100,000 Americans have signed these petitions to protest the harsh punitive welfare law that will exact a terrible toll on legal immigrants, the elderly, the disabled, and vulnerable immigrants. There are 100,000 people calling on Congress and the White House to restore benefits to legal immigrants, to restore fairness to the welfare debate, to restore compassion to our Nation's policy, and to restore America's heritage as a nation that welcomes and protects legal immigrants who seek a better life and seek to make America a better place. These are 100,000 Americans who will continue to fight this Congress and the White House until justice is done.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair reminds the gentleman not to refer to persons in the gallery.

NUCLEAR WASTE DISPOSAL

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

□ 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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Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, think about what \$2.3 billion would buy today. If the American people knew what Congress was planning to do with this large sum of money, they would be appalled. Does anyone here honestly think the American people would choose to spend this money to transport nuclear waste through their States, their communities, their towns and their backyards? I do not think so. Yet this is exactly what H.R. 1270, the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1997 will do.

Today, schools need more teachers, communities need more police, veterans need a cost-of-living adjustment, and the hard-working men and women of this country need a tax break. Why then, Mr. Speaker, do some in this body contend that the \$2.3 billion should be used to subsidize nuclear powerplants? It is an unfair, unfunded mandate.

H.R. 1270 seeks to create an interim storage facility at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, to temporarily store nuclear waste. Why endanger Americans when it is infinitely safer and seven times cheaper to keep this waste on site?

THE 101st BIRTHDAY OF ELENA E.L. CHRISTIAN

(Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to say congratulations and happy birthday to Elena E.L. Christian, who is 101 years old today and who happens to be my grandmother.

This great lady is a native of the island of St. Kitts. At about 3 years old, she traveled with her mother and siblings to the island of St. Croix, then one of the islands of the Danish West Indies.

Fifteen years later, she witnessed the lowering of the Danish flag and the raising of the American Stars and Stripes as we became the United States Virgin Islands and she later, an American citizen.

She has given her long life in service to the education of our children and to the St. Johns Anglican Church. She continues to be a role model for all of us who, while we might not attain her age, we can still aspire to her level of commitment and achievement.

Happy birthday, Grandma.

A MESSAGE TO THE MIDDLE CLASS

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

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, I have a message for all of those in the middle class out there: Every time you hear the liberals attacking tax cuts as tax cuts for the wealthy, hold onto your wallets. Because when liberals talk about tax cuts for the wealthy, they

are really talking about you, the middle class.

That is right, Mr. Speaker. Tax cuts for the wealthy are code words for tax cuts for the middle class, and the big-government crowd will have none of that.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is the same big-government crowd that acts as if they are doing you a favor by letting you keep what is already yours. Of course, they do not really think you are entitled to keep the fruits of your labor. The only thing the big-government crowd thinks that you are entitled to is the fruits of other people's labor.

Surprise, surprise, the politicians are the ones who get to decide what to take and what special interest groups to give it to.

Let us give the middle class a tax break and stop Washington from wasting so much of middle-class taxpayers money.

THE IRS

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

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, the IRS, in denying the 1996 tax return and refund to Pamela Damon, said, Pamela Damon, you are dead. You have been dead for 26 years. Now, if that is not enough to bury your 1040, Pam went to the Social Security Administration. They called the IRS and they said, Pam is here in our office, she is alive. They said, Pam's presence is not enough. She is dead as far as the IRS is concerned.

Beam me up, Mr. Speaker.

I recommend that Congress do two things. No. 1, hire a proctologist to perform brain scans on all those morticians at the IRS. And No. 2, pass H.R. 367, that simply transfers the burden of proof to the IRS.

Unbelievable. Pam Damon is alive.

ON SCHOOL CHOICE

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

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands would be willing to let me also join her in wishing a happy birthday to her grandmother. And may she have 101 more happy birthdays.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that every single person alive in the world, but especially in this great country, should have as much personal freedom and liberty as their acceptance of personal responsibility will allow. And I have found that, for most persons, we will find them never so willing to accept personal responsibility and the expectations of the rewards of the accompanied freedom as they are when it comes to the education of their children.

That is why I am introducing today on behalf of all the parents of Washing-

ton, DC, who have so thoroughly expressed their desire for more freedom of choice in the selection of schools for their children, a bill that would enable even the most poor of those parents to select the school that they think is best for their children through the use of a system of opportunity scholarships for those children.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to visit Holy Redeemer School, a private school where children are educated because their parents have found the way to get them included in a better alternative. Mr. Speaker, I saw happy, healthy, young people who love their school and who love to learn.

Mr. Speaker, almost without exception, their favorite courses were math and science. We could not have academic curriculum too rigorous for these children to enjoy when they got to go to the school of their choice. We have 800 children in Washington, DC, today who sit idly in a waiting line, hoping for that opportunity, that hope encouraged by loving parents. We ought to help them. We have the bill to do so.

WORKFARE PROVISIONS OF WELFARE REFORM

(Mrs. MEEK of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring attention to the workfare provisions of the welfare reform. Welfare recipients who must work for their benefits under the new welfare reform law must be protected by existing Federal labor laws.

When the welfare reform bill was passed, Congress gave very little guidance to the States for determining how they would apply existing employment laws to welfare recipients. As a result of it, many States are going off the handle trying to determine how they are going to work with the labor laws. We never said that, the Congress never said that the Fair Labor Standards Act, including minimum wage provisions, applied to welfare recipients. Welfare recipients in work programs should indeed earn the minimum wage.

There are some people, Mr. Speaker, who want to overturn that decision. They think it is OK for people who are on welfare to make less than the minimum wage. I say to this Congress that people who are on welfare and going into work deserve the minimum wage. Welfare recipients deserve the dignity of equal treatment with their fellow workers. The minimum wage does that. They are entitled to the protections of the wage and hour laws. They are not second class citizens. Minimum wages are not inflated wages. They are decent wages, Mr. Speaker.