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Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, June 9, 1997, at 12 noon.

House of Representatives

FRIDAY, JUNE 6, 1997

The House met at 9 a.m.

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

We are appreciative, O gracious God, of all those people who use their abilities and gifts in ways that make this institution better, a better place to serve the people of the Nation. We recognize that this day marks the last day of service by the Pages of the House of Representatives, and we express our gratitude to them for their long hours of service and their attention to the business of this Congress. We are indebted to them for the dedication and commitment that they have shown in their tasks and for their faithfulness to their responsibilities.

May the friendships that they have developed here continue to be a blessing in their lives and may Your peace, O God, that is above all of our understanding, keep them all in Your grace, now and evermore. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. 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. Will the gentleman from Oregon [Ms. FURSE] come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. FURSE 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.

REMEMBERING D-DAY IN NORMANDY

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

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning mindful of the fact that this is a special day in American history. For one-half century and 3 years ago on this date, the largest amphibious assault in the history of warfare occurred on the shores of Normandy.

Representing the people of the Sixth District of Arizona, I am pleased and proud to represent many veterans, some of whom were there at Normandy that day, some of whom visited with me last Saturday in a townhall meeting at Apache Junction. To those who survived and were victorious in that battle, in that crusade, Dwight Eisenhower called it, in Europe, I believe this House and our Nation continues to owe a debt of gratitude.

So it is in that spirit this morning that I rise, remembering those who paid the ultimate price to remind us all that freedom is not really free, it does involve sacrifice.

Those of us who were part of generations as yet unborn one-half century ago should heed and remember the sacrifice of so many great Americans who joined to preserve our freedoms in this constitutional republic.

So on this date, June 6, 1997, we again acknowledge the sacrifice of so many, the pride of a grateful nation, and we rejoice in our ability to come to this Chamber to discuss our differences openly and honestly and to maintain the integrity of our constitutional republic. Thanks to all of our veterans, and especially those who found themselves in action at Normandy 53 years ago today.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

THE MILITARY SURVIVORS EQUITY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. FILNER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I think it is appropriate following the gentleman from Arizona's remarks on the anniversary of the Normandy invasion that we talk about our veterans in their current situation.

On the first day of the 105th Congress I introduced legislation to terminate the confusing system that discriminates against surviving military spouses when they reach age 62. H.R. 165, the Military Survivors Equity Act, would simply eliminate the callous and absurd reduction in benefits that now

□ 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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burdens our military widows. Instead, they would get what they and their deceased spouses thought they would get: fifty-five percent of retired military pay. To put it simply, no offset.

When I introduced that legislation and talked to my colleagues about it several months ago, I received letters from all over the country supporting this position, widows who described for me the situations that they were in. Let me read, Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, several of the letters that I received:

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE FILNER: I hear from my friends that you have presented in Congress a bill concerning our Survivor Benefit Plan, SBP. Thank you very much.

I have been a widow since November 1, 1973. My husband retired from the U.S. Air Force after 20 years, 6 months and 4 days of active duty in 1964. He died on November 1st, 1973.

The Social Security offset has been hard to take since my income is only \$1,300 a month. I am now 75 years of age and I really could use the money that is rightfully mine. I have raised two sons alone on this small income, and I must watch every penny I spend. My sons were 14 and 11 years of age when their father died. Thank you for helping me in this matter.

Another letter from a different part of the country:

DEAR CONGRESSMAN FILNER: I was reading in the Army Echo that you are working on a bill to repeal the SBP Social Security offset that occurs at age 62. I just want to tell you briefly what happened to me.

My husband, who served in the Army for 20 years, was on Social Security disability because of heart problems and could no longer work. He died in July of 1995. I was then 61 years old. I received Social Security plus my SBP. With both of these incomes, I was doing just fine, paying my monthly bills and having enough left for groceries. Then a few months later I turned 62 and was notified that my SBP was reduced from \$476 to \$302. What a shock. That meant I had \$174 a month less. I knew right then I could not make it. This was my grocery money they took away from me.

I really don't know what they thought when they made this law. I just hope and pray that some day our people in Congress could look that law over again and make a change. I just want to say it is a shame and disgrace the way we get treated. After all, our husbands worked hard for their country and don't deserve this kind of treatment.

Another letter:

DEAR CONGRESSMAN FILNER: Of all the literature on Social Security offset, there is no mention of 35 percent of retirement pay ever made. My husband thought I would be getting at least half of his retired pay, should he pass away before I did. He believed that he had conscientiously and diligently provided insurance for me. I believe it will take about 10 years just to recoup the monies he paid into the fund, if I should live that long, and with the current offset it could take even longer.

My husband paid into Social Security and into the Survivor Benefit Plan. These two funds should be separate and treated as such.

I know that surviving spouses are financially suffering. I believe it to be a slap in the face to the deceased service members who gave so much in the service of their country. It was also a slap in the face to the surviving spouse, who more often than not served the same amount of years as his or her spouse.

Imagine this scenario: November 1, you received a total of \$882 in the form of a retirement check from the U.S. Government. December 1, your spouse passed away. January 1, you receive a check in the amount of \$295. This decrease negatively affects the quality of life of the surviving spouse.

I hope and pray that you and Members of Congress will try to put themselves in the shoes of that widow or widower who is always trying to make ends meet with less.

Just lastly today, Mr. Speaker, another letter from outside my district, as I tried to present this bill to the Nation:

I realize I forfeited my pension to be with my husband. We married to be together, not in separate States or countries. We felt the military took care of its own. We paid for several years for a pension which will now be cut when I reach age 62. I really do feel this is unfair.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that this Congress will look at H.R. 165, the Military Survivors Equity Act, and finally provide some equity to the surviving spouses of our veterans who we remember today on the anniversary of the Normandy invasion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. DREIER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. DREIER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

PROTESTING MILITARIST GOVERNMENT OF BURMA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon [Ms. FURSE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. FURSE. Mr. Speaker, for a number of years now I have been deeply concerned about the militarist government in Burma and by its repression of human and civil rights of the citizens of Burma. In particular, I have protested the many years of house arrests suffered by Nobel Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I was extremely pleased when on April 22 the Clinton administration imposed sanctions on Burma, and I wrote to Secretary Albright about this. I would like to read into the RECORD the letter I received from the Secretary's office:

As you know, on April 22 the President announced his decision to impose a ban on new U.S. investment in Burma. He took this step in response to a constant and continuing pattern of severe repression by the SLORC. He imposed the ban under the terms of the Burma sanctions provisions of the Consolidated Appropriations Act for fiscal year 1997.

During the past 7 months, the SLORC has arrested and detained large numbers of students and opposition supporters, sentenced dozens to long-term imprisonment, and prevented the expression of political views by the democratic opposition, including Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy. The SLORC has also committed serious abuses in its military campaign against Burma's Karen minority, forcibly conscripting civilians and compelling thousands to flee into Thailand.

She goes on to say:

The United States and other Members of the international community have firmly and repeatedly taken steps to encourage democratization and human rights in Burma. With the imposition of the ban on new U.S. investment, we seek to keep faith with the people of Burma, who made clear their support for human rights and democracy in 1990 elections that the regime chose to disregard. We join with many others in the international community calling for reform in Burma, and we emphasize that the U.S. Burma relationship will improve only as there is progress on democratization and respect for human rights. We continue to urge the SLORC to lift restrictions on Aung San Suu Kyi and the political opposition, to respect the rights of free expression, assembly and association, and to undertake a dialogue on Burma's political future that includes leaders of the NLD and the ethnic minorities.

□ 0915

I congratulate the President and the Secretary of State for their actions, and I pledge my continued support to the people of Burma in their brave and continuing struggle for democracy in their own land.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. MCINTOSH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. MCINTOSH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

ISSUES AFFECTING GUAM AND NORTHERN MARIANAS ISLANDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Guam [Mr. UNDERWOOD] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I want to associate myself with the remarks just made by the previous speaker the gentlewoman from Oregon [Ms. FURSE].

Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about some recent stories regarding the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands who are neighbors to my home island of Guam, and I want to be able to explain not for the purposes of comparison but certainly for the purposes to distinguish and to clarify perhaps for Members of the House and to certainly clarify at least for the record what the situation is in the Marianas Islands.

Over 2 or 3 months ago, there were a number of stories that appeared in the Washington Post and other newspapers which referred to a series of allegations about fundraising scandals in the Clinton reelection. As part of this corpus of stories regarding this issue, there was an effort to stigmatize my home island of Guam in the context of those donations. It was alleged that the people of Guam were seeking local control of immigration in order to be able to bring