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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

"For the beauty of the Earth,
For the glory of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our prayer of grateful praise."

We are thankful, O God, for the beauty that surrounds us and for the grace which makes us whole. May our lives never become so cluttered that we fail to see Your divine glory in the world and Your perfect love which is freely given to us and to every person. Bless us, O God, this day and every day, we pray. 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 Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin 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.

IMPRISONED CHINESE PASTOR XU YONGZE

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

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, this week marks the second anniversary of the imprisonment of Pastor Xu Yongze by

the Communist authorities in China. Today also marks the fifth time I have come to the floor to urge the Chinese Government to release this decent man of God.

Last week, I met with the Chinese Ambassador to once again raise my disappointment with China's refusal to release Pastor Xu, who is often called the "Billy Graham" of China. Unfortunately, the Chinese still cling to the belief that Pastor Xu is a cult leader because he believes in a judgment day. But, Mr. Speaker, the belief in a judgment day is a basic tenet of Christianity, a belief held by billions of Christians around the world, including myself. Now that would be one big cult.

Pastor Xu is a respected and honorable man and one incredibly brave Christian. So once again I ask President Jiang Zemin to release Pastor Xu, as I humbly ask my colleagues and fellow Americans to remember Pastor Xu in their prayers.

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 119) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

HOUSE RESOLUTION 119

Resolved, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

JANICE SCHAKOWSKY, to the Committee on Government Reform.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

STRENGTHEN MEDICARE WITH THE SURPLUS

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, when Medicare was created in 1965, fewer than half of all American seniors had health care coverage. Today 99 percent are covered. Medicare has enabled millions of seniors to live their retirement years with dignity, financial independence, and peace of mind.

Unless we prepare for the baby boom's strain on the system, Medicare will go bankrupt in the year 2008, only 9 years away. The Democratic proposal for the Federal surplus would use 15 percent of that surplus to bolster Medicare, to strengthen Medicare. This plan will extend the life of Medicare by a decade.

In contrast, the Republican plan is to spend that surplus on a one-time, trillion-dollar tax break while Medicare withers on the vine. It is irresponsible. Giving tax breaks while Medicare dissolves is akin to fiddling while Rome burns.

Mr. Speaker, we should use the surplus to strengthen Medicare. This is a responsible plan for our current seniors and for future generations.

VOTE AGAINST UNION-ONLY LABOR CONTRACTS

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

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, the President and the Vice President have worked diligently in the past few years to link Federal projects to union-only construction firms. Unfortunately, the Los Angeles Unified School District is following suit by proposing a new major \$2.4 billion school construction initiative, using only unionized contractors.

I say this is unfortunate because union-only contracts increase the cost of construction projects by limiting competition, which results in higher

□ 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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labor costs. It has been estimated by some that the union-only project labor agreement could increase the construction cost by 10 to 15 percent. This means that funds aimed at building and renovating some of Los Angeles' schools would actually be lost to artificially high labor cost.

I am a firm believer that the lowest qualified bidder for these building projects should be able to win the construction job, regardless of union affiliation. Quite frankly, I find it against the American spirit of healthy competition to put rules in place that work otherwise.

I hope that when this project labor agreement is voted upon on the 23rd of this month, the Los Angeles Unified School District will vote for the best interest of their students and against an anti-education project labor agreement.

SCHEDULE GHB AND STOP TEENAGE DEATHS

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise again this morning to encourage my colleagues to move swiftly to schedule GHB. GHB is a drug that many of us are not aware of but has killed teenagers across this Nation.

I have legislation called the Hillory J. Farias bill, H.R. 75. I am working with the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) and others to ensure that we move quickly to have this drug scheduled and made illegal. What is the reason?

Hillory J. Farias was a 17-year-old bright teenager who went to a teenage club and drank a soft drink. Unbeknownst to her, the lack of taste, the lack of smell GHB drug was placed in her drink. The next morning, Hillory was found dead in her bed.

This drug has been given a lot of pluses. For example, it is found on the Internet described as a relaxing agent. They liken its effects to alcohol. Some even consider it to be a form of treatment to the effects of alcoholism. One site claimed that the drug was better than alcohol because it did not cause damage to the brain or liver. There are many misconceptions about this drug.

I ask my colleagues to help stop the death of young people. Let us schedule GHB and pass this legislation quickly.

REVITALIZING THE MIAMI RIVER

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, the Miami River project should be a priority in this year's consideration of the Water Resources Development Act. The Miami River Commission and the Miami River Marine Group remind us that it is vitally important that we act

to provide the necessary Federal cost share so that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' 1990 recommendations for navigational maintenance dredging of the Miami River be implemented as soon as possible.

Congress must clarify the language of the Act so that the intended 75 percent Federal and 25 percent non-Federal cost share formula will be applied in the Miami River project to the cost of navigational maintenance dredging, including disposal costs.

The removal of these toxic sediments will have the added benefit of eliminating a significant pollution threat to Biscayne Bay, one of our most pristine environments.

The Miami River is the fifth largest port in our State of Florida. Any further delay in dredging could endanger one of our Nation's most critical shipping links to the Caribbean and Latin America.

We must maintain this environmental river, as well as restore the environmental quality of a key part of south Florida's ecosystem.

SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, our Nation's Social Security system has traditionally been a safety net for citizens hoping to live long and fruitful lives. However, changes in our society's economic and social conditions warrant reform.

The facts are abundantly clear. The trust fund will be depleted by 2032. As such, the current debate is not about the necessity of reform, but what structural revisions will preserve the system long-term.

I believe that reform should be synonymous with guarantee; that is, guaranteed minimum benefits for decades to come. Reforms that do not ensure system solvency or include pension or private savings plan without such a guarantee, frankly, are indefensible.

Today I urge my colleagues to support reform that, as Franklin Roosevelt said, takes care of human needs throughout the next millennium.

SUPPORT OUR SERVICEMEN AND SERVICEWOMEN BY PROVIDING FUNDING

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to talk about the state of our Nation's military, because the readiness of our military is in perilous danger.

This Nation cannot continue to turn a blind eye to underfunding of our armed forces while asking our military men and women at the same time to keep doing more and doing more with less and less.

A recently released accident report of the 12 airmen who lost their lives in a tragic accident of their rescue helicopters last September in Nevada is a reminder of the perilous readiness environment that our armed forces are required to operate in.

It is up to this administration and this Congress to provide our service men and women with the right tools, the right training and the resources to accomplish their mission, and nothing less.

For my part as a veteran, I honor these men and their families and the 66th Rescue Squadron for their great service to this country. I believe we must honor their legacy by ensuring our military men and women have the resources to do their jobs. Support our servicemen. Support our servicewomen by providing full funding to our military.

USE SOCIAL SECURITY MONEY FOR SOCIAL SECURITY

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

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, both parties have a plan to save Social Security. Quite frankly, neither plan is adequate. There is no budget surplus. There is a deficit. The only surplus that exists is in the Social Security account. I say it is time to pass an amendment to the Constitution that says Social Security money can only be used for Social Security and Medicare, and no politician or no administration could reach in and use that money.

It is not Republicans' money, it is not Democrats' money. It is the people's money. If we could, in fact, do it for term limits on presidents, and if we could do it for every other reason that exists, we can protect the most important account of the American people and save Social Security.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back all the IOUs in the wastebaskets of the Social Security center.

SOCIAL SECURITY MONEY BELONGS TO OUR SENIORS

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, we do have to protect Social Security. The President has been saying over and over he wants to save Social Security, but he keeps spending it on foreign giveaways. I would just say, Mr. President, you cannot have it both ways.

Unlike the President, however, this year's budget resolution will set aside fully 100 percent of the Social Security surplus to strengthen that vital program for our seniors. Seniors have paid a lifetime of earnings into Social Security, and we promise to protect it for them. We are committed to that promise, and we cannot allow Social Security money to be frittered away on foreign aid.