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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 4, 1999.

I hereby appoint the Honorable THOMAS G. TANCREDO 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 agrees to the amendment of the House to the bill (S. 323) "An Act to redesignate the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument as a national park and establish the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area, and for other purposes."

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.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN) for 5 minutes.

SPORTS MILESTONES FOR HOUSTON

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of two important sports milestones that were achieved yesterday in my congressional district in the City of Houston.

The first milestone was the Houston Astros' clinching the National League Central Division title for the third year in a row. While their 97-win season was impressive, equally impressive was the division race, which lasted until the final day of the regular season. Yesterday, Astros 22-game winner Mike Hampton took the mound on only 3 days' rest and delivered a decisive performance, guiding the Astros to the Central Division title.

Despite a year plagued by injuries, forcing the team to use the disabled list 16 times, the Astros managed to finish the season with the second highest win total in franchise history.

Starting with the loss of outfielder Moises Alou in the off season, this season was undoubtedly a test for Astros players and fans alike. The only Astros position players who did not spend time on the disabled list were first baseman Jeff Bagwell and second baseman Craig Biggio, both of whom have had career years leading the National League in RBIs and doubles respectively.

The team also weathered the temporary loss of manager Larry Dierker, whose rapid recovery from brain surgery revealed the strength and breadth of his character. But in the end, what drove the Astros to victory was the team performance on the field: great pitching, fielding, defense and timely hitting.

Of particular note was the Astros' amazing pitching staff: Mike Hampton, who set a team record with 22 wins, the best in the National League; Jose Lima, whose animation and love for the game delighted fans and whose commitment to succeed resulted in 21

wins; Shane Reynolds, with 16 impressive, hard-fought wins; and Billy Wagner, the best closer in baseball, with 39 saves; and a bullpen that set a remarkable record for winning every game in which they held a lead after eight innings.

With the steady veteran presence of fan favorites Craig Biggio, Jeff Bagwell, Ken Caminiti, and Carl Everett, the Astros were able to overcome the adversity of injuries and find a way to win 97 games.

A second important Houston sports milestone was also achieved yesterday in the Astrodome, with the end of the 1999 regular season. It is special because, after 35 years, yesterday's division-clinching game was the last Astros regular season game in the place known in Houston as the Dome.

Next year, the Astros will begin play at Enron field, a new ballpark in the heart of downtown Houston. But the Astros' history, for better or worse, has been established in the Astrodome, the Eighth Wonder of the World. The brainchild of Judge Roy Hofheinz, the Astrodome has been the site of 35 years of great sports memories.

The Dome saw Elvin Hayes meet Lew Alcindor for a classic college basketball game in 1968. Mohammed Ali fought there, Elvis and Selena performed there, Evel Knievel jumped, Billy Graham preached, and Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs played a score-settling tennis match.

The Oilers won big games and lost a few there, the University of Houston Cougars called the Dome their home, and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo have maintained one of Houston's most important traditions with countless concerts and rodeos that have thrilled millions.

But the Astrodome will always be identified first with the Houston Astros. The Astrodome's opening in 1965 was so special that the New York Yankees traveled to Houston for an exhibition game, which saw the very first

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Dome home run hit by none other than Mickey Mantle, witnessed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, who attended the game with tens of thousands of his fellow Texans, including myself.

The scoreboard, unlike any other in sports, shared color, lights, and Texas pride for all who entered. The team, with their often colorful uniforms, played their hearts out, rain or shine, in the 72-degree comfort of the Dome.

The list of players who wore the Houston Astros uniform is legendary, from Jimmy Wynn to Joe Morgan, Larry Dierker to Rusty Staub, Nolan Ryan to Mike Scott, Art Howe to Dickie Thon, Phil Garner to Ken Caminiti, Don Wilson to Billy Wagner, Glenn Davis to Jeff Bagwell, Bill Doron to Craig Biggio, Craig Reynolds to Doug Rader, Cesar Cedeno to Jose Cruz, Joe Niekro to Alan Ashby, and J.R. Richard to Dave Smith.

There have been many unforgettable moments and unforgettable athletes who have played the game of baseball for the Astros. Now, as the final chapter of the 1999 Astros season is being written in the playoffs, this generation of Houston Astros players will have a chance to bring home the team's first World Series title to the city of Houston.

The next generation of Astros stars will play their games in the new ballpark, in itself a modern marvel. But there is only one Astrodome, and Houston fans and the athletes who performed so greatly there will never forget it or the franchise that proudly played there for the great fans of the city of Houston.

OPPOSE H.R. 782, OLDER AMERICANS ACT

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

Mr. DeFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I had hoped that today would be a day to celebrate. For 4 years, the Older Americans Act has languished in this House of Representatives. The authorization expired 4 years ago. We have been operating off of a continuing appropriations resolutions for 4 years.

Because of that, there has been no inflation adjustment in many crucial programs for our senior citizens. Because of that, there has been no review and addition to the Older Americans Act of new programs to serve the vital needs of our seniors.

I introduced bipartisan legislation the beginning of the session. We have more than half of the Members of this House of Representatives on that widely agreed-upon legislation.

But now, in rather a bit of a surprise move, the Republican leadership is popping out an Older Americans Act revision to the floor, H.R. 782, under suspension of the rules, no amendments allowed, that is extraordinarily

controversial. Why is it controversial? Well, because in a pique, in a pique, the Republican leadership is very angry with one of the many senior groups which participates in the Older Americans Act employment programs, the National Council of Senior Citizens, who regularly advocate for progressive issues for seniors, for prescription drug coverage and other things. Yes, they ding the Republican leadership and the Republicans a bit.

So in a pique, to get at that one group that they hate, they are going to take and penalize all the other senior groups who actually do 90 percent of the senior employment and arbitrarily change the program.

What are the Republicans, the party of small government, the party of the private sector, the party of charitable nonprofit groups going to do? They are going to rip money away from a very successful program being operated now by dozens of other senior groups and give it to the States.

Well, one might say, what is wrong with that? Well, even in my own State, which is recognized as the leader on senior citizen issues, they are less efficient and less capable. They get fewer people placed for the same amount of money as the private nonprofit senior groups do. They get fewer people through this program. They serve a different clientele.

Actually, the States serve the easier-to-serve clientele, the urban clientele, the more educated clientele than do the disbursed groups like Green Thumb and others who go into rural areas where the States do not have the capability of going.

This is extraordinarily unfortunate that this bill should come forward in this form. It is going to come forward under the suspension of the rules. No amendments allowed. We could have at least had a fair fight over this issue. Given the fact that more than half of the House has cosponsored my legislation, bipartisan legislation, I believe we would have prevailed.

But we will not be allowed to offer an amendment to this bill. There will be 40 minutes of debate. We have waited 4 years. Only the people who are running this House of Representatives after 4 years could deliver a turkey like this, a bill that is going to hurt senior citizens.

Instead of helping them when this should have been a day to celebrate for America's senior citizens, it will be a day that we will look back upon and say how is it now that the Older Americans Act senior employment programs were destroyed, they were destroyed because a few people in the majority were mad at one senior group that gets a tiny fraction of the money under this bill. So they dumped money into State bureaucracies that were incapable of doing the job. That is a sad day.

In addition to that, we find that the administration is very opposed to this. Perhaps they can even get this on to the veto list if they try hard enough.

The Secretary of Labor has said that they find unacceptable the changes that were made to the Senior Community Service Employment program authorized under title 5 of the Older Americans Acts. We believe this change would significantly diminish the effectiveness of the Senior Community Service Employment programs.

So why? Why are they doing this? It is so sad. Again, just to repeat one last time that, because they are angry at one senior citizen group that has advocated against some of their priorities, their misplaced priorities here, they going to penalize all the senior citizen groups, including Green Thumb, which has got one of the most successful employment programs for hard-to-serve rural low-income seniors in this country and provides vital services in thousands of communities across America.

They are going to have millions of dollars ripped out of their budget and delivered to State bureaucracies that will not spend it as efficiently and perhaps will not be able to spend it at all.

I urge people to oppose this bill under the suspension of the rules.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 42 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

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

O gracious God, in whom we live and move and have our being, we are grateful that Your blessings are over us and Your everlasting arms are beneath us. We know, O God, that Your spirit gives us strength when we are weak, chastens us when we miss the mark, forgives us and makes us whole. We are thankful that we can begin a new week energized by Your faithfulness and comforted by Your many mercies. Bless all Your people, O God, and may Your peace that passes all human understanding be with each one of us 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.