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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC.
March 4, 1999.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOEL HEFLEY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

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

We are grateful, O God, for the many blessings that have come from Your hand, and we begin this day with appreciation for the gift of friendship. With our families and with our colleagues, there can be that kind of relationship that transcends all the divisions of position or responsibility, that surmounts the differences that separate people from each other. For friends who support us when the day is done, we offer our praise. For friends who encourage us when we are discouraged, we offer thanks. For friends who forgive when we miss the mark and for friends who stand near us when we are alone, we offer these words of gratitude and thanksgiving. 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 gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WU) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WU 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair wishes to announce that the one-minutes will be limited to 15 on each side.

REMOVING SOCIAL SECURITY EARNINGS TEST

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

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge Members' support of a piece of legislation that will be introduced shortly in the House. That legislation is called the Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act of 1999 and it removes the earnings limitations that now exist in our Social Security laws. For 1999, this limit penalizes retirees with above \$9,600 in earnings. For example, if the Social Security recipient is under the age of 65 and they earn \$20,000, they would lose \$5,200 from their Social Security benefit. It is a little better if you are age 65 to 69. Then you would only lose about \$3,500 in your Social Security benefits.

This restriction on outside earnings dates back to the original Social Security law. In 1935, unemployment in the United States exceeded 25 percent, net new business investment was a negative \$55 billion, and national wages had declined from \$50 billion in 1929 to \$30 billion.

In this environment, it made sense to provide a disincentive to an older generation of workers to remain in the work force. The government would take care of this older generation by ensuring a level of financial support we now call a social insurance system. In turn, new positions for younger workers were created, giving them the wherewithal to become financially independent from government assistance. Taxes from these workers would become the mechanism to fund the benefits payments to the retirees.

Sixty-five years later, it is time to revisit the premise underlying this penalty. With record low unemployment rates, the annual earnings limit is an outdated disincentive that we cannot afford to keep. We need the expertise and wisdom that these workers can provide, but we make it punitive to compensate them for this value. It is time we change this provision of the Social Security Act. The Senior Citizens Freedom to Work Act of 1999 does exactly that and addresses one of the most unfair provisions of all, the penalty for working. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this important, and long overdue, piece of legislation.

SCHOOL MODERNIZATION

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

Mr. WU. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in favor of school modernization. In communities like Astoria in Oregon, there are elementary schools with only one electrical plug in each classroom. No new elementary schools have been built there since 1927. This is simply not an adequate 21st century learning environment.

In my congressional district, communities like Astoria and McMinnville need the resources to modernize school buildings and provide schools with up-to-date technological tools. In other rapidly growing communities such as Beaverton and Hillsboro, schools are suffering from that growth. There,

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classroom overcrowding creates difficult learning environments and exacerbates student discipline problems. Schools there need the resources to expand and maintain education quality.

Congress can make it more affordable for local school districts to refurbish old school facilities and construct new school buildings by paying the interest on local school bonds designated for construction and repair of school facilities. The agenda is clear but it requires a real commitment by Congress. We must work hard to meet that challenge.

BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER TREATMENT ACT OF 1999

(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, it is estimated that this year alone approximately 44,000 women will lose their lives to breast cancer and an additional 15,000 will die from cervical cancer. As these treacherous diseases continue to spread in women, researchers work diligently in hopes of finding a cure for cancerous cells and in hopes of providing solutions to improve and extend the lives of cancer patients. Yet with all this new technology and new medications, scores of low-income women, mothers, daughters and wives, will never know the benefits of this new research because they simply cannot afford treatment for their potentially fatal cancer.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO) will soon introduce a bill that will provide States with an optional Medicaid benefit to provide coverage for treatment to low-income women who are screened and diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer through our Federal CDC Early Detection Program. With little cost to taxpayers, passing this fiscally conservative legislation will literally mean saving the lives of thousands of women. I urge each and every one of our colleagues to sponsor this bill.

SOCIAL SECURITY

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

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, Members of the House did you hear the one about the Republicans who think that we ought to privatize Social Security because the interest earned on Social Security trust funds is too little? Now, they have a plan this week, the interest on the trust funds is so little that they are going to take it away from the people that paid into the trust funds. They have a plan where they say they are going to save Social Security, that they are not going to touch the principal of the trust funds or 70 percent of it, 60 percent of it, something like that.

But what they are going to do is they are going to take away the interest. So working men and women in this country pay in their hard-earned dollars through the FICA tax into Social Security, it earns interest that they are supposed to be the beneficiaries of, and along come the Republicans and they are going to steal the interest.

I hope America is watching closely when this legislation comes to the floor, because while they say they are going to protect the principal, lo and behold we see that JOHN KASICH and others have a proposal to take it and use it for tax cuts or to take it and use it for spending proposals that they have. If you are going to protect Social Security, you got to protect the principal and the interest.

LET US WORK TOGETHER TO SAVE SOCIAL SECURITY

(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, did you hear the one about the liberal who markets the politics of fear?

I am reminded by the previous speaker that in this Chamber, 2 years ago, we heard that the elderly would be thrown into the streets and that schoolchildren would be starved. That just was not true. And yet in the name of political hyperbole and fear, the liberals pull out the only card they know to market, to try and scare the H-E-double-hockey-sticks out of seniors.

The fact is, less than a year ago, our majority in Congress moved to save 90 percent of the surplus for Social Security. We currently are working on plans to save all of that surplus for today's seniors. Sad to say, the other side offers fear. We offer hope, opportunity and reality. There is a clear difference in America, and that is why together, as Americans, we can solve problems, if we avoid the partisan temptations of fear.

STOP ILLEGAL TRADE

(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, take the steel crisis, please. America is being violated every day, every hour, every minute by illegal trade, and the White House has done nothing. To make matters even worse, Congress has done nothing. This is wrong, this is stupid, this is unAmerican. Illegal trade must be stopped. Congress must grow a backbone.

I yield back 10,000 jobs, 10,000 American jobs already lost in the steel industry.

PRESIDENTIAL BUDGET FAILS STRAIGHT FACE TEST

(Mr. SCHAFFER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, the President's budget is fraudulent. That seems to be the devastating verdict of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. CBO took a look at the President's budget and they were appalled at what they saw. Double counting, slick accounting, arithmetic gymnastics, things like this have not been seen since the advent of rain forest math and faddish politically correct schools.

Social Security is not saved. In fact, Social Security would remain insolvent despite the figures the President's budget says looks good on paper. And spending busts the spending caps that Congress worked so hard to pass only 2 short years ago. Spending goes up, way up. And so the security of Social Security goes down, way down.

One would think that the White House would avoid this kind of slick accounting. Double counting of imaginary money is guaranteed to get them in trouble with the CBO and all other budget analysts and economists. Congress is eager, though, to work with the President to stick with our historic balanced budget agreement. But the President's budget just does not pass the straight face test. Mr. Speaker, we need to go back to work.

EDUCATION

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

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support efforts to modernize our schools so that our children have the skills and the tools they need for the jobs that they will face when they graduate.

Two years ago I was pleased, with the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ESHOO), to sponsor the Computer Donation Incentive Act to encourage businesses to donate computer equipment and software to schools to help upgrade the schools. Since that time in my district, we have wired almost 50 schools with volunteer effort.

But we know that, if our children are going to learn, we not only need to have the hardware there, the software, be able to support teachers, to have the professional development and training they need, but our classrooms need to be smaller so that teachers can truly give children the attention that they need. That is why I am so strongly supporting the efforts to have the Federal Government be a junior partner in supporting communities to build new schools, to modernize their schools and to make sure that in order to have smaller classroom sizes, we have more classrooms and more teachers in those classrooms. This is a very important effort that the Federal Government needs to address. I urge it be a part of this year's budget.