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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: Lord, merciful and gracious God, bless Congress today. You lead all into the desert in search of salvation. There light and darkness are bold and relentless, each night falling suddenly on the Nation's brightness. For in Your presence the barren land is timeless. As the cold mountains are once again awakened by the pounding, shake us into Lenten awareness.

Forty years seems hardly a lifetime anymore. Yet Your people wandered aimlessly through purification longing for Your promises to be fulfilled.

Forty days seems far longer than a month's time now. Yet removed from the crowd, Moses and Jesus climbed the desolate stage of this mountain to seek Your face.

This year make our annual desert story victorious by Your Holy Name. May Passover and Christian Pasch bring forth the first vestiges of peace. For this we pray now and forever. 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.

Mr. McNULTY. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. McNULTY. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts 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.

YUCCA MOUNTAIN POSES A MOVING DISASTER

(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, how much more simply can I say it, that shipping nuclear waste back and forth across this country 96,000 times is simply unsafe. Sure, proponents of the Yucca Mountain Project would say that some 3,000 shipments have already been made to destinations in America without any incidents. But let me say, I am sure that the elevators in the World Trade Center operated faultlessly until September 11. We cannot use the past to predict the future.

Mr. Speaker, terrorist threats against one of these many shipments is a real danger, and it would be foolish to disregard it. Moreover, the news program "60 Minutes" last year said that train accidents due to track failure are happening at a rate of nearly 1 every 24 hours. Just a few months ago the city of Baltimore was nearly shut down due to a chemical train accident.

Mr. Speaker, I am not willing to gamble on transporting the deadliest

substance known to man back and forth through 43 States, especially when DOE has no strategy or plan for the possibility of disaster. We need to protect our communities and constituents, protect our Nation. I urge Members to vote "no" on Yucca Mountain.

WHY ALL THE GIMMICKS?

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, remember the Social Security lockbox? Republican leadership had us vote on protecting Social Security with a lockbox eight times over 5 years. But now, of course, the lockbox has been ripped opened and plundered, and over the next 10 years it will finance tax cuts for the wealthiest of Americans.

Now there is a new gimmick. Hey, certificates. Certificates suitable for framing on the wall and hanging next to the Enron stock certificate. They will be just as valuable. That is their new gimmick.

Mr. Speaker, why all of the gimmicks? Because they are proposing a privatization plan that will undermine the foundations of Social Security, cut benefits, increase the retirement age; or, phenomenally, increase the debt. They have yet to say how they are going to pay for their risky privatization plans, taking 2 percent, doubling the problem that Social Security has. Instead of Social Security running out of money in 2038 and only being able to pay 73 percent of benefits after that time, they have a plan that will run Social Security out of money in 2024. That is not a great plan.

THE AXIS OF EVIL

(Mr. PITTS 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. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, when the leader of the free world came to this Chamber in January to deliver his State of the Union address, he described the axis of evil governments. He mentioned them by name: Iran, Iraq and North Korea.

Since then, some people have criticized the speech. In fact, one of President Bush's predecessors said the speech was "over simplistic" and "counterproductive."

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Iran spends millions of dollars financing the murder of innocent civilians and violence in the Middle East. The Government of Iraq has used chemical weapons to kill its own citizens and has invaded its neighbors. North Korea is the only country I know of today that has concentration camps where people enter and never come home from. They literally starve their citizens.

If that is not evil, I do not know what is. Years ago another President referred to the Soviet Union as an evil empire, and some of us remember the Soviet refusenik Natan Sharansky. He was in a gulag when President Reagan gave that speech. Mr. Sharansky told me, when I met him, that news of that speech spread like wildfire through the Soviet gulags. Not until then did they realize that a leader in the West understood the nature of communism.

STOP CORPORATE EXPATRIATES

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

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, in the 6 months since the devastating attacks of September 11, we have seen some of the most heartwarming images of our American family pulling together to support one another. While Congress grapples with the tough decisions on how to pay for this war against terrorist and enhanced homeland security and other pressing national priorities, one member of the American family is losing its commitment. I quote, "Maybe patriotism needs to take a back seat to improve our earnings."

Mr. Speaker, these were the disturbing words of one aggressive accountant a mere 3 months ago urging her corporate clients to sneak out of the U.S. in the dark of night to avoid paying income tax. For a mere \$27,000 to rent a post office box offshore, one U.S. corporation has avoided \$40 million a year in corporate income taxes. If these were individuals doing this, the American taxpayers would be outraged.

Mr. Speaker, join me in shutting down this loophole exploited by corporate expatriates before one more American company decides to shelve the Stars and Stripes to save some money on the bottom line by avoiding corporate income tax.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO CATHY LAIRD

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in deep humility to join in the shock and the grief of the citizens of Shelby County, Indiana, to pay tribute to the passing of a leader, a wife, a mother, and a distinguished local citizen, Cathy Laird, who passed away at the age of 37 yesterday following the complications from an automobile accident. Cathy Laird was not only a distinguished public servant who would have, without term limits, been permitted to run for her third consecutive term as county clerk, she was also the devoted wife of Roger, the devoted mother of Mary, 9, and Emily, 5. Emily was in the car when the accident occurred; and characteristic of Cathy, she looked after Emily making sure Emily got to her appointment while she was taken to the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage Roger and all family and friends to not grieve like the rest of men who have no hope. Cathy had the hope that is now realized, and we will pray for her husband, her children, her family, her friends, and a grieving community who take comfort in the faith, hope and love of Cathy Laird.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE BUDGET

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

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, Social Security has been a successful program. It has helped millions of seniors out of poverty. Our seniors are facing a dilemma, one that threatens their security and their trust. We must fight to preserve our Social Security trust fund and honor the country's commitment.

The President's budget does not honor the commitment to our seniors, and in turn fails all Americans. Now is the time for us to focus on a long-term budget plan that will recover as the economy recovers, returning us to an era where we can fully protect and even strengthen our Social Security trust fund. We need to recommit to the idea of Social Security surplus dollars only for Social Security and paying down the national debt.

The President's new budget raids the Social Security surplus to pay for government programs, not just 1 year but 10 years. Our seniors deserve better than gimmicks and budget tricks. They need us to lead and fight for the preservation of a historic program and for the needs of seniors. We ask Congress to reconsider their budget, reconsider their tax cuts, and reassume the responsibility, and that is to pay down our debt and take care of our seniors.

ARMY NEEDS ADEQUATE RESOURCES

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

Mr. RYUN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the enduring commitment the Army provides to our Nation. Throughout our history, we have relied on the Army to provide decisive force to defend America and her interests.

In the aftermath of September 11, the Army again answered the call by effectively leading efforts to support victims and secure our borders. They continue to coordinate efforts to protect our Nation throughout this country through homeland defense.

Last week General Shinseki testified about the need of the Army to increase its end strength. I believe we would do well to heed his advice.

Today America only boasts the ninth largest army in the world. Of the top eight, six are potential adversaries. We must work to increase the Army force structure. It should be obvious that we must maintain stability through strong ground forces.

Mr. Speaker, we rely on the Army to win wars and maintain the peace. Now more than ever, we must give these men and women adequate resources to meet these requirements.

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INTERNATIONAL CHILD ABDUCTION

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

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to talk about Ludwig Koons. Ludwig is still being held illegally by his mother in Italy.

He was born in New York City in 1992. When he was a year old, his mother, Ilona Staller, took him to Rome. After promising a quick return, Ilona delayed her return to the United States after Mr. Koons had purchased tickets for his family to return to New York. But in December of 1993 he learned that Ilona had left their son with unknown third parties and traveled to Ecuador to participate in an erotic pornographic show.

Mr. Koons quickly went to Rome to find his son. He found Ludwig confused, disoriented and abandoned by his mother, left in the care of a foreigner who spoke neither Italian nor English. Ludwig's housing environment was filled with pornography and was physically dangerous due to construction materials left strewn about. Neither the Italian nor the United States governments are helping to correct this situation.

Mr. Speaker, we would not want our own children in this kind of an environment. We should not want it for any American child. It is time to bring our children home.