

APPOINTMENT OF HONORABLE
ROSCOE G. BARTLETT OF MARY-
LAND TO ACT AS SPEAKER PRO
TEMPORE TO SIGN ENROLLED
BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS
ON TODAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid be-
fore the House the following Commu-
nication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 25, 2003.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ROSCOE G.
BARTLETT to act as Speaker pro tempore to
sign enrolled bills and joint resolutions on
this day.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without
objection, the appointment is ap-
proved.

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF HONORABLE
TOM DAVIS OF VIRGINIA OR
HONORABLE MAC THORNBERRY
TO ACT AS SPEAKER PRO TEM-
PORE TO SIGN ENROLLED BILLS
AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS UNTIL
THE DAY THE HOUSE CONVENES
FOR THE SECOND SESSION OF
THE 108TH CONGRESS

The Speaker pro tempore laid before
the House the following communica-
tion from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 25, 2003.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM DAVIS
or, if not available to perform this duty, the
Honorable MAC THORNBERRY to act as Speak-
er pro tempore to sign enrolled bills and
joint resolutions until the day the House
convenes for the second session of the 108th
Congress.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without
objection, the appointment is ap-
proved.

There was no objection.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant
to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair
declares the House in recess subject to
the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 6 min-
utes p.m.), the House stood in recess
subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1315

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House
was called to order by the Speaker pro
tempore (Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland)
at 1 o'clock and 15 minutes p.m.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2673,
CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIA-
TIONS ACT, 2004

Mr. YOUNG of Florida submitted the
following conference report and state-
ment on the bill (H.R. 2673) making ap-
propriations for Agriculture, Rural De-

velopment, Food and Drug Administra-
tion, and Related Agencies for the fis-
cal year ending September 30, 2004, and
for other purposes:

[The conference report will be avail-
able in Book II of the CONGRESSIONAL
RECORD.]

COMMENTS REGARDING
CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2673

(Mr. OBEY asked and was given per-
mission to speak out of order for 7 min-
utes.)

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to
take this time to comment on the leg-
islation just filed. The legislation just
filed would complete the work of the
Committee on Appropriations and the
Congress on a number of appropriation
bills which were not able to get
through the system one by one, as is
the usual process. But in the process of
putting together this omnibus appro-
priation bill, the House has, I think,
reached a new low in terms of its will-
ingness to reflect the will of the mem-
bership.

We elect in this country 535 people to
come to this Congress, 435 of them in
this institution; and the idea is that
those Members are supposed to vote on
various issues, and after those Mem-
bers have voted, then a conference
committee between the Senate and the
House is supposed to iron out whatever
differences remain between the House
and the Senate in the consideration of
that legislation.

That is really not what happened on
this legislation this year. Time and
time again, the conferees simply dis-
regarded the will of Members of both
Houses, went into a back room, and de-
cided on their own, without consulting
anybody but themselves and the White
House, that they were going to cut the
cards a different way and deal a new
hand to everyone.

So we find, for instance, that in the
legislation just filed, even though both
Houses of Congress in public, on-the-
record votes made the decision to try
to scale back the expansion of the abil-
ity of large businesses in the commu-
nications industry to own television
stations, despite the fact that both
branches of the Congress voted to put a
35 percent cap on the percentage of
American homes that should be reach-
able by any one corporate entity in the
television business, despite that fact,
the conferees produced legislation just
filed at this moment which changes
that cap and raises it to 39 percent. No
votes taken in either House to do that,
just an arbitrary judgment because the
White House said, "If you do not do it
our way, we are going to hold our
breath and turn blue."

So the conferees caved and went
against the position of both Houses. I
think that is a national scandal. This
is a backroom deal to strengthen the
hands of the national media giants
against local control of television. It
allows ABC and NBC to acquire addi-
tional stations up to the new 39 percent

limit, and it takes Fox and CBS off the
hook so that they do not have to divest
as they would have had to if the will of
the House and the Senate had pre-
vailed.

I am also concerned about what has
happened here with the across-the-
board cut that is being provided in this
legislation because, as I understand the
impact of that cut, that is going to
mean a reduction of \$178 million in cru-
cial veterans medical care; and it is
going to, as I understand it, severely
hamper the VA in its ability to reduce
the backlog in handling cases brought
to them by veterans. It now takes
about 157 days to process a veteran's
claim; and this across-the-board cut in
the operations of the VA will, I am
afraid, result in seeing those delays ex-
panded rather than contracted.

I also want to take just a moment to
point out that this institution has en-
gaged in a very questionable practice
with respect to congressional ear-
marks. In the past, there is no question
that Congress had provided significant
numbers of earmarks. But in the past 4
or 5 years, in my view, that has gotten
incredibly out of control. There is
nothing wrong with Congress deciding
to take a reasonable number of
projects through earmarks in order to
give this institution an opportunity to
define what activities it considers to be
very important; but when the practice
explodes to such a degree that virtu-
ally every university hires a lobbyist
to try to obtain funds through the po-
litical process rather than the process
of peer review, then the Congress aban-
dons all pretext of taxpayers' moneys
being used in rational fashion.

The other problem, Mr. Speaker, is
that when earmarks change in char-
acter from being a convenience to
Members to a weapon in the hands of
the majority party to punish Members
of the minority party who oppose those
appropriation bills, then we have, I
think, fundamentally corrupted the ap-
propriations process of the House, and
I think it becomes a source of shame
for the House in many ways. We have
had a huge explosion in the amount of
Member-directed earmarks over the
past 4 or 5 years; and I would say that
when that is accompanied by the idea
that Members will be punished if they
vote on the basis of substance, then I
think this Congress ceases to be a body
which can earn the respect of the
American people. It seems to me that if
we are going to allow earmarks to be
used as a partisan threat, then what we
will do is eliminate the ability of the
appropriations process to be considered
on the merits, and the only thing Mem-
bers will be focused on will be their
local pork projects rather than the
broader welfare of the country; and I
think that will demean the process of
the Congress and demean the American
people in the process.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr.
BARTLETT of Maryland). Pursuant to

clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 24 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1521

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland) at 3 o'clock and 21 minutes p.m.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair lays before the House the following privileged message from the Senate.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment:

Page 1, line 2, strike out all after "*concurring*," over to and including line 3 on page 3 and insert: *That when the House adjourns on any legislative day from Tuesday, November 25, 2003, through the remainder of the first session of the One Hundred Eighth Congress, on a motion offered pursuant to this concurrent resolution by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand adjourned sine die, or until such day and time as may be specified by its Majority Leader or his designee in the motion to adjourn, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 2 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first; that when the Senate recesses or adjourns at the close of business on any day from Monday, November 24, 2003, through the remainder of the first session of the One Hundred Eighth Congress, on a motion offered by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand adjourned sine die, or stand recessed or adjourned until such day and time as may be specified by its Majority Leader or his designee in the motion to recess or adjourn, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 2 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first.*

The Senate amendment was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SENATE BILLS REFERRED

Bills and a concurrent resolution of the Senate of the following titles were taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 391. An act to enhance ecosystem protection and the range of outdoor opportunities protected by statute in the Skykomish River valley of the State of Washington by designating certain lower-elevation Federal lands as wilderness, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 425. An act to revise the boundary of the Wind Cave National Park in the State of South Dakota; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 434. An act to authorize the Secretary of agriculture to sell or exchange all or part of certain parcels of National Forest System land in the State of Idaho and use the proceeds derived from the sale or exchange for National Forest System purposes; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 435. An act to provide for the conveyance by the Secretary of Agriculture of the Sandpoint Federal Building and adjacent land in Sandpoint, Idaho, and for other pur-

poses; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and in addition to the Committee on Resources for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

S. 452. An act to require that the Secretary of the Interior conduct a study to identify sites and resources, to recommend alternatives for commemorating and interpreting the Cold War, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 551. An act to provide for the implementation of air quality programs developed in accordance with an Intergovernmental Agreement between the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the State of Colorado concerning Air Quality Control on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce and in addition to the Committee on Resources for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

S. 714. An act to provide for the conveyance of a small parcel of Bureau of Land Management land in Douglas County, Oregon, to the county to improve management of and recreational access to the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 1003. An act to clarify the intent of Congress with respect to the continued use of established commercial outfitter hunting camps on the Salmon River; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 1279. An act to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to authorize the President to carry out a program for the protection of the health and safety of residents, workers, volunteers, and others in a disaster area; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

S. 1499. An act to adjust the boundaries of Green Mountain National Forest; to the Committee on Agriculture.

S. 1531. An act to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of Chief Justice John Marshall; to the Committee on Financial Services.

S. 1947. An act to prohibit the offer of credit by a financial institution to a financial institution examiner, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

S. Con. Res. 77. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress supporting vigorous enforcement of the Federal obscenity laws; to the Committee on the Judiciary and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Mr. Trandahl, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled bills of the House of the following titles, which were thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 421. An act to reauthorize the United States Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1367. An act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a loan repayment program regarding the provision of

veterinary services in shortage situations, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1683. An act to increase, effective as of December 1, 2003, the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1821. An act to award a congressional gold medal to Dr. Dorothy Height in recognition of her many contributions to the Nation.

H.R. 1828. An act to halt Syrian support for terrorism, end its occupation of Lebanon, and stop its development of weapons of mass destruction, and by so doing hold Syria accountable for the serious international security problems it has caused in the Middle East, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1904. An act to improve the capacity of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands and Bureau of Land Management lands aimed at protecting communities, watersheds, and certain other at-risk lands from catastrophic wildfire, to enhance efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, across the landscape, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2115. An act to amend title 49, United States Code, to reauthorize programs for the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2417. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2004 for intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the United States Government, the Community Management Account, and the Central Intelligence Agency Retirement and Disability System, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3038. An act to make certain technical and conforming amendments to correct the Health Care Safety Net Amendments of 2002.

H.R. 3140. An act to provide for availability of contact lens prescriptions to patients, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3166. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 57 Old Tappan Road in Tappan, New York, as the "John G. Dow Post Office Building".

H.R. 3185. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 38 Spring Street in Nashua, New Hampshire, as the "Hugh Gregg Post Office Building".

H.R. 3349. An act to authorize salary adjustments for Justices and judges of the United States for fiscal year 2004.

H.R. 3419. An act to establish within the Smithsonian Institution the National Museum of African History and Culture, and for other purposes.

SENATE ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to enrolled bills of the Senate of the following titles:

S. 189. An act to authorized appropriations for nanoscience, nanoengineering, and nanotechnology research, and for other purposes.

S. 579. An act to reauthorize the National Transportation Safety Board, and for other purposes.

S. 1152. An act to reauthorize the United States Fire Administration, and for other purposes.

S. 1156. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve and enhance provision of health care for veterans, to authorize major construction projects and other facilities matters for the Department of Veterans