

RECOGNIZING THE MERCURY RED-BONE CELEBRITY TOURNAMENT SERIES AND GARY AND SUSAN ELLIS

(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, I would like to recognize the Mercury Red Bone Celebrity Tournament and their founders, Gary and Susan Ellis, members of my Congressional district, for their outstanding commitment to the fight against cystic fibrosis.

On March 15 of this year, Mercury Redbone and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation will hold their fourth annual 10K Walk to Pigeon Key. The walk will benefit the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, an organization dedicated to the fight and the cure of this disease. Cystic fibrosis is the number one genetic killer of children and young adults in our country, and thousands of people have it.

Please join me in thanking the Ellis family and Redbone for their commitment to this noble cause.

PROMOTING RURAL HEALTH CARE ACCESS

(Mrs. CAPITO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to join me in supporting efforts to adequately address one of the most vulnerable aspects of the health care system, rural America.

This very minute, over 60 million rural Americans live with the risk of being without critical health care services. We must make sure that we have meaningful health care reform, guaranteeing all Americans access.

In my home State of West Virginia, 50 of the 55 counties are designated as "medically underserved." In addition, physicians in our State, like many other States, are experiencing a medical liability crisis that threatens to deprive us of critical care specialists. This situation has the makings of a "perfect storm."

Whether you live in New York City or Moorefield, West Virginia, we should all have access to proper health care. From ambulance service to community health centers to hospitals to nursing homes, millions of Americans are counting on us to make sure that rural health care delivery systems will be there for us when we truly need them.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 13, MAKING FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS, FISCAL YEAR 2003

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 29 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 29

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider in the House the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 13) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2003, and for other purposes. The joint resolution shall be considered as read for amendment. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the joint resolution to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate on the joint resolution equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations; and (2) one motion to recommit.

SEC. 2. Upon receipt of a message from the Senate transmitting House Joint Resolution 2 with a Senate amendment thereto, it shall be in order to consider in the House a motion offered by the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations or his designee that the House disagree to the Senate amendment and request or agree to a conference with the Senate thereon.

□ 1215

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. LINDER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 29 is a closed rule providing for the consideration of a very straightforward 1-week continuing resolution. The continuing resolution itself, H.J. Res. 13, makes further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2003. The rule provides that H.J. Res. 13 will be debatable in the House for 1 hour, equally divided and controlled by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY). The rule waives all points of order in consideration of H.J. Res. 13, and it provides 1 motion to recommit the underlying measure.

I want to note that section 2 of the resolution provides that upon receiving a message from the Senate transmitting H.J. Res. 2 with a Senate amendment, it shall be in order to consider in the House a motion by the Committee on Appropriations chairman or his designee that the House disagree to the Senate amendment and request or agree to a conference with the Senate. This provision in this section of the report is necessary to permit the Committee on Appropriations chairman the authority to offer a motion to go to conference on the omnibus appropriations bill.

Mr. Speaker, this is a clean continuing resolution that will ensure that the United States Government remains open through February 7 and that all Americans who are expecting any kind of Federal benefit, a Social Security check, Medicare payments, or veterans benefits will continue to do so without interruption.

While we can debate the substance of the continuing resolution in subsequent general debate, I will note that as negotiations continue on the overall appropriations package, this continuing resolution will make sure that ongoing programs are continued at current rates under the same terms and conditions as fiscal year 2002, except for the defense and military construction bills that have already been enacted into law. Current funding expires at midnight on Friday, without action on the continuing resolution that this rule permits. Therefore, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this rule so that we may proceed to consideration of the continuing resolution and ensure that the Federal Government remains open until February 7.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. FROST asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, two important things will happen today on the floor of this House. First, we will debate and pass yet another continuing resolution, the eighth temporary stop-gap measure for a fiscal year that began almost 4 months ago. This continuing resolution represents an abdication of responsibility that has become almost run-of-the-mill under Republican control. Today's resolution, which extends the date of the current CR through February 7, means that Republicans will be 4 months late in addressing priorities like homeland security and the economy. America is struggling through dangerous, uncertain times; but the Republican Congress may as well still be on vacation.

Republican leaders are hoping this shameful failure will be obscured by today's second important event: the President's State of the Union address. The Republican majority is expecting to hide behind the glib rhetoric we have all come to expect from President Bush.

But political slogans only go so far, especially in the face of the wide and growing credibility gap facing a Republican Party that has spent the past 2 years saying one thing and doing another. And no matter how eloquent President Bush may be tonight, words alone cannot fix the primary problem this Republican government has created for the Nation at this difficult time.

Simply put, there are two states of the Union in America today. For the vast majority of Americans, these are difficult and anxious times; but for the Republican politicians and the privileged few they represent, like the corporate lobbyists invited to the White House today for a special sneak preview of the State of the Union, the good times just keep on coming.

It is a tragedy, Mr. Speaker; but it is the truth. Just take a look around the country. We will see hard-working

Americans struggling to make it through the weakest economy in a generation. Since President Bush took office, 2.3 million private sector jobs have been lost, the worst jobs record for any President since the end of World War II. The unemployment rate is stuck at a 6-year high. We will see millions of Americans whose retirement plans have been crushed by the fall of the stock market. The Dow dropped below 8,000 again yesterday; and overall, the market has lost trillions of dollars in value since President Bush took office. We will see firefighters and police officers who still sit exposed on the front lines of homeland defense, desperate for help from this Congress. It has been nearly a year and a half since September 11, but Republicans have done shockingly little to increase America's defenses here at home.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats have fought for these priorities. We have proposed economic stimulus plans to create at least 1 million new jobs this year, put money and purchasing power in the hands of consumers, and provide relief to struggling small businesses; and we have tried time and again to make Americans safer at home by meeting critical homeland security needs.

Unfortunately for the American people, Mr. Speaker, Republicans have the power in Washington, and just take a look at the government they control. We will see an out-of-touch Republican Congress that arrogantly refuses to do the job they have been elected to do: address critical needs like homeland security and education. Republicans will not help firefighters or increase port security, but they have relaxed their own ethics rules in the House of Representatives. Mr. Speaker, we will see a Republican Party that has but one answer for every problem: budget-busting tax breaks for millionaires that will do nothing to stimulate the economy this year. Soldiers and firefighters are putting their lives on the line to keep Americans safe at home, and President Bush is pushing \$90,000 tax breaks for everyone making \$1 million or more a year. Middle-class Americans are struggling through the worst economy in a generation, but the Bush plan would provide half of all taxpayers with less than \$100.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it appears that Republicans just do not understand the real state of the Union for the vast majority of America, because if they did, they would not insist on sacrificing the security interests of all Americans to pay for tax breaks for the most privileged few. That is just wrong. It is time that Republicans stopped stifling homeland security to pay for tax breaks for millionaires, and it is time they stopped using their political power to divide this great Nation.

Mr. Speaker, last week I attended a mobilization ceremony for a reservist in Grand Prairie Texas who had been called to active duty. These brave men

and women are making a great sacrifice for their country, leaving their families and jobs to support our troops overseas. I was struck by their courage and by their willingness to put aside their own personal concerns to serve their country. That spirit of unity and sacrifice has made America great for the past 2 centuries. I hope it is the spirit President Bush remembers tonight during his State of the Union and that the Republican Congress puts into practice so that we can finally address our economic and homeland security challenges.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, after 9-11, it became obvious to all of us, I think on both sides of the aisle, that we needed to equip the people at the local level who will respond to terrorist attacks with the best equipment that we could possibly find to make certain their equipment was compatible and safe enough to do the job. For reasons that I find difficult to fathom, the White House has resisted efforts to do that on four separate occasions.

The first example is what happened on the supplemental a year ago. After 9-11, the committee, on both sides of the aisle, agreed that we ought to add more money for first responders, and we tried to do that. The White House strenuously resisted. In fact, at one point the President personally told us that he would veto one dime more than the White House had appropriated for homeland security items. Despite that fact, on a bipartisan basis, the House and the Senate approved \$400 million in funding for first responders in that supplemental.

Then, last year, in their second supplemental which the administration sent up, they still provided no request for first responders. Again, the House and the Senate, acting on a bipartisan basis in both Houses provided, after much White House resistance, \$551 million for first responders for firemen, for policemen, and the other folks at the local level who are our first line of defense against terrorist attacks in our communities. The President vetoed \$350 million of that \$500 million.

Finally, the administration did request \$3.5 billion for first responders in the regular 2003 appropriations bill, but it then proceeded to back the political strategy in the House that prevented the veterans under the VA-HUD bill from coming to the floor; and it prevented the State, Justice, Commerce appropriations bill from coming to the floor. As a result, neither of those bills which were supposed to contain funding for first responders, neither of those bills passed. And then, when the continuing resolution finally passed, which was supposed to contain \$650 million for first responders, the White House saw to it that the agency would not apportion that money among the States and localities.

So after we have that track record, the White House resistance to bipartisan congressional support for adding money for first responders, the White House chief of staff went on national television last Sunday, Mr. Card did, and told Mr. Russert, the moderator, and the entire country that the only reason first responders were not getting their money is because the Congress had not done its job.

Baloney. In capital letters, BALONEY.

The fact is that both political parties, on a bipartisan basis in both the House and the Senate, on four separate occasions tried to meet our responsibilities in providing the funding that was needed for first responders and, the White House, in each of those instances, either flatly rejected the money or saw to it that they would use their power in order to squeeze down the amount of money that we wanted to provide for those initiatives.

So now, what I am going to urge Members to do when we get to the resolution today is to vote for a motion which we will offer which restores that needed money for first responders.

It is time for two things to happen: it is time for the White House to stop peddling fiction about why the first responders at the local level do not have badly needed money to deal with terrorism problems at the local level; and, secondly, it is time for us to actually get the money out to them so that we do not have to sit, the next time we have a terrorist attack saying, gee whiz, I wish we had done something.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1230

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Joint Resolution 13, and that I may include tabular and extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS, FISCAL YEAR 2003

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the rule just adopted, I call up the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 13) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2003, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.