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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. BOOZMAN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON DC,
March 25, 2003.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN BOOZMAN 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. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a concurrent resolution of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 28. Concurrent resolution authorizing the printing of the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-2005.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, 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 not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY).

MAKING OUR CHILDREN SAFER

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, this week is Children's Week, and the House will

consider four bills designed to make our children safer. We are reminded this week that a society that does not keep its children safe is failing its most basic duty.

A reading of the titles of the bills before the House reveals the circumstances experienced by too many American children today: The prevalence of child abuse and neglect, the significance of runaway prevention, and the importance of preventing child abductions and sexual exploitation.

These bills stand as a stark reminder that our children need special protection because they are children and therefore simply vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

We will have two bills on the suspension calendar that are designed to increase public awareness of the problems of child abuse and runaway prevention.

Mr. Speaker, the problems of child abuse are staggering. It is estimated that every year in our country more than 1,200 children die as a direct result of being abused and neglected. Some studies suggest that as many as 2.8 million children run away from home to escape abuse, age out of foster care or are thrown out of their homes and live on the streets.

Both the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003 and the Child Abduction Prevention Act will be the subject of debate and floor consideration this week.

The Keeping Children and Families Safe Act reauthorizes and modifies the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act and related measures to prevent family violence, to assist abandoned babies and to promote adoption.

The bill emphasizes the prevention of child maltreatment and family violence before it occurs, puts in place procedures to care for infants born drug-exposed, and ensures that parents

investigated for child abuse be fully informed of the specific allegations made against them.

Finally, the House will consider the Child Abduction Prevention Act with the purpose of preventing child abductions and putting in place the necessary enforcement tools to assure that child abductors will not escape justice.

This bill offers a comprehensive package of child abduction prevention tools that make severe child abuse and torture a capital crime, that provides stronger penalties against kidnapping and sexual trafficking, that keeps child kidnappers behind bars until trial and that puts a "two strikes you're out" law in place.

After all, how many children's lives do you have to ruin before you should be locked up for life?

Additionally, it keeps all the safeguards in place for wiretapping, but creates four new circumstances to allow better monitoring of criminals' abuse of children's chat rooms. We used to be able to keep an eye on our children at the playground in order to keep them safe. Chat rooms pose a dangerous new challenge that we must confront.

In addition, the bill would extend the Justice Department's Amber Alert system to a nationwide program and authorizes funds to enhance communication systems along highways to support the Amber Alert communications plans.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the child-related legislation that the House is set to move this week shows the American people that our children are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and that the House is committed to ensuring that more of our children are protected and made safe.

□ 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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