

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 Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. KUCINICH 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.

THANKING THE REVEREND DR. BOB PATTERSON

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank the reverend Dr. Bob Patterson for his message today. Bob is no stranger to the halls of the United States House or to Georgia congressmen named Phil. When he was a young man growing up in Hall County, Georgia, in the 1970s, he was appointed to serve as a House page by then Congressman Phil Landrum, and later, he was on detached duty with the House Press Gallery during the Nixon impeachment inquiry.

But Bob did not answer to the siren song of politics. He returned to Georgia to finish college, and then he headed to Texas for seminary. Ministers are not known for staying in one place too long, but Bob has made his home at the First Baptist Church of Warm Springs, Georgia, since 1986.

Warm Springs, Georgia, should sound familiar to those who take a strong interest in American history. Even before he was elected President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a frequent visitor and a part-time resident. He was convinced that the warm spring water that existed there had a healing effect on his polio, and he set up an institute in this west Georgia community where other victims of the disease, many of them children, could come for care.

FDR built a house in Warm Springs that is known as the Little White House, and it was in this house in 1945 that the President died.

FDR saw Warm Springs as a place to serve others, and Bob Patterson has carried on that tradition in the heart of Meriwether County. The thesis for his doctoral dissertation was entitled "Developing a Need-Based Community Ministry Strategy for First Baptist Church in Warm Springs." He has personally ministered to the needs in his local community by serving the Family Connection initiative. In fact, he has been honored by both the Rotary

and the Pilot clubs for his outstanding contribution to all of Meriwether County.

U.S. MUST DEVELOP EXIT STRATEGY IN IRAQ

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, the United States must begin to present an exit strategy in Iraq. Bombing the villages to save the villages is not an exit strategy. It is absolutely horrific that as many as 100,000 innocent civilians may have perished in Iraq. Stopping troops who have served their tour of duty from returning to their families is not an exit strategy. Expanding house-to-house fighting across Iraq is not an exit strategy.

The United States must develop an exit strategy in Iraq. It must bring our troops home, and we must seek a new relationship with the United Nations to help make this possible.

In the weeks ahead, I will join with other Members of the House in expanding this discussion. We have a new Congress coming up. We have to take new directions. And we can start by discussing a new direction for Iraq that will result in the United States getting out, bringing our troops home and reestablishing our relationship with the world.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, it is business as usual after the election here in Washington. Right now they are writing a bill to finance the entire Federal Government, hundreds of billions of dollars, behind closed doors. It will be brought up with one vote, no amendments allowed, up or down. Why not? Maybe because we are borrowing \$1 million a minute to run the Federal Government, \$1 million a minute.

Yesterday the Pension Benefit Guarantee Fund announced that its deficit has doubled to \$24 billion. They are broke. They cannot guarantee pensions. Social Security will collect \$163 billion more than it needs, but every penny will be borrowed and spent this year for current consumption. We hit the federal debt limit for the third time in 3 years, but the Federal Government is not in default because they are borrowing from Federal employees' pension savings.

Is this not great? Nothing wrong with this picture. We do not need to change. The majority has a plan: more spending, more borrowing, more tax cuts, more dynamic scoring, which means we pretend none of this exists, and we pass the bill to our kids and grandkids.

WORKING TOGETHER

(Mr. GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the election is over, and I rise to congratulate President Bush, a fellow Texan, on his reelection. I look forward to working with the President over the next 4 years, particularly to ensure the security of our Nation and to support our men and women in combat. The elimination of terrorist networks across the world and victory in Iraq are mutual goals on which I think we can work together.

While the President's election victory was decisive, 51 percent does not constitute a mandate. Nearly half of America voted for a Democratic platform that protects Social Security and provides more Americans with health insurance. So the President should not mistake this election as a mandate for his efforts to privatize Social Security.

To put Social Security in the hands of a volatile stock market would dismantle our Nation's secured social safety network. We must do more to stop the increase in Americans without health insurance. To expand health savings accounts and association health plans would increase the ranks of uninsured by more than 1 million per year.

During the President's first term, we saw the middle class dwindle, the gap between rich and poor widen. If the President wants to reverse this trend and provide Americans with true health care and economic security, we can work together. But if working together means enacting controversial policies that dismantle the social safety net, this President can count on aggressive opposition.

God bless the United States of America.

TROUBLING ECONOMIC NEWS

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, as we returned for this lame duck session, we are confronted with a slew of troubling economic news. Just yesterday we learned that inflation is up by 1.7 percent, the sharpest monthly increase in over 15 years. The value of the dollar is dropping to all-time new lows. We also learned that the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation's long-term deficit doubled from \$11.2 billion to \$23.3 billion, a deficit resulting from the PBGC assuming responsibilities for pension plans of 192 failed companies, up from 155 last year alone.

And while we are confronting these new challenges, the annual budget deficit is at \$400 billion, an all-time high. On top of the pension benefit deficit, the Federal Government has added, in just the last 3 years, \$2 trillion to the Nation's debt, and we are being asked to vote on an additional \$900 billion just this week alone.

Mr. Speaker, the American people look to us to solve their problems,

America's problems, not our own problems or our own challenges. But in some ways finishing last year's business this year is a fitting end to the 108th Congress.

REPUBLICAN RULES CHANGE

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, this morning, House Republicans are meeting here on Capitol Hill to vote on a change to their conference rules. A new rule would allow an indicted leader to continue in his position as leader if the indictment comes from a State grand jury.

Can my colleagues imagine that? If House Republicans make this rule change, they are condoning unethical behavior at the State level by their own leaders here in the House. The American people should be outraged by this arrogant behavior.

Back in 1993, Republicans made the change in their rules to demonstrate to the American people that they were not above the law, that if they ran this House, the American people would not have to worry about ethical problems, that Republicans would hold themselves to a higher standard.

Now, however, it appears that higher standard is gone. House Republicans are saying they are willing to stand behind one of their leaders after he is indicted by a State grand jury. It does not matter the charge. The Republicans simply do not care. But I am betting that the American people will care, Mr. Speaker.

TRIBUTE TO RAUL A. BESTEIRO, JR.

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

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of the finest citizens of South Texas, Raul A. Besteiro, Jr., who passed away November 14, 2004. The Brownsville Herald called him a "Brownsville Pioneer" because of his groundbreaking efforts to transform the region.

For those of us committed to education and economic development, he was the ultimate role model. Mr. Besteiro dedicated his life to improving educational and economic opportunities for his hometown of Brownsville, Texas. He has left a lasting impact on the entire south Texas region.

Mr. Besteiro saw the potential of our region and committed his life's work to helping us achieve it. Whether he was preparing future scientists in the classroom, leading a school system to excellence, or promoting the economic development of our region through the Brownsville Port Authority, Raul Besteiro made south Texas a better and stronger place to live in. Let us carry out his legacy. He will be sorely missed, and we mourn his passing.

MORAL VALUE OF GOVERNMENT'S "BORROW AND SPEND" ECONOMIC POLICIES

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

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of talk and discussion in media and throughout the country about morals and the role they played in the elections. I personally welcome these discussions, but I am saddened by the fact that there has been little talk about the moral values of the government's "borrow and spend" economic policies.

This week, we will have a vote to raise the debt ceiling for the third time in the last 3 years. Why? Because Congress has been content to manage the American taxpayers' money in a way that immorally disregards the well-being of our Nation's economic future.

I believe it is immoral for this country to keep racking up debt as far as the eye can see only to pass it on to our children and our grandchildren. I think it is immoral to continue to borrow and spend and ask our soldiers to make the ultimate sacrifice while we refuse to make even marginal sacrifices in our fiscal policies.

Mr. Speaker, last week, on Thursday, November 11, the 278th Regimental Combat Unit left for Iraq. Many of these brave men and women of this National Guard unit come from my district in Tennessee. I was able to visit the 278th in Fort Shelby, Mississippi, the day they went off to defend our country. I wish them luck and offer my prayers for their safe return home.

□ 1015

Now I wish our soldiers' government would take the steps necessary to curb this deficit spending, to reinstate true budget enforcement measures like pay-go, and to pay down this national debt instead of continuing to raise the ceiling, so that when our troops return home, they are not left footing the bill for a war they so bravely fought. As we continue to discuss morality in America, I hope we will not continue to ignore the immoralities within our current fiscal policies.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 15 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON) at 2 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later in the day.

VETERANS BENEFITS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2004

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 2486) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve and extend housing, education, and other benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 2486

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004".

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Reference to title 38, United States Code.

TITLE I—VETERANS EARN AND LEARN ACT

Sec. 101. Short title.

Sec. 102. Modification of benefit entitlement charges for certain on-job training programs.

Sec. 103. Increase in benefit for individuals pursuing apprenticeship or on-job training.

Sec. 104. Authority for competency-based apprenticeship programs.

Sec. 105. Ten-year extension of delimiting period for survivors' and dependents' educational assistance for spouses of members who die on active duty.

Sec. 106. Availability of education benefits for payment for national admissions exams and national exams for credit at institutions of higher education.

Sec. 107. Requirement for coordination of data among the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Labor with respect to on-job training.

Sec. 108. Pilot program to provide on-job benefits to train Department of Veterans Affairs' claims adjudicators.

Sec. 109. Collection of payment for educational assistance under Montgomery GI Bill from members of the Selected Reserve called to active duty.

Sec. 110. Technical and conforming amendments.

TITLE II—EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

Subtitle A—Employment and Reemployment Rights

Sec. 201. Two-year period of continuation of employer-sponsored health care coverage.