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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:

Eternal Father of all and well-spring of youthful dreams, bless the young women and men who have served these past months as pages of the U.S. House of Representatives. As their term of service comes to an end, inspire each of them with expansive hopes and fill them with great aspirations to create powerful futures both for themselves and for this Nation.

We praise You and we thank You for their families and all of those who have mentored the pages in their program: their work, their school, and in their dorm. May this experience of government at work deepen their commitment to learning and their ability to make friends with diverse people from across the Nation, forming them into leaders for tomorrow.

May the Members of Congress surrounded by such youthful presence grow in their tender understanding of America's young people, their needs, their dreams, their problems, their values, and their abilities.

Ever-living Lord, help young and old Americans alike develop skills to cross the generational divide, that we may all grow up to be one Nation under God. 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.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Mr. FLAKE 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.

PRINCIPLES OF TAX REFORM

(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, we have a tax system that is needlessly complicated and burdensome to the middle class. It is time for fundamental tax reform that reflects the values and the interests of all Americans, not the special interests.

When President Bush announced his tax reform commission, he said his core principle was that it should not hurt government revenues.

Democrats believe that the core principle of tax reform is that tax reform should help the middle class achieve their goals. Tax reform is about the middle class and economic growth, not about government revenue.

In the last 4 years the Tax Code has been filled with special breaks for special interests. At the same time, the tax burdens have shifted from the wealthy to those who work, from dividend to wages.

What should we do?

Combine the five educational tax breaks to one tax break for higher education for \$3,000 for everybody going to college; unify the various child credits and earned income tax credit to a single simplified tax family credit; simplify the 16 different versions of the Tax Code for savings to one universal 401(k) pension; and, finally, encourage homeownership. We should create a universal mortgage deduction for all taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, we need a tax system that reflects the American values and fosters the American Dream, not the current system written by and for the special interests.

SOCIAL SECURITY PROPERTY RIGHTS

(Mr. MILLER of Florida asked and was given permission to address the

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, as I listen to the national debate on Social Security reform, I am left wondering why no one is talking about America's greatest principles, and that is property rights.

I get letters, e-mails, and phone calls every day from my constituents demanding that I do not take away their guaranteed Social Security benefits. That leads me to believe that our Nation's citizens may not understand that they really have no legal right to their Social Security benefits.

The Supreme Court ruled in *Flemming v. Nestor* that there is no legal right to Social Security benefits. In the eyes of the Court, it is deemed a tax-and-spend program in which Congress can change the rules regarding eligibility at any time, and it has many times over in past years. That is how our current system works.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for reform. It is time to give American taxpayers back their personal property rights. Personal accounts would give workers true legal property rights to their contributions and their benefits. They could not be raided to pay for other programs. Personal accounts are the ultimate lockbox.

NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, as so many American families struggle with the rising costs of health care and with the unavailability of health care, I think it is important to keep in mind that roughly one-third of every health care dollar goes to wasteful administration and profit. The result is that we pay more for our health care than any other industrialized country by a wide margin.

Since American businesses are the main provider of health care in the United States, they bear the burden and it is hurting their competitiveness. How do we know? Our competition tells us so.

The CEO of the Ford Motor Company of Canada, the president and CEO of GM Canada, and the CEO of DaimlerChrysler Canada had this to say in a 2002 letter: "Publicly funded health care thus accounts for a significant portion of Canada's overall labor cost advantage in auto assembly, versus the U.S. which in turn has been a significant factor in maintaining and attracting new auto investment to Canada."

The time has come for national health insurance.

HEALTH CARE COSTS

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, America's health care system is indeed in need of fixing on so many levels. You can lose count of the number of problems that it has. One of the major issues is cost.

Recent studies show that the average American pays close to \$4,000 a year on health care. However, that figure pales in comparison to the \$11,000 that health care costs for America's seniors each.

The last time this study was conducted in 1989, the average cost was only \$2,200. Health care has become big business and big government, and patients are further removed from their doctors. Decisions that should be made between doctors and patients are now being decided many times by somebody else. Rising costs affect everyone: patients, doctors, and even small businesses that can no longer afford health insurance for their employees.

Regardless of who pays, patients should have a choice when it comes to their health care, plain and simple. H. Res. 215 would do just that. As we move forward, we must be on the patients' side; they know what is best for themselves.

PROTECT OUR NATION

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the House Republican leadership pulled the intelligence authorization bill from the floor today because the leadership here is doing the dirty work of Defense Secretary Rumsfeld.

We all know that Rumsfeld was against the intelligence reforms that the 9/11 Commission suggested, and now he is trying to prevent those reforms from moving forward. The Republican leadership is keeping the intelligence bill from coming to the floor today because Secretary Rumsfeld does not want to give up any intelligence control to new Intelligence Director Negroponte.

Let us be clear, Secretary Rumsfeld and the Republican leadership are preventing intelligence reform that could make our Nation safer than it is today.

The 9/11 commissioners warned us earlier this week that time is not on our side. It is time the House Republican leadership stops listening to Rumsfeld and starts listening to the 9/11 Commission so we can finally begin to protect our Nation.

SHELF LIFE FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

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

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. Speaker, so often people come to this Chamber and say the way we deal with health care costs is to change who pays. What we need to talk about is what we are paying for.

The Department of Defense Extended Shelf Life Program evaluated over 312 drug products and found that even though they were given a date of shelf life, many of them maintain their stability, safety and potency up to as much as an additional 107 months past their expiration dates.

For the \$3.9 million the military spent on stability testing on expired drugs, it saved \$263 million. These are savings worth exploring, and I would urge my colleagues to support careful scientific review of expiration dates for prescription drugs and ask if the savings gained by the military can be applied to general health care spending.

My colleagues can learn more about these ideas for savings and health care by visiting my Web site at Murphy.house.gov and continue to change the way we look at health care to what we are paying for.

INDIANAPOLIS 500

(Ms. CARSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 89th running of the greatest spectacular in racing, the Indianapolis 500 held at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Congratulations to the winner, Dan Wheldon of Andretti-Green Racing, whose victory was not an easy one. Wheldon's winning highlight was a dramatic pass of the sensational rookie Danica Patrick with only six laps left in the race.

Although Danica Patrick may not have won, she made history. Danica Patrick of Rahal-Letterman finished in fourth place, the best finish ever for a woman.

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She also had the highest starting position for a woman and was the first woman to lead a lap at the Indianapolis 500.

I would like to congratulate Dan Wheldon, Danica Patrick and the entire field of 33 drivers, their racing teams, the Indianapolis Racing League and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway for a spectacular race. Congratulations again.

ONE THING I KNOW FOR CERTAIN

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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, as a former small business owner, one thing that I know for certain is that there is not a nation on this earth that has ever taxed itself into prosperity. Raising taxes and increasing regulation absolutely does not create economic growth. It is a guarantee that you are going to get less of what you want. We know that by reducing regulation and reducing taxes that we see economic growth and we see jobs growth.