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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FOSSELLA).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 10, 2005.

I hereby appoint the Honorable VITO FOSSELLA to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

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

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Lord, guide the minds and hearts of the Members of the House of Representatives today as they sort out and prioritize the massive work before the 109th Congress. Strengthen their determination as they commit themselves to the difficult task of meetings and committee work. May mutual respect and civility prevail in all their discussions.

In every issue to be addressed or any problem to be resolved, let Members turn to You in prayer so to draw from Your holy inspiration and true creative thinking.

By Your constant guidance further their work until it is brought to completion. Then the American people will rejoice because their hopes for equal justice under the law are realized, and the security and prosperity of this Nation are really fashioned by Your hand now and forever. Amen.

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 New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. PALLONE 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 5 1-minute speeches on either side.

IRAQ ELECTION

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

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, last week the people of Iraq risked life and limb to vote. They showed the world that freedom and self determination were things worth fighting and dying for.

The people of Iraq have spoken and in doing so, have undermined the terrorists who claim to be the true representatives of the Iraqi people.

No one expects the transition to representative government to be easy. After winning independence from Britain, it took our Founding Fathers years to draft and adopt a constitution that brought together the widely different factions that comprised the original 13 colonies.

There is one thing that is beyond dispute. The overwhelming majority of Iraqis want to live in a free and tolerant society. They have no use for the discarded Saddam and his henchmen.

As this editorial cartoon shows, a seed of democracy has been planted in the very heart of the Middle East. As Iraq continues to defeat the terrorists and build a flourishing society, the other oppressed peoples of this troubled region will demand and seize the same freedom for themselves. The mullahs of Iran should take note and realize that their people will throw them out sooner or later.

Again, I wish to congratulate the people of Iraq on their successful election.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE BUDGET

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

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, the President has sent his budget dealing a blow to veterans health care, and I would like to share with you what the veterans' organizations across the country think about it.

Paralyzed American Veterans say the release of the 2006 budget request by the administration demonstrates a callous disregard for the services of America's veterans.

The VFW says the President has delivered a disappointing funding request for the Department of Veterans Affairs. This budget will cause veterans' health care to be delayed.

The DAV, the Disabled American Veterans, says the administration has proposed one of the most tight-fisted, miserly budgets for veterans' programs in recent memory. As a result, VA facilities across the country are cutting staff and limiting services even as the number of veterans seeking care is on the rise.

The American Legion says veterans' health care is an ongoing expense of war. You do not thank veterans for serving their country and then tell them, Oh, by the way, you had better

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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not get wounded or you will have to pay extra for your health care.

Shame on this terrible veterans budget.

SOUND ECONOMIC POLICY

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

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, sound economic policy cannot be made in a vacuum. Today I am introducing a resolution to help take steel policy out of that vacuum.

My resolution calls on the Commerce Department and the International Trade Commission, the ITC, to simply consider domestic steel consumers when they decide whether to continue duties on imported steel.

Although Commerce and the ITC have the authority to consider steel consumers in sunset reviews, they traditionally have not done so, and frankly, that is simply wrong.

Steel consumers are hurting, and unnecessary distortion in the steel market is the reason why.

As decisions are made about the import duties on steel products, does it not make sense to consider the impact on steel consumers?

Some steel duties are still necessary, but some are not. The deck should not be stacked in favor of keeping unnecessary duties.

Let us look at the full impact. It is a matter of fundamental fairness.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

(Ms. KILPATRICK of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KILPATRICK of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, this week the President delivered a \$2.5 trillion budget to Congress and the American people. What was missing was nearly a trillion dollars for his plan for Social Security.

What was missing was the \$1.8 billion, the cost of making the tax cuts permanent and retiring tax cuts.

What was missing was the cost of the war in Iraq. He has already spent \$280 billion. He has asked for \$80 billion more, none of it in the budget.

What was in the budget was \$60 billion cut for Medicaid. Over 40 million people, children and poor people, a \$60 billion cut.

What was missing was a \$2 billion cut that was in the budget for community development block grants, monies to cities and towns to build their infrastructure, to help in their housing and other local community programs.

What was in the budget was a cut to Upward Bound, TRIO and other education programs, cuts to our firefighters, at the same time asking for permanent tax cuts. We have got to do better and I hope we will.

THE BULGARIAN MIRACLE

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in appreciation of the strong partnership between the United States and Bulgaria.

For over 100 years the United States has enjoyed diplomatic relations with Bulgaria. With its new era of democracy, our two countries now stand together in the war on terrorism and our friendship is stronger than ever.

Bulgaria is a new democracy which recognizes the importance of furthering freedom throughout the world. By sending over 400 troops to rebuild Iraq and train security forces, the country is playing an important role in helping the Iraqi people. Also, with a contingent in Afghanistan, Bulgaria is protecting the modern world by containing terrorists at the source.

Bulgaria is also a country of great accomplishment. Last year I was honored to meet Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha and to attend the White House ceremony honoring Bulgaria's admission into NATO. Under his leadership, the Bulgarian economy is being transformed and EU admission is planned in 2 years.

During my visits to Bulgaria, I have seen firsthand the Bulgarian miracle, the establishment of a dynamic democracy and the restoration of economic freedom.

As the co-chair of the Congressional Bulgaria Caucus with the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TAUSCHER), it is also my privilege to work with Ambassador Elena Poptodorova.

In conclusion, may God bless our troops and we will never forget September 11.

NO TO PRICE INDEXING AND PRIVATIZATION

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Social Security benefits have steadily increased over the years because they have long been calculated by indexing them to wage increases which on the average go up 3.6 percent a year, so Social Security benefits increase with rising wages.

The administration wants to change all of that. They want to index Social Security benefits according to price increases, not wages. As a result, millions of future retirees will see their future Social Security benefits reduced as much as 40 percent because prices do not increase as fast as wages.

Let me give an example. If you began work in 1959, retired in 2003 at age 65, under wage indexing where benefits rise with rising wages, you get \$1,158 a month. Under price indexing, your benefits would be frozen. You would get only \$701 a month. So there would be a

40 percent cut in benefits with price indexing and a person would lose over \$100,000 in retirement benefits over a lifetime.

Why the switch to price indexing? Because privatization is going to create an additional shortfall. The administration is going to have to borrow money to set up private accounts, and the shortfall is going to be for 45 years. They are going to have to borrow up to \$15 trillion. They are going to try to get the money off the backs of America's retirees. It is wrong. No to privatization and no to price indexing.

CLOSING CRITICAL LOOPHOLES

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

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, on September 11 terrorists struck the heart of the American people. By infiltrating our country and living among us, these enemies were able to plot and execute an attack on thousands of innocent Americans. It is imperative they do not have that opportunity again.

Driver's licenses are the primary identification document in the United States, yet 11 States, including my home State, Washington, do not require applicants to provide proof they are in the country legally to obtain IDs. The 9/11 Commission report states: "For terrorists, travel documents are as important as weapons."

These gaps in the system are critical loopholes. With a driver's license, the wrong person can then go on to purchase a firearm, rent a car, and board a plane.

Mr. Speaker, as a former law enforcement officer of over 33 years, I can speak firsthand to the danger of firearms in the wrong hands. We do not need to make it easier for the terrorists to get weapons. I urge my colleagues to vote for the REAL ID Act today and take another step to a more secure Nation.

WHERE IS REPUBLICAN OUTRAGE?

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

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we and the American public found out that the Bush administration once again has not been telling us the truth about the cost of the Medicare prescription drug benefit. It now appears it is going to cost over a trillion dollars. When they debated it on the floor of Congress, they said it was going to cost \$300 billion, and at the same time, of course, the administration and the Republican leadership kept the people from coming forward with the real information that they thought it was going to cost \$600 billion.

Now it is over a trillion dollars. Where is the Republican outrage?