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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. CULBERSON).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 16, 2005.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN ABNEY CULBERSON to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

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

PRAYER

The Reverend John H. Parker, Pastor, Central Baptist Church, Washington, D.C., offered the following prayer:

Eternal God, we thank You for the blessings that You have given us this day. We pray, Lord, that the things that are done today will be done pleasing in Your sight, that they will be a blessing unto Your people and edifying unto You.

We pray O Lord, that You continue to bless the President of these United States of America, lead him in every level of his life and all leadership that has been given to and staff to help him. We pray for the protection of our Armed Forces, especially those who are serving in Afghanistan and in Iraq. We pray for their families who are left back here. We ask that You comfort them. I know when the phone rings at night it gets lonely, but be with them.

Guide us and keep us throughout the day and let everything that be done in this institution be done for Your glory and for the benefit of Your people. In Jesus' name we pray, our hearts say, 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 North Carolina, (Mr. MCHENRY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. MCHENRY 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.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has agreed to a concurrent resolution of the following title:

S. Con. Res. 13. Concurrent resolution congratulating ASME on their 125th anniversary, celebrating the achievements of ASME members, and expressing the gratitude of the American people for ASME's contributions.

INTRODUCTION OF THE REVEREND PARKER

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

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor and privilege that I rise today to introduce our guest chaplain, the Reverend John H. Parker, the pastor of the Central Baptist Church, located right here in Washington, D.C.

Reverend Parker was born and raised in Monroeville, Alabama. He is married to the former Diane Elois Harvey, and they are the proud parents of two lovely daughters, Chandra and Lynne.

After serving in the U.S. Army for 20 years, Reverend Parker moved to

Washington, D.C. in 1980 where he became a member of the Central Baptist Church. In 1984 Reverend Parker received his calling into the ministry to preach the Gospel. He was licensed and later ordained as the Pastor of Central Baptist Church in 1988, where he has become the source of much pride and admiration, not only in his church, but also in his surrounding community.

Reverend Parker graduated from the Washington Bible College in 1996, with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in biblical studies and urban ministries. Respected for his dynamic leadership, Reverend Parker thanks God for his guidance and support and he is deeply grateful to the Almighty for saving him so that he might become an instrument for spreading God's word.

Mr. Speaker, again it is an honor for me to introduce and welcome to the U.S. House of Representatives the Reverend John H. Parker, pastor of the Central Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., to deliver our opening prayer.

FRIVOLOUS LAWSUITS HURT AMERICANS

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

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, frivolous lawsuits bankrupt individuals, ruin reputations, drive up insurance premiums, increase health care costs and put a drag on the economy.

For example, the chief executive officer of San Antonio's Methodist Children's Hospital was sued after he stepped into a patient's room and simply asked how he was doing.

Of course, a jury cleared him of any wrongdoing. Today, almost any party can bring any suit in almost any jurisdiction. But there is a remedy: The Lawsuit Abuse Reduction Act. It requires judges to issue sanctions, including reimbursement of attorney's

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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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fees when an attorney files a frivolous claim. This will make a lawyer think twice before filing a frivolous lawsuit.

Also this legislation prevents forum shopping. It requires that personal injury claims be filed only where the plaintiff resides, where the injury occurred, or in the State or county where the defendant's principal place of business is located.

The Lawsuit Abuse Reduction Act is sensible reform that will help restore confidence in America's justice system.

URGING ACTION ON THE HEALTH CARE CRISIS

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, the administration has told us Social Security is in a crisis, headed for an iceberg, going broke, yet last week's revelation that the Medicare drug bill will cost nearly three times more than its original price tag, for a total of \$900 billion, known in the real world as a \$500 billion overcharge, calls into question the notion of privatizing Social Security.

Apparently the leaders here in Washington are content to ignore the 900-pound gorilla in the room. I would like to remind everyone that it was none other than the Fed Chairman, Alan Greenspan, who told the House Budget Committee in February of 2004, the concern is not so much about Social Security, the outlook for Medicare is much more difficult to assess. We really do not have a clue about the outlook for Medicare and never have.

The distinguished Fed Chairman is an expert on the challenges facing Social Security. He is undoubtedly getting tremendous pressure today to change his story.

Mr. Chairman, Federal Chairman Greenspan, do not get weak in the knees today, or ever. This is no time to change your judgment. Your integrity is a precious asset. I was there at the Budget Committee hearing when you said Medicare is a more serious problem.

Mr. Speaker, we have a health care crisis in this country. Privatizing Social Security is not an ideological solution in search of a crisis.

EXTREME RHETORIC FROM THE LEFT

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, the rhetoric of the left these days is becoming outrageous. Democrats in Virginia's legislature took this to new levels last week. Several compared a measure defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman to the Holocaust. Last week, the mayor of Baltimore compared President Bush's budget impact on cities to the murder of 3,000 civil-

ians on 9/11 killed by terrorists. A Colorado professor similarly disparaged 9/11 victims, calling them Nazis, little Eichmanns, working to sustain the Fascist capitalist system.

This demagoguery is an affront to our sense of decency and justice. It blames the victims, not those who murder them, for the most terrible injustices of our time. The Holocaust is incomparable to anything we have ever seen. Fourteen million people were murdered because of their race, ideology, nationality, or disability. Mr. Speaker, 9/11 was perpetrated not by capitalism, but by terrorists. That is the truth of history.

The left would do well to consider what their words really mean when leveling accusations at opponents, not sacrifice decency and truth at the altar of political expediency.

WOMEN AND SOCIAL SECURITY

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

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to denounce the so-called Social Security crisis that President Bush is trying to sell the American public.

As the Democratic chair of the Women's Caucus, I am especially concerned about the impact of privatization on women. The President is proposing drastic cuts in Social Security survivor benefits. Nationally, 50 percent of Social Security beneficiaries receive all or part of their benefit either as a widow or widower, spouse or child of a worker or a disabled worker. Over 80 percent of the beneficiaries are women and children. Right now the typical widow receives a Social Security benefit of \$865 a month. If the 45 percent cut projected by the Congressional Budget Office were to take effect currently, they will only receive \$476 per month.

In my own family, I have a relative who is a widow whose family receives Social Security survivor benefits for her last child. She had three. If it was not for that amount of money, she would be living in poverty.

Democrats believe that all American workers should get the benefits they paid for. We will fight to improve the Social Security system and not dismantle it.

AGGRESSION AGAINST TAIWAN

(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, in 1979, Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act to ensure our friends on the island of Formosa would not be isolated because of our Nation's "One China" policy. The Taiwan Relations Act sent a strong message to Communist leaders on mainland China, saying we will conduct business with their country but

will not tolerate Communist aggression against a sovereign people.

It is important to emphasize our commitment to the democratically represented citizens in the Republic of China, because recent reports indicate mainland China is about to enact an anti-secession law with the purpose of reuniting China under Communist dictatorship. This action will not only destroy the goodwill between the peoples of Taiwan and China, it will also provoke unnecessary tension in the Taiwan Strait.

By unilaterally changing the status quo, Communist China is also challenging America's will to stand behind the Taiwan Relations Act. After diplomatic improvements in recent years, I believe the anti-secession law is wrong for the region's stability and is a potential misstep that needs to be addressed.

PRESIDENT'S PRIVATE RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS SUBJECT TO HIGHEST LEVEL OF TAXATION

(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, one of the most interesting things about the President's plan to privatize Social Security is that for those individuals who decide to take out a private account, not only will that lead to benefit cuts into the future, very substantial benefit cuts for the recipients, up to 40 percent, but those who decide to take out the private accounts will find out at the time of their retirement that unless their accounts have earned inflation plus 3 percent, that they will be taxed up to 70 percent or higher of their benefits that they risked and put into that private account.

It is rather interesting that Republicans who so often make "no tax" pledges will subject those retirees to the highest level of taxation of anybody else in the country. Most people pay 20, 15, 20, 25 percent of their income, but those retirees on that benefit, on those accounts, the government will take back up to 70 percent of that unless they achieve some remarkable rate of return that is beyond the historical rates of return guaranteed by the marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, it is a rather interesting proposal that that is where they would decide to levy taxes, on those retirees who open those private accounts, to increase savings in this country.

CLASS ACTION REFORM

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, not too long ago, our Nation's courts were a place where Americans were able to seek justice. Today, however,