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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. LATOURETTE).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,

March 3, 2005.

I hereby appoint the Honorable STEVEN C. LATOURETTE 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:

Father of mercies and God of all consolation, You pursue us with untiring love. At certain moments of life, any one of us can be overshadowed by sickness or the death of a colleague, relative, or friend. Be our refuge and our strength, O Lord. Comfort all those who are lost in grief. Dispel the shadow of death with Your bright promise of new life. Lift Your people from their meandering questions of doubt and darkness; lift them into the peace and light that comes from Your presence.

Confirm them in love which never dies but lives on and on. 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 Georgia (Mr. PRICE)

come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia 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 receive ten 1-minute speeches per side.

FREEDOM FOR JOSE DANIEL FERRER GARCIA

(Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about Jose Daniel Ferrer Garcia, a political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba. Mr. Ferrer Garcia is a peaceful pro-democracy activist in Cuba.

In January 2002, he was forced from a bus and beaten by the tyrant's thugs. In March 2003, 2 years ago, he was arrested as part of the dictator's crack-down on peaceful pro-democracy activists and in a sham trial sentenced to 25 years in the totalitarian gulag because of his support of democracy.

Mr. Ferrer is a brilliant example, Mr. Speaker, of the heroism of the Cuban people. The totalitarian gulag is full of men and women of all backgrounds and ages who represent the best of the Cuban nation. Thousands languish in the gulag because, like Mr. Ferrer, they refuse to accept tyranny.

Mr. Speaker, we must speak out against the grotesque disregard for human rights, dignity, and freedom just 90 miles from our shores. We must demand the immediate and unconditional release of Jose Daniel Ferrer and every political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

TILLIE FOWLER: IN MEMORIAM

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

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, never before in my years in this House have I taken the floor with such sadness. It is the sadness that penetrates to my very core, for I have lost a dear friend and Congress has lost one of its most distinguished Members.

Everyone was stunned by the news that our former colleague, Tillie Fowler, suffered a massive brain hemorrhage on Sunday. Now that she has died, we mourn her passing with the heaviest of hearts.

Tillie and I were Members of the class of 1992 and for some time the only women serving on the House Committee on Armed Services. She was a source of inspiration, a sister, a soul mate. We can take some comfort in knowing that she did not suffer and that her beloved husband, Buck, and her daughters were by her side. But nothing can bring her back, and she cannot be replaced.

Never partisan and always principled, the Congress and the country are better places because of her service, and she leaves a legacy we all learn from.

I will miss Tillie, my wonderful friend and staunch ally. We looked at the world the same way, through the same kind of eyes, and for me, for a while, the path ahead will be less clear without her.

SOCIAL SECURITY

(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, America's Social Security system has been described with nearly every word in the dictionary: crisis, problem, trouble, bankruptcy. One can play the semantics game with Social Security all

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they want, but the fact of the matter is that Social Security is broken and needs fixing.

Back in 1935 the system worked well. Retirement age back then was 65 and the average life expectancy 63. A pretty good deal for the government. Today, however, Americans are living longer than ever and far more likely to live long enough to get their benefits.

Social Security is not a savings plan. It is a pay-as-you-go system where today's workers support today's retirees and tomorrow's workers support tomorrow's retirees. The number of workers supporting each retiree was 42 when the program started. It is now three, with the payroll taxes on the paychecks of hard-working Americans going up 600 percent over the time when it gets to two.

Just in 3 years, 2008, the government will begin to pay out more in Social Security benefits than it collects in payroll taxes. It does not take a math whiz to understand that the pay-as-you-go system will not provide retirement security for American workers.

Mr. Speaker, it is a problem and must be resolved. I urge my colleagues to join me in solving it.

MILITARY READINESS ENHANCEMENT ACT

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

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1059, the Military Readiness Enhancement Act, bipartisan legislation to repeal the military's senseless Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy.

With our troops spread thin in Iraq and Afghanistan, our military is having serious problems meeting personnel requirements. The Army missed its February recruiting goals by 27 percent. Yet under the Don't Ask, Don't Tell, we are discharging thousands of experienced, dedicated servicemembers simply because of their sexual orientation.

Hundreds of people let go under the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy have skills that are critical to the war on terror, including translators and linguists. These soldiers have the courage to fight and the skills our military needs. There is no reason we should not allow them to serve their country. It is time for Congress to put national security interests first. It is time to repeal the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy so we can keep the United States military the strongest in the world.

RECOGNIZING THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF BAD AXE, MICHIGAN

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

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the

centennial celebration of Bad Axe, Michigan, the capital of Huron County. This beautiful city was founded originally in 1861 in the "thumb area" of Michigan, and it has remained a distinct part of history as it has continued to grow and to prosper over the past 150 years.

Bad Axe is a unique city. In fact, its very name gives it a very unique distinction. It is located in one of the most beautiful areas in the State of Michigan. It is a favorite destination for so many people who love the outdoors, either hunting or fishing or just enjoying the magnificent scenery.

Bad Axe's rich history includes some outstanding Michiganians, including Albert E. Sleeper, who became Michigan's 29th Governor, served from 1917 to 1921, certainly leaving his mark on the entire State as he worked to establish the State highway system and the State park system. So it is fitting that some of the most beautiful State parks are in Bad Axe area.

I am proud to represent this unique city in Congress as it has developed and transformed over the years. From its pioneer beginnings during the Civil War, Bad Axe has managed to leave its mark on history.

Mr. Speaker, I wish the city and its citizens the very best as they celebrate the future and as they remember the past.

HOMEcoming OF USS "LINCOLN" CARRIER GROUP

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

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor the service of the sailors and Marine Corps of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* Carrier Strike Group who bravely and compassionately served the Nation and the world in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean in the wake of December's tragic tsunami.

These women and men began their new year by delivering vital food, water, and medicine around the clock to the people of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. They showed the world the values that we represent and why this country is so great.

From January 1 until February 4, carrier group aircraft flew over 1,700 missions in support of Operation Unified Assistance, carrying almost 6 million pounds of supplies. Over 1,200 crew mechanics from the group volunteered to go ashore and help.

Tomorrow I will attend the USS *Lincoln* and USS *Shoup* homecoming to Everett Washington. The VAQ 131 Prowler Squadron out of NAS Whidbey, the Lancers, just returned; and they are all part of Operation Unified Assistance.

Tomorrow, with their return, will be a great day for our country, a great day for our Navy and Marine Corps and for their families to celebrate.

BUILDING AWARENESS AND UN- DERSTANDING ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

(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 am honored to discuss how two service organizations in the Second District of South Carolina have joined together on the Nothing to Hide project to promote awareness about mental illness. This project is an educational photo exhibit about families whose lives have been affected by mental health disorders.

By sponsoring the Nothing to Hide project, the Rotary Club of Hilton Head Island, Sunset, and the Mental Health Association of Beaufort and Jasper are addressing the myths and stigmas surrounding mental illness and are helping connect people who suffer from mental illness to the appropriate resources for support, education, and treatment.

Sunset Rotarians have volunteered to oversee the transition of the display during its 8-week tour through Beaufort and Jasper Counties. I would especially like to recognize the good work and leadership of the dedicated volunteers, Ed Dowaschinski, Krista Delgado, and Sandy Leath. Their strong efforts to raise awareness about this issue that affects so many of our friends and family members will help increase understanding throughout our community.

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

CELEBRATING PEACE CORPS WEEK

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

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, this week we celebrate the 44th anniversary of the Peace Corps and the service of current and return Peace Corps volunteers.

Today 7,700 Americans of all ages, including 38 volunteers from my congressional district, are serving our Nation and advancing the cause of peace in cities, towns, and villages in 72 countries around the world.

As we all know, with service also comes sacrifice. So as we celebrate this Peace Corps success, I would like to remember a young Minnesota Peace Corps volunteer, Melissa Mosvick, who died in a bus accident last November while serving our Nation in Morocco. Her service and sacrifice are also honored.

Nearly 180,000 Americans have served our Nation as Peace Corps volunteers these past 44 years. The service and commitment of all Peace Corps volunteers to our Nation and the world is truly a very special gift all Americans can celebrate.