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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. WESTMORELAND).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 7, 2006.

I hereby appoint the Honorable LYNN A. WESTMORELAND 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 God, You have blessed us as a Nation since our earliest days. Present problems are no easier to resolve and today's decisions no less difficult to make than those closer to the birth of this Nation. So this morning, Lord, we pray that wisdom remain our constant companion.

Your sacred scripture tells us, "Wisdom is the brightness that streams from everlasting light, the flawless mirror of the active power of God and the image of goodness. She is but one, yet can do everything; herself unchanging, she makes all things new. Age after age she enters into human souls and makes them God's friends and prophets."

Lord, grant that power always have wisdom as its sister, both 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 Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. PITTS 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 desires to make an announcement.

After consultation among the Speaker and the majority and minority leaders, the Chair announces that during the joint meeting to hear an address by Her Excellency Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, only the doors immediately opposite the Speaker and those on his right and left will be open.

No one will be allowed on the floor of the House who does not have the privilege of the floor of the House.

Due to the large attendance that is anticipated, the Chair feels the rule regarding the privilege of the floor must be strictly adhered to.

Children of Members will not be permitted on the floor, and the cooperation of all Members is requested.

The practice of reserving seats prior to the joint meeting by placard will not be allowed. Members may reserve their seats by physical presence only following the security sweep of the Chamber.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of Thursday, May 25, 2006, the House stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 4 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1056

JOINT MEETING OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE TO HEAR AN ADDRESS BY HER EXCELLENCY DR. VAIKA VIKE-FREIBERGA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

The Speaker of the House presided. The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms, Bill Sims, announced the Vice President and Members of the U.S. Senate who entered the Hall of the House of Representatives, the Vice President taking the chair at the right of the Speaker, and the Members of the Senate the seats reserved for them.

The SPEAKER. The Chair appoints as members of the committee on the part of the House to escort Her Excellency Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, into the Chamber:

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER);

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT);

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. PUTNAM);

The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON);

The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS);

The gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER);

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI);

The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER);

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN);

The gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON);

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER); and

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

□ 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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The VICE PRESIDENT. The President of the Senate, at the direction of that body, appoints the following Senators as members of the committee on the part of the Senate to escort Her Excellency Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, into the House Chamber:

The Senator from Tennessee (Mr. FRIST);

The Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL);

The Senator from Alaska (Mr. STEVENS);

The Senator from Arizona (Mr. KYL);

The Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT);

The Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN); and

The Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER).

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, His Excellency Banny De Brum, Ambassador of the Marshall Islands.

The Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seat reserved for him.

At 11 o'clock and 4 minutes a.m., the Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced Her Excellency Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia.

The President of the Republic of Latvia, escorted by the committee of Senators and Representatives, entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and stood at the Clerk's desk.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

The SPEAKER. Members of the Congress, it is my great privilege and I deem it a high honor and a personal pleasure to present to you Her Excellency Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

ADDRESS BY HER EXCELLENCY DR. VAIKA VIKE-FREIBERGA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

President VIKE-FREIBERGA. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, distinguished Members of the House of Representatives, honorable Senators, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is with deep emotion that I stand within these august walls and thank you for the honor of addressing you on behalf of the Latvian people.

I believe this honor to be bestowed upon me in recognition of Latvia's strivings, sacrifices and extraordinary success in transforming itself from a captive nation under the yoke of a foreign totalitarian regime into a reestablished democracy with a flourishing market economy.

Fifteen years ago, Latvia, along with neighboring Estonia and Lithuania, regained its independence after 50 years of Soviet occupation. The Baltic Singing Revolution achieved this by non-violent means and the sheer courage and determination of the peoples of

these countries. They were ready to face Soviet guns and tanks with nothing but their unarmed bodies and the deep conviction of their rights, knowing full well that, at any moment, these guns and tanks might crush them as they had crushed so many before.

After the collapse of the once powerful Soviet empire, Latvians at long last recovered their fundamental rights and freedoms. They regained the right to forge their own destiny; they recovered the freedom to shape their own future.

For too long the Iron Curtain had kept Europe divided and the nations of the world confronted each other in two opposing camps. We thank the Lord that these times are behind us at last. Dozens of nations have gained or regained their sovereignty. For them, right has triumphed over might, courage has overcome fear, and dignity has replaced humiliation and oppression.

The wave of freedom and democratic reform has been spreading throughout Central and Eastern Europe, extending from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and into the Caucasus. One country after another, with the sad exception of Belarus, has been making a commitment to democracy and has accepted the need for the rule of law and the respect of human rights.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, distinguished Members of Congress, it is an honor and a pleasure to be addressing you as the elected Representatives of a great country, a mighty world power that has achieved its greatness by building its house on the solid rock of democracy. The United States of America has remained ever faithful to Lincoln's goal of having a government of the people, for the people and by the people.

Born 230 years ago, your great Nation has grown strong by being a warm and welcoming Mother of Exiles as well as a land of hope and opportunity for its own sons and daughters. Among the exiles received in America, there were many Latvians who had fled their native land at the end of the Second World War.

Latvia remains grateful to the United States for opening its doors to a good many of these exiles, who gained the right to live here in peace, justice and liberty, while many of their relatives back home suffered oppression and brutal persecutions. They quickly became loyal and patriotic citizens of America, productive members of your society, many achieving positions of distinction and responsibility.

Latvia remains grateful to the United States for the firm refusal to recognize the illegal occupation of the three Baltic countries. Along with the other formerly captive nations of Central and Eastern Europe, we thank America for its steadfast and courageous stand on freedom and democracy.

You were instrumental in assisting Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania in the withdrawal of former Soviet troops from their territories. The U.S.-Baltic Charter of Partnership of 1998 gave di-

rection to our common goal and vision of the Baltic States joining Euro-Atlantic institutions. We recall the unanimous vote by the United States Senate in support of the latest enlargement of NATO. Since then, the United States has helped to ensure the collective defense of the Baltic airspace. For all this, we are grateful.

Latvia has had the honor of receiving two American Presidents since recovering its independence: President Clinton in 1994 and President Bush last year. We look forward to receiving President Bush again this fall when the 2006 NATO Summit convenes in Riga. We count ourselves fortunate to have the United States of America as a true friend and trusted ally.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, distinguished Members of Congress, I stand before you as a former exile, who has had the rare privilege of returning to her native land, free and independent again; a former exile who has had the deep satisfaction of helping her country rise like a phoenix from the ashes of oppression. I am the representative of a resilient and stubborn nation whose people have struggled against all odds to preserve their ancient heritage, maintain their language alive, and remain true to their national identity. It has been indeed a privilege to lead this nation while it recovered its rightful place among the world community of free and democratic countries.

The road has not been easy. Renewing independence was just the first step. We still had to rebuild a country, not just starting from scratch, but only after clearing away the rubble left by the previous system. Just 15 years ago, we had to make the transition from a stagnant, state-planned, command economy to a workable, liberal, free-market economy. It was a formidable challenge. While we were fortunate in regaining our independence without significant bloodshed, our inhabitants did pay a heavy economic and social price for their freedom. They were ready to do so because they understood that this was an investment in a better future.

Overcoming years of constant change, uncertainty and adaptation, Latvia has become a success story. An unfinished story by all means, especially as concerns the standard of living of our people, but a success story nevertheless. Last year, Latvia's economy grew by more than 10 percent, and this year my country continues to maintain the highest economic growth rate on the European continent. We are on our way, ready to share our experience and pass it on to others.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, distinguished Members of Congress, what has helped Latvia and its Baltic neighbors succeed where so many others are failing, in spite of not just years, but decades of help and encouragement of every kind?

It was above all the faith of the Baltic nations in the values of freedom and democracy. It was their firm and