

PRAYER

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

Above the cold winds is a clear blue sky. Behind a flurry of activity is the conviction we are entering a holy season.

Lord God, as Congress resumes major responsibilities today, we mourn the passing of a dear colleague, strong witness of perseverance in suffering and advocate for the poor and the homeless, the Honorable JULIA CARSON.

Her sweet manner always shown through her raspy voice and determination. Her smile born out of sincerity and faith encouraged others when there was only a smidgen of hope.

God of all consolation, reward her public service, and be close to all who grieve the loss of her presence.

As all prepare to celebrate the approaching feast of heaven and Earth, we know many will greet her with shouts of triumph and thanksgiving. In Your kingdom, You will invite her to take her place where Rosa Parks has reserved for her a seat.

May she rest in peace. 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 gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. FOXX 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.

CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF FOOD LION SUPERMARKETS

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Food Lion, a North Carolina business success story, for 50 years of doing business the right way.

Food Lion, founded in Salisbury, North Carolina, in 1957, today boasts a chain of 1,300 supermarkets spread throughout the Southeast and mid-Atlantic States.

Food Lion's 73,000 employees serve more than 10 million customers every week and embody the ethic that great service in local communities is a for-

mula for a successful and profitable business.

This company has shown a true commitment to its employees by offering employees a working environment that focuses not just on good wages, but also integrates working conditions and profit-sharing arrangements that are some of the best in the retail business.

And Food Lion's business model doesn't stop at the bottom line or with treating employees right. Food Lion gives back every year to many community organizations and charitable causes, including the Children's Miracle Network, America's Second Harvest Food Banks, Easter Seals, the United Way, the American Red Cross, and local schools.

Food Lion represents the type of company that helps make North Carolina and America great. I applaud their 50 years of service to hundreds of communities and wish them many more years of success.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under clause 5(d) of rule XX, the Chair announces to the House that, in light of the passing of the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON), the whole number of the House is 433.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 4 of rule I, the Speaker signed the following enrolled joint resolution on Thursday, December 13, 2007:

H.J. Res. 69, making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2008, and for other purposes.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, December 14, 2007.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker, The Capitol, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on December 14, 2007, at 2:13 p.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 2338.

That the Senate agreed to the amendments of the House to the Text and Title of the bill S. 597.

That the Senate agreed to the Conference Report accompanying the bill H.R. 1585.

That the Senate agreed to without amendment H. Con. Res. 269.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

LORRAINE C. MILLER,

Clerk of the House.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

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OFFICE OF THE CLERK,

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, December 14, 2007.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker, The Capitol, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on December 14, 2007, at 6:13 p.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 2488.

That the Senate passed S. 2400.

That the Senate passed with an amendment H.R. 3648.

That the Senate passed with an amendment H.R. 3739.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

LORRAINE C. MILLER,

Clerk of the House.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

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OFFICE OF THE CLERK,

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, December 13, 2007.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker, The Capitol, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on December 13, 2007, at 6:55 p.m.:

That the Senate agreed to without amendment H.J. Res. 69.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

LORRAINE C. MILLER,

Clerk of the House.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, December 14, 2007.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker, The Capitol, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on December 14, 2007, at 12:10 p.m.:

That the Senate agreed to the House amendments to the Senate amendments to the bill with an amendment; that the Senate agreed to the House amendments to the Senate amendments to the title of the bill H.R. 6.

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 2408.

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 2671.

That the Senate passed S. 1396.

That the Senate passed S. 1585.

That the Senate passed S. 2339.

That the Senate passed S. 2484.

That the Senate passed S. 1916.

That the Senate passed S. 1858.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

LORRAINE C. MILLER,
Clerk of the House.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE INDUSTRY TO THE UNITED STATES ECONOMY

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 15) recognizing the contributions of the Christmas tree industry to the United States economy.

The Clerk read the title of the joint resolution.

The text of the joint resolution is as follows:

H.J. RES. 15

Whereas Christmas trees have been sold commercially in the United States since the 1850s;

Whereas, by 1900, one in five American families decorated a tree during the Christmas season, while, by 1930, a decorated Christmas tree had become a nearly universal part of the American Christmas celebration;

Whereas 32.8 million households in the United States purchased a live-cut Christmas tree in 2005;

Whereas the placement and decoration of live-cut Christmas trees in town squares across the country have become an American tradition;

Whereas, for generations, American families have traveled hundreds and even thousands of miles to celebrate the Christmas season together around a live-cut Christmas tree;

Whereas 36 million live-cut Christmas trees are produced each year, and 98 percent of these trees are shipped or sold directly from Christmas tree farms;

Whereas Oregon, North Carolina, Michigan, Washington, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New York, Minnesota, Virginia, California, and Ohio are the top producers of live-cut Christmas trees, but Christmas trees are grown in all 50 States;

Whereas there are more than 21,000 growers of Christmas trees in the United States, and approximately 100,000 people are employed in the live-cut Christmas tree industry;

Whereas many Christmas tree growers grow trees on a part-time basis to supplement their other farm and non-farm income;

Whereas growing Christmas trees provides wildlife habitat;

Whereas, in 2005, Christmas trees were planted on more than a half million acres of land;

Whereas 73 million new Christmas trees will be planted in 2006, and, on average, over 1,500 Christmas trees can be planted per acre; and

Whereas the retail value of all Christmas trees harvested in 2005 was \$1.4 billion: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Congress recognizes the important contributions of the live-cut Christmas tree industry, Christmas tree growers, and persons employed in the live-cut Christmas tree industry to the United States economy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) and the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.J. Res. 15.

H.J. Res 15, a resolution introduced by Congresswoman VIRGINIA FOXX of North Carolina, recognizes the success and importance of the live-cut Christmas tree industry in the United States.

It is an appropriate time of the year for Congress to consider this resolution, as I think that most of us here today have memories of decorating a Christmas tree during the holiday season. The live-cut Christmas tree industry ensures that this tradition continues every year for families across the Nation.

Likewise, there are private forest landowners all across America for whom Christmas trees are an important source of income. Over 35 million live-cut Christmas trees are produced this year, and they are growing in all 50 States. Christmas tree growers are responsible land stewards who provide wildlife habitat, give us cleaner air, protect watersheds, and improve the environment.

The economic strength and cultural contribution of this industry makes this resolution worthy of congressional support.

I encourage the support of the resolution.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I am deeply honored today to rise as the House considers House Joint Resolution 15, a resolution I authored to recognize the contributions of the Christmas tree industry to the United States economy.

As a former Christmas tree grower myself, I can attest to the importance of recognizing this often overlooked, yet highly significant, farming industry. Christmas trees have held a historic place in traditional American family values since 1850. Just as importantly, Christmas trees play a vital role in the North Carolina High Country's economy by providing jobs and livelihoods for thousands of North Carolinians.

My district in North Carolina is one of the largest producers of live-cut Christmas trees in the entire country. There are over 1,600 North Carolina growers and approximately 400 choose-and-cut Christmas tree farms across the State. The North Carolina Christmas tree industry is ranked second in the Nation in the number of trees harvested, producing over 19 percent of the real Christmas trees in the United States.

North Carolina has an estimated 50 million Fraser fir Christmas trees growing on over 25,000 acres. Representing over 95 percent of all species growing in North Carolina, Fraser firs are grown in North Carolina's western counties, including Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, Mitchell, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey.

The North Carolina Fraser fir Christmas tree is the most popular Christmas tree in North America and is shipped to every State in the United States, as well as the Caribbean Islands, Mexico, Canada, Bermuda, Japan, and other points all over the world.

The North Carolina Fraser fir has soft needles with incomparable needle retention, a long-lasting aroma, and more pliable, yet stronger, branches for even the heaviest ornaments.

Through a contest sponsored by the National Christmas Tree Association, the North Carolina Fraser fir has been judged the Nation's best and has been chosen for the official White House Christmas tree 10 times, more than any other species, in 1971, 1973, 1982, 1984, 1990, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2005 and 2007.

It is my great privilege to say that a beautiful Fraser fir grown by Joe Freeman and Linda Jones of Mistletoe Meadows Christmas Tree Farm in Laurel Springs, North Carolina, presently sits in the White House Blue Room as this year's official White House Christmas tree.

The Christmas tree industry supports our economy and the environment. Christmas trees are grown in all 50 States, with North Carolina, Oregon, Michigan, Washington, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New York, Minnesota, Virginia, California, and Ohio being the top Christmas tree producers. Nationally, there are more than 21,000 Christmas tree growers, and more than 100,000 people are employed in the live-cut Christmas tree industry.

Thirty-six million live-cut Christmas trees are produced each year, and 98 percent are shipped or sold directly from Christmas tree farms. Live-cut Christmas trees are a renewable, recyclable resource. There are over 500,000 acres in production for growing Christmas trees in the U.S., and each acre provides the daily oxygen requirement for 18 people.

□ 1215

On average, over 1,500 Christmas trees are planted per acre, providing an abundant habitat for wildlife.

It can take up to 15 years to grow Christmas trees to retail sale height, a