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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: All powerful and ever-living God, Your Divine Providence has blessed this Nation from its beginning. Your Divine Providence is evidenced in our Declaration of Independence and speaks through our Constitution to the rest of the world.

Lord, help us to embrace this same truth of Your Provident Love as this country wrestles with national issues today and desires to address problems facing the international community of nations in our times.

May every individual working in Congress see that every moment is given to us by You, Loving Lord, and thereby bears Your holy will for us now.

May each of us seek Your divine purpose for us and be disposed to become Your instrument to accomplish the great task of establishing Your kingdom of peace, Your reign of truth and Your rule of justice by every word we utter, every decision we make and every action we take this very day. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. ALTMIRE 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

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to ten 1-minutes on each side.

OVERSIGHT FINALLY IN THE HOUSE

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, with Democrats now in control of Congress, oversight is finally being conducted. The new Democratic Congress has already held 81 separate hearings on important issues involving the war in Iraq, including the billions of dollars that are unaccounted for. The documented pattern of neglect at Walter Reed goes back at least 3 years, yet previous Congresses did nothing. But just this week the new Congress held four separate hearings on the treatment of our wounded soldiers.

Also, this week the House held hearings on the firing of seven U.S. attorneys for purely political reasons. Partisanship and politics have no place in our justice system, and this House is going to aggressively investigate this situation.

Madam Speaker, this level of oversight is part of the Democrats' effort to bring real change to Washington. Two months into the new Congress, we are already delivering on that promise.

CONGRESSIONAL INACTION JEOPARDIZES MALHEUR COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES

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

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, the failure of Congress to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act will have an extensive and extreme impact

on more than 1,800 local governments that receive "Payments in Lieu of Taxes" funds, also known as PILT. The loss of the county payments program means these counties can now apply for the limited PILT fund, thus reducing funds to counties reliant on PILT, and many counties will see a 20 percent reduction.

For Malheur County, Oregon, which is nearly 10,000 square miles and is 72 percent under Federal ownership and is larger than the States of Vermont, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware and Rhode Island, it can mean real problems.

As we all know, rapid response for emergency services is a life-and-death issue. In many areas of Malheur County, it can take well over an hour to respond to a situation. Loss of critical PILT funds will mean a reduction in vital public services, and that is unacceptable.

County Judge Dan Joyce, who is in Washington today, says loss of PILT funds will devastate our ability to respond rapidly in emergency situations. I call on the new Democrat majority to move H.R. 17. Services are being lost. Libraries are closing. Teachers are being given notices they won't be rehired. It is time for action.

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN AGAINST INTERNET PREDATORS

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

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, last month I was proud to be part of an important announcement concerning the safety of our children. And thanks to the tremendous generosity of Quest Foundation, the National Center For Missing and Exploited Children was able to establish netsmartz411.org, a first of its kind online service.

NetSmartz411 provides a direct line for experts at the National Center for

□ 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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Concerned Parents. Through this program, questions and concerns about online safety can be answered quickly and accurately. We are all too familiar with stories of Internet predators making their way into our homes with the simple click of a mouse. More and more teenagers are joining social networking Web sites and roaming the Internet freely, with little or no adult supervision. These Web sites have given predators the freedom to search for pictures, ages, even nearby schools. By empowering more parents than ever before, NetSmartz411 will reinforce our efforts to make the Internet a safer place.

So for those who want more information, my colleagues, and would like to find that out, please visit www.netsmartz411.org, or www.missingkids.com.

OUR VETERANS DESERVE THE BEST

(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 stand before you as a grateful veteran of the South Carolina Army National Guard, and I have four sons currently serving in the military. You can imagine my concern upon learning of the dire conditions our Nation's wounded service members have recently been made to endure. My appreciation for our troops is as a member of the Armed Services Committee, a veteran and as a parent who expects the best for the courageous troops who protect American families.

While Walter Reed Medical Center is renowned as a world-class facility, recent management neglected to provide adequate care. I appreciate Defense Secretary Robert Gates' decisive action in dealing with this disturbing situation. I was honored to attend President Bush's speech earlier this week to the American Legion where he announced a creation of a bipartisan commission to review military and veterans' care.

We in Congress are committed to ensuring our military heroes are well cared for and receive the medical attention they deserve.

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

BUSH ADMINISTRATION NOT PROPERLY FUNDING THE NEEDS OF OUR MILITARY PERSONNEL

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

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, when we send our Nation's young men and women into harm's way, it is always with the commitment that we will provide them with all the care they need if they are wounded in combat. Unfortunately, this administration has broken its commitment to our

soldiers. Saying that they support the troops is easy for the President and the Vice President; actually coming up with examples is becoming more difficult every day.

Dana Priest, the Washington Post reporter who uncovered the conditions at Walter Reed Hospital recently, said that money is the root of the problem exposed at Walter Reed. Yet in testimony before the House Oversight Government Reform Committee on Monday, top military brass said they were given all the money that they needed. How could this be? If they indeed have all the money they need, then why are we attempting to nickel-and-dime the injured soldiers who have put their life on the line for our country?

Mr. Speaker, this is just another example of this administration's inability to make government work. Fortunately, this Democratic Caucus is not going to let them get away with it.

LET THE JURY HEAR ALL THE EVIDENCE

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, if the prosecution negligently or intentionally or by incompetence fails to give beneficial information to the defense, then our law says a new trial should be ordered. In the Ramos and Compean border agents trial, the prosecution based its whole case on the testimony of a drug smuggler who not only brought in \$1 million worth of marijuana to the United States but was given immunity for it. He was portrayed as just a mule trying to get some money for his poor sick mama. Well, now it seems that after he got immunity for his crimes and while waiting to testify against Ramos and Compean, he brought in another large load of marijuana.

Here is the DEA report on the second case. I have read it. This case is simple enough that a third-year law student could prosecute it. But the U.S. Attorney's Office refused to prosecute the drug smuggler in the second case, and the jury never heard about this matter. The jury should have known about the second case to judge the credibility of the drug smuggler's testimony. The border agent should receive a new trial. Let the jury hear the truth about the star witness the Federal Government made a backroom deal with.

And that's just the way it is.

THE KUCINICH PLAN, H.R. 1234

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

Mr. KUCINICH. In a few short days, this Congress will make a momentous decision as to whether or not to fund the continuation of the war in Iraq. And yet, at this time, the American people clearly want our troops brought home. Funding the war will keep the

troops there. Stopping the funding will enable us to bring them home.

BARBARA LEE has an amendment that will fund the orderly return of our troops. I have offered H.R. 1234, which is compatible with the Lee amendment. The money is there right now in the pipeline to bring the troops home. Once we bring the troops home or a plan is put forth to bring the troops home, we have to have a plan to stabilize Iraq. That's what H.R. 1234 will do.

This Congress cannot stand by as the casualties pile up. We have to remember that the families of the troops are waiting for us to take action. Let's act now. Support the Lee amendment and support H.R. 1234.

WE NEED SPENDING RESTRAINT, NOT TAX HIKES

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

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, we are anxiously awaiting the arrival of the 2008 budget that the Democrats are putting together. In all likelihood, it will require a spending of \$2.9 trillion. Let me put that money in perspective. That is \$90,000 plus every second of the fiscal year. It is a lot of money.

Tax rates will be going up under current law unless this Congress acts to not do that. There is a myth being purporting by the other side that we can somehow tax the rich and balance the budget. That is a myth. The top 10 percent of taxpayers already pay two-thirds of the taxes that are being paid in this country.

Spending restraint is far more impactful on balancing the budget than raising taxes. We have a spending problem, not a tax-raising problem. I urge my colleagues to work on spending restraint as the true measure of how we fix this deficit.

PRESIDENT BUSH CANNOT TURN HIS BACK ON SOLDIERS WHO'VE BEEN WOUNDED IN HIS WAR

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

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, when President Bush sent American troops to war in Iraq, he had an obligation to ensure they were cared for if they came home wounded. Unlike in past wars, medical technology and protective gears have advanced to the point that soldiers who would have died in the past are now surviving devastating combat injuries. Their survival, of course, is a great development. Unfortunately, as the case at Walter Reed shows, many of our injured soldiers are not receiving the treatment they need and deserve when they return home.

We should all be outraged at what is happening at our military hospitals. Fortunately, this Congress is taking action. At the end of this week, House