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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COSTA).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,

May 15, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JIM COSTA to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 25 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate extend beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

TAKING THE FOOD STAMP CHALLENGE

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, this week, I am joined by three of my esteemed colleagues, Congresswoman JO ANN EMERSON from Missouri, Congressman TIM RYAN from Ohio and Congresswoman JAN SCHAKOWSKY from Illinois, in taking the Food Stamp Challenge.

The Food Stamp Challenge is an initiative begun by nonprofit and religious community groups. Public officials agree to live on a food stamp

budget for 1 week in order to raise awareness of the food stamp program and the inadequacy of the current benefit. Under the Food Stamp Challenge, we will only be allowed to eat food totaling \$21 for the week, \$3 a day, or \$1 per meal, which is the national average food stamp benefit. In other words, no lattes at Starbucks, no organic chicken at home and no wine or shrimp at receptions this week.

Yesterday, Congresswoman EMERSON and I went grocery shopping at the Capitol Hill Safeway for the week. However, she was a more efficient shopper than I was. While she made it through the checkout line in 30 minutes, it took me almost an hour and a half to find food that fit my budget, and that was even with the much-appreciated assistance of Ms. Toinette Wilson, a DC food stamp recipient, who assisted my wife Lisa and me with our shopping.

Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski successfully took the challenge with his wife a few weeks ago, and Utah Governor John Huntsman, Jr., is currently living on a food stamp budget with his household of eight. In New York City, where over 1 million people depend on food stamps each month, New York City Councilman Eric Gioia is participating in the Food Stamp Challenge.

This diverse group of public leaders who all feel compelled to take on this challenge demonstrates the importance of the food stamp program for all Americans: from California to Massachusetts, Michigan to Texas, Republican and Democrat, urban and rural, the food stamp program represents the moral values of America: compassion, thoughtfulness and community spirit.

Mr. Speaker, I am taking this Food Stamp Challenge as a way of saying that as Americans, we need to do more to eliminate hunger and poverty in this country. One in nine U.S. households, nearly 36 million Americans, does not

consistently have enough food to feed themselves or their families according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. There is no excuse for this.

In the wealthiest country on earth, it is not about finding the resources. It is about mustering the political will.

Established in 1939, the food stamp program helps families in need buy food so that they do not have to make difficult choices, such as choosing between paying a utility bill, addressing health care needs or buying food. It truly is the safety net for America's hungry.

Despite what some critics like to say, the food stamp program is not a government handout, but it is a true safety net program that provides access to food for people who cannot afford to choose between rent, medicine, child care and transportation. Gone are the days of the inefficient program ravaged by fraud, waste and abuse. In fact, National Journal recently named the food stamp program as one of the government's top successes. And the GAO has repeatedly reported on the successes of this important program.

Mr. Speaker, let me take a moment to share with you who benefits from the food stamp program. According to USDA, over 26 million people benefited from the food stamp program last year, including 452,000 individuals from my State of Massachusetts. Over 80 percent of food stamp benefits go to families with children. One in five food stamp households has an elderly family member, and one in four has a disabled member. Increasingly, working families must rely on food stamps to supplement their wages in low-paying jobs.

Some may question the motives of elected officials taking this 1-week challenge. These critics, Mr. Speaker, are missing the point. It's time for a much greater public debate to take place around this issue. It is time to end hunger in America, and we can do

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so starting by focusing on the food stamp program.

The food stamp program is our government's first line of defense against hunger and malnutrition and it should be better equipped to accomplish that task. Merely 60 percent of those who are eligible to receive food stamps currently do, and in Massachusetts that participation rate is only 49 percent. The participation rate is particularly low for immigrants and the elderly.

Last week, Congresswoman EMERSON and I introduced H.R. 2129, the Feeding America's Families Act, which would greatly improve the food stamp program as well as other Federal hunger and nutrition programs scheduled for reauthorization in the farm bill. We encourage each of our colleagues to consider cosponsoring this important piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, although some judge the health of our Nation by how the wealthiest are faring, others, including myself, believe we must measure the morality and prosperity of our society by the status and mobility of those at the bottom of the economic ladder. Through this challenge, I hope my constituents, the American people and my colleagues in Washington, DC, will learn more about the vital role the food stamp program plays in the lives of low-income people.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 8 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

□ 1000

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. SOLIS) at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Reverend Don Green, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, offered the following prayer:

Sovereign of the nations, who has created the human family with rich diversity and who wills that all peoples be reconciled and live in peace and wholeness with dignity and justice, we call upon You to bestow Your wisdom and compassion upon these representatives of the American people.

Grant them humility and openness to listen to their opponents and adversaries before condemning their positions or denigrating their person. Give them courage to seek reconciliation with our enemies, encouraging negotiation and diplomacy instead of violence as the means to lasting peace in our conflicted world.

Open their eyes to a vision of a more just society where all may enjoy the

benefits of wellness and health, adequate shelter, food in abundance, lifelong learning, and security in their communities.

Hear us now, O God, as we pray for the preservation of this legislative institution and the prospering of our Nation, for we trust in You and entrust our whole being to Your providential care. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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 pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BILIRAKIS 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 Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 71. Concurrent resolution commemorating the 85th Anniversary of the founding of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), a leading association for the Nation's 1.3 million American citizens of Greek ancestry, and Philhellenes.

WELCOMING THE REVEREND DON GREEN

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to introduce Pastor Donald Green as today's Guest Chaplain. I have known Pastor Green for many years through our involvement in the McCandless Rotary Club, which is just one of the many service organizations to which Pastor Green lends his time in western Pennsylvania. He is truly an extraordinary man, and it is an honor to present him to you today.

Pastor Green has led a number of trips abroad to assist in various relief efforts. His travels have taken him to Kenya and Zambia to visit projects funded by the Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran World Federation. In 1997 he visited missions in India, and in 1999 he took a group of volunteers to Puerto Rico to assist in hurricane relief. He also led a group of volunteers to Madagascar to lay the foundation for a youth center, which now bears his

name, the Pastor Don Green Youth Center. These are but a few examples of Pastor Green's commitment to his community and commitment to service above self.

Pastor Green now serves as the Executive Director of Christian Associates of Southwestern Pennsylvania. He and Kathy, his wife of 36 years, are the proud parents of three children and one grandson.

On behalf of my colleagues in the House, Pastor Green, welcome and thank you for your many years of service.

TIME FOR A NEW COURSE IN IRAQ

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

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, it seems that President Bush and many of his allies still don't understand how things have changed on the ground in Iraq.

A few days ago the Republican leader, when asked about the President's new escalation plan, said that if it doesn't work, the President pretty soon is going to have to present to Congress and the American people what plan B is.

Well, there are very few people that don't realize by now that we are not on plan B anymore; we are on plan Z. And we have got to start asking ourselves why plan A and plan B all the way through plan Z still haven't worked. It is because a military plan, without diplomatic and political reinforcements behind it, cannot work on the ground in Iraq. That is what the Democrats in Congress have realized. That is what the Iraq Study Group realized. That is what legions of retired generals have realized.

Madam Speaker, it is time the President and his allies join that hegemony of opinion and join us in setting a new course in Iraq.

NATIONAL SECURITY, DEMOCRAT STYLE

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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam Speaker, later this week the liberal left in the House will take up the Defense Authorization Act, legislation that is supposed to make our Nation more secure and help our troops in winning the war on terror.

But you will have to excuse the American people if they don't understand the leadership's real agenda here, because you actually have to read through 452 pages of the National Defense Authorization Act to find it. Subtitle F, section 951 reveals all you really need to know: a significant diversion of national security resources to indulge the liberal fascination with global climate change.

The language paints an unwelcomed portrait of the liberal left's agenda on