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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:

To You, O Lord, we pray.

In praying, all of us become priests who alone can lift up our personal lives on the altar of our hearts and consecrate all the words, actions, joys and sufferings of this day to You as the Lord of life. Just as all our intentions here in Congress can be dedicated to the service of the American people, especially those in most need of Your mercy and our persevering attention.

When praying we become instruments of Your spirit. You move and act within us. Help us this day to be more aware of Your presence within us and in one another.

To You, O Lord, be all glory, honor and praise today and forever.

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 California (Mr. CARDENAS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. CARDENAS 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 bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 57. An act to repeal certain sections of the Act of May 26, 1936, pertaining to the Virgin Islands.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 276h-276k of title 22, United States Code, as amended, the Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, appoints the Senator from Texas (Mrs. HUTCHISON) as a member of the Senate Delegation to the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group conference for the first session of the One Hundred Tenth Congress.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 one-minute speeches on each side.

HISTORIC INCREASES IN VETERANS FUNDING

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

Mr. STUPAK. Madam Speaker, when America's troops volunteer to serve our Nation, they do so believing that the government that sends them into harm's way will live up to its promise to care for them when they return home. However, as we have seen from the debacle at Walter Reed and the current backlog of 400,000 benefits claims pending at the VA, our veterans do not always receive the level of service and care they deserve.

Today, this Democratic Congress is taking a vital step in addressing these issues by bringing up a Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill that provides the largest increase in funding for veterans health care in the VA's 77-year history. The funding bill also allocates much-needed funding for mental health and PTSD services; additional funds for construction and modification of extended care facilities; and critical funding for the

operation and maintenance of the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

This legislation is critical to providing our Nation's veterans with the benefits their service entitles them to and gives the VA the resources necessary to ensure we meet their growing needs. It deserves strong bipartisan support today; and under Democratic leadership, they will receive it.

BORDER FENCE FUNDING

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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, last year we passed the Secure Fence Act, which mandated the Department of Defense construct a fence and vehicle barriers along 800 miles of the southern border of the U.S., from California to Texas. And 283 people in this Chamber, many of them Democrats, voted to take this first step in real border security reform by funding a secure fence on our southern border.

But under a new liberal Democrat leadership, actually paying for the fence is a whole different matter. Despite the overwhelming support and a \$2.4 billion increase in the Homeland Security budget, the bill before us today actually underfunds the fence by \$187 million and ties up an additional \$700 million in bureaucratic red tape.

The question is: Why? Nothing has changed. Hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants, drug dealers and possible terrorists continue to slip through the cracks in our southern border while we wait for the fence on the southern border.

Where are those people on the other side of the aisle that were committed to pay for this security fence last year?

Mr. Speaker, it is time to fund the fence.

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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