

So to Charlie, we say once again, thank you for a job well done. We hope to see you around. We know we will, but just want you to know that your contributions to all of us, to our community, are deeply appreciated and will not be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, Tip O'Neill once said that all politics is local, and I rise today to honor the career of one our nation's great local civic officials, Charlie Allebach, Jr.

Charlie has been serving the people of the Borough of Souderton, Pennsylvania, for almost 43—that's 43—years. He first became a borough councilman in 1964, and he was appointed mayor in 1970. He has been the mayor ever since, but he has just announced his retirement.

Charlie has presided over the steady growth of a wonderful community. He has also performed more than 2,400 marriage ceremonies, lent his time to local service organizations, and has been devoted to the Borough in every way.

On behalf of the people of the 15th Congressional District, I wish him the best during his retirement, and I ask that a copy of these remarks be included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD so that Charlie Allebach, Jr.'s career as the mayor of Souderton, Pennsylvania, can be memorialized within the annals of Congress for all time.

Thank you, Charlie, for a job well done.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 45 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at noon.

PRAYER

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

Lord our God, ever-faithful throughout the ages and seasons of life, the cold winds of January rob the memory of Washington's heat and stretch our longing for another spring.

And January 30 recalls for us, Lord, another distant memory. On this day in 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was killed by a young religious zealot. The personification of nonviolence was overcome by violence.

Lord, the voice of this "great soul," who spoke out in the midst of politics to end oppression and seek independence seems forgotten by us now, caught up in the war on terrorism.

In this mad spin around the sun, Lord, we cannot help but question whether we are an evolving world about to break upon the brightness of a new day or dissolving into the cold of Dante's darkness.

Raise up, O Lord, a prophetic light and lead us, now 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 Wisconsin (Mr. KAGEN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. KAGEN 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.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

(Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to plead for health care reform. In recent weeks, I have received more than 150 letters from my constituents asking for health care reform. No one has written expressing satisfaction over the current health care system. Most seniors feel that their medicine coverage is still costing too much. Others cite fear and losing access to choice of health insurance plans or medicines.

I am in favor of sweeping reforms to the system rather than the piecemeal and "quick-fix" methods of the past.

In Dallas, the poor, elderly and disabled are hurting the most when it comes to health care. Texas has the largest number of uninsured in the Nation, and our emergency rooms are bursting.

Madam Speaker, it is time for a new strategy. Let's consider comprehensive health care reform that will improve our health care system and make a real difference for Dallas and for America's citizens.

FEDERAL TIMBER POLICY SHATTERED HARNEY COUNTY'S ECONOMY

(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. Madam Speaker, the failure of Congress to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act is another day with another broken promise.

When the Federal Government abruptly slashed timber harvest, the economy in Harney County, Oregon, population about 7,000, nearly collapsed. Hundreds of family-wage jobs were lost; 78 percent of the land mass in Harney County is controlled by the Federal Government so the govern-

ment's decision had a dramatic effect on the people who live there.

In 2000, Congress did the right thing by approving the county payments program which in Harney County supports roads, community services, and Burns High School where 60 percent of the student body takes vocational classes.

Take Jim Gibbon, a Burns High graduate and 4-year vocational classes participant. Through that learning, he is now co-owner of Burns Ford and they employ 20 people.

County Judge Steve Grasty says, "Loss of this program means losing future opportunities for young people here and in rural counties across America."

This Congress must keep the Federal Government's word to timber communities and pass H.R. 17. Time is running out.

RESTORING FISCAL SANITY

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

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, it is time we restore fiscal sanity to Washington. In 6 short years, Republican policies turned a \$5.6 trillion surplus into a \$3 trillion deficit. That is an \$8 trillion reversal of fortune.

And last year, congressional Republicans never came to an agreement on the budget and refused to pass nine of the 11 must-pass appropriations bills before adjourning in December. This isn't how the appropriations process is supposed to work, and the American people know it.

Democrats vow we are going to get things done and done on time. This year, Democrats brought much-needed reform to Congress by passing a rules package that require Democrats to pay-as-we-go. This isn't a new idea. From 1990 to 2002, Congresses and administrations of both parties abided by commonsense rules that stated you couldn't cut taxes and increase spending unless you paid for it. Pay-as-you-go was one of the main reasons Washington balanced the books in the 1990s.

This week, since Republicans were unable to do their job last year, Democrats will bring a final bill to the floor that will fund key priorities. This bill will allow us to move forward with fiscal sanity.

OPPOSE CONTINUING RESOLUTION

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

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, I rise today in objection to the so-called continuing resolution the Democrat leadership is going to bring up tomorrow. This is by no means a typical continuing resolution. A continuing resolution basically requires only a couple of lines saying that the current appropriations are continuing for a set period of time.

This CR has not been scrutinized through the committee process before being brought to the House floor for a vote. This is a \$463 omnibus spending bill without any specific guidelines or accountability measures. American taxpayers deserve to know how their hard-earned dollars are being spent.

Madam Speaker, this is not a continuing resolution. A typical 1- or 2-page bill that continues spending at its previous level. Again, it is an omnibus spending bill well over 100 pages long, full of excessive unregulated spending, just another broken promise by the Democrat leadership that shows their true colors.

HEALTH CARE COSTS

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

Mr. KAGEN. Madam Speaker, impossible costs for health care are a major concern for everyone, and the President should be commended for addressing this difficult crisis. But his proposal is really a tax hike for people who cannot afford it: businesses and working families.

We must establish an open and transparent medical marketplace, and it is really not that difficult to do.

We need to, one, openly disclose all prices in health care everywhere; two, give every citizen the same discount; and three, establish a single risk pool, 300 million strong, across the country to leverage down prices and costs for all of us. In other words, if you are a citizen, you are in.

It is past time that the Congress should establish a single basic Federal standard health insurance policy that every insurance company must offer to each and every one of us. In doing so, we will be able to compare insurance companies based on the quality of their service and their price.

The President means well, but you cannot use tax hikes to lower health care costs.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION COMES TO FLOOR

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

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, tomorrow this House will take up a massive spending bill that will remove over \$400 billion from our Treasury. This huge 150-page “CRomnibus” spending bill has not been read by most Democrats or Republicans.

We are told that despite the end of the 100 hours, this large bill cannot be amended. We have had no hearings on this bill. There is no report to accompany the legislation detailing hundreds of billions in spending, and we will not be allowed to offer improvements like taking the savings in canceling Federal earmarks and making sure the deficit is reduced.

In large part, Members of this House may be later embarrassed when enterprising reporters who have the time to read this legislation find out what we have actually done without review or consideration. This bill is not pay-as-you-go. Given the Democratic retreat coming up, it is more like pay-and-then-play.

WHITE HOUSE ESCALATES CONFLICT

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, Iranians and Saudis are uniting to try to avoid a war in Lebanon while the U.S. stays on the sidelines. Meanwhile, the Bush administration is isolating our Nation from Europe and trying to force Europe to block Iranian exports and freeze assets.

The U.S. should be standing for peaceful resolution of conflict. Instead, the White House escalates conflict: escalates with Iran, escalates in Iraq, escalates violence, escalates deaths, and escalates the Federal deficit.

I want the Bush administration to know there will be constitutional consequences for the President and the Vice President if this administration continues to move towards war with Iran.

THE TRUTH SET BORDER AGENT FREE

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

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, another border agent has been tried for allegedly using too much force in arresting an illegal at the Texas-Mexico border.

Former border agent David Sipe was found guilty in 2001 by a Federal court jury for using excessive force in arresting Jose Guevarra.

According to news sources, the Federal prosecutor hid evidence at that trial that was beneficial to the border agent, such as the Federal Government had made deals and gave benefits to witnesses like Social Security cards, and the prosecutor had not revealed the criminal record of a witness.

Does this sound familiar to anyone? Anyway, Sipe was granted a new trial and last week a second jury, after hearing all of the facts and the truth, found the border agent not guilty.

Why does it seem our Federal Government is so zealous in prosecuting border agents who appear to be doing their job and give those who illegally enter the United States a free pass? Once again, it seems like the Federal Government is on the wrong side of the border war.

And that's just the way it is.

REDEPLOY FROM IRAQ

(Mr. SESTAK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SESTAK. Madam Speaker, I spent 31 years in the military defending our freedom of speech. I often wondered and hoped during those years, whether in the fury of war or the challenges of peace, what Washington was thinking, debating wisely at length about the use of our national treasure, those men and women who wear the cloth of our Nation overseas.

I am concerned for U.S. security because of Iraq, a tragic misadventure that does not permit us to best address more important security challenges throughout this world.

Don't double down on a bad military bet by using more troops. Have confidence in our diplomatic ability to lead even with Syria and Iran, set a date certain for redeploying out of Iraq this year to serve as the leverage to have the Iraqis accept the reality of the personal consequence of not assuming responsibility for their nation.

That is why I will introduce legislation that sets the end of 2007 for our redeployment from Iraq to serve as the catalyst for the Iraqis to assume responsibility for their country so we can better address our security interests throughout this world.

SPENDING WITHOUT TRANSPARENCY

(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, the hold-onto-your-wallet Congress is at it again. Just a week after raising costs to nearly all of America's small businesses, they are spending billions of taxpayer dollars with little or no explanation of where it is going.

After months of campaigning and pledges on open government and more accountability, the Democrats are still behind locked doors spending billions of taxpayer dollars with very little transparency.

Tomorrow, they are going to cram through an omnibus spending package, not a continuing resolution, which basically is going to pay the government's bills; and the price tag is \$463 billion, a \$463 billion budget. And from what we understand, it has been crafted by a couple of folks, that's all. The Budget Committee didn't hold hearings. It was not reviewed for waste, fraud and abuse.

But from what we are understanding from the reports in the news, we have two Appropriations chairmen who have put it together, and you and I are just supposed to trust their judgment. I think so, Madam Speaker; we need to have accountability, we need to have review.