

the concurrence of the Minority Leader:

Mr. David Skaggs, Colorado, Chairman

Mrs. Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, California, subject to section 1(b)(6)(B)

Ms. Karan English, Arizona, subject to section 1(b)(6)(B)

Mr. Abner Mikva, Illinois, Alternate Nominated by the Minority Leader with the concurrence of the Speaker:

Mr. Porter J. Goss, Florida, Cochairman

Mr. James M. Eagen, III, Colorado, subject to section 1(b)(6)(B)

Ms. Allison R. Hayward, Virginia, subject to section 1(b)(6)(B)

Mr. Bill Frenzel, Virginia, Alternate

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LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

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

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend from Maryland, the majority leader, to tell us about next week's schedule.

Mr. HOYER. I thank my friend, the Republican whip.

On Monday, the House will meet in pro forma session at 11 a.m. On Tuesday, the House will meet at 10:30 a.m. for morning hour and 12 p.m. for legislative business with votes postponed until 6:30 p.m. On Wednesday and Thursday, the House will meet at 10 a.m. for legislative business. On Friday, the House will meet at 9 a.m. for legislative business.

We will consider several bills under suspension of the rules. The complete list of suspension bills will be announced by the close of business tomorrow, as is the custom.

I tell the Members that we will also consider the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs fiscal 2009 appropriations bill; H.R. 1338 the Paycheck Fairness Act; additional energy legislation; and any conference report available, possibly including the Higher Education conference report, the Amtrak conference report and the Consumer Product Safety Commission conference report.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend for the information.

On the first bill under a rule, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill, will that be an open rule?

Mr. HOYER. We expect it to be an open rule, but we do expect to ask that amendments be prefiled so that Members will have notice of amendments.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend for that.

In the past, we've had in previous Congresses an open rule on these appropriations bills. I don't recall a pre-filing requirement, though I'm sure we will talk about that in the Rules Committee. In appropriations, whatever the amendment is has to be paid for out of the bill so it has always been felt that

that provides its own level of constraint. We would certainly argue for that kind of open rule.

I would yield.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Our thought is that both sides should have notice of what amendments are going to be considered, that all Members have notice of what is going to be considered. Obviously, there is no constraint on what amendment somebody might want to offer, but we believe that it would be helpful if Members had notice of what the substance of the amendments are so they can, if they want to support it, support it on the floor, if they want to oppose it, have the opportunity to come here and do so. But I think it will be our intention to ask that there be a notice requirement without restriction on the amendments that are asked but simply to give notice as to what the amendments are going to be.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank you for that information.

This will be the first appropriations bill on the floor this year. Do you anticipate other bills in September?

I would yield.

Mr. HOYER. Thank you for yielding.

I would certainly anticipate more appropriations legislation coming to the floor in September, yes.

Mr. BLUNT. On that topic of September, since at the end of next week we wouldn't have a chance to talk about the upcoming schedule, does the gentleman have a sense of some of the priority legislation that we might consider in September?

Mr. HOYER. We have a number of pieces of legislation that are obviously pending. First of all, we are very hopeful that we will pass the extenders legislation which we sent to the Senate some, actually months ago, a couple of months ago, I think, which, as you know, ensures tax credits for alternative energy. Wind is particularly important. Boone Pickens was here, as you know, on the Hill talking to both Democrats and Republicans, the importance of that. Others have talked about that as well. As you know, they're trying to dispose of some of the "Coburn holds" as we call them. Some of those may be back. Obviously we will have to consider a funding resolution for government after we leave. My expectation is that will be a point of business. We're also talking about obviously, as you have read in the paper, and as I think, I'm not sure you and I have talked about a jobs bill and some continuing economic assistance to make sure our economy hopefully grows and does not certainly fall any deeper into recession. Those are some of the pieces of legislation.

I have mentioned some of the things that we hope to get from conference next week, mental health parity being one of those, higher education, the consumer products safety. Hopefully many of those may be dealt with next week. But if they were not, it is my expecta-

tion we would do those in September as well.

So those are some of the major things that I foresee for September. What we will have done next week obviously won't be on September, but if we haven't done them we will try to get them done in September.

Mr. BLUNT. On the extenders package, I'm hopeful we see that bill back here because it is one of the things we could do that would have energy impact. And I hope we could even consider whatever is the maximum time that we would be able to do there is what we should do.

On energy generally, yesterday, Mr. BOEHNER from Ohio and I, Mr. CANTOR, Mr. PUTNAM and others introduced a bill, the American Energy Act. It's a bill that is broad based and designed to promote American energy, conservation and invest in the future. Is there any opportunity for that act or other acts that we've had discharge petitions on, other bills, coming to the floor? And if not, what kind of energy legislation do you anticipate?

Mr. HOYER. As you know, we have considered a number of pieces of legislation which we were hopeful would move us in the direction of, A, producing more domestic energy through encouraging further drilling in those leaseholds already available, approximately 88 million acres that are currently available. We considered the Consumer Energy Supply Act today. Unfortunately, that didn't get sufficient votes. It got a lot of votes. It got a significant majority of the House. It did not get the two-thirds so we could move it to the Senate. We considered the DRILL Act which also received a majority of the votes which provided for both the 10.4 million acres in Alaska and the National Petroleum Reserve to be encouraged to be moved forward as quickly as possible to drill in that area, produce oil and petroleum in that area, which also encouraged, as you recall, the building of additional pipelines, both for natural gas and for petroleum products.

Next week, we will be considering—many people are very concerned about the fact that the price spikes which don't seem to go down consistent with the price of oil by the barrel, which has reduced significantly, but the gasoline price hasn't reduced. There is significant concern about the impact of speculation. We are going to consider that bill, I think, next week, as I indicated.

You say you have introduced this bill. I'm sure it will go to the committee. I haven't seen the bill. I will certainly talk to the various chairmen. I don't know how many committees will have jurisdiction over the bill. You say it's a comprehensive bill, maybe multijurisdictional, but I will certainly talk to the Chairs about the substance of the bill.

Let me say, the American public is obviously very concerned. Our position is we ought to drill. We ought to drill where we've given leases that exist.

Your position essentially is, well, that is fine, but there are other places where we could drill as well. We believe that is accurate as well. It's been very controversial. As you know, Governor Schwarzenegger, the Republican Governor of California, is not too interested in proceeding with drilling off his shore. There are differences of opinion. We really do believe that we ought to drill, we ought to drill now and we ought to drill where there is not controversy and where we do have leases. I think that is the difference between us, apparently, not that any of us oppose drilling. It is where you drill first. If that proves, from my perspective, not to be fruitful, then perhaps at that time we ought to look at alternatives. But the President, of course, has indicated and made it very clear that he believes wherever you drill is not going to make a substantial difference in the next 5 to 10 years.

So we believe we ought to start drilling right now so that we can move ahead as soon as possible. There are 107 billion barrels currently speculated to be in the identified areas of that 88 million acres to be available. We use about 21 million a day, about 14 billion a year. That is a pretty good supply, about 7½ years of supply. We would hope we would move ahead on that. But we haven't done that yet. We understand that.

But we ought to have a legitimate debate on it. I think all of us want to get to the same place—energy independence for our country and the use of alternative and renewable energy sources to not only help our energy supply but also help our environment. So I will certainly encourage the committee to look at that bill.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for that.

We have other bills that we've started discharge petitions on, some sponsored by Democrats, that we think are part of the solution here. Clearly, based on the understood facts that some of this oil and natural gas gets online quicker than others, it seems to me that that is one of the principal reasons to get started everywhere that is reasonable for us to go as quickly as you can. We're the only country in the world that has the potential for offshore drilling, deepwater drilling, that doesn't do it. And I think any proposal that we've advanced through the Senate in previous years or anybody is making now involves the Governors or the State governments of the affected States having to agree. So if Governor Schwarzenegger and the people of California don't want to drill, don't want the revenue, in fact, even if they don't want the Federal Government to have the revenue from that drilling, they wouldn't have to drill. But if the people of Virginia or North Carolina or any other State did, they're part of that decision-making process.

And other countries do this. Some of that oil, particularly in the deep water, is going to come online quicker than

others. But geologists believe in the deepwater drilling there is roughly an 18-year supply of natural gas and oil. So it doesn't all have to come online at once. Also, my view has been, as my friend knows, that if we just announce that as a country that has some of the most known and plentiful reserves in oil and natural gas that we were going to start in a real effort to go after all of it that was reasonably and safely achievable, that that would have impact on price.

Mr. HOYER. Will my friend yield?

Mr. BLUNT. Let me say one other thing, and then I will yield.

The other thing I would say about a full and fair debate, these bills that come under suspension obviously narrow the debate. I guess I understand that. We have had some discussion on the floor, well, let's have all these ideas out there and just see who a majority is for, but 20 minutes of debate on a side of an issue really isn't the kind of full and fair debate we need.

I would like to see a bill come with plenty of debate, with plenty of opportunities for every Democrat that wants to make an amendment to make an amendment, for every Republican, it could be prefiled, it could be anything, and the will of the House would determine which direction the country goes in this real desire for energy, more American energy, American energy created by and producing American jobs. I hope we can get there. There is a real demand in the country for that.

A Member just has to go home to know what is the number one economic issue in a country where people are concerned right now about what to do about the economy.

I would yield.

Mr. HOYER. I thank my friend for yielding.

As my friend clearly knows, as you know, we've been operating under two moratoria: One has been the executive moratorium which was just lifted which was placed on by the first President Bush. As you know as well in the Interior bill year after year in the 6 years your party was in charge and then last year in the Interior bill, that moratorium was continued. So under both parties, Governor Schwarzenegger, Governor Bush of Florida, both very, very strong proponents effectively of not drilling off their shores. So this is not a Republican-Democratic difference. In fact, both parties were supporting—I presume, I don't want to speak for your party—our party was supporting drilling where we have current leases.

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I would disagree with my friend, and we may disagree on the definition of deep water. They are drilling now in the Gulf of Mexico, as you know, at depths of 1,000 feet. Additionally, there are 33 million acres available in the gulf now on the Outer Continental Shelf and available for drilling right now.

I would say further to my friend, if you wanted to drill tomorrow anywhere, there is not a drill available in the world. Now my presumption is there is not a drill available in the world that is not being used because they are pretty pricey items and you can make a pretty good profit providing those drills. My presumption is that people have not requested those drills be made available and have not asked to purchase them. As you heard me say, Exxon made \$40 billion. These drills are pretty expensive items, and they bought no drills with that \$40 billion.

So as a practical matter, tomorrow, if everything were available, there would be no drilling because there are no drills available. My presumption is that the oil companies believe there is sufficient supply available. There are no lines at any of the gas stations that I go to. I have not seen any gas lines. I am old enough, I know you're not, but I'm old enough to remember the lines in the 1970s. They were long. That was an artificially created shortage by OPEC, as you recall. But notwithstanding that, I don't see any lines. I don't see any shortage of product available. What I see is a healthy price at the pump. And in my opinion, when you get more supply, the price comes down. I think some people are pretty happy with the price. None of my consumers are happy with the price. None of the people who pull up to the pumps in my district are happy with the price, but I can't believe that the oil companies are unhappy about the price. I don't see them complaining about their high profits.

So when you say if we could drill in the deep water, I don't know what you mean by deep water. It could be more than 1,000 feet which is where we are drilling now in some places in the Gulf of Mexico. But we do have 33 million acres available on the Outer Continental Shelf in the Gulf of Mexico available for drilling right now. And if the drills were available and the inclination were available, I would hope that the companies would pursue, either the large companies or small companies. The problem with small companies is that it is a very expensive proposition, as the gentleman knows.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for that observation.

I would say in terms of deep water, I think sometimes I say that rather than make the point that when we talk about drilling on the coast, and the Atlantic and Pacific coast which is where we restrict, and no one else restricts their coastal drilling, I am always talking about something way beyond the line of sight. I can say that as well as deep water.

I think there is drilling in the gulf even significantly deeper than the 1,000 feet to the floor and below that. But there is potential there. If, in fact, people of the various States don't want to drill well beyond their shores even though they get part of the revenue,

that is a decision they'd get to make. I do think that is an issue that is dramatically changing.

I also believe firmly, and every economist that I have read on this topic agrees, that if we announced we were going to drill, it wouldn't matter if anybody had a drill or not. That one signal from the United States where we have at least twice as much readily available oil shale in the Rockies as Saudi Arabia has in its known reserves, readily available, not to count the other amounts that could be available later, just if we were to announce that we were going after that supply, it would have an impact on price.

We had a hearing a couple of weeks ago where we had people from Interior talk about that particular supply, a lot of supply well off the coast on the Atlantic and Pacific coast. And if there is speculation here, I think the best way to deal with speculators would be to get them caught on the wrong side of a market that is going the other way because the United States of America has announced it is going to go after its own resources in a more dramatic way.

There are two prohibitions on the appropriations bill. One is coastal drilling on the Atlantic and Pacific coast, no money can be used to issue a lease, which is another way that legislators say you are not going to get a lease, and one in the oil shale in the Rockies. Removing both of those prohibitions would have a huge impact on price. It would start us in the right direction. The idea that some of this oil won't be available for 3 years, some of it for 5, some of it for 10, we are still going to need oil 10 years from now. Oil that is not available for 10 years is not an unacceptable goal because we know we are going to need oil 10 years from now.

I am convinced, I will tell my good friend, and we are good friends, I am convinced that if we just announced we were going to take those steps, it would have an immediate impact on price at the pump. We both know the reason there is no line at the pump. I went to 12 gas stations in my district on Friday and Saturday. There was no line anywhere, but every person that I talked to, whether they were traveling to Branson, Missouri, on vacation, or filling their car up in Andersonville or Neosho, Missouri, they all had a story as to how these gas prices were affecting their lives in other ways. Members have those stories. We can do something about them. But to do that, it is going to take more than a 20-minute debate on whether we release oil that we have already bought in the short term. If supply matters, long term going after that supply really matters.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. HOYER. We agreed with your premise, and we offered a bill to have that happen, and it was Use It or Lose It which said we have 107 billion barrels identified, speculated to be available on presently held leases, a 14-year supply in the United States of America. And what we wanted to direct the

administration to do was start leasing that land right now because we agreed with your premise that the psychological effect would be that those who have the petroleum and are frankly selling it very dear, and many of our consumers are being really hurt, we understand that, our premise was either by drilling in the National Petroleum Reserve now or drilling in the 68 million acres available in the lower 48, including 33 million in the gulf now, that it would have exactly the effect that you projected.

Unfortunately, we also believe that releasing oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which in 1991 and two other years, I don't have the exact years, we have done it three times, including once under this administration after Hurricane Katrina, in 1991 price went down 33 percent. It went down less when SPR was released after Hurricane Katrina.

Our view is you are correct. Psychologically, that would have a real effect on the market. Unfortunately, we couldn't pass that. We wanted to pass it as quickly as possible. How do you pass something as quickly as possible? You put it on suspension and give it to the Senate. Unfortunately, large numbers on your side of the aisle determined that was not a policy that they wanted to pursue. So they had no psychological effect, which we thought would have been, as you do, a psychological effect and may well have had an immediate impact on pricing by the barrel, and hopefully then would be converted to price at the pump.

Mr. BLUNT. I just advance the idea that the moment we are in right now is not a Katrina-analogous moment. There is no temporary disruption of supply that you need to do something about. There is a long-term problem that needs to be solved. In fact, you mentioned those gas lines. Those gas lines in the seventies, the embargo in the seventies, that led us to this idea of a Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And at the time we set the reserve up, it is the same size it is now, or when Congress set it up, before many of us were here, at least, at the time Congress set it up, it had a 117-day supply. That same amount of oil is now a 56-day supply because of the amount we now use.

Taking 3 days out of that 56-day supply only postpones, in the view of many of us, the reality of dealing with the long-term challenge that we face. We would like to have a debate on that.

You could bring that bill back to the floor next week under a rule. If a majority wanted to send it to the Senate, they could. But the chance you take is that others with another idea would get at least one amendment on the floor, and that's why we are here with suspension bills as opposed to rule bills because it's a take-it-or-leave-it-this-is-all-of-the-debate kind of approach.

I yield back.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, JULY 28, 2008

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 11 a.m. on Monday next; and further, when the House adjourns on that day, it adjourn to meet at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, July 29, for morning-hour debate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

WELCOMING BRADEN ALEXANDER HEWLETT

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

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Members of Congress do not like to miss votes on the House floor, and I agree with that feeling. There is sometimes very good reason Members do miss votes, whether it is illness or important business in our district.

This last week, I missed both Tuesday and Wednesday due to an important reason: my wife and I became grandparents for the third time. Our grandson was born Tuesday, July 22, at 3:20 p.m. at Christus St. John's Hospital in Houston. Braden Alexander Hewlett weighed in at 8 pounds, 1 ounce, and 19 inches long.

Our daughter, Dr. Angela Hewlett, and her husband, father Dr. Alex Hewlett, and now big sister, Lauren, who is all of 3 years old, and Braden are doing well, and I want to congratulate their growing family.

HONORING CAPTAIN BARRY K. CAVER

(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, I rise today to honor Captain Barry K. Caver, commander of the Texas Ranger Company E, as he retires from his long and distinguished career of service to the public.

Ranger Captain John Ford once described the Texas Rangers and said of them: "They knew their duty and they did it. While in a town, they made no braggadocio demonstration. They did