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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SCHRADER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 6, 2009.

I hereby appoint the Honorable KURT SCHRADER 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 6, 2009, 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 30 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

HEALTH CARE PLAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to correct a misperception held by many in this Chamber and others throughout our great Nation. Members of my party claim that our colleagues across the aisle do not have a health care plan. Well, I'm here to break with my own caucus and say that's just not true. Our Republican friends do in fact have a plan.

Let me offer you some of their highlights. The plan so far offered by our

Republican colleagues would allow health care premiums to double over the next decade; add more than two-thirds to the out-of-pocket expenses for individuals and their families who watched helplessly as premiums and deductibles grew three times faster than their wages over the last decade; and push more families to the brink of financial ruin because they can no longer afford basic health care needs.

In my district alone, more than 1,400 people were forced into bankruptcy last year because of expenses not covered by health insurance.

It doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. Their plan would also allow insurance companies to continue racking up profits by denying coverage using capricious standards.

Insurance companies in 45 States would be allowed to continue discriminating based on preexisting conditions for those attempting to purchase insurance on the individual market. It's estimated that more than 12.6 million Americans have been denied coverage because of preexisting conditions already.

Insurance companies in eight States and the District of Columbia would be allowed to continue denying coverage to survivors of domestic violence because they classify history of such violence as a preexisting condition, which is a particularly egregious example of cherry-picking by insurance companies, considering October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Even those lucky enough to have health insurance will continue to find their coverage or their costs altered due to preexisting conditions, which affect up to 45 percent of us who already have health care insurance.

The Republican plan, or lack thereof, also will make it harder in the business community to continue meeting the needs of its workers and customers. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation study showed that 42 percent of em-

ployers are preparing to increase premiums next year; 39 percent of employers are preparing to increase out-of-pocket expenses for doctor visits next year; 37 percent of employers are preparing to increase out-of-pocket prescription drug costs next year; and 8 percent said they already have reached the tipping point and have decided to drop health care coverage altogether next year.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses in the Commonwealth of Virginia alone spent more than \$3 billion on health care premiums last year. That figure is expected to more than double to \$7.4 billion during the next decade if we do nothing.

Today, less than half of Virginia's small businesses offer health insurance to their employees, with three-fourths saying they're struggling to do so. The plan offered by our Republican colleagues would only exacerbate that situation and likely push more businesses into withdrawing health care coverage altogether.

But that's not what our businesses want. Not only do two-thirds of Virginia's small businesses say health care reform will play an important part in getting the economy back on track, but more than half of them also say they, themselves, have a responsibility to help provide coverage for their employees.

A majority of Americans—57 percent—say it's now more important than ever to reform our broken health care system. Unfortunately, the plan from our Republican colleagues amounts to “do nothing and hope for the best.” Well, we can't afford that plan. And, thankfully, Americans are starting to come to the same realization.

That same poll found that 57 percent of the public faults our Republican colleagues for opposing health care reform more for political reasons than substantive argument.

□ 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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Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford for premiums to climb 50 percent above the national poverty rate for a family of four. We cannot afford for more employers to pull the plug on providing health care coverage for their employees. We cannot afford to put even more families in the position of struggling to pay for basic needs like health care.

We must deliver reform that will make health care affordable and accessible; cap out-of-pocket expenses; stop the practice of cherry-picking based on preexisting conditions; and protect our small businesses from crippling costs.

We must deliver reform that will once again instill confidence in our Nation's health care system—and that is what we will do here in the House of Representatives this fall.

AMERICA NEEDS MORE JOBS, NOT MORE GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few days ago, the Labor Department released its monthly unemployment report. It was another month of bad news for unemployed Americans looking for work. In September, we lost 263,000 jobs and the unemployment rate rose to 9.8, a 26-year high. And, according to the Labor Department, the number of unemployed people now stands at 15.1 million.

This is an American tragedy. There are millions of breadwinners desperate for an opportunity to get back to work. But for far too many, these opportunities seem inaccessible. And Washington doesn't seem to get it.

Instead, it's business as usual here in Washington. Borrow and spend is Washington's prescription for our ailing economy. But Americans know that we cannot borrow and spend our way into prosperity. We've tried that already—and it didn't work.

Nevertheless, my Democrat colleagues insisted that passing a stimulus bill that borrowed another trillion dollars would create jobs "immediately" and unemployment would not rise above 8 percent. The facts tell another, more discouraging story.

More than 2.7 million jobs have been lost since the so-called stimulus was signed by President Obama. And the Labor Department keeps churning out these gloomy monthly unemployment reports. Today, there are about 12 million workers who would like to work full time but can't find a full-time job. U.S. auto sales plummeted in September and factory orders tumbled by the largest amount in 5 months.

The American people know that a true economic recovery starts with tax relief for American families and small businesses and fiscal discipline in Washington. After all, if American families have to buckle down and trim their budgets, Washington should, too. We can't keep running \$1.5 trillion defi-

cits and expect economic growth as a result.

House Republicans agree with the American people. Washington needs to rein in the runaway spending. For example, this week Congress is poised to pass an agriculture spending bill which includes a 14 percent increase in discretionary spending. There's plenty of good to be said about some of the spending in this bill, but its unrestrained increase in spending is emblematic of Washington's intractable, profligate habits.

We can find a way to live within our means and create real incentives for employers to create jobs and get people back to work. How about using what remains of the stimulus money to create a jobs tax credit for employers who take risks and put Americans back to work?

Such a tax credit could spur new job creation and help reinvigorate our battered economy. Plus, it keeps taxpayer money out of wasteful government programs and politicians' pet projects.

Until we start to consider such real solutions to our jobs deficit, I will continue to oppose the Democrats' job-killing tax-and-spend policies and support real solutions to get the American people back to work.

ON THE DALAI LAMA'S VISIT THIS WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. The front page of the Washington Post yesterday featured a story about the Dalai Lama's visit to Washington this week—a trip which will be marked by what doesn't take place. For the first time since 1991, this spiritual leader, a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, will not be afforded a meeting with the President of the United States. This is a mistake which has far-reaching consequences.

China has initiated a global effort to stop heads of state from hosting the Dalai Lama. As the Wall Street Journal editorial page pointed out yesterday, "China routinely assails countries whose leaders meet with the Dalai Lama, targeting France and Germany in recent years by cutting off diplomatic exchanges and canceling conferences and the like."

The Dalai Lama is set to travel to New Zealand and Australia later this year and, as the Post reported, "he has yet to secure a commitment from their leaders to meet." Will these countries follow our lead?

I've been to Tibet. I've seen the Buddhist monks and nuns in Drapchi prison. I've met frightened Tibetans who quietly showed me their forbidden photo of the Dalai Lama. I wonder if their plight received even passing mention during internal White House deliberations about whether to meet with the Dalai Lama before the President's November trip to China. Or, were they simply a nuisance in the context of a larger bilateral relationship?

An unnamed administration official in the Post story justified the decision by saying "this President is not interested in symbolism or photo ops but in deliverables." I, too, am interested in deliverables, as is the human rights community, but I'm interested in symbols. And the President should be, too. Symbolism is powerful. If we surrender to this Chinese government, we have surrendered something far greater than the President may realize.

The Tiananmen Square demonstrators of 20 years ago understood that symbols speak volumes. They carried papier-mache models of the Statue of Liberty. Ronald Reagan, too, understood symbols. He understood there was something symbolically stirring about him standing at the Brandenburg Gate and calling on the then-Soviet leader to tear down that wall that divided the people of East and West Berlin.

Ronald Reagan understood there was something symbolically powerful about invoking the name of Solzhenitsyn when he spoke at the Danilov Monastery in Russia—the very same dissident who more than a decade earlier, reminiscent of this week's events, was denied a visit with President Ford who was worried about upsetting the Russians prior to a summit.

This administration may not be interested in symbolism, but that will come as devastating, devastating news to millions around the world who yearn for freedom, who cry out for basic human rights, and who expect America, our country, to be their champion when their own voices have been silenced.

What about the Coptic Christians in Egypt? The Baha'is in Iran? What about the oppressed citizens of Burma and North Korea and Vietnam? They should rightly be alarmed by the treatment of the Dalai Lama, as this is just one more example of a growing pattern in this administration of sidelining human rights.

It's not too late. I call on the President to invite the Dalai Lama to the White House; to reclaim the moral high ground and not kowtow to the Chinese government that brutally oppresses its people.

I call on the President to stand side by side with his holiness—a man of peace—and align America once again with the oppressed, not with the oppressors.

MOJAVE DESERT VETERANS MEMORIAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) for 2 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, the United States Supreme Court will soon hear arguments in the case of *Salazar v. Buono*, which may determine the future of memorials all across the country that honor those who fought and died for our Nation. The center of this case is a memorial in my