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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SALAZAR).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 26, 2009.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN T. SALAZAR to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Reverend Michael E. Askew, Sr., Trinity United Presbyterian Church, Tallahassee, Florida, offered the following prayer:

Heavenly Creator, maker of days past, present and future, we humble ourselves in the breaking of this new day, so that in all of our efforts and energy, we give glory to You.

We pray for each Member in this United States House of Representatives and their staff. We ask that in the actions and deliberations of today, resentment, strife, bitterness, and anger will not prevail.

Rather, each Member is mindful to hear the voices and concerns of people they serve, of those serving in the military, of those living in small towns, on farms, in rural communities, and in cities throughout the United States, so collectively and conscientiously we may find methods and solutions to help even the least among us during these troubled times.

With great joy and gratitude, we stand before You ready to serve. Lord, hear Your people as we pray.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Mr. HONDA 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 agreed to a concurrent resolution of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 8. Concurrent resolution expressing support for Children's Dental Health Month and honoring the memory of Deamonte Driver.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 8002 of title 26, United States Code, the Chair, on behalf of the Committee on Finance, announces the designation of the following Senators as members of the Joint Committee on Taxation:

The Senator from Montana (Mr. BAUCUS).

The Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER).

The Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CONRAD).

The Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH).

WELCOMING REV. MICHAEL ASKEW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to have had Rev. Michael Askew from Tallahassee, Florida, as our guest chaplain today to lead us in prayer this morning. I appreciate his insightful words and spiritual message.

Rev. Askew joins us from the Trinity United Presbyterian Church of Tallahassee, Florida, where he has led the congregation since September of 2008 after arriving there from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Rev. Askew has an impressive 20-year career as an educator and careworker to at-risk youth. He is a man of God, a man of service, and a spiritual leader and teacher in the Tallahassee community.

I would like to commend Rev. Askew for the positive impact he has made on so many lives in my community and others. We are grateful for his service, and I wish him the very best as he continues to guide his congregation in the coming years.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain five further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

EFFECTS OF THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

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

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to give voice to several of my constituents' stories about how they are being impacted by the economic downturn.

☐ 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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One constituent, Robert, told me about how he and his wife lost nearly 60 percent of their retirement funds. They have no pensions, no 401(k)s, and no health care coverage.

Another constituent told me how he lost his job 4 months ago and is now drowning in college loans and bills. These stories are all too common.

Every one of us is feeling the effects of the economic downturn. But I, along with my colleagues in Congress, will advocate for you and your family's needs every day.

EARMARKS ARE ESSENTIALLY NO-BID CONTRACTS

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

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we passed an omnibus spending bill with more than 8,600 earmarks. Many of them are simply wasteful, including 1.8 million to combat swine odor in Iowa. Maybe that could have been spent a little closer to home.

But a lot of these earmarks, a few thousand of them, have the potential to be far more damaging to this institution because they are essentially no-bid contracts. In many cases, they're no-bid contracts to those who turn out to be campaign contributors to Members who secured the no-bid contract.

We have to ask ourselves, is this proper for the House to do? Should the House of Representatives allow its Members to award no-bid contracts to their campaign contributors? It doesn't seem right, Mr. Speaker. We owe this institution far better than that, and we ought to stop the practice.

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

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

Mr. BACA. America recently elected not just the first African American to serve as President but also the son of an immigrant. Yet, the positive contributions of immigrants never seem to make it through the smoke of politics that blurs the issue of immigrant reform.

We must not forget that we are a Nation built by immigrants. Today, there are 12 to 14 million undocumented, hardworking immigrants contributing to our economy.

As we struggle to rebuild our economy, we must not forget that a comprehensive immigration reform is needed to bring out of the shadows hardworking immigrants. We must make sure that all workers are on a level of playing field and that the exploitation of undocumented immigrant workers ends.

We must make sure that unscrupulous employers are punished and that families are respected.

I urge my colleagues to work with me and for the President to keep his

word and work towards comprehensive immigration reform.

BANK BAILOUT BLUNDER—NORTHERN TRUST

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Chicago-based bank Northern Trust took \$1.6 billion in bailout money. But last week the bank threw a high-dollar party in Los Angeles. The celebration included flying in guests and employees to stay at the Ritz and the Beverly Hills Wilshire.

The bank hosted a \$6.3 million fancy golf tournament. Northern Trust partied all week by entertaining the rich and famous.

Nightly concerts were held that included the groups Earth, Wind and Fire, Chicago, and even singer Sheryl Crow.

One night, the bank rented the entire establishment of the House of Blues for \$50,000 to enjoy the necessities of life.

When it was all over, the party animals received Tiffany gift bags. A good time was had by all.

Mr. Speaker, corporations can do what they want with their own money, but when banks take taxpayer money, they are responsible to the taxpayers. The bank says they didn't ask for the money. Well, if that's so, the bank should do the right thing. Northern Trust, give us back our \$1.6 billion because you can't be trusted with our money.

The bank blunder bailout loan has come due.

And that's just the way it is.

NATIONAL PEACE CORPS WEEK

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

Mr. SIRES. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate National Peace Corps Week and to honor the agency's 48th anniversary. Since the Peace Corps began in 1961, over 195,000 volunteers have served in 139 countries around the globe. Currently, there are over 7,800 Peace Corps volunteers serving in 76 countries, including two of my constituents.

Jaskirat Singh is currently serving in Jordan until September 2010, and Antoinette Day is currently serving in Bulgaria. I am incredibly proud of their service and the lasting contributions they are making to improve the lives of people in the communities where they are serving.

I would like to commend all the Peace Corps volunteers for their dedicated service to our Nation and for expanding and creating new opportunities for people in the developing world.

REAUTHORIZATION OF E-VERIFY

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

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because 7 months from now the E-Verify program will expire. It is unacceptable that Congress continues to kick the can down the road on E-Verify. Last Congress, I along with 406 other Members of Congress, voted to extend E-Verify for 4 years. It was a bipartisan bill that had the overwhelming support of Members, as well as the American public. Congresswoman GIFFORDS and I have introduced the same legislation this Congress, H.R. 662.

Let's be clear: Reauthorization of E-Verify is not immigration reform. The existing voluntary program is the only way for employers to ensure that they are complying with existing law, which requires them to hire a legal workforce. Extending the voluntary program will also provide certainty to the 106,000 users of the system, including the States of Arizona and Mississippi, that E-Verify will continue to be available.

So why do we find ourselves counting down to an expiration date? Because there are certain special interests that may try to leverage E-Verify for a so-called comprehensive immigration reform bill.

We cannot allow the reauthorization of E-Verify to be tied up in a battle over an amnesty bill. Let's bring the bipartisan reauthorization of E-Verify through regular order and give the American people, and the thousands of E-Verify users, the assurance that employment verification will continue to be available.

HONORING THOSE WHO HAVE DEPARTED

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest privileges we have in the House of Representatives is an opportunity to come before this body and take cognizance of the extraordinary work of people in our constituency throughout the United States. When they depart life, very occasionally we come here to say something about it.

In the last 2 months, Fletcher Gibson, Ronald Dallas, Pat Larkins, and Andrew DeGraffenreidt, constituents and personal friends, some fraternity brothers of mine, have departed this life.

I take this opportunity that's given to us by our citizenry to express my condolences to their families. Each in their own way were legendary, iconic figures in Broward County, and I deeply appreciate the service they gave to humankind, and I honor them and offer condolences to their families.

HELPING FAMILIES SAVE THEIR HOMES ACT

(Mr. SMITH of Nebraska asked and was given permission to address the