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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: "After the earthquake came fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave."

You, O Lord, are the subtle inspiration hidden in our deepest instincts to seek out goodness and love and content us with the whisper of truth and presence.

Lord, if we desire You to be a part of our busy lives we need to find some cave of aloneness where we can heed Your voice and ponder Your Word with a clean heart.

Enable us and our children not to be afraid of silence.

Only from silence can come the depth of expression, the wellspring of beautiful and common language that will help us interpret all the sounds of our noisy world.

Lord, help us to keep silent so that we can listen better. Help us to abide in the silence of prayer so prayer can live in 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 Illinois (Mr. HARE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. HARE 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to five 1-minutes on each side of the aisle.

HONORING EDGAR MAY

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

Mr. WELCH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a Vermonter who has dedicated his life to serving others, one who's made an impact nationally and internationally, but most importantly, in his hometown of Springfield, Vermont.

Edgar May has worn many hats in his life, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, a leader in President Johnson's War on Poverty, and a top administrator in the Peace Corps under Sargent Shriver.

I came to know Edgar May when we served together in the Vermont State Senate, where we reminded colleagues every day of our obligation to be there for average Vermonters. He earned tremendous respect for his ability to solve difficult problems, to temper emerging feuds and, most importantly, for the profound decency at the core of all his work.

Edgar has devoted his recent years to providing the people of Springfield with something they thought they'd never have, a downtown recreation center at the site of an old machine tool plant, a resource for all people of all ages and all incomes. The Southern Vermont Health and Recreation Center is a symbol of Springfield's quiet but confident determination to continue reviving one of Vermont's proudest cities. Its creation is a testament to Edgar May's perseverance and his devotion to his city, his State and country.

NEW EMPLOYEE VERIFICATION ACT

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

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Last night my colleague GABBY GIFFORDS of Arizona and I re-introduced our work site enforcement bill, the New Employee Verification Act, H.R. 2028, or NEVA. Our bill would create the Nation's first mandatory employment verification system for all U.S. employers.

The act achieves three important objectives. It ensures a legal work force, it safeguards workers' identities, and it protects Social Security.

Employers want, need and deserve a reliable employee verification system, and we want to give it to them.

Now's the time for the Congress to create a new way forward that prevents illegal immigrants from taking jobs from American citizens. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor H.R. 2028. When immigration reform happens this year, this bill ought to be part of it.

OPPOSING THE PANAMA AND COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

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

Mr. HARE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to respond to recent comments made by the United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Kirk, regarding the Panama and Colombia Free Trade Agreements.

In addition to the tax haven and money laundering issues with Panama, and the fact that Colombia remains the most violent country for trade unionists in the world, it would be a mistake to pursue these two unfair trade agreements as we attempt to recover from

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the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Our economy began this downward spiral as a result of irresponsible trade policies that have outsourced millions of good-paying American jobs. With the unemployment rate at 8.5 percent, the last thing our economy can afford is more of the same.

I intend to work with the Obama administration and my colleagues in Congress to forge a new direction on trade that addresses the devastation caused by NAFTA and, instead, creates jobs and grows industry in the United States.

AMERICANS HAVE THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

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

Mr. FLEMING. Mr. Speaker, last week I joined thousands of citizens in my district to protest the reckless disregard Washington has shown for the taxpayers of this Nation and their hard-earned dollars.

People are angry, they are frustrated, and they feel that Washington is not listening, so they came together to protest in the same manner as our forefathers. Their message was simple. Stop spending our money, taxing our families and borrowing against the future of our children.

How did the media and our Democrat leaders here in Washington respond? They were dismissive.

The Speaker of the House, in fact, referred to this grassroots effort as Astroturf.

At the same time, Homeland Security released a report labeling political opponents of the administration as potential terrorists. The right of citizens to speak out against their party in power is at the heart of our democracy.

For a party that carps about bipartisanship and freedom of speech, the Democrat leadership should back their words with actions.

RESET THE COURSE ON TRADE POLICY

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

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, United States Trade Representative Ron Kirk said this week that the administration wants to move forward with the Bush-negotiated Panama and Colombia Free Trade Agreement "sooner rather than later." This is absolutely outrageous and a serious mistake, and contrary to what the President campaigned on.

Why would we be moving forward on a trade agreement negotiated by President Bush during a time where our economy is struggling? This makes no sense whatsoever. It does not represent a new model on trade. It represents a recycled model that doesn't work.

At home, people are furious about these trade deals. During the economic

downturn, do we really want to push forward a Bush-negotiated free trade agreement? I believe the American people deserve more. I believe they demand more from their elected officials.

We have a historic opportunity with a new administration to reset the course of trade policy. I look forward to working with the administration to change the course of direction.

LAST FIRE ALARM FOR FIREFIGHTERS JAMES HARLOW, SR. AND DAMION HOBBS

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the safety of our Nation's citizens often depends on the courageous Americans who choose to serve as firefighters. They answer the sound of the alarm every day to protect and to serve.

On April 12, 2009, two Texas firemen were killed in the line of duty while rushing into a burning home to look for an elderly couple. Captain James Arthur Harlow, Sr. and Firefighter Damion Jon Hobbs both served at Houston Fire Station Number 26.

Captain Harlow served 29 years at the Houston Fire Department. He was married to Debbie, and a wonderful father and grandfather. He also liked to hunt and to fish.

Firefighter Hobbs served our country for 10 years in the United States Army, where he just recently returned from Iraq to join the Houston Fire Department. He left behind parents, siblings and his longtime girlfriend, Crystal. The fire that took his life was his very first alarm call.

Mr. Speaker, our country is better because of remarkable Americans that risk their lives to protect us from harm. Firefighters rush to the sound of the alarm to fight the fires that destroy our communities and threaten lives of citizens. Two of those firefighters, James Harlow, Sr. and Damion Hobbs, gave their lives in that sacred duty.

And that's just the way it is.

LAS VEGAS SUN PULITZER PRIZE

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

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Las Vegas Sun and reporter Alexandra Berzon for the top-notch reporting that carried them and earned them the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for public service earlier this week.

Alexandra's investigation into the deaths of construction workers on the Las Vegas Strip, combined with the efforts of editorial writers, Matt Huffman and David Clayton brought attention to this serious issue and resulted in critical safety reforms that will save lives in Nevada.

Nine workers had died on the job when Alexandra wrote her first of more

than 50 stories chronicling the dangers construction workers face when safety is sacrificed for speed or profit. Her findings will be very valuable to Congress as the Education and Labor Committee examines this issue further.

The first Pulitzer for the Las Vegas Sun is a momentous occasion for the paper and for our community, so I, again, congratulate the Sun and Alexandra for earning journalism's highest honor.

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FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Savings Recovery Act, legislation designed to help Americans rebuild their retirement, college and personal savings, was introduced. This legislation will make it easier for Americans to save more for their retirement by increasing the contribution and catch-up limits for individuals and families. It will restore college savings by extending the existing credit for contributions made to college savings accounts. The Savings Recovery Act will ensure workers retain control over their hard-earned 401(k)s, not the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, the American people need more than just lip service when it comes to their futures. They need real solutions, solutions which come from empowering the public, not from racking up more debt.

I urge my colleagues to support the Savings Recovery Act.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF SANDRA CANTU

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

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Sandra Cantu, a child whose life was tragically cut short. Eight-year-old Sandra lived in Tracy, California, a town I am honored to represent.

Now known as "Tracy's precious angel," Sandra was a cheerful, friendly girl whose joyful life was evident whether she was doing cartwheels or playing on the jungle gym. She brightened the lives of everyone she came into contact with, even those who never met her, as was seen in the number of people at her memorial last week.

Her horrific kidnapping and death are a tragedy beyond description. No parent should have to experience the loss of a child, especially at such a young age.

I am touched by the outpouring of support for Sandra's family from the Tracy residents and for the tireless work of the Tracy Police Department.