

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 37 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CARNAHAN) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

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

As people of faith, we often pray to You, Lord God Almighty, out of a sense of need.

Aware of our personal limitations physically and emotionally, each of us cries out in frustration to You as our refuge and as healer. Prayer helps us, whether we are leaders or just ordinary Americans, to live our lives with greater integrity and meet our daily responsibilities.

Sometimes we are more conscious of our common needs. It is then prayer helps us identify with one another, feel compassion toward others in need and pray for them. We all desire peace of heart, health, and wisdom, as well as prudence, to make the right decisions needed each day whether we are in public service or work in the private sector.

In all cases, through prayer, Lord, You help us to see ourselves more honestly and suspend judgment of others so we can work together and more freely give You the glory.

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 gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. FOXX 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

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, the health care debate has begun in Washington

and across the country. Unfortunately, the plan Democrats have in store for the American people will do little to improve our health care situation. In fact, it will make the problem worse.

When Democrats talk about health care reform, what they really mean is a government takeover of health care. With few details available, some reports suggest the plan for this government takeover will cost upwards of \$1.2 trillion. As Robert Samuelson noted in today's Washington Post, all of this new Federal spending still will not fix the "crux of our health care dilemma." The American people deserve a plan that makes health care more affordable and accessible to all and that allows those who like their current health care coverage to keep it.

While Democrats support raising taxes and rationing care, Republicans support health care reform that controls spending and that ensures patients and doctors make health care decisions, not a bunch of bureaucrats in Washington.

RECOGNIZING THIS WEEK AS HIGH-PERFORMANCE BUILDING WEEK

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

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, last week, the House passed House Resolution 492, recognizing this week as High-Performance Building Week. The resolution aims to provide greater public awareness about the benefits of high-performance buildings, and it works to increase education about the impact buildings have on our environment.

Each year, our homes, offices, schools, and other buildings consume 70 percent of our electricity, 60 percent of all raw materials, and they emit 40 percent of all CO₂ emissions in the U.S. By designing and building high-performance buildings, we reduce energy consumption and our carbon footprint. We save both water and raw materials. We save demolition and construction debris from going into landfills. Most importantly, high-performance building construction creates good-paying jobs that give workers the valuable skills they need to excel in a clean energy economy.

It is my hope that Members will use this week to highlight the importance that buildings have on our environment and for Congress to continue to support future research, development and the deployment of high-performance building technologies.

EMPOWER PATIENTS, NOT GOVERNMENT

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, President Obama and his Democrat allies in Congress have said

that they want those who currently like their health care plans to keep them. Then they publicly endorse a government-run health care insurance plan that would crowd out and eliminate the private insurance plans millions of Americans currently enjoy. They cannot have it both ways.

The Democrat big government proposals claim to increase access and affordability by letting government determine what will and will not be paid for. As the only game in town, a government insurance plan would be the sole provider and decider of the quality of health care available. Conversely, Republicans have long argued that health care reform should focus on expanding access so more Americans can afford a higher quality of care.

We should be focused on empowering more individuals and families to afford the level of care they want. If Congress chooses to empower the government and itself in crafting a new government-run insurance plan, it will directly undermine the doctor-patient relationship that is the foundation of quality American health care.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th and the global war on terrorism.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF FAYETTEVILLE SUPERINTENDENT, MR. BOBBY NEW

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Bobby New, who has devoted his life to the education of our youth. Mr. New is retiring from 35 years of public education, 13 of which were as the superintendent of the Fayetteville School District.

During his time as superintendent, he provided the school district with the ideas and the innovation required for a growing area, including updating the grading structure and increasing technology throughout the district.

We are blessed to have educational professionals like Mr. New. I commend him for his service as a superintendent of the Fayetteville Public Schools, for his passion in educating our youth and for his commitment to improving our schools. I wish him success in his future endeavors.

Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Mr. New, an educator and friend whose continued devotion to the Third District of Arkansas has not gone unnoticed and will never be forgotten.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote on the yeas and nays are ordered, or on

which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken after 6:30 p.m. today.

PROVIDING ADDITIONAL AUTHORITIES TO SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 615) to provide additional personnel authorities for the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The text of the Senate bill is as follows:

S. 615

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL AUTHORITIES FOR THE SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION.

Section 1229(h) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181; 122 Stat. 381) is amended by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following:

“(1) PERSONNEL.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Inspector General may select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary for carrying out the duties of the Inspector General, subject to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title, relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates.

“(B) ADDITIONAL AUTHORITIES.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—Subject to clause (ii), the Inspector General may exercise the authorities of subsections (b) through (i) of section 3161 of title 5, United States Code (without regard to subsection (a) of that section).

“(ii) PERIODS OF APPOINTMENTS.—In exercising the employment authorities under subsection (b) of section 3161 of title 5, United States Code, as provided under clause (i) of this subparagraph—

“(I) paragraph (2) of that subsection (relating to periods of appointments) shall not apply; and

“(II) no period of appointment may exceed the date on which the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction terminates under subsection (o).”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from American Samoa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of Senate bill 615, legislation that provides critical personnel authority for the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan, known as SIGAR.

Since 2001, the United States has devoted \$32 billion in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan. In an effort to combat waste, fraud and abuse with regard to the expenditure of these funds, Congress created the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, commonly known as SIGAR, in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008.

That legislation empowers SIGAR to conduct audits, inspections, and investigations of all U.S. assistance programs in Afghanistan. Congress intended that SIGAR would exercise its authority swiftly. It came into existence in July of 2008 with an authorization to hire 18 auditors, 13 inspectors and 3 investigators; but from the beginning, SIGAR has been hindered by certain limitations contained in standard Federal Government personnel authorities and by the difficulty of attracting qualified candidates to work in the difficult security environment of Afghanistan. A year after its creation, SIGAR has conducted only one independent audit and has only hired nine auditors, five inspectors and three investigators.

This resolution would help resolve this problem by granting SIGAR a special hiring authority under 5 U.S.C., section 3161. Section 3161 would allow SIGAR a more flexible, excepted service authority and would empower the office to select, appoint, and employ the necessary staff to fulfill its duties. In particular, section 3161 would grant return rights to Federal employees, provide interagency detail authority and permit the setting of pay rates above the caps established by GS-15, step 10, under which SIGAR is currently required to operate.

This has proven to be a vital asset for SIGAR's counterpart in Iraq, SIGIR, which has long relied upon this enhanced hiring authority to attract its dedicated core of professional staff.

After conducting an in-depth review, the Department of Defense and the Office of Personnel Management have concluded that the proposed legislation is necessary to allow SIGAR to meet its responsibilities.

□ 1415

This bill represents a vital step in allowing SIGAR to fulfill its critical duties of the oversight of U.S. assistance programs in Afghanistan. I support the bill and urge my colleagues to support it as well.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation. The United States has committed over \$30 billion in assistance to Afghanistan since 2001, and with the President's stated intention to increase the size and scope of our ef-

forts, it is necessary that we provide all of our inspectors general operating in Afghanistan the authorities and resources necessary to mitigate fraud, waste, and abuse in these programs. However, the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR, currently lacks such authorities and resources.

Despite its establishment nearly 1 year ago, SIGAR officials have reportedly had difficulty hiring individuals for this unique and challenging assignment, and the staffing shortfall has contributed to the lack of an independent audit or investigation by the office thus far.

This legislation would amend the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2008 to provide to SIGAR personnel authorities similar to those given to the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction. The legislation would expedite the standard hiring process for civil service provisions by permitting SIGAR to use employment authorities granted to heads of temporary organizations. Such authorities allow organizations to hire staff for limited terms, notwithstanding the requirements normally applicable to civil service positions.

This legislation is intended to help the SIGAR quickly hire experienced, well-qualified employees to conduct necessary oversight of reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Employees hired under this new authority could serve until the termination of the SIGAR office.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation which gives the SIGAR additional hiring authorities to facilitate his ability to quickly hire experienced, well-qualified employees to fill critical positions.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I thank my good friend, the gentleman from Florida, for his comments in support of this legislation. And I do also want to thank the gentlelady, the good Senator from Maine, Senator COLLINS, for her authorship to this bill. Thirty-two billion dollars is no pennies certainly to be given some sense of responsibility in knowing where the American taxpayers' money has gone in terms of the appropriations and the funding that we've given to Afghanistan and as well as to any other country, for that matter.

So again, I really commend the gentlelady, the good Senator from Maine, Senator COLLINS, for her authorship of this bill, and I thank my good friend from Florida also in helping us manage this bill on the floor.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for your leadership in bringing this legislation to the floor today. I want to also thank Senator COLLINS for introducing this legislation in the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to support Amending the National Defense Authorization