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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

PRAYER

Rabbi Stephen A. Leon, Congregation B'Nai Zion, El Paso, Texas, offered the following prayer:

O Lord, "This is the day that God has made, on it may we rejoice."

These words from the Book of Psalms reflect the thoughts that are in my heart on this glorious day. Imagine if every person each day would arise and thank God for one more day of life, for one more precious moment to make a difference for good in this world.

How fortunate I feel to live in this blessed country of America where a rabbi from El Paso, Texas, is given the opportunity to offer a prayer before this historic assembly which represents the highest ideals of democracy.

May each of us here realize what awesome moments God gives us each day, and may we in partnership with the Almighty help speed that day when every person in the world will be privileged to live in peace and freedom.

Let us say, 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 Texas (Mr. REYES) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. REYES 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.

WELCOMING RABBI STEPHEN A. LEON

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. REYES. Madam Speaker, it is a real honor and privilege to have Rabbi Leon here this morning in this great people's House.

I want to especially welcome not just the rabbi but members of his family that are here. I know that back in my district, back in El Paso, people have gotten up extra early to see the rabbi give our opening prayer.

It's a real honor and a real privilege and pleasure.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

THE ECONOMY HAS NOT BEEN RESCUED

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

Mr. BOEHNER. Madam Speaker, American families and small businesses are hurting. The economy has been hurting; but this morning, in previewing the President's speech tonight, our former colleague, the President's chief of staff, said this: We've rescued the economy.

Now, I'm sure that the 9.5 percent unemployment rate that we have in our country today—and from most economic experts on its way up, don't believe that we've rescued the economy. The 11.1 percent unemployment rate that we have in Ohio, I'm sure those people are looking up today wondering, wait a minute, the President's going to say we rescued the economy? I don't think so.

Not only has the stimulus bill not worked and the economy not been rescued, the President continues to promote policies that will create more unemployment in America.

The national energy tax that went through this House last month will cause millions of Americans to lose their jobs over the next 10 years, like 2.5 million per year. And we're debating the health care plan, the government takeover of health care, which according to the President's Council of Economic Advisers' model will cost 5 million more Americans their jobs.

I don't believe that the economy has been rescued.

H.R. 1503 IS A SHAMEFUL PLOY TO STIR UP FEAR AND DISSENSION

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

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 1503, the so-called "Birther Bill." You ought to read it.

H.R. 1503 is predicated on the vicious and false rumor that circulates among fringe elements of our society that Barack Obama is not a citizen of the United States and his Presidency is, therefore, illegitimate.

I bring you a copy—and I hold it up—of his birth certificate which has been authenticated in the State of Hawaii by the Department of Health, and I also hold up an announcement in the newspaper on August 14.

Yet, despite being proved categorically untrue time and time again, this rumor stays alive because of tacit acknowledgment embodied in this legislation from legislators in this room. Anything to bring the messenger down. These rumors hurt America.

These rumors hurt America. They hurt the strength of our country. The fact that some Members of the minority would embrace this hateful rhetoric stuns me.

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

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These allegations have no grounding in fact, and this bill is nothing more than a shameful ploy to stir fear and dissension in the minds of the American people.

BIPARTISAN SOLUTIONS ARE BEST

(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, Republicans agree we need to reform the health care system. Yet the Democrat leadership hide behind closed doors. They've chosen to go it alone; and as a result, they have a scheme of proposals that adds to the deficit, spends over \$1 trillion, enacts a government takeover of health care, and has garnered bipartisan opposition.

Democrats should sit down at the table with Republicans and work on a bipartisan plan of reform. Republicans have commonsense solutions that will help Americans afford insurance, regardless of preexisting conditions. We want to provide small businesses the resources and freedom to offer and keep insurance for their employees.

House Republicans and the American people do not believe we need to let Big Government take over our health care, ration out the taxpayer-subsidized care, and raise taxes on small businesses that will, according to the National Federation of Independent Businesses, cost 1.6 million jobs lost, in addition to the 2.6 million jobs lost since January.

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

GUARANTEEING HEALTH CARE FOR ALL AMERICANS

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

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, one of our core Democratic principles in seeking health care reform is gaining control over health care costs. Contrary to my friend, the minority leader, what he said a few minutes ago, this is not government takeover of health care. It's about guaranteeing health care for all Americans and reducing the costs of health care which are just spiraling out of control.

If we fail to control health care costs, families will continue to be burdened with higher premiums and unaffordable out-of-pocket expenses; businesses will be forced to drop coverage or lay off workers; and our national and State budgets will become unsustainable.

Without reform, the costs of health care for the average family of four are projected to rise \$1,800 annually for years to come.

In my home district of North Carolina alone, there were 400 health care-related bankruptcies last year, caused primarily by health care costs not being covered by insurance.

The reforms would cap out-of-pocket expenses at \$10,000 per year, ensuring that no American will have to face financial ruin due to health care costs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to work together to find solutions.

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HEALTH CARE BILL

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the administration is demanding that Congress pass nationalized health care before we go back to our districts for the August work period. They said it's urgent, that we have to do it or it will be the end of health care in America forever.

That's what was said about the Wall Street bailout. Congress had to pass the Wall Street bailout in 24 hours or we were all going to die. And it passed. And it's a miserable failure.

Next came the so-called stimulus bill. It was over a thousand pages long, filed in the darkness of night. Nobody had a chance to read it. We were told we had to vote on it immediately or the world would end. Well, none of that happened. The stimulus bill, too, was a disaster for our country.

Hasn't Congress learned its lesson that quickly passing legislation because Presidents say so is a bad idea?

Most Americans don't like this health care bill. They don't want it. It's going to raise taxes. So what's the rush? We need to get health care right instead of just getting it done. The very lives of the American people depend on it. Besides, the administration's current health care bill is a sick solution for America.

And that's just the way it is.

RETURN FISCAL DISCIPLINE TO CONGRESS

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

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud today to be an original cosponsor of the PAYGO legislation that we're going to see on the floor later today because it represents a return to the responsible budgeting principles that we saw in the 1990s.

During that time, the Federal Government made difficult fiscal decisions, but those tough choices took our country from record deficits to record surpluses. Yet, the Bush administration abandoned PAYGO in 2002, and our country has returned to record deficits that have since doubled our national debt.

Mr. Speaker, we owe it to the working families that elected us to match their tough household budgeting decisions during these difficult economic times. We must once again commit to reduce our national deficit and to tighten the purse strings here in Washington.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this legislation and to return fiscal discipline to the Congress.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

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

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I come before you today to highlight exactly how out of control government spending has become. As some in Congress charge towards a more than \$1 trillion health care bill with little regard for our national debt, I think a reminder of how much we have already spent is in order.

This year's budget increased spending to \$4 trillion. That's 48 percent of GDP, the highest since World War II. For FY 2009 alone, we have a \$2 trillion deficit. This summer, we've been busy passing bills with double-digit increases in spending. Already, there have been mentions of tax increases to cover our financial obligations.

Where does all of this stop? Sadly, it would appear, not in this Congress.

We only have to look towards the West Coast to see a cautionary tale of a government with no fiscal discipline. In California, they've laid off thousands of workers, withheld tax refunds, and started paying contractors with IOUs. Their finances are in shambles.

We have a clear example of how reckless spending can paralyze a State. I hope all Members of this body learn from that important lesson.

LET'S GET IT DONE

(Mrs. CAPPs asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. CAPPs. Mr. Speaker, the time for health reform is now. The American people want it. The American economy needs it, and we will pass a comprehensive health care bill out of this Chamber before we break for August recess.

We will pass a bill to reform health care that ends the current system of insurance company executives lining their pockets by denying you the care you need. We will pass a bill that keeps your health coverage intact even if you lose your job or face a sudden illness, and we will pass a bill that brings health care spending under control.

It's easy to get caught up in the politics of Washington as we work on this legislation, but this is about so much more. It's about the American people. When we pass this legislation, when the President signs it into law, everyday families will finally be able to have access to reliable, affordable, quality health care.

Let's get it done.

SOLID SOLUTIONS

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