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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. HOLDEN).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 23, 2009.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TIM HOLDEN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

Rev. Dr. Martha Taylor, Elmhurst Presbyterian Church, Oakland, California, offered the following prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God, the Creator of the universe, the heavens, the Moon and the stars are Your work. You laid the foundation of this Earth. We pause in the midst of pressing demands to open our hearts and minds to hear from You.

Bless this Nation. Bless our President and each Representative of the people whom they represent and all that labor with them.

Help us not to forget the timeless principles penned by our Founding Fathers: that men and women are created equal, that we are endowed by You, our Creator, with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Prick our heart to make decisions that embrace these principles. Let the peace of God rule in our hearts. We pray this prayer in the name of the Most High.

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 Montana (Mr. REHBERG) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. REHBERG 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 PRO TEMPORE

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

MAKING SURE SMALL BUSINESS THRIVES AND EXPANDS

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

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this morning to dispel a misleading rumor I recently heard about small business and health care reform.

Some are saying that, by requiring employers to offer health insurance for their employees or to opt out, we are going to crush small business. As a small business owner for over 40 years, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that this reform will not cost us jobs in small business.

Under our current system, there is no requirement for employers to offer insurance. Yet 99 percent of large firms do offer and nearly 65 percent of small firms offer insurance to their employees. For the firms already offering cov-

erage, health care reform will bring much-needed competition and affordability to the insurance market. In addition, the smallest firms will be exempt. Finally, a 50 percent credit will be available to help pay premiums for the small businesses' insurance expenses.

In Ohio's Sixth Congressional District, which I serve, over 11,000 small businesses will receive credits to help cover their employees. As we continue to work on health care reform, I am committed to making sure small business continues to thrive and expand.

AMERICANS DESERVE BETTER

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

Mr. REHBERG. Mr. Speaker, in Montana, we often say there are only two seasons: winter and construction.

This August, at the peak of the construction season, I drove almost 3,500 miles around Montana, having listening sessions.

While it's not strange to see road construction in Montana in August, signs telling drivers that the funds for the construction came from the so-called "stimulus" were new. These signs provide no jobs or long-term investment in our economy. Instead, they represent the worst kind of political credit-taking.

What's more, the signs are wrong. The dollars Congress allocates come from taxpayers. In this case, it would have been more accurate to say: "A project funded by our children and grandchildren." There are better ways to fund and to spend millions of dollars.

Last week, the Senate had a chance to stop wasting money on these signs, but failed to do so. We can do better in the House, and we must because Americans deserve better.

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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HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, economic recovery requires not only solving the employment and housing crises but the health care crisis as well.

In this decade, the premiums charged by private health insurance companies have risen more than 75 percent while workers' wages have risen less than 25 percent. Meanwhile, the profits of the 10 largest health insurers have risen by 400 percent, and the salaries of their CEOs have tripled.

America now has 50 percent higher health care costs than the highest of the next 20 most industrialized nations. Yet Americans suffer shorter life expectancies and higher infant mortalities than any of those nations. Fifty million American citizens who cannot afford basic health insurance receive crisis care in the most expensive way possible: in emergency rooms for which the rest of Americans pay. The uninsured fail to receive the preventative care they need, and the insured shoulder the enormous long-term costs in both lives and dollars of preventable diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.

There is something morally and fiscally wrong with this picture. Wake up, America. We need health care reform now.

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS IN
AFGHANISTAN

(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, yesterday's Washington Post editorial was correct when they stated that President Obama's goals in Afghanistan, as he outlined in March, were essential to preventing another attack on the United States by al Qaeda and its extremist allies. Indeed, there is much at stake in Afghanistan in establishing security and stability throughout the region. President Obama's original strategy is vital to ensuring that terrorist organizations do not reestablish safe havens or return the Taliban to power.

Our military commanders and troops on the ground are doing extraordinary work. We need to ensure they have the resources to complete their mission: to defeat the terrorists and to help provide, as President Obama mentioned in March, stability in the region.

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

HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM
DAILY MYTHBUSTER: IMPACT ON
SENIORS

(Mr. CARNAHAN asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address seniors in this country about many myths that have been perpetrated about current health care reform.

The fact is that health care reform in this House, which we've talked about, simply provides Medicare reimbursement to doctors who spend time with their patients who wish to speak to their doctors about their values and their preferences with regard to end-of-life-care decisions. It empowers older Americans who want to have their wishes observed.

The other myth we've heard about is rationed care. The fact is nothing will stand between you and your doctor or will prevent you from making the best health care decisions, and if you're enrolled in Medicare, it will improve the level of care you can get.

With regard to a so-called "government takeover" of health care, this bill would build on the system of private health care in this country. The CBO said it will actually expand coverage under private care by 16 million and that only about 3 percent of Americans would choose to enroll in a new public health care plan.

Also, with regard to Medicare, we are going to have savings from overpayments to Medicare Advantage plans of \$150 billion, which will help improve the stability of Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, we need to pass this now and get on with the serious business of health care reform for our seniors.

REMOVE THE CMS GAG ORDER

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

Mr. FLEMING. Mr. Speaker, it was recently reported that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has issued a gag order on private insurance companies to prevent them from providing information to their beneficiaries regarding the administration's proposed cuts to Medicare Advantage and how the Democrat health reform could take away their current coverage.

The CBO, by the way, agrees with this. That is a fact that coverage is being taken away.

However, the one entity not being affected by this gag order is the AARP, which has been a prime advocate of the Democrats' government takeover of health care. Even as AARP advocates for cutting Medicare Advantage plans by more than \$150 billion, an analysis of the organization's operation reveals that it stands to receive tens of millions of dollars at the expense of seniors' medical care. Under the Democrats' plan, seniors are going to have to fund kickbacks to AARP-sponsored plans, and there isn't a single provision attempting to impose any new restrictions on AARP policies.

Did CMS somehow forget to include AARP among the organizations whose First Amendment rights to inform seniors of harmful Medicare provisions were restricted, or did the administration only wish to silence its critics?

HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago when the President addressed the Nation from this very Chamber, my Republican colleagues made a big show of waving their plans for the health reform and of waving them all over the floor, five bills and particularly a specific bill.

Unfortunately, just as I hope all of us read our bill, I hope all of you read your own bills. The plans that have been bandied about by my Republican friends lack any commitment to guaranteeing affordable, quality health care for all Americans.

The truth about the Republican plans is that they dismantle and disrupt the health insurance system. Get this, the American people: the provisions espoused by the Republicans would unravel the employer-based system where 159 million Americans get their health coverage. It erodes the employer-provided coverage. It provides fewer choices at higher costs for those who need insurance the most.

Wait until Americans read the Republican plans for us and what they have available.

By the way, the CBO does not in any manner, shape or form tell us how we're going to pay for this under the Republican plans. You've criticized us, and hypocritically, you've done what you say we've done.

AFGHANISTAN

(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. Mr. Speaker, I'll bet Osama bin Laden and his buddies are high-fiving each other in their caves after hearing that the administration is soft-pedaling on its promise for an aggressive fight in Afghanistan.

In March, the President unveiled a new plan for success for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Sadly, now he's singing a different tune at just the wrong time. General McChrystal recently warned that America and our allies are in danger of losing the war if we do not create a bold, new strategy for America that requires more troops.

The President should heed the general's advice and should stand strong for freedom and security by giving our troops the tools they want, need, and deserve for victory so they can return home with honor.

To quote the President: The world cannot afford the price that will come