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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 9, 2010.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DONNA F. EDWARDS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2009, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

HONORING WOMEN OF TOMORROW MENTOR AND SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a wonderful organization, the Women of Tomorrow Mentor and Scholarship Program. As a former educator and Florida certified teacher with a doctorate in education from the University of Miami, I know first hand the importance of providing our children every opportunity to succeed. The Women of Tomorrow

Program is a local lifeline for at-risk young women. This pioneering program pairs extremely accomplished professional women with small groups of at-risk teenage girls in public high schools for a 4-year mentoring program.

These mentoring women who could be judges, doctors, lawyers, indeed from all walks of life, they are all volunteers who are dedicated to showing teenage girls the possibilities that exist if they stay on the right track.

The Women of Tomorrow Program gives students the hope and inspiration needed to be successful, productive, active adults. The volunteers build self-confidence, assist the girls in achieving academic success, and help students give back to their community in both a constructive and positive manner.

Founded in 1997 by veteran TV journalist Jennifer Valoppi and Telemundo president Don Browne, Women of Tomorrow is an unrivaled positive and growing force within our south Florida community. Dozens of public high schools throughout south Florida have implemented the Women of Tomorrow Program. These schools allow over 2,000 young women to be helped by this program. And the high school graduation rate of students in the program is nearly 90 percent.

The Women of Tomorrow Program is inspiring at-risk young women to achieve their fullest potential through a strong education. And since 2000, the Women of Tomorrow project has presented \$2.3 million in scholarship value to over 800 graduates of their program for college. The support offered by the volunteers of Women of Tomorrow give these young women the confidence to pursue a college degree, to realize that they can achieve their goals.

The incredible impact this program has had on south Florida in helping countless troubled youth achieve success is truly phenomenal. It is because of the commitment of dedicated volun-

teers, mentors, and staff at Women of Tomorrow that this innovative program has been such an immense success.

As a proud grandmother of a beautiful baby girl, I know our girls deserve a program like Women of Tomorrow. I look forward to hearing more about all of the future successes of each young woman that is involved in Women of Tomorrow, and congratulate everyone involved for their everyday victory for our children.

I include for the RECORD the wonderful board of directors that guides the Women of Tomorrow Program.

Madam Speaker, at this time I would like to submit for the RECORD the board of directors for the Women of Tomorrow Mentor & Scholarship Program: Jennifer Valoppi, Television Journalist & Author, Founder & President; Don Browne, President, Telemundo Network, Co-Founder & Vice President; The Honorable Katherine Fernandez Rundle, Miami-Dade State Attorney, Founding Mentor & Co-Vice President; Betty Amos, President, The Abkey Companies, Founding Mentor, Board Member & Treasurer; Judge Judith Kreeger, Miami-Dade County Circuit Court, Founding Mentor & Secretary; Jamie Byington, Tax Partner, Cherry, Bekaert & Holland, L.L.P., Board Member; Donna Feldman, CPA, PA, Mentor & Board Member; Marisa Toccin, President, Linea Luxe Lifestyle, Board Member; Lisa Stewart Hughes, Vice President, Compliance, Telemundo/NBC Universal, Board Member; Dr. Diane Walder, MD, PA, Founding Mentor & Board Member.

RESTORING AMERICANS' NET WORTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, since it began in 2007, the Great Recession has caused tremendous hardships throughout the Nation. Millions of Americans have lost their jobs, in increasingly larger numbers

□ 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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every month, including 741,000 in January 2009 alone. Our economy contracted an astounding 5.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2008, and an unbelievable 6.4 percent as this Congress and the Obama administration were taking office in the first quarter of 2009. Foreclosures were skyrocketing, up 81 percent in 2008, with more than 2.3 million homes in default or seized. Our economy was on the brink. Nowhere was that more evident than in the precipitous drop of American households' net worth.

I brought a visual aid today because words alone cannot do this loss justice. From December 2007 through March 2009, Americans lost \$17.5 trillion in net worth. That is trillion with a "t." That is larger than the entire economy of the United States. If we dedicated the entire output of the U.S. economy, every penny spent by every single person, it still would not equal that loss. It represented a loss of \$56,000 for every single person in our country.

I am not talking about the value of a business, or corporate profit. The net worth of American households is their 401(k) and retirement accounts. It is in the value of their children's education fund. It is their emergency savings and nest eggs. It is the equity in their homes, the single largest asset most Americans have. In fact, foreclosed homes have decreased the equity of existing homeowners by \$502 billion alone. American homeowners who always have remained current on their mortgage payments nonetheless have lost more than half a trillion dollars in equity, simply because of those foreclosures. And the broader housing market troubles have only exacerbated that loss.

This long red line represents that loss. It represents \$17.5 trillion of lost college payments, \$17.5 trillion of delayed retirement, \$17.5 trillion lost from the American dream.

This blue line represents the return to growth for that net worth. One of the very first acts this Congress undertook was to pass the Recovery Act. The economy was in free fall, and Americans were literally losing trillions of dollars. And it worked. The first quarter after we passed the Recovery Act, the economy slipped only 0.7 percent, and by the end of last year it had recovered and grown by 5.9 percent, the largest increase in 6 years.

Housing prices had an unprecedented 22 straight months of decline starting in 2007, leaving more than 20 percent of all homeowners underwater with negative equity. Not only are these homeowners unable to access home equity in case of emergencies, they cannot sell their homes without risking bankruptcy if they need to relocate for their jobs. As a result of our actions through the Recovery Act, and the extension and expansion of the first time home buyers tax credit, and overall mortgage refinancing support, housing prices stabilized. And in December 2009, they grew for the seventh consecutive

month. While their value has not fully recovered, the average home sale price increased \$45,000 from January 2009 through January of this year, restoring tens of thousands of dollars in equity to each homeowner.

The stock market, representing the retirement funds, 401(k)s and life savings of so many Americans, has grown almost 60 percent since its March 2009 low. Although there is still a way to go to fully restore the value, the increases have been steady.

The result of these improvements to the American people is the blue line. It is \$5 trillion of value restored to American households. Madam Speaker, I ask you to look at that red line again. The decline was continuous until our interventions. Since our actions, the growth has been continuous.

We are not out of the woods just yet. Households lost value every month for the longest recession since World War II. But we have turned the corner, and Americans today have \$5 trillion more in net worth because of our actions. That is why it is vital to stay the course so we can continue to help every homeowner recover their life savings and restore prosperity to every household.

HEALTH CARE REFORM THAT WORKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, I came to talk about health reform, but would first note that the gentleman from Virginia fails to mention that the economy began its nose-dive when Democrats took control of Congress in January 2007. For 54 months before that, with a Republican President and Republican control of Congress, the economy was doing very well and growing.

Madam Speaker, the American people have spoken loud and clear: they do not want a government takeover of health care. They want sensible, step by step health care reform that works. But the White House is not listening. Instead, they are proposing expensive new entitlements that will only worsen the Federal Government's finances and North Carolina family budgets. At least there is one thing we agree on: we need to have a bill that will lower the cost of health care in America. But you don't lower the cost of health care in America by creating expensive, new, government-run programs. The best way to lower the cost of health care is by empowering patients, putting patients in charge of their health care, not insurance companies and certainly not the government, is the solution.

While I agree with President Obama that we need to lower the cost of health care, the problem is that his proposals, which are simply retreats of the House and Senate bills, will not really lower costs. They are simply a trillion-dollar expansion of government control.

Lower costs will stem from patients who are empowered in making health care decisions through innovations like expanded health savings accounts and by making sure that the trial lawyers who are driving up the cost of health care with a blizzard of frivolous lawsuits are reined in.

So we should start over. Starting over is the single best way to produce bipartisan legislation that the public can support. We should focus on working step by step to enact commonsense health care reform that will lower costs for families and small businesses and expand access to affordable, high-quality care.

Republicans have been talking about a step-by-step approach for months. This approach would allow individuals to buy health care across State lines, cover people with preexisting conditions, improve access to health savings accounts, as well as enact medical liability reform. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that such a commonsense plan would reduce deficits by \$68 billion and reduce private insurance premiums by up to 10 percent. This is a plan that doesn't grow the government, and it is a plan that reduces cost without a government takeover and without breaking the budget or soaking taxpayers. Madam Speaker, it is a plan that will work for the American people.

BORDER SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Arizona (Mrs. KIRKPATRICK) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK of Arizona. Madam Speaker, for too many years the Mexican drug cartels have taken advantage of our unsecured borders, smuggling drugs and people into our country in exchange for the illegal weapons and cash they use to keep their supply routes open.

For too many years, failed policies from the Federal Government allowed these violent gangs to grow and thrive. Politicians in Washington fought each other rather than dealing with the problem. As a result, crime is spilling over into Arizona and throughout the entire Southwest.

While our State, local, and tribal law enforcement do a great job with the resources they have, they cannot do this job alone. Securing our borders is the responsibility of the Federal Government, and the Federal Government has to live up to that responsibility. This government has begun to give this danger the attention it deserves, but there is so much more that has to be done to make up for years of neglect.

I am fighting for the folks in my district who have to live with the consequences of Washington's mistakes, and I am continuing to push for the support that our border agents need. I will not let up. As a part of my efforts, I am happy to announce that I will be touring the Arizona-Mexico border