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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. WATSON).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,

March 16, 2010.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DIANE E. WATSON 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.

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, last week I brought the same chart to the House floor to visibly demonstrate how, starting in 2007, the Great Recession destroyed \$17.5 trillion of household aggregate wealth in the United States. I noted that it represented a loss of more than \$56,000 for every man, woman, and child in America. Trillions of dollars of home equity were lost, retirement savings and college funds lost.

As you can see by the red line here, the worst recession since World War II continually destroyed value from American households for seven straight quarters, from June of 2007 until March of 2009; 21 months of lost net worth. The economy was on the brink of collapse, and the tremendous losses to every American household were directly evident.

But this Congress acted. And as you can see from the blue line, since passage of the Recovery Act, Americans recovered \$5 trillion in net worth during the second and third quarters of 2009. Today I have even better news. Last week, data came out for the fourth quarter of 2009, and once again Americans' net worth increased for the third straight quarter. There was an additional \$800 billion returned to American households over just the past 3 months.

Let me put this in context. The Recovery Act was an investment in this Nation, in this economy, in the American people, to help bring us out of the Great Recession. It kept hundreds of thousands of teachers from being laid off, including 800 in my own district. That is not just a short-term investment in economic recovery, it is a long-term investment in our communities and in the education of our children.

The Recovery Act also provided for thousands of needed transportation improvements. Again, that is a short-term investment in construction jobs, but a long-term investment in our communities and national infrastructure. The Recovery Act's investments, including more than \$200 billion in tax cuts, totaled \$787 billion, and it will be spent over 2 years time. Where is the return on that investment, you just have to look at the blue line showing \$5 trillion in net worth that has been recovered since we passed that bill for American families in the first 9 months of this year. We can now add another

\$800 billion to that figure for the last 3 months of 2009, nearly \$6 trillion in recovered wealth.

The recovery of America's net worth is vital to the overall recovery of our economy. Consumer spending makes up 70 percent of our GDP. However, so long as consumers' net worth remains depressed, consumer spending will naturally suffer. When consumer spending suffers, businesses pull back and lay off employees. It is a tragic downward spiral, one that unfolded starting in the Bush administration in 2007.

But this chart, this blue line of recovery shows we are back on the right track. Despite historic blizzards that many thought would imperil the recovery, retail sales actually increased 0.3 percent in February, outpacing expectations. Housing prices increased 7 straight months, reversing 22 straight months of decline. New orders for manufactured goods are at their highest level since 2008. The manufacturing index has been growing for 6 straight months, and manufacturing jobs have been growing for 3 months. GDP grew at 5.9 percent, its fastest growth in 6 years, in the fourth quarter of 2009. And today, the stock market is up more than 70 percent since its March of 2009 low.

We are not out of the woods yet, and we have some ground to cover before the value of the economic losses are fully recovered. But we are making steady progress, as we can see from this chart. We must now continue on that path to restore financial stability for our residents and the economy as a whole.

JOB KILLING HEALTH CARE

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

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, this week we are going to be taking up, we

□ 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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think, a job killing so-called health care reform bill that the American people do not want but that the Democratic leadership and the President are determined to cram down our throats.

This bill will not help our situation in terms of health care or health insurance. It does not reduce the cost of health insurance which was one of the goals the President said that he wanted. It does not solve any of the problems that we need to solve in health care. In fact, it makes those problems worse.

Yesterday I had a town hall in Statesville, North Carolina, with about 175 people there. They are very upset about this proposed health care reform bill. They understand that a lot of dirty tricks are being played here, and they don't like it. They don't like several aspects of the proposal that is being brought forth this week.

Number one, they don't like the fact that the Democrats are proposing to pass this bill without voting on the bill. They know that goes from passing bills without reading them to passing bills without voting for them. Another thing that they don't like is they don't like to see two bills that have no relationship to each other put together because one of the bills can't pass on its own and so the folks in charge attach it to a bill that they can get the votes for.

And so what the majority people are doing is they are going to latch onto their reconciliation bill a job-killing government takeover of student loans. They are attaching that to their job-killing government takeover of health care which many people have called a monstrosity.

This is not the way the American people want us to be operating in this Congress. We are the greatest country in the world with the best form of government in the world. But what is about to happen this week, if the American people do not speak out even louder than they have spoken out, is you are going to see Democrats vote for this monstrosity and undermine the rule of law that exists in this country. It is a scary proposition.

Republicans know that we need reform in health insurance and in health care, and we have made proposals to do that. We have legislation that will reduce cost in health insurance. The plan that the Democrats have put forward will not reduce cost. Even one of their Senators, DICK DURBIN, said that last week on the floor of the Senate.

The bill also does not allow people to continue the current health insurance that they have which the President has been saying you could do. In his meeting with Republicans at our retreat, he admitted that he had been saying that incorrectly. He is still saying it even though he said it was incorrect because you will not be allowed to keep your insurance if you like it.

Republicans want for Americans to be able to buy their health care across State lines. We want medical liability

reform. We want to expand health savings accounts. We want to put Americans in charge of their health care and in charge of their health insurance. We don't want a giant government takeover of health insurance and health care. This can be done to help Americans, but what the Democrats are proposing will not be the right thing to do.

I serve on the Rules Committee. They are planning to bring a rule that will say if you vote for the rule, you voted for the bill. That has never happened in the history of this country. Again, it undermines the rule of law and the American people will not stand for it.

COLON CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

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

Mr. BOREN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to remind Members of this body that the month of March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. During the month of March, colon cancer advocates across the country will organize and participate in a wide range of activities to raise awareness about this horrible disease. This year alone, almost 150,000 Americans will be diagnosed with colon cancer, and approximately 50,000 of them will die from it.

Madam Speaker, it doesn't have to be that way. If detected early, the survival rate for colon cancer is almost 90 percent. Yet less than half of all Americans get the recommended preventive tests by the suggested age of 50.

Colon cancer is an issue that is very personal to me; 12 years ago, I lost my mother Janna to this dreadful disease. And since arriving in Congress, I have made it one of my missions to bring attention to this serious yet preventable cancer. So for the next 3 weeks, I want Members of this body to ask themselves and their constituents two important questions: Have you asked your doctor if you should get a colonoscopy? Do you know that it could save your life?

THE FAIR TAX

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

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Madam Speaker, this past weekend, like many Americans, my wife and I sat at our kitchen table and worked on getting our taxes figured out so we could file our return. Across our country, millions of Americans are working to finalize their annual tax return. It is clear that our system of income taxes is broken. To restore our Nation's economic health, increase personal liberty, reduce cheating and confusion, and restore fairness, Congress must abandon our current tax code and replace it with something much better.

There is no reason that paying taxes should be so complicated and so con-

fusing. The burden in this process that is placed upon individuals and small businesses must be relieved. The IRS itself has estimated that 7.6 billion hours are spent in tax preparation every year. That 7.6 billion hours equates to 3.8 million people working full time for a full year. Congress can simplify this process and reduce the amount of time and energy spent on paying our taxes.

As a longtime supporter of the FAIR Tax, I see H.R. 25 as a step in the direction of liberty and prosperity. The FAIR Tax seeks to eliminate the payroll, estate, and many other taxes to be replaced by a national sales tax levied on purchased goods. Overhauling the U.S. Tax Code is not an easy task to undertake, but reducing the burden of filing taxes should be a priority in this Congress. Anyone who views our tax collection practices can see the flaws. The question is whether Congress has the courage and determination to change it.

The process of tax reform has major consequences for every American, but it is a process that must be started because the consequences of inaction are too costly. The truth remains that Americans want and need some sort of tax filing relief. The need for common-sense reform becomes more obvious during this tax season.

I have called on the newly installed chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) to schedule a hearing on the FAIR Tax. I encourage my colleagues who are serious about starting an open conversation on tax reform to join me in this request. The American people are ready to have that conversation, and their representatives should be also.

□ 1145

Americans are in need of tax reform and simplification, but instead, all they are getting from this Congress is increased spending and record deficits. By reforming this broken process, Americans will once more be in charge of their lives and their money.

Over the course of the last several years, American taxpayers have become much more attentive to what is and what is not happening in Washington, DC. Tea Party protests and fair tax advocates are making their voices heard. Their message is clear to Congress if Congress will only listen—simplify the tax code. In doing so, we will create an opportunity for economic growth and new prosperity while increasing personal freedom and liberty.

April 15 is now less than 1 month away. No more business as usual. Let's not let another tax year go by without action to replace our convoluted, confusing, and freedom-restricting tax code.

HEALTH CARE

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