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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER. 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.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK of Arizona. Madam Speaker, over the past months, we have witnessed firsthand the potential consequences of allowing the national debt to continue growing out of control. Greece borrowed heavily during the last decade during the boom and the bubble and found itself at risk of default when global credit dried up. Now the country is facing financial disaster.

The crisis should serve as a warning to Washington. This country's debt is now $12.9 trillion and is approaching unsustainable levels. We must address the fiscal imbalance here before it's too late. Washington must start by making major changes to the budget—changes that go beyond freezing spending and instead look to make significant budget cuts. That means we have to crack down on the consequence-free spending culture in Congress. Washington needs to put a priority on eliminating waste and finding cost-effective ways to achieve this country's goals.

Budget cuts are not always easy or popular, but business as usual in Washington is not working. Greece's rapid spiral shows that it is past time that we start to take serious steps—both big and small—to address our fiscal health.

NET REGULATION WILL HARM INVESTMENT AND INNOVATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. MARKEY of Colorado). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, a recent announcement by FCC Chairman Genachowski to impose new, burdensome regulation on the Internet and on Internet transmission appears to me to be a political maneuver to regulate the Internet. Several weeks ago, he indicated he was not going to push for net regulation. Now he is. There is no economic or legal justification for this move and the result will be a freeze in the investment and innovation we have seen over the past 20 years. The Internet is the most powerful platform for innovation ever created and, by his actions, Chairman Genachowski is endangering the Internet's deployment and ultimately its innovation.

Our current free-market, pro-investment policies have served us well. In fact, according to the FCC's own National Broadband Plan, 95 percent of all Americans have access to broadband and approximately 200 million subscribers have broadband at home today, up from 8 million just 10 years ago. By comparison, it took 90 years to go from 8 million voice subscribers to 200 million under the old Title II Common Carrier Regulations. Ironically, the chairman's laudable goal of maximizing broadband deployment and adoption will be most harmed by his announcement.

Will Rogers once said that, ''Things in our country run in spite of the government, not by the aid of it.'' He was not, of course, talking about the Internet, but his words still ring true today. The rise of the Internet itself is a truly great deregulatory story. What started as a government-run network for sharing research has now exploded into a force for mass communication, entertainment, and commerce, when we turned it over to the private sector and lifted restrictions on its use by commercial entities and the public. The unregulated Internet is now starting to help spur a new technological revolution in this country. Where there were once separate phone, cable, wireless, and other industries providing distinct and separate services, we're now seeing a confluence and a blur of providers all competing against each other for consumers, offering broadband, voice, video services, and much more.

The Apple iPod is a perfect example of the confluence of the Internet, the TV, and the computer, which will then be followed by other exciting products. Lines of technology are being blurred all the time. In fact, a few years ago, you had to have separate platforms for each additional individual TV technology. Now, your computer becomes your TV, your TV doubles for your computer, and your wireless device becomes your TV, your computer, your phone, and camera. We will see more of this convergence in the years to come if we remain on the current deregulatory path. However, the FCC appears to want to change course. In response to the FCC's announcement, I introduced a bill today, H.R. 5257—the Internet Investment, Innovation, and Competition Preservation Act—that would prevent the FCC from regulating the Internet or Internet transmission, absent a market failure.

□ 1245

My bill would require the FCC to conduct a rigorous market analysis before mandating new network regulations. The FCC would need to prove that regulations are, indeed, necessary. Chairman Genachowski has said on numerous occasions that he wants to make sure that the FCC is the most data-driven agency. Well, let's see the data. Let's see the data showing there's a need for regulation before you do it, Mr. Chairman.

□ 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.

With our economy still struggling, now is the worst time to impose new regulations on the Internet and on Internet service providers; yet, this is exactly what the FCC is going to try to do. Communication companies are among the few companies still investing billions of dollars into our economy in these very difficult financial times. Net regulation will discourage investment and innovation precisely when we need it the most, especially in light of our push to increase broadband deployment in this country.

The FCC's announcement is a perfect example of how regulations meant to help can actually hurt our policy goals while taking more money out of the American taxpayers' pockets. I am reminded again, Madam Speaker, of another Will Rogers quote when he said, ''Be thankful we're not getting all the government we're paying for.'' Our history of communication policy is rife with examples of the best regulatory intentions going awry. More often than not, advances come despite regulation or, as with our Internet policy over the past couple of decades, from our decision not to regulate.

AVOIDING A SECOND ECONOMIC COLLAPSE: THE NEED FOR FINANCIAL REFORM

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, the global economy is increasingly interconnected. The current economic crisis may have begun in the United States, but it rapidly spread throughout the world. Now as we stand on the cusp of a sustained economic recovery, we must be mindful of the ripple effects and guard against further threats to our economy.

Last Thursday's historic stock market plunge, initially precipitated by Greece's economic uncertainty, must serve as a stark reminder of what happens when you don't have adequate protections in place. Without proper oversight, Madam Speaker, our financial markets are dangerously exposed.

In the financial chaos that erupted last Thursday, shares of Accenture swung from $40 to one penny and back to $40. Shares of Procter & Gamble traded for $54 on the New York Stock Exchange but only $39 on the NASDAQ. Those aren't market forces at work. Those are market forces that are broken. Almost 300 trades made under questionable circumstances had to be subsequently canceled by the trading houses. Such wild disparities highlight the dangers of a marketplace left largely to its own devices and the tremendous risk posed to our economy and those who invest in it.

The recession of 2007 began in the financial sector. Its effects were widespread. Millions of Americans lost their jobs. Millions more had their homes foreclosed. Millions more lost their retirement savings, college funds, and emergency reserves. In fact, American households cumulatively lost $17.5 trillion in aggregate household wealth in the recession.

Now it's true, Madam Speaker, that we're seeing signs of an economic recovery. The Nation's gross domestic product is once again growing at the rate of 5.6 percent in the last quarter of 2009 and another 3.2 percent in the first quarter of this year. After 2 years of job losses, culminating with 741,000 jobs lost in January of 2009, we're finally in the midst of our fourth straight month of job growth, even though the other side of the aisle can't accept good news when they see it. More than 290,000 jobs were created last month, the most since March of 2006. Despite the recent uncertainty, the stock markets are up more than 50 percent since their March 2009 lows.

But it is that lingering uncertainty that we have sought to address with our actions in this Congress. Similar financial sector problems came to a head in 2007, leading to the worst economic recession since the Great Depression. And as last Thursday reminded us, we're still at risk to financial sector uncertainty. Responsible Wall Street reform remains one of the critical components of a sustainable economic recovery.

Madam Speaker, with such an obvious need for reform, why hasn't it been implemented already? Why, for example, is the more than $700 trillion—that's trillion with a ''T''—derivatives market still completely unregulated? We must ensure that this highly speculative market is brought out of the shadows and operates with transparency and responsible oversight. Why are the American taxpayers still faced with the possibility of bailing out financial institutions deemed ''too big to fail?'' Never again should private risk become a public responsibility.

I was proud to join a majority of my colleagues in this body in supporting passage of Wall Street reform last December to address these systemic problems and protect American families and their savings. We provided for regulation of the shadowy derivatives market. We brought accountability and transparency to the financial sector. We ended the practice of ''too big to fail.'' We established safeguards to ensure that the abuses of the past are never again repeated. Madam Speaker, the House made Wall Street reform a priority.

Although the Senate finally began its own deliberations a few weeks ago, the process thus far has been slow. I am encouraged to see bipartisan negotiations on the bill after a failed filibuster attempt by the minority. After last week, can there be any doubt that we need Wall Street reform now?

Every day of delay is one more opportunity for a recurrence of economic uncertainty and even collapse. Last Thursday's roller coaster on the stock market was a clear reminder that we cannot allow a continued and willful lack of responsible oversight to expose American families, American business, and our whole economy to such potential risk. Madam Speaker, we must have Wall Street reform now.

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 50 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m. today.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

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

PRAYER

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

Lord, make Your presence known in our midst that we may calm the fears of Your people and bring justice to the land. Fill the Members of Congress with understanding that they may relish our national diversity and gain wisdom by listening to one another. Make of us an instrument of peace in the world by lifting us beyond self-centeredness to a new level of transcendence and transparency. Let Your truth reign in our hearts that we may give You glory both now and forever. 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 Texas (Mr. POE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. POE of Texas 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.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, May 11, 2010.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
The Speaker, U.S. Capitol, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II