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Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 25, 2011, at 12 noon.

House of Representatives

MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2011

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. FOXF).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 24, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable VIRGINIA FOXF to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2011, 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 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

LET'S GET REAL ABOUT THE DEFICIT

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

Mr. DEFazio. Well, by all accounts we're finally going to get serious about

the mountain of debt that's been built up over the last 10 years that we're going to leave for our kids and grandkids—nearly \$14 trillion, a number that's hard to actually understand.

Now, I'm hopeful it will really be a serious discussion, but it can't be as long as the Republican rules stand. The Republicans have said that if you reduce income to the government that that doesn't count toward the debt or the deficit. You have to borrow the money—probably from China—and it goes on the debt for our kids and grandkids. But they don't count that because it's your money. We're giving it back to you. Except, of course, we're still spending more than is coming in.

Now, I'm all for looking at the expenditure side, and there are a lot of places I'd like to cut. Republicans have put some of them off-limits.

We can't look anywhere in the Pentagon who is still acquiring through cost-plus contracts weapons that were designed to fight during the Soviet era. We're wasting a fair amount of money over there. It's well documented.

The Pentagon is the only agency of the Federal Government that can't be audited. Every other agency is audited. Most of them get good grades. The Pentagon, they say maybe within 5 years they will have an accounting system that could be audited. Come on. And we're going to exempt them from scrutiny and review and cuts?

The war in Afghanistan, they've exempted that from cuts. They want to spend about \$200 billion this year on the wind-down in Iraq and the war in

Afghanistan. But that's off the table as far as Republicans are concerned.

And Social Security they say is off the table, and that's good. Medicare is off the table. They just added to the costs of Medicare with legislation they passed last week, but that doesn't count either. That was exempt.

So what's left? Well, we're going to have, because of the tax cuts adopted in December, a \$1.6 trillion 1-year deficit. Now, if we were only going to get to a balanced budget this year with cuts, that would mean eliminating the entire government of the United States of America. We'd still make our Social Security payments. And we wouldn't be able to exempt the Pentagon, which they want to do, if we wanted to really get to \$1.6 trillion.

No more Border Patrol. No more Homeland Security. No more Coast Guard. No more Postal Service. No more Centers for Disease Control. Department of Education, gone. They wouldn't care much about that. Park Service I guess would probably sell off the parks to the highest bidder. I don't know.

So you can't be serious and stand here and say we're going to put this hand and tie it behind our back, which is the revenue side. Oh, and by the way, if we give millionaires and billionaires tax cuts and reduce our income, that doesn't count. If we allow corporations to continue to use overseas tax loopholes to avoid paying a responsible level of taxes here in the United States, that doesn't count. Can't close any loopholes. That would be bad. No.

☐ 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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They just say we're going to do it all in cuts. It's an impossible task.

But I worry even though they say they've exempted Social Security that that's not really their game plan. Because for the first time this year, we will borrow money to put into Social Security. Never been done since the program was created. It's always been funded by its own tax.

But this year, the Republicans cooked up an idea—which President Obama bought into lock, stock, and barrel—to reduce the Social Security tax under the guise of giving people back their money and putting people to work. Every Member of Congress will get over \$2,000 in tax breaks this year because of that one provision. Every millionaire and billionaire will get over \$2,000 in tax breaks. Working people will get a tax break, too—and they can use a tax break—but there are better ways to do it, less costly ways to do it, and ways to do it without jeopardizing the future of Social Security.

So part of the borrowing this year, a couple of hundred billion dollars of that borrowing this year is going to be from China, the government will borrow, to reinject into the Social Security trust fund.

So I fear the Republicans are going to say, "Well, wait a minute. We can't subsidize that Social Security thing. And oh, by the way, you can't restore the taxes and run Social Security on its own income." So they're creating some impossible scenarios here.

I'm hopeful the President will chart a better path, one that doesn't go after Social Security. Social Security didn't create, until this year, one penny of the debt of the United States but this year it will create \$200 billion of debt for the United States. A very bad precedent set by a bipartisan problem—the Republicans and President Obama and some few Democrats.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Let's get real about the deficit.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, as one who is firmly in the camp of not just supporting the benefits but the necessity of government regulation, I nonetheless welcomed the President's recent op-ed in the Wall Street Journal and his executive order to review the regulations we have in place.

This is a unique opportunity to reframe at least part of the regulatory debate to satisfy both sides and better serve the public. The area of opportunity lies in creating a new generation of environmental protections that are performance based. Pioneering efforts to protect the environment, like the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, were regulatory based that

worked well for their time. Public health requirements, citizen expectations have evolved. Subsequent efforts have become more difficult, expensive, and time consuming.

Having these agencies dictate specifics is not necessarily providing the most innovative, timely, nor cost-effective solutions.

There is an alternative to rules-based procedures, command-and-control rules process. Such a model would give latitude to parties on how they comply with the standards for protection as long as they met or exceeded the requirement.

In Oregon, we were able, some years ago, in partnership with the EPA and the State Department of Environmental Quality, to work with a major industrial presence in our community, Intel, on a plant expansion where latitude was granted for air quality compliance. The company made an enforceable commitment to the requisite clean air and environmental regulations, but the environmental agent regulators did not micromanage how the company complied. The result? Clean air with less cost and time.

There are countless opportunities for this principle to save time, money, and create innovation, and importantly, the potential to reduce opposition to the regulatory process itself: building trust and confidence, partnerships between the regulator and the regulated with more control, more flexibility, producing a cleaner, safer environment.

This requires first and foremost an administration that can be trusted to act in good faith because too often, regulatory reform is a tactic of those who are simply opposed to the regulation in its first instance.

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This approach will only invite fierce opposition to watered-down protection. The Obama administration has established its environmental credentials and should be able to avoid, or at least lay to rest, that sort of concern.

There are two other necessary elements. The standards must be clear, and the parties must be both responsible and have the capacity to be held accountable. Nothing must allow the protection in question to be undercut. Indeed, it may be reasonable for performance-based approaches to require higher standards and environmental protection. And we certainly don't have to suspend current rules or regulations. Just give an alternative path for compliance that we can always fall back upon if people fall short.

Once it's clear that we can produce the environmental or other desired protections on a performance basis, perhaps we can tackle redundant regulatory processes. For instance, California has arguably more stringent environmental regulations than the United States Government itself. Can we figure out a way to apply that single, more stringent standard rather

than forcing individuals, government agencies to comply with both?

In sum, it's always helpful for an administration to make sure our efforts at government regulation are effective and relevant. By all means, eliminate the unnecessary or the ineffective. What is more important, however, is to usher in a new era of performance-based protections to improve regulations, save money, and protect the public welfare.

THE BUDGET AND SUSTAINABLE DEFENSE

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

Mr. KUCINICH. As we begin this great debate over what our priorities are, it's worth reflecting on an article that was written nearly 3 years ago in the Sunday Times of London by Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz and his associate Linda Bilmes. Here is what they write:

"The Bush administration was wrong about the benefits of the war"—talking about the Iraq war—"and was wrong about the costs of the war. The President and his advisers expected a quick, inexpensive conflict. Instead, we have a war that is costing more than anyone could have imagined.

"The cost of direct U.S. military operations—not even including long-term costs such as taking care of wounded veterans—already exceeds the cost of the 12-year war in Vietnam and is more than double the cost of the Korean War.

"And, even in the best case scenario, these costs are projected to be almost 10 times the cost of the first gulf war, almost a third more than the cost of the Vietnam war, and twice that of the First World War. The only war in our history that cost more was the Second World War, when 16.3 million U.S. troops fought in a campaign lasting 4 years, at a total cost, in 2007 dollars, after adjusting for inflation, of about \$5 trillion."

They go on to write that, "With virtually the entire Armed Forces committed to fighting the Germans and Japanese, the cost per troop, in today's dollars, was less than \$100,000." That's in 2007 dollars. "By contrast, the Iraq war is costing upward of \$400,000 per troop.

"Most Americans have yet to feel these costs." This was written almost 3 years ago. "The price in blood has been paid by our voluntary military and by hired contractors. The price in treasure has, in a sense, been financed entirely by borrowing. Taxes have not been raised to pay for it—in fact, taxes on the rich have actually fallen. Deficit spending gives the illusion that the laws of economics can be repealed, that we can have both guns and butter. But, of course, the laws are not repealed. The costs of the war are real even if they have been deferred, possibly to another generation."