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House of Representatives

The House met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WEBSTER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 22, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DANIEL WEBSTER 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 11:20 a.m.

THREE OF THE TOP PERFORMING MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOLS IN THE COUNTRY

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this week, three middle schools located in Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District—Mount Nittany Middle School in State College, Park Forest Middle School in State College, and Titusville Middle School in Titusville—have been named three of the top performing middle grades

schools in the country by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. I rise today to recognize and congratulate these three schools for this noteworthy achievement.

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform is an alliance of more than 70 educators, researchers, and officers of national associations and foundations dedicated to improving schools for young adolescents across the country. Every year, the forum, through their Schools to Watch program, identifies schools across the United States for their high performance.

The forum's members believe that three things are true of high-performing middle grades schools: They are academically excellent; developmentally responsive schools that are sensitive to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescents; and socially equitable, schools that are democratic and fair, providing every student with high-quality teachers, resources, and supports.

Later this week, these three schools will be recognized with 97 other high-performing schools from across the Nation during the forum's annual conference. I am proud to represent these incredible teachers, administrators, and students. These outstanding efforts deserve recognition, and I want to congratulate all of you for this awesome achievement.

PROTECT OUR WORKERS FROM EXPLOITATION AND RETALIATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. CHU) for 5 minutes.

Ms. CHU. I rise today to announce the introduction of legislation that will finally provide protection to immigrant workers from exploitation, the Protect Our Workers from Exploitation and Retaliation Act, the POWER Act.

Too often, unscrupulous employers threaten or retaliate against workers who complain about illegal working conditions. Today, employers can use a worker's immigration status and threaten them so that they will fear reporting them to the authorities. The abuse of these vulnerable workers undermines working conditions and wages for all U.S. workers.

The POWER Act protects these workers. Under current law, the U visa provides temporary status for immigrants who are victims of crimes, including domestic violence and rape. The POWER Act ensures that this visa protection is also provided to these workers who risk everything by reporting to authorities the employers who break the law by committing serious labor violations.

Today, such workers are silent out of fear, but silence can mean the difference between life and death. Take the case of Mr. Asuncion Valdivia, a farmworker who came from Mexico seeking a better life. One day, during the hot summer months, he picked grapes for 10 hours straight in 105 degree temperatures. Then he fell over, unconscious and ill. Instead of calling an ambulance, Giumarra Vineyards told his son to drive Mr. Valdivia home. On his way home, the father started foaming at the mouth and died of a heat stroke. A son had to witness his father die, a preventable death, at the age of 53.

After hearing about this tragedy, I had to act. For 15 years, the farmworker advocates had petitioned Cal OSHA for minimal health protections for the workers who perished and died working in heat, but they were always ignored. So I carried a bill in the California legislature that required that farmworkers and all outdoor workers have basic protections from the heat: water, shade, and rest periods. It passed and became the first law of its kind in the Nation.

□ 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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A decade after that law, I am in Congress. And while some farms obey the heat protections, others are flagrantly violating it. The POWER Act will stop these violations. It would have let someone like Asuncion go to the authorities without fear of retaliation. It would have let him continue to work while he cooperated with Cal OSHA to take Giumarra to court and would have ensured that Giumarra treated all their workers fairly from then on. And I hope that because of the POWER Act, a son will never have to watch a father die in this way again.

The POWER Act will bring abused workers out of the shadows. It will give employees the courage to stand up to the world's biggest and strongest companies. The POWER Act will fundamentally change the very structure of workers' rights in this country. It supports every honest, hardworking employee across the country, protecting them. It's time that exploited workers were able to come out of the shadows, leave cruel conditions, and find jobs where they are treated with the dignity and respect that every employee in America deserves. It's time for the POWER Act.

RUSSIA

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, in August of 2008, Russia and the Republic of Georgia engaged in what author Ronald Asmus called "A Little War That Shook the World." And, Mr. Speaker, it did shake the world. For all of post-Soviet Russia's anti-democratic crack-downs, its aggressive and bellicose actions toward former Soviet states, it was still a shock to see Russian tanks roll across the border of a sovereign, democratic country. The military conflict lasted 5 days; and a shaken world moved on, soon forgetting the shock and outrage of what happened.

But for the people of the Republic of Georgia, this conflict goes on nearly 3 years later. They live with the tragic consequences that follow any armed conflict, including thousands of displaced persons and significant economic hardships. Beyond the human cost, they face a long-term strategic challenge of an occupying force in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia where Russia continues to violate the terms of the ceasefire to which it agreed.

As occupiers, they violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of an independent democratic state, one that has chosen a path toward integration with Euro-Atlantic institutions and, more important, one that has chosen integration with Euro-Atlantic values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Russia's recalcitrance has left the region in a bitter stalemate as it flouts international norms and its own commitments. Within the context of this

stalemate, the temperature has seemed to cool, with bitter hardship and frustrations supplanting heated military conflict.

But that cooling temperature is perhaps a very dangerous illusion. While the fear of overt military action may be waning, more subversive—but just as potentially deadly—action is taking place. Since 2009, the Republic of Georgia has experienced 12 acts or attempted acts of terrorism within its borders, which the Georgians believe are linked to Russian forces.

One such bombing, on September 22, 2010, took place right near the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi. Two thwarted attacks took place just this month. One improvised explosive device was intercepted on June 2, two days before several colleagues and I arrived in Tbilisi. Another was intercepted on June 6 while we were still there.

□ 0940

We had the opportunity to discuss with President Saakashvili at length the nature of these attacks and attempted attacks. He and his administration are increasingly concerned about what they perceive to be a systematic effort to target the Georgian people and undermine their progress toward a peaceful, stable, democratic and independent nation. The intended targets of recent bombing attempts seem to suggest an increased focus on civilian casualties, which is particularly troubling.

As investigations proceed to determine the exact origin and intent of these bombings, it is more important than ever that we stand with our Georgian friends; that we stand with their right to sovereignty and territorial integrity; that we stand with their efforts to build a stronger democracy. In fact, the purpose of my recent trip to Tbilisi was to continue the work of the House Democracy Partnership, which has a longstanding program with the Georgian legislature.

My co-chairman, DAVID PRICE, and I have led a number of delegations to Tbilisi and hosted many Georgian legislators in Washington in order to provide training and support as they build their legislative institutions.

It is important to work with new and reemerging democracies as they grow and develop, but it is all the more essential for us to support those who are under attack for the very reason that they have chosen their democratic path.

The Obama administration has attempted to reset relations with Russia for a number of pragmatic and strategic reasons. I believe they were right to do so. But it is important to differentiate those relationships which are important for inescapable geopolitical considerations, and those which are based on shared values and goals. As a major international player and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, we must engage constructively with Russia, but

that does not mean we must turn a blind eye to its tactics or strategic aims towards the former Soviet sphere. To the contrary, we must engage with eyes wide open.

Georgia is not the only state to have emerged from the Soviet orbit with democratic intentions, only to face deliberate, significant pressures and obstacles from Moscow.

The nature of our engagement with Russia will get more scrutiny than ever as Moscow moves toward entry into the World Trade Organization. Bringing them into a rules-based trading system will help us deal with the challenges that we face, but we cannot lose our resolve to address these challenges, or lose sight of the fact that the fate of democracy in the post-Soviet world is one of them. Those who are working diligently against great odds to build democratic institutions must know that the American people stand with them.

TAX LOOPHOLES

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, in their agitation over the debt, our Republican friends have obstinately focused on program cuts alone, ignoring the harm to American families and the economic recovery. Their mindless slashing of the budget is costing jobs, while damaging communities. Yesterday's news about EPA cuts hurting local efforts at clean air and clean water is another example.

More than a quarter of the deficit growth since 2001 resulted from the economic downturn which reduced tax revenues and increased programmatic spending. You spend more on unemployment when more people are unemployed.

Our focus should be on job creation, which reduces unemployment costs and increases tax revenue. However, in their first 6 months in the majority, the Republicans have not passed any legislation to create jobs.

The government's budget is often compared to a household budget, but every family knows that expenses are just one side of the equation. How many Americans, in tough times, take on second or even third jobs to increase their income because some expenses just can't be cut?

As a Nation, we have the ability to increase our revenues, our income. An obvious place to look for additional income is closing tax loopholes and ending unnecessary subsidies, for example, for large oil companies would be one of the best places to start.

Tax incentives are intended to help businesses create vital American jobs or develop technologies to improve our way of life. We as Democrats support those tax incentives that increase domestic manufacturing and other American businesses which create jobs and