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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 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,
July 14, 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 11:50 a.m.

BRING OUR TROOPS HOME FROM AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I plan to come to the floor at least once, maybe twice a week until we get our troops home from Afghanistan. I do that because I have the privilege to represent the Third District of North Carolina, the home of Camp Lejeune Marine Base, Cherry Point Marine Air Station, and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. I have been privileged, since I didn't

serve, to have great relationships with active duty and retired marines in the district.

I want to share with this House, Mr. Speaker, that we continue to support a corrupt leader and a corrupt government. Just recently, the half brother of Mr. Karzai, Wali Karzai, was murdered in Afghanistan. This only reinforces the fact that Afghanistan is in a fragile situation at every level of their government. It is in chaos, quite frankly.

Just this week, I spoke with a Marine colonel who has been to Afghanistan three times. He was in my office on Tuesday, and he shared the same sentiments as the retired Marine general who has been advising me for 20 months. Recently, I emailed the general and I said, Please give me your ideas of what Mr. Obama has proposed in bringing 10,000 of our troops out in July and then another 23,000 next year, 2012. This is what he emailed back to me, Mr. Speaker, and I read:

"I think the timeline is too long. I think he needs to increase the number of troops coming out of country, more and quicker."

Another point he made in his email is: "Get real with 'training' an army and police force. All we are doing is training eventual new members of the Taliban. Trainers are doing a wonderful job, but we don't have the time to 'make' an army."

And, Mr. Speaker, then it was kind of sad the way he closed: Every day somebody from our country dies—a marine, a soldier, an airman, Navy, whatever.

Mr. Speaker, I bring posters to the floor—I have probably 12 now that I want to bring to the floor every time that I speak—to remind the House that there is pain in war.

The wife to my left on the poster is in tears. The little girl, who is about 2 years of age, she doesn't understand why this Army officer is kneeling before her with a folded flag. Yet I would say to the little girl: When you grow

older and you're old enough to know, your daddy was a real hero, Sergeant Jeffrey Sherer, who gave his life for this country.

Mr. Speaker, that leads me to share with the House an editorial that was written about 4 weeks ago by Eugene Robinson, and the title is, "Afghan Strategy: Let's Go." And I want to read from his editorial:

"Slender threads of hope are nice, but they do not constitute a plan. Nor do they justify continuing to pour American lives and resources into the bottomless pit of Afghanistan. The threat from Afghanistan is gone. Bring the troops home."

This, again, is an editorial from Eugene Robinson.

Mr. Speaker, with our Nation in such a financial crisis, the people of the Third District of North Carolina, which I represent, ask me many times when I'm home on the weekends: Why are we still in Afghanistan? Why are we still spending \$10 billion a month to prop up a corrupt leader and there's no future in Afghanistan?

We're not going to change history. History has always said to these great nations like America: You go into Afghanistan, you're never going to change anything.

The Congress needs to join those of us on both sides of the aisle when we debate trying to bring our troops home from Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, again I want to make reference to the wife in tears and the little girl looking up at the Army officer wondering, Why are you giving me this flag? Young lady, your daddy was a hero.

I close, Mr. Speaker, by saying to God, please bless our men and women in uniform. God, please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. God, please, in Your loving arms, hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq.

□ 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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God, please bless the House and Senate, that we will do what is right. God, please give wisdom, strength, and courage to President Obama, that he will do what is right.

And three times, God please, God please, God please continue to bless America.

THE MASSIVE TRANSFER OF WEALTH FROM THE MANY TO THE HANDS OF A FEW

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

Mr. KUCINICH. The rancorous debate over the debt belies a fundamental truth of our economy: that it is run for the few at the expense of the many, that our entire government has been turned into a machine which takes the wealth of the mass of Americans and accelerates it into the hands of a few. Let me give you some examples.

Take war. War takes the money from the American people and puts it into the hands of arms manufacturers, of war profiteers, of private armies. The war in Iraq, based on lies, \$3 trillion will be the cost of that war, at least. The war in Afghanistan, based on a misreading of history, half a trillion dollars in expenses already. The war against Libya will be \$1 billion by September. Fifty percent of our discretionary spending goes for the Pentagon. A massive transfer of wealth into the hands of a few while the American people lack sufficient jobs, health care, housing, retirement security.

Our energy policies take the wealth from the American people and put it into the hands of the oil companies. We could be looking at \$150 a barrel for oil in the near future.

□ 1010

Our environmental policy takes the wealth of the people, clean air, clean water, and puts it in the hands of the polluters. It's a transfer of wealth not only from the present but from future generations, as our environment is ruined.

Insurance companies, what do they do? They take the wealth from the American people, in terms of what they charge people for health insurance, and they put it into the hands of the few.

We have to realize what this country's economy has become. Our monetary policy, through the Federal Reserve Act of 1913, privatized the money supply, gathers the wealth and puts it in the hands of the few while the Federal Reserve can keep creating money out of nothing, give it to banks to park at the Fed, and our small businesses are starved for capital.

Mark my words: Wall Street cashes in whether we have a default or not. And the same type of thinking that created billions in bailouts for Wall Street and more than \$1 trillion in giveaways by the Federal Reserve today leaves 26 million Americans either underemployed or unemployed.

And 9 out of 10 Americans over the age of 65 are facing cuts in their Social Security in order to pay for a debt which grew from tax cuts for the rich and from endless wars.

There is a massive transfer of wealth from the American people to the hands of the few, and it's going on right now as America's eyes are misdirected to the political theater of these histrionic debt negotiations: threats to shut down the government, a willingness to make the most vulnerable Americans pay dearly for debts they did not create. These are symptoms of a government which has lost its way, and they are a challenge to the legitimacy of the two-party system.

CONGRATULATING DR. JOHN SHANK ON HIS RETIREMENT FROM TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a dear friend and colleague, Dr. John Shank, and congratulate him on his retirement from Temple University. Dr. Shank is a tenured professor at Temple University, where he serves as the director of the Therapeutic Recreation Program within the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences.

In his 25 years of tremendous service to Temple, Professor Shank has put forth a level of commitment to the advancement of professional knowledge within the field of recreational therapy that is second to none. Without a doubt, John's scholarly successes have overwhelmingly contributed to the reputation of Temple University being regarded as the most prolific academic center within the field of recreational therapy. Not only has Dr. Shank made tremendous contributions to his field, he has served as an outstanding teacher and role model to those students who were fortunate enough to have him as a classroom instructor or research adviser.

Dr. Shank, thank you, for a lifetime of academic and recent achievements and for your contributions to the field of recreational therapy at Temple University. I congratulate you on your retirement and wish you well in the future.

COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

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

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker and Members of the House, very shortly the United States Congress is likely to consider three ill-conceived and ill-timed trade agreements that will do nothing to create jobs in this country. One of these agreements is with the nation of Colombia.

One of our most important responsibilities as elected officials is to promote and protect American jobs and American values. We do this by ensuring that those who receive trade preferences respect essential democratic rights. These are important rights: the right to speak out and protest, the right to organize unions and bargain collectively, and the right of citizens to support political efforts to improve their economic condition without reprisals.

Unfortunately, we see what happens when union members in Colombia try exercise their rights. Death squads are unleashed against union activists and human rights defenders; labor leaders are gunned down in broad daylight. This isn't yesterday's news. The intimidation and violence continue to this day. There have been 17 confirmed killings of unionists in Colombia this year, according to a human rights group. Last year, 90 unionists were murdered worldwide, 49 of them in Colombia. Colombia unionists face the highest rates of murder anywhere in the world.

To overcome longstanding objections to passage of the Colombia free trade agreement, President Santos of Colombia and President Obama signed a Labor Action Plan on April 7. The plan includes deadlines for new laws that could enable workers to form unions as a means to advance social progress in Colombia. This plan has deadlines to restrict the use of cooperatives that allow employers to evade bargaining directly with their workers. It calls for new labor enforcement agencies and the hiring of additional inspectors.

On the one hand, the labor action plan has important elements that are necessary and valuable, and President Santos is to be commended for advancing this initiative; however, there are major gaps in the action plan. There are no benchmarks to show whether or not the new laws on paper have translated into laws on the ground. Will workers have greater ability to exercise their rights, to organize, to bargain collectively, and to negotiate contracts directly with their employers? Will levels of violence and murders against trade unionists be substantially reduced? Will employers and companies that violate the rights of workers be punished, as prescribed under the new laws?

We don't know if these are merely gains on paper or if they are real. And based upon the accelerated schedule, it appears we won't be given a chance to learn if there will be real change on the ground before we consider the trade agreement with Colombia.

Any trade agreement with Colombia must produce a verifiable reduction in the violence. It must protect human rights. It must end the impunity enjoyed by death squads and paramilitaries. Due to the lack of benchmarks for progress, Colombia could still have a record year of assassinations and the action plan would be declared a success.