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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. WEST).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 15, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ALLEN B. WEST 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.

A NATIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Americans are understandably frustrated by the political process. Attention has appropriately been directed to the perversion of Senate rules that slow the Senate's legislative process to a crawl with very real consequences for the ability of the Federal Government to function.

Concern has also been expressed about the House of Representatives.

The health care debate revealed the deepest of divisions and some of the most inflammatory language and action in history. The budget battles of the 112th Congress, especially the artificial crisis surrounding meeting our debt ceiling obligations, extend and amplify that trend.

Experts across the political spectrum agree that part of this divisiveness arises from the very nature of congressional districts. Both parties have developed into an art form the ability to manipulate redistricting: packing in partisans of a single party, punishing opponents and protecting incumbents. Just look at the maps published in "Roll Call" this week, the "Top 5 Ugliest Districts: Partisan Gerrymandering 101." Sadly, it's practiced by both political parties. We should all be concerned when politicians have more influence picking their voters than voters have picking their politicians.

Now, some progress has been made to insulate the redistricting process by creating a few independent commissions and some guidelines, but the problems persist. Look at what has happened in Florida to try and circumvent those reforms and, more recently, the actions of Arizona Governor Brewer firing the independent head of the supposedly independent commission. The process remains woefully inadequate, highly politicized and subject to what normal people would regard as political abuse. For many politicians, the temptation to place partisan objectives above the public interest is just too tempting. In the last decade, we saw the culmination of this trend in 2003 when Texas conducted a hyper-partisan, mid-decade, second reapportionment process.

Americans deserve better. Congressional representation should not be a political blood sport that protects incumbents, disenfranchises legitimate interests and allows people to

achieve with surgical reapportionment what they couldn't do honestly at the ballot box. As we approach the 50th anniversary of the landmark Baker vs. Carr Supreme Court case that required one person/one vote, it's time to revisit that process.

I would propose that we would establish a national commission, composed of ex-Presidents, retired Federal justices, previous congressional leaders, housed in an independent, professional agency, not unlike what Iowa has done successfully for decades. These distinguished and independent experts would establish uniform criteria and congressional district lines for each State to respect the communities of interest—the ethnic, cultural and historic boundaries—rather than just partisan affiliation. Indeed, we may even consider competitiveness to be a positive outcome. It would then be approved by Congress with an up-or-down vote like we do with base closings. We may even fix the outrage that denies American citizens of the District of Columbia, our Nation's capital, voting representation. Congress should enact these proposals now while the abuse of the process is clear in everyone's minds—well before the next Census in 2020.

The ebb and flow of our history has shown that highly political gerrymandering can backfire, that political tides can change. Nobody knows which party is going to be in charge 10 years from now. Having a system that guarantees fairness will guard against the destructive and highly partisan maneuvering that we see now.

Americans deserve better. When citizens are treated fairly and all politicians play by the same rules, government works better. Meaningful political reform is seldom easy. It takes time to educate the public and policymakers and to refine the concepts. I am hopeful there will be careful consideration of this proposal as a way to make the House of Representatives fair, more representative and

□ 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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more effective for this century. Given the challenges we face, America deserves no less.

THE KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE—
PAGE II

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the folks I represent down in southeast Texas are concerned about many things; but two things they are concerned about probably the most are jobs and energy, because, you see, in southeast Texas, that's still the energy capital of the United States. I probably represent more refineries than any Member of Congress.

There is an answer to jobs and energy, and it's called the Trans-Canada pipeline, commonly called the Keystone XL pipeline.

The plan is for our allies in Canada to ship crude oil from Alberta, Canada, through a pipeline all the way from Alberta, Canada, down to Port Arthur, Texas. Most Americans have never heard of Port Arthur, Texas, but it sits on the gulf coast, really close to the Louisiana-Texas border. It is part of that energy development going all the way back to Spindletop days in 1901—the energy capital of the world. The plan has been, for several years, to ship that crude oil down to American refineries and have them refine.

That decision, or that request to get a permit, started about 3 years ago, and no decision has been reached yet on whether to build it or not to build it. The latest development is that the administration has decided: Still, we'll not make a decision until 2013, after the elections.

That's unfortunate because these are times when we need American jobs, and this pipeline would create American jobs in America—thousands of American jobs—and then there is related industry all up and down the area where the pipeline will be built to Port Arthur, Texas. Then it will give us crude oil, energy that we can use from a stable ally. Instead of having to ship oil in from all over the world—from the Middle East primarily—we will have a stable ally where we can bring crude oil into the United States.

About how much oil are we talking about?

Well, it's about 700,000 barrels a day. That's just a number—most people can't relate to that. I really can't—but that's about as much crude oil as we buy from Venezuela and bring into the United States. When the pipeline is fully completed, it will be 1,200,000 barrels a day. Now, that's a real number. How much is that? That's about as much oil as we bring in from Saudi Arabia; yet we could bring that in from Canada to our refineries in southeast Texas.

Pipelines are the safest way to move crude oil—the safest way, Mr. Speaker. It's safer than rail; it's certainly safer

than trucks; it's safer than bringing it in on ships from overseas; and it's safer than barges, because pipelines have a history of being the most environmentally safe, as they should be safe. In fact, the new pipelines that are developed are taking newer technology. They put a machine in the pipeline—it's called a pig machine—which goes through the pipeline with the crude oil and looks for dense or even small leaks which would automatically shut the pipeline down. Nobody wants a leak in a pipeline—the people who build it or the people who live in that area—but the administration has decided, primarily the State Department has decided, not to make a decision until 2013.

□ 1010

The Prime Minister of Canada is very disappointed that the United States will not be a partner in this crude oil development. But there is a country that will take that Canadian crude oil, and it's China. So we may not see the pipeline built from Alberta to Port Arthur, Texas; but we may see that pipeline built from Alberta to their west coast where they could pipe that crude oil off to their west coast and sell it and put it on tankers going to our buddies, the Chinese, who are eager to take that crude oil.

Recently, however, there was a development that the pipeline folks, the TransCanada people who want to build a pipeline, have started to work with the legislature in Nebraska. Nebraska is primarily the holdup where the environmentalists have gone and said they can't build a pipeline here for a bunch of reasons. The new plan is to build that pipeline to the east, the northeast of Nebraska. Hopefully they will work out something. Unfortunately, the State Department said last night or this morning, Well, nothing has changed. So it seems like delay, delay, delay is still the answer.

We need to get crude oil to our refineries somehow. What is the answer? What is the answer for those who say that they don't want a pipeline? There is no answer. And until we get to that green energy that we all want to get to eventually, we have to get that crude oil and have it refined not only into gasoline and jet fuel but into the by-products, plastics that we all use. And the answer, Mr. Speaker, I think is, we need to pick a horse and ride it, sign up, and build that pipeline immediately.

And that's just the way it is.

INCOME INEQUALITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, last month the Congressional Budget Office released a report that examined household income distribution between 1979 and 2007. The most disturbing figure to

me in this report is that the top 1 percent of income earners have seen their average real after-tax household income grow by 275 percent. Middle-income Americans saw an increase of 40 percent over the same period of time.

This report illuminates a sad fact: Income inequality in our country is growing at a staggering pace. The report is pointing out what many of my constituents tell me as I travel around my district from Cumberland to Pawtucket to Newport, from community dinners and talking to business owners: This economy is not working for the majority of middle class families. In fact, the hardworking middle class of our country is being hollowed out, a middle class made up of people that are just trying to provide a good life for themselves and their families. My real fear is that if we let that happen, we'll never get it back.

Those here in Washington need to remember that our job is to help people and to strengthen the middle class of this country. The way back to prosperity is not to ignore the problem; it's through investing in workforce retraining, infrastructure, housing, and education for tomorrow. We can't wait any longer. Now is the time to act. We need to work together in a bipartisan way to get our economy and our country moving again.

I have introduced legislation, the Make It in America Block Grant, designed to help small to medium-sized manufacturers retool, retrofit their facilities, and train employees so they can sustain their current workforce, create jobs, and better compete in the 21st century economy. We need to develop new efficient and effective ways to fund much needed investments in our Nation's crumbling infrastructure, including legislation to create a national infrastructure bank which will attract private investment in vital infrastructure projects.

American families will not feel or share an economic recovery until we stabilize our distressed housing market. We not only need to mitigate our foreclosure crisis but undertake bold actions to prevent the next wave of foreclosures from occurring. Congress needs to pass critical housing legislation, like the Preserving Homes and Communities Act, introduced by Senator JACK REED and Representative ELLIJAH CUMMINGS, which would improve home loan modification programs, including creating an appeals process for homeowners denied a loan modification, limit foreclosure-related fees, and respond to robo-signing misconduct by forcing mortgage servicers to prove they actually have the legal right to foreclose on a property.

I believe that each and every American must be guaranteed access to an affordable higher education, including vocational education, regardless of their economic status. We need to protect the funding of Pell Grants, named for my home State Senator, the late Claiborne Pell, which are one of our