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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. FOXX).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,

December 6, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable VIRGINIA FOXX 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.

CONGRATULATING CONSUMERS ENERGY COMPANY ON ITS 125TH ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. WALBERG. Madam Speaker, it's my great honor to recognize and congratulate Consumers Energy Company on its 125th anniversary. On this day 125 years ago, Consumers Energy founders William A. Foote and Samuel Jarvis secured a street lighting franchise agreement with the city of Jackson, Michigan. What began as the illumination of a dozen streetlights has

endured 125 years of change, growth, and service. Today, Consumers Energy delivers electricity and natural gas to 6.8 million of Michigan's 10 million residents in all 68 counties of the State's Lower Peninsula.

For the past 125 years, Consumer Energy has operated under the timeless principle: provide customers with safe, reliable, and affordable energy service. This principle has played an integral role of improving the quality of life for generations of Michigan residents. It also has been responsible for the growth of businesses and industries which provide jobs for millions of the State's residents.

Since its beginning in 1886, the goal of Consumers Energy was to deliver power to homes and businesses in cities, towns, villages and even the most rural areas. In 1927, the company installed Michigan's first rural power line, the 7-mile Mason-Dansville line, thereby bringing power to rural farms for the first time.

Today, Consumers Energy continues a proud tradition as an industry and community leader. In celebration of its milestone anniversary, the company will award \$125,000 each to 10 communities for a total of \$1.25 million for programs and services that will strengthen those communities and touch the lives of thousands of our citizens.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Consumers Energy's 125th anniversary and wishing them continued growth and success in the future.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, there was a tough article in the Sun-

day, December 4, New York Times entitled, "How the Food Industry Eats Your Kids' Lunch." This has serious consequences for the 32 million children who rely on school lunches, and often the breakfast program as well. Unfortunately, when one-third of our children of school age, 6 to 19, are overweight or obese, this matters.

There's no denying that the institutional and political forces combine to favor giving our kids unhealthy food. It doesn't just shortchange the children and their families with huge medical costs in the future from obesity, from diabetes and other problems. It also poses problems for local farmers and the local economy.

The good news is that we know how to fix this. Without help from the Federal Government—or despite the Federal Government—there are areas where the local governments are leading. In 2001, there were only six programs that were farm-to-school, providing healthy produce and fruit that found its way into the schools. There are now more than 2,300 programs involving more than 10,000 schools across the country.

On this House floor, I have referenced a pilot project that I think is a model in Abernathy School in Portland, Oregon, which I am privileged to represent, but there are dozens more in my community. There are 160 edible gardens around Oregon. California led the way with special payments that are made to local school districts to provide opportunities to purchase local fruits and vegetables. It's been followed by similar programs in D.C. and Maine.

Now, this doesn't just deal with the health of kids. It also deals with the health of local economies. When you are able to buy fresh fruits and vegetables locally and put them into the schools, it has a significant multiplier effect. Each dollar there actually has more economic impact than a dollar spent on infrastructure or a dollar that

□ 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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would be spent on food stamps. It's one of the most valuable economic impact generators, almost \$2 of economic impact for each dollar invested, according to a study from Ecotrust.

Let's accept the challenge to try to help improve this process. There are some additional steps that can be taken locally—don't build or remodel schools that don't have kitchens. It's simple, but it's more cost effective to do it when you're constructing or remodeling than to have to come back later.

Let's hold Members of Congress accountable. Last month, we once again on the floor of the House reaffirmed the fact that pizza dough with a little bit of tomato sauce is a vegetable. Maybe people in the course of this next year, when politicians are going to be out campaigning, may be able to pin them down on whether or not they believe pizza is a vegetable and whether they will act to override that outrage.

It's also important to expand the USDA pilot project that's going to be starting next month in Florida and Michigan. Let's see if we can give other States the opportunity for cash instead of commodities, to be able to purchase these local products. This will give opportunities for our school districts to strengthen the local partnerships; to be able to give kids healthy food; to be able to model behaviors that are important; and, most important, for the Federal Government to realign its interests away from large agribusiness and in favor of the health of our children.

Now, in the midst of the rubble of the so-called supercommittee, there was some good that came out of it. One good element was that there was not a secret sort of farm bill that was embedded that would have denied us the opportunity this year to reform farm legislation, because one of the simplest things we can do is to move payments from large agribusiness, put it in the hands of local schools, and local farmers to be able to improve the health of our children and our local economy.

CHRISTMAS AND THE EMPTY CHAIR

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, Thanksgiving is over and Christmas is just around the corner. All throughout America, families will gather to celebrate the traditions and festivities, and be together and celebrate faith. But there are some American families that won't have their entire family with them this year. There will be an empty chair at their table. That's because their loved ones serve in the U.S. military in lands throughout the world.

War at Christmas is not new, and this year will be no exception for many of our warriors that are still on call, still on duty serving America. But there is a way to connect with our troops

throughout the world, and it's a project that we are involved in in southeast Texas through the Red Cross and Operation Interdependence.

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And here's how it works. It's a way of having young school-age children connect with troops not only in our war zone, but other places in the world where our troops are serving America.

It started several years ago when I had the opportunity to go see our troops in the Middle East about this time of the year. Before I left, my staff came up with the idea that maybe I should take some Christmas cards and holiday cards to our troops that were serving overseas. And so they did all the work and they were able to get schoolteachers to get their kids to volunteer to make handmade Christmas cards. I took about 6,000 of those handmade cards by third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders overseas.

On my way back from the Middle East, I stopped off at the Landstuhl military base. That's the place in Germany where our wounded warriors are taken before they're brought back to the United States. I distributed those cards not only in the Middle East but to our troops, and even our NATO troops, at Landstuhl.

But here is what happened on the plane when I was going overseas—I checked a couple of bags, but I took one bag on the plane with me. It was a night flight, flying overnight and arriving in the daytime. I started going through one of these suitcases that had all of these cards in it. I was looking at them, and the person next to me wanted to know what I was doing. I told him these were from schoolkids back in southeast Texas. He was passing them around. Before I knew it, these cards were up and down the aisles in that plane and I could hear sobbing and saw tears of emotion from some of the passengers on the plane reading those cards from schoolkids connecting with our troops overseas.

When I came back to the Landstuhl military base, some of our troops who were wounded opened the cards and wanted the nurses to put the cards on the wall. Even NATO troops that were there from foreign countries had these cards that were made from American youth.

Madam Speaker, there's something about a warrior from the United States opening up a handmade Christmas card from some kid in the United States. At that moment, the darkness of war seems to disappear because of the brightness of a child.

I have had the opportunity to have these cards made by the kids in southeast Texas now for 5 years. I say I've had the opportunity. I don't do the work. My staff does the work, along with the chambers of commerce and all the teachers. Everybody volunteers. When my staff does the work, it's not doing it on government hours. It's after work, it's on the weekend, plan-

ning and getting these cards from throughout southeast Texas.

Every year the number of cards that are either taken or shipped gets to be more. The first year, it was 6,000. The next year, 10,000 Christmas cards were shipped overseas. The third year, 16,000 cards. And, Madam Speaker, this year kids from southeast Texas are shipping to our troops overseas 35,000 handmade cards, wishing them well, giving them Christmas greetings, saying some of the most awesome things that only third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders could say.

So I want to thank those kids. I want to thank Rikki Wheeler and the chamber of commerce in Baytown. I want to thank Ross Sterling High School, Horace Mann Junior High, Highlands Elementary, and I want to thank those teachers. God bless our teachers who work to have these kids volunteer to make cards for our volunteers overseas who won't be home for Christmas, because there's an empty chair at the Christmas table where that soldier, that warrior, that sailor, that airman is not there because they're representing the United States in lands far, far away.

And that's just the way it is.

COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK

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

Mr. POLIS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Computer Science Education Week, which started this past Sunday, December 4, 2011, and runs through Saturday, December 10. This week-long celebration of the teaching and learning of computer science is a call to share information and host activities that will elevate computer science education for students at all levels.

In my district in Colorado, the computing achievements of 20 young women will be celebrated at an awards event for the Colorado affiliate of the Aspirations in Computing Award on the campus of the University of Colorado at Boulder.

On Friday, representatives of Computer Science Education Week and the Computer Science Teachers Association will be honored at the White House as Champions of Change, which is part of President Obama's Winning the Future initiative.

Today in Harlem, New York, a company is launching a new national initiative, Tech Girls Rock, in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. On Thursday, 200 third-graders will learn hands-on programming and Web site development at Techie Club. I'm marking this occasion by talking to you about computer science education and urging all my colleagues in the House to support legislation I introduced earlier this year, the Computer Science Education Act, H.R. 3014.

Computing and information technology is transforming our world—