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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. GARDNER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
April 8, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CORY GARDNER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

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

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 658. An act to amend title 49, United States Code, to authorize appropriations for the Federal Aviation Administration for fiscal years 2011 through 2014, to streamline programs, create efficiencies, reduce waste, and improve aviation safety and capacity, to provide stable funding for the national aviation system, and for other purposes.

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.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, our Nation is standing at a crossroads. The government can continue to mortgage America's future by reckless borrowing, which is a threat to the young people of our country, it's a threat to our senior citizens, or we can limit the growth of government. We are facing a government shutdown today, as liberals are driving our Nation to a permanent economic shutdown. Dr. Skeet Burris is correct.

Yesterday, the House passed a bill funding the troops and military families for the rest of the year. Senate Democrats have yet another opportunity to pass a budget. They have had 48 days to act but have refused. Yesterday, liberals laughed and mocked Republican Leader ERIC CANTOR when he warned of bankruptcy, but ERIC was standing up for freedom in the best Virginia tradition.

We face a shutdown today because the liberal majority in the House last year failed to pass a budget. The new Republican majority did pass a budget 48 days ago, but the liberal majority in the Senate failed to act. Citizens should call liberals and demand they pass a budget today.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

MEDICARE

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

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in defense of our Nation's seniors, who are currently under attack. And the worst part about it is many of them are just waking up this morning

to the nightmare that faces them. And why is that? Because the Republican budget proposal released this week is literally balanced on the fragile backs of our Nation's seniors. That's right. It ends Medicare as we know it. That's the simple truth. It no longer honors our commitment and our promise to our Nation's seniors.

As Americans now know, we are in the midst of a serious budget battle, and the Republicans are even threatening to shut down government. And there are real differences between our approach to the budget and the Republican budget released earlier this week. The Republican budget replaces Medicare with a voucher system. Seniors will have to use this voucher to buy insurance from private insurance companies.

Under the Republican plan, Medicare as we know it will end. And in the same budget proposal, the Republicans give away tens of billions of dollars in subsidies to big oil companies. And under their plan, they will slash support for seniors in nursing homes, while giving away tax breaks to companies that ship our jobs overseas.

And what else? America's seniors, more than 150,000 in my home State of Rhode Island, will literally be paying more for their health care and getting less in order to provide additional tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans, also reflected in this Republican budget.

To make matters worse, the Republican plan does not reduce the deficit. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office determined that this budget actually adds \$8 trillion to the national debt over the next decade because its cuts in spending are far outpaced by the gigantic tax cuts for the richest Americans.

Our seniors cannot afford this Republican budget. It would deny them health care, long-term care, and the benefits they've earned and deserve.

□ 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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The Republicans' choice to privatize Medicare, turning more power over to the insurance companies, will result in reduced coverage and exposure to greater financial risks for our seniors.

The Congressional Budget Office determined that under the Republican budget seniors' out-of-pocket expenses for health care would more than double, and could almost triple. To put that into context, the Congressional Budget Office found out that by 2030 seniors would pay 68 percent of premiums and out-of-pocket costs under the Republican plan, compared to only 25 percent under current law. And it found that the Republican plan means seniors will pay more for their prescription drugs because it reestablishes the doughnut hole.

Even Alice Rivlin, the former Office of Management and Budget Director under President Clinton, who worked with the Republican architect of this budget on a deficit reduction proposal, said she could not support his Medicare proposal because it eliminated the traditional Medicare choice and lowered the rate of growth beyond what's defensible.

And the conservative Wall Street Journal concluded earlier this week, quote: The plan would essentially end Medicare, which now pays for 48 million elderly and disabled Americans, as a program that directly pays those bills.

Under the guise of deficit reduction, Republicans are recklessly attacking the vital supports for our seniors.

We all agree that we have to address the deficit. The issue is not whether we reduce the deficit but how we do it. We can't cut what helps us create jobs, innovate for the future, and remain competitive in the global marketplace. And we cannot balance this budget on the backs of our Nation's seniors.

The Federal budget is about more than dollars and cents. It's a statement of our values and priorities as a nation. Republicans in this budget have set the wrong priorities. They would rather cut benefits to seniors than cut subsidies to Big Oil or corporations that ship our jobs overseas. The Republican budget breaks the promise we made to our seniors to protect them in their golden years.

I say to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle: If we can't protect our Greatest Generation, I ask you, what's next?

END THE POLITICAL GAMES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis I listen to the people of my district, and they tell me they don't want games and they don't want the buck passed. They're sick of the status quo here in Washington. And my constituents are sick of the big spending, the big government, and the political games. They're sick of Washington doing what's easy.

Well, we're here today because last year it was easier for the Democrats in Congress to not do their job and not pass a budget. Isn't that a shame? And we're here because HARRY REID and the Senate Democrats want to play political games and defend big spending.

Yesterday, we passed a bill to protect our troops in the event that HARRY REID shuts down the government, and the President then said that he would veto this bill. HARRY REID and the President are playing games with our troops as well.

Now the House is leading, and we passed four bills to keep the government open and cut spending. And we are going to be here until we get our fiscal house in order.

I stand here today, 9 days after I first joined my colleagues outside of the Capitol demanding that HARRY REID act like a leader, and I said it then and I will say it now: HARRY REID, get your act together. Let's put this country on the right track and move forward.

STOP THE CHILDISH GAMES; KEEP THE GOVERNMENT RUNNING

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, 14 hours from now it appears the doors of the Federal Government will shut. And it will happen for one reason and one reason alone—because of the Republican majority's inflexibility, callousness, and political gamesmanship.

For 3 months, they have been in charge of the people's House, but they haven't done one thing that the people want.

□ 1010

They haven't lifted a finger to create the jobs Americans so desperately need. One Republican Member, in fact, said on the House floor last week that we should stop talking about the jobs. Stop talking about the jobs? They don't want to talk about jobs because they don't have a plan to create any. They've offered nothing but deep, painful, unnecessary job-killing spending cuts, and they have refused to budge an inch.

I want to cut government spending, Mr. Speaker. But I don't want to take the money from children who need early childhood education. I don't want to take the money from families that need help paying for colleges. And I don't want to take the money from seniors who need medical care.

I want to cut the gobs and gobs of money, nearly \$7 billion every single month, we're spending to occupy a foreign nation and have our servicemen killed and maimed by insurgents.

You want to eliminate wasteful government spending? I say the war in Afghanistan could be number one on our list. Ten years after we started sending our troops there we continue to be stuck in a hopeless quagmire that

doesn't doing anything to eliminate the terrorist threat or accomplish our national security goals.

But, of course, the Republican leadership won't consider cutting more spending. Instead they want to go after middle class working families who need a government that's on their side, particularly now because of how dire the economy has become.

I hope my Republican colleagues will give up this childish refusal to compromise. The American people deserve better than to have their government held hostage by an extreme ideological agenda.

Let's keep the doors of the Federal Government open. And as we look to next year's budget, instead of making seniors and schoolchildren bear the sacrifice, and instead of dismantling Medicare and cutting education, instead of threatening women's health, why don't we restore fiscal sanity by finally bringing our troops home.

AVOIDING A GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

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

Mr. WOMACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to add my voice to those calling for agreement on funding the government for the remainder of this year and avoiding the consequences of a government shutdown. I don't want the government to shut down. Our conference does not want the government to shut down. No one I've talked with wants the government to shut down. And talk of such a shutdown is weighing heavily on consumer confidence in an already fragile economy, not to mention its confidence in this body. We can do better. We should do better. We must do better.

Yesterday on this floor we took yet another action that keeps our government afloat and guarantees that, in the event of a shutdown, troops and their families get paid. That's the least we can do.

And Mr. Speaker, yesterday I sat in a hearing with the CEO of Amtrak. During the hearing it was suggested by a colleague that the carrier examine the feasibility of shutting down routes that are losing, hemorrhaging money. The answer he received was that because of legal agreements mandating payments on labor and benefits and other guarantees, it would still cost them billions.

I find it incredible that we have these federally subsidized guarantees in place, but we can't guarantee the same for those men and women downrange willing to take a bullet for their country. Shame on us.

Jobs continue to be our highest priority, and it should surprise no one that fundamental to this objective is dealing with a balance sheet full of red ink. It's fundamental to business, it's fundamental to households, and it's fundamental to government. No reputable organization behaves financially the way this government behaves.