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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. FLEISCHMANN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
April 17, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHARLES J. FLEISCHMANN 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 17, 2012, 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.

HUNGER HITS HOME

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday the Food Network premiered their first-ever documentary called "Hunger Hits Home." This powerful program showed the struggle that millions of Americans go through just to put food on their tables. I urge my colleagues, indeed, all Americans, to watch it by going to foodnetwork.com and searching for "Hunger Hits Home."

It's fitting that the Food Network, a cable network that focuses on cooking,

would choose to highlight the scourge of hunger with its first documentary. That's because food is at the heart of the problem.

While 435 Members of Congress and 100 Senators will never have to worry about going hungry, there are nearly 49 million people who struggle each year to put food on their table; 17 million kids each year go hungry in America, and those numbers are getting worse, not better.

The Food Network aired this documentary because of the hard work of good people at Share Our Strength. Led by my good friend, Billy Shore, Share Our Strength is a leader in the fight to end child hunger, and this effort wouldn't be where it is today without them.

We have more than enough food in America to feed everyone. We also have the delivery systems to ensure that food gets to those people who need it. The problem is politics. We have the means, the food, and the programs to ensure that not one person goes without food in this country.

What we lack, Mr. Speaker, is the political will to actually make it happen. We should remember that while there is a cost to ending hunger, the cost of doing nothing is so much more. According to a report from the Center for American Progress and Brandeis University, hunger costs America more than \$261 billion each year. That's billion with a "b."

Specifically, hunger costs "at least \$167.5 billion due to the combination of lost economic productivity per year, more expensive public education because of the rising costs of poor education outcomes, avoidable health care costs, and the cost of charity to keep families fed. This \$167.5 billion does not include the cost of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the other key Federal nutrition programs, which run at about \$94 billion a year. We call this \$167.5 billion America's

hunger bill. In 2010 it cost every citizen \$542 due to the far-reaching consequences of hunger in our Nation. At the household level, the hunger bill came to at least \$1,410 in 2010. And because our \$167.5 billion estimate is based on a cautious methodology, the actual cost of hunger and food insecurity to our Nation is probably higher."

That's a lot of money—\$167.5 billion. It's a staggering amount. Yet, we continue to ignore those costs and allow hunger to grow in America.

We know that hunger would be even worse in this country if it weren't for programs like the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, or SNAP, the school meal programs and other Federal anti-hunger programs. These programs are literally a lifeline for millions of hungry children, parents, and seniors.

I believe that we can end hunger in America if we muster the political will to do so. Fighting hunger has traditionally been a bipartisan effort. Unfortunately, the Republican leadership in this House is pushing an agenda that will actually make hunger worse in America.

Tomorrow the Agriculture Committee will mark up legislation that cuts \$33 billion from the most important anti-hunger program we have in this country. SNAP is a program that not only provides food to low-income parents, seniors, and children; it also provides a most effective form of economic stimulus, and it actually reduces poverty.

Yet, the Republican leadership continues to demagogue the program as wasteful, as fraudulent, and as something that is growing out of control. But nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, SNAP is among the most effective and efficient Federal programs. The truth is that the SNAP error rate is around 3 percent. That error rate includes people who do not receive the benefit that they're actually entitled to. I challenge anyone to

□ 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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find me a Defense Department program with an error rate as low as 3 percent.

I look forward to the time when the Republican leadership stops using hunger as a wedge issue and lets this become a bipartisan issue once again.

I understand that we need to balance the budget, Mr. Speaker. But must it be on the backs of the poor and the most vulnerable in our country?

"Hunger Hits Home," this wonderful film, shows us the problem facing this Nation. The challenge is presented to us. Are we going to end hunger once and for all or not?

So far the answer from the Republican leadership is a resounding "no," and I regret very much that decision.

Mr. Speaker, hunger is a political condition. If we muster the political will, we can end it once and for all.

SECURING OUR BORDERS

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

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I want to just say before I actually get started, we just saw the space shuttle fly over on the back of a 747, and I salute the end of an amazing era in space exploration, and I look forward to the next day of NASA being able to talk about space exploration and how we're going to get out there so we won't have to rely on Russians to get to space to continue to do what I think is a very important role of the Federal Government.

I was in Houston—I actually went through the NASA center there about 3 or 4 days ago—but I was in Houston for military duty. I am a pilot in the Air National Guard. I fly an airplane called a RC-26, which is a reconnaissance plane. I did 9 days of duty. And what we did is we were in Texas flying missions on the border of Mexico in order to help the Border Patrol secure that border, to ensure that those people that want to come in here come in here legally and, just as importantly, if not more importantly, to ensure that the drug trade is not being brought into our country, to reduce the amount of drugs being brought in from Mexico, as well as to ensure that terrorists are not making their way through the border by sneaking in through that border of Mexico.

Now, before I went, I expected to see a border that was basically secure because that's what I've been hearing from the administration, that the border is basically secure. Yeah, there are examples of people coming across outside of that but, for the most part, it's pretty good to go. Well, what I saw was something completely different.

I'm going to tell you just a quick story about somebody who's on the border every day trying to protect this country against drugs and against terrorism coming through that border. This guy is a Border Patrol agent affectionately known as Uzi. Uzi is a former marine. He was a marine for about 5

years, started a small business when he got out of the Marine Corps, and made the decision that, you know what, he wants to go continue to serve and protect his country.

Now, I flew missions with Uzi. He was on board my aircraft as we went down and we assisted Border Patrol. And the one thing Uzi said to me is, Congressman, look, we're out here every day in the heat and the sweltering sun trying to continue to protect this country. Make sure you give us what we need here.

And when you hear the stories about how hamstrung they are from actually enforcing the border, and how there are many tools available to them that they're not allowed to use, it's actually pretty sad.

Now, look. We want to be a Nation of immigration. We want to be a Nation of legal immigration. But one thing we don't want to be is a Nation that wakes up one day and finds out that there was another terrorist attack in a major United States city and that, potentially, that weapon of mass destruction or those terrorists actually came in through an unsecure border with Mexico.

I went down there really believing that there was a fence along the line, and I saw nothing of the kind in southern Texas.

□ 1010

Let's tell the American people the truth. The truth is, we want to be a Nation that respects immigration because most of us here actually are immigrants removed ourselves, but we want to be a Nation that has a legal process to do it. When we have an open border, we're encouraging people to go around that legal process, and we're opening ourselves up to attack.

Let's stand together. Let's say to respect the immigration and the immigrant history of this country, but let's do it in a legal way. My eyes were opened, as I did military duty on the border, to the fact that we have a long way to go. This can be a bipartisan issue—it doesn't need to be Republican versus Democrat—but it needs to be something that we actually finally do, and we stand together and we say we'll be a Nation that is safe once and for all.

TAXES

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today is the deadline for filing tax returns. Even though we were given 2 extra days this year, we are running out of time for the Tax Code.

The tax system doesn't generate enough money for what America needs and spends today. It's getting more expensive every year to continue the huge array of tax breaks even as the code itself becomes more unfair, com-

plex, and inefficient. It costs over \$160 billion a year for Americans just to comply with the Tax Code.

The path forward should be simple. First, we should stop making the code more complex, which, sadly, the Republican plan working its way forward will do with \$50 billion of additional unfocused tax breaks. At least if we're going to borrow another \$50 billion from the Chinese, we should use it to fund job-creating infrastructure. For instance, that \$50 billion would enable us to fund a multiyear transportation reauthorization.

We should also repeal the pernicious alternative minimum tax. It was once designed as a tax on very rich people who didn't pay taxes. Today, no billionaire hedge fund manager pays the alternative minimum tax. Instead, it falls on upper middle-income families, especially those who pay a lot of taxes.

Every year we find some creative way to avoid the consequence of it not being indexed for inflation. Every year we find some way to have a fix, to have a patch to avoid the alternative minimum tax's full impact. Unless somehow there is a complete breakdown in the political process, which, sadly, is not impossible, as we saw this last year with the FAA reauthorization. If that were to happen, then at least the full fury of 20 to 30 million of upper middle-income and middle-income households who would be forced to pay it—they would force it to be repealed.

We should combine the alternative minimum tax repeal with the imposition of the so-called "Buffett Rule," where millionaires at least pay as much as the people who answer their phones and drive them to work. This will get back to the original intent of the alternative minimum tax but in a way that simplifies the Tax Code rather than further complicating it.

We should stop the dangerous practice of suspending some of the payroll tax in the name of economic stimulus. We are uncomfortably close to destabilizing the long-term funding mechanism for Social Security. Instead of the payroll tax cut, let's target a tax credit for lower and middle-income families that will be fair, affordable, and help nurture our fragile economic recovery without threatening the long-term Social Security stability.

We should target for elimination tax breaks that are out of date, like the subsidy of oil that doesn't reflect current production techniques or the reality of global petroleum markets. We should instead protect subsidies that are key for our future, especially expiring renewable energy tax credits. We should renew the section 1603 Treasury grant program, which reflects current market realities and would actually be less expensive than traditional tax credits.

On this tax day, we should look for some progress towards building momentum for real tax reform. The Romney-Republican House budget refuses to identify any of the massive tax increases that will be necessary to meet