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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DENHAM).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,

February 6, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JEFF DENHAM 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 1:50 p.m.

HOUSE REPUBLICAN TRANSPORTATION BILL

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

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying that goes: when all you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.

These days, it seems the Republican toolbox is down to just one tool. Because for all of the energy choices available to America, every Republican energy plan centers on one thing, drilling for more oil.

First it was simply: drill here, drill now. Well, we are. There is more drill-

ing taking place in the U.S. lands and water now than during the Bush administration. Indeed, last year, we relied less on foreign oil than in any of the past 16 years. Clean, renewable energy usage is at an all-time high as well.

Then it was: drill for energy independence. It sounds great, but unfortunately we can't simply drill our way to energy independence. Even with all of the expanded drilling we are doing, the plain fact is that we use too much oil and have too few domestic reserves.

Next it was: drilling will create jobs and put everyone back to work. That claim was based on borderline fictional numbers in a report bought and paid for—surprise—by the oil industry.

Now House Republicans have found a new problem that can only be solved by opening more of the country to risky and reckless drilling: filling the funding gap in the highway trust fund. Their latest proposal would combine three bills to open more of America's most sensitive lands and waters to drilling. Supposedly, this is how we are going to fund repairs to America's crumbling bridges and highways.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that again the numbers don't add up. Proponents of this approach now claim that we can make up the \$6 billion a year in the highway trust fund by mandating oil drilling just about everywhere. Yet according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, drilling for oil and gas in protected coastal waters, as they wish, at best would produce only about \$80 million per year of assets. That's a small fraction of the funds needed to repair and upgrade America's roads and bridges.

They also want to open up a pristine coastal plain of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—a special place I've visited—and speed up development of Federal oil shale deposits across the West. Any potential revenues from this drilling, however, will not come close

to meeting the needs of the highway trust fund either. Whatever minimal funds do materialize would not be available for several years, maybe a decade. In other words, it is too little and it is too late.

Mr. Speaker, the only way to make progress in solving our current fiscal mess is not to create a new round of giveaways and favors to the oil industry. It would be better to start cutting some of the unnecessary tax breaks that the oil and gas industry now receives, and use that money to pay for the transportation bill. That's because they are unnecessary. Of the world's 12 most profitable corporations last year, fully half are oil companies. Repealing these tax breaks would save more than \$40 billion over 10 years, which would alone cover almost all the gap in the highway trust fund revenues. Americans are already squeezed at the pump. There is no reason why they should be handing over tax dollars to these wildly profitable companies.

Mr. Speaker, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill was the worst in history, crippling the gulf coast economy, destroying livelihoods of fishermen and tour operators, and killing wildlife for hundreds of miles. It was eerily similar to the destructive oil spill of 1969. That's when Santa Barbara beaches were smothered with oil—that's where I come from—that killed thousands of birds, fish, and sea lions.

Now House Republicans want to expose more of our coastal communities, including Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, to the tender mercies of the oil and gas industry. They want to mandate new drilling off central coast beaches despite our community's long-held view that the current drilling should be ended, not extended.

They want to gut the environmental laws of our State that our community has used to protect its coastline from the kinds of devastation that the 1969 oil spill brought to Santa Barbara.

□ 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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This might be good news for oil companies, but it is bad news for my constituents; and it is bad energy policy.

Perhaps most ominously, Mr. Speaker, this proposal is bad news for the prospect of a new transportation bill. These new oil-drilling provisions are poison pills and could doom passage of this desperately needed jobs legislation.

This is very reminiscent of the manufactured crisis we saw last year to keep the government funded, pay our bad debts, and continue the payroll tax. We all saw the chaos and gridlock those fights produced. We need to put aside this effort to use the transportation bill as a means to push forward the favored policies for an already-pampered industry.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 8 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DENHAM) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Eternal God, through Whom we see what we could be and what we can become, thank You for giving us another day.

Send Your spirit upon the Members of this people's House to encourage them in their official tasks. Be with them and all who labor here to serve this great Nation and its people.

Assure them that whatever their responsibilities, You provide the grace to enable them to be faithful to their duties and the wisdom to be conscious of their obligations and fulfill them with integrity.

Remind us all of the dignity of work, and teach us to use our talents and abilities in ways that are honorable and just and are of benefit to those we serve.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS)

come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BURGESS led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IS ACTUALLY MUCH HIGHER

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the National Bureau of Labor Statistics released its jobs report for the month of January and revealed that our Nation's unemployment rate continues to be above 8 percent, marking the 36th consecutive month of record high unemployment.

Dr. Peter Morici, a business school professor at the University of Maryland, recently stated on Fox News that, if you factor in part-time workers who would prefer full-time positions, that unemployment rate becomes 15.6 percent. Factoring in college graduates in low skill positions, like counter work at Starbucks, the unemployment rate is, sadly, closer to 20 percent.

These statistics provide further evidence that the President's policies are failing to provide job creation. I hope the President and the liberal-controlled Senate will work with the House Republicans on the 30 bills that we've already passed for job creation through private sector growth which are currently held in the Senate.

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

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, 101 years ago today, the 40th President of the United States, Ronald Wilson Reagan, was born. It's a tribute to the man that there is bipartisan agreement to the greatness of Ronald Reagan as President. We hear from both sides of the aisle about his fortitude, his encouraging smile, his positive attitude. He handled the weight of the Presidency with such ease.

I remember, as a young physician in north Texas, watching as this individual led our country from the travails that were Vietnam, Watergate, stagflation, and not only gave us a reason to believe in ourselves, he said it was okay to believe in yourselves as Americans again, and we did. And, as a consequence, we reestablished America as a force in the world and we reestablished our prosperity.

Everyone has their favorite Ronald Reagan quotes. Mine is, as we watch

some of the difficulties and arguments between conservatives during this Presidential year: Remember that if we agree with each other 80 percent of the time, we're on the same side; and if it's a 100 percent, one of us is suddenly unnecessary.

Mr. Speaker, I hope all Members of the House today will acknowledge the 101st anniversary of the birth of Ronald Reagan. The Nation is forever in his debt.

LABOR NUMBERS

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I think it is becoming increasingly clear to anybody that's paying attention that this President's policies have failed and are making the economy worse.

More Americans are out of work than when he took office. At that point, unemployment was 7.8 percent. America has witnessed the longest period of sustained high unemployment since the Great Depression, more than 8 percent for every month that he has been in office.

When the President talks about the latest unemployment statistics, I think it's important that we look at more pressing issues, which is labor force participation. For the past 31 months, discouraged workers have been dropping out of the labor force in unprecedented numbers.

In June 2009, which they like to say was the end of the recession—it was 6 months into his term—the labor force participation rate was 65.7 percent. Today, it is down to 63.7 percent. The difference between those two numbers represents 4.8 million people who have given up looking for work. If the labor force participation rate had remained where it was when he took office, at 65.7 percent, the unemployment rate for January 2012 would have been 11 percent, rather than 8.3.

It is time for us to change policies. It is time for us to get America back to work. The American people continue to say, "Where are the jobs?"

PASS THE PAYROLL TAX EXTENSION

(Mr. COURTNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, last Friday the Department of Labor came out with job statistics which no one expected. The U.S. economy added 243,000 new jobs, and there was a revision upward for December and November across the board: manufacturing, service, leisure, service industries, health care.

The U.S. economy, which has suffered its biggest blow since the Depression because of the financial meltdown