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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

PRAYER

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

Loving God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

In the waning days of this 112th Congress, we ask Your blessing, O Lord, upon the Members of this people's House, and most especially upon the leadership. It is on their shoulders the most important negotiations of our time have been placed.

They have been entrusted by their fellow Americans with the awesome privilege and responsibility of sustaining the great experiment of democratic self-government. Give them wisdom, grace, insight, and courage to forge an agreement that allows us all to move forward toward an encouraging future.

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

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. 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. Will the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WOMACK) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WOMACK 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to five requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

COMMENDATION FOR GOVERNOR HASLAM'S BUSINESS DECISION

(Mr. DESJARLAIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DESJARLAIS. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Governor Bill Haslam of my home State of Tennessee for his decision not to set up a State-run health care exchange. Governor Haslam was exactly right when he said this was a business decision, not a political one.

After 2 years, the Obama administration has failed to provide States with sufficient guidance as to how State exchanges would function, yet President Obama expects States to make that decision this week. That's like asking a business to sign a contract that is still being written.

Further, there is evidence that the Federal Government will ultimately control exchanges no matter who creates them. The only difference is if a State sets up an exchange, it will pay for it. No business would take a deal like that.

Finally, Tennessee has seen what experimental health care reform looks like in TennCare. This program almost collapsed and bankrupted our State. What business would risk its finances on a proposal modeled after a failed plan?

I applaud Governor Haslam and thank him for his business-like approach.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL FISCAL CLIFF

(Mr. QUIGLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise because whether you call it a fiscal cliff or a slope, there's no denying the environmental wreckage hitting a metaphoric ledge will have.

Under the sequester, the National Park Service would likely have to close national parks, campgrounds, and visitor centers. Under the sequester, widespread rural job loss, weaker wild-fire management, closure of trails and campgrounds, poor maintenance of forest roads, unprocessed recreational permits, and greater invasive species growth is forecasted.

Under the sequester, \$148 million would be taken away from the U.S. Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy program, which would be equivalent to cutting the solar energy program in half or equal to eliminating the entire wind and geothermal energy programs.

Fiscal cliff or slope, the environment knows no difference. We must act and act now.

IN TRIBUTE TO AMERICA'S LONGEST-SERVING MAYOR, HILMAR MOORE OF RICHMOND, TEXAS

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

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the legendary mayor of Richmond, Texas, Hilmar Moore.

Mayor Moore passed away last week after 63 years as Richmond's mayor. He was a true Texan, a straight shooter who loved his family, good conversations, quail hunting, ranching, and Texas Longhorn football.

The last time I talked with Mayor Moore was Richmond's 175th anniversary. My speech was interrupted by trains rolling by. The trains did not dare to interrupt Mayor Moore. I asked him, "How can I do that?" He said, "Give it time. Give it time."

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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Hilmar Moore gave Richmond time, the time of his life.

THE THEORY OF VECTOR BUNDLES

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

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce the discovery of a new breakthrough in mathematics in the theory of vector bundles.

The theory of vector bundles plays a crucial role in modern mathematics. Part of the interest comes from its application to quantum mechanics, the theory that makes modern electronics possible. In quantum mechanics, a particle has a position, which is a point in space-time, as well as an internal structure, which is described by the theory of complex vector bundles.

Over the last few years, the Boij-Soderberg theory has given a new approach to vector bundles in several important areas. Just yesterday, the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute in Berkeley, California, announced that several young scientists collaborated to discover how to extend this theory into new places, such as spheres.

The discovery is a significant accomplishment, and I commend these young scientists for their hard work and dedication. It's because of efforts like this that the U.S. continues to be a leader in innovation.

A HOLIDAY GIFT TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, time is counting down, the holidays are upon us, and Congress still hasn't come together to spare hardworking middle class families from the tax hike rushing towards them.

We know we agree on this. We know what this tax increase would mean for these families. Why aren't we voting on that? Why won't we have a vote on protecting the middle class from this tax hike?

We know that every minute we delay is more stress, more anxiety for mothers and fathers looking at the holiday season, worried about what's waiting for them on the other side. What are we waiting for?

I know Members of Congress might stay here through Christmas, but let's make sure that our holiday gift to the American people is a Congress that doesn't hold the middle class families hostage. Let's bring the middle class tax cuts to the floor for a vote today.

IN MEMORY OF DAVE BRUBECK

(Ms. LEE of California asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, this month we lost a giant in the music industry. Dave Brubeck was a legendary jazz and classical pianist and composer who helped to define jazz.

A fellow Mills College graduate in my district in Oakland, California, Dave served in a crucial role as a jazz visionary who first began his iconic musical experimentation as a student. He subsequently grew to become a world-renowned musician and composer, writing more than 200 compositions and making over 115 recordings, including the jazz piece "Take Five," which became one of The Dave Brubeck Quartet's best known records.

Throughout his long career, Dave has received many national and international honors, including the National Medal of Arts from President Clinton and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. In 2007, he received the Living Legend Jazz Award from the Kennedy Center and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the London Symphony Orchestra.

I had the privilege to meet Dave a couple of years ago during one of the amazing musical events held at the Library of Congress. What an amazing, gentle man of such strength and vision.

My thoughts and prayers are with his wife and his family during this very difficult period.

□ 0910

BUILDING FOR A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

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

Mrs. CAPPS. Sequestration would be a huge blow not only to middle class families but also to our clean energy innovators and entrepreneurs.

According to the Office of Management and Budget, sequestration would impose an across-the-board cut of nearly 10 percent to critical clean energy and innovation programs. That would mean a \$148 million cut to the Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Program alone. These cuts would tremendously damage our ability to develop the clean energy technologies of tomorrow, technologies that lead not only to lower energy bills for our constituents but also to new businesses and middle class jobs. I see it every day in my congressional district, where cutting-edge companies like LaunchPoint Technologies and Transphorm use Federal funding to develop exciting new ideas that would otherwise languish on the drawing board.

Mr. Speaker, the threat of sequestration and the fiscal cliff is very real. It's time for us to come together and pass a balanced package that continues building for a clean energy future.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WOMACK). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

IMPROPER PAYMENTS ELIMINATION AND RECOVERY IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2012

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4053) to intensify efforts to identify, prevent, and recover payment error, waste, fraud, and abuse within Federal spending, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4053

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Improvement Act of 2012".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

(1) the term "agency" means an executive agency as that term is defined under section 102 of title 31, United States Code;

(2) the term "improper payment" has the meaning given that term in section 2(g) of the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002 (31 U.S.C. 3321 note), as redesignated by section 3(a)(1) of this Act; and

(3) the term "State" means each State of the United States, the District of Columbia, each territory or possession of the United States, and each federally recognized Indian tribe.

SEC. 3. IMPROVING THE DETERMINATION OF IMPROPER PAYMENTS BY FEDERAL AGENCIES.

(a) *IN GENERAL.—Section 2 of the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002 (31 U.S.C. 3321 note) is amended—*

(1) *by redesignating subsections (b) through (g) as subsections (c) through (h), respectively;*

(2) *by inserting after subsection (a) the following:*

"(b) IMPROVING THE DETERMINATION OF IMPROPER PAYMENTS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall on an annual basis—

"(A) identify a list of high-priority Federal programs for greater levels of oversight and review—

"(i) in which the highest dollar value or highest rate of improper payments occur; or

"(ii) for which there is a higher risk of improper payments; and

"(B) in coordination with the agency responsible for administering the high-priority program, establish annual targets and semi-annual or quarterly actions for reducing improper payments associated with each high-priority program.

"(2) REPORT ON HIGH-PRIORITY IMPROPER PAYMENTS.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to Federal privacy policies and to the extent permitted by law, each agency with a program identified under paragraph (1)(A) on an annual basis shall submit to the Inspector General of that agency, and make available to the public (including availability through the Internet), a report on that program.