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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 18, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable BRAD WENSTRUP 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 3, 2013, 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.

GOP BUDGET

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this week, we begin the Republican charade of pretending to balance the budget in 10 years, without a hint of how it really is possible. They intend to repeal ObamaCare, which was the central issue in the last campaign, where you will remember President Obama was reelected, the Senate went even more Democratic, and House Democrats gained seats and won over 1

million more votes than the Republicans.

Normal people would think that the ObamaCare issue might be settled. Does anybody realistically think it's going away anytime soon?

The Republican fantasy budget reduces taxes dramatically without a hint of how it would be possible, without exploding the deficit or dramatically raising taxes on the middle class.

This is consistent with what the Romney-Ryan ticket said on the campaign trail last fall. The same issue where they dodged, dissembled, or ignored the perfectly reasonable question: How is it possible? Six months later, it's back in the budget, but there still is no answer.

During the last 40 years, there have been only four budgets without deficits: the last three Clinton budgets and the one that George Bush inherited from Bill Clinton. In each case, taxes as a percentage of the total economy were over 20 percent. In this Republican fantasyland, budgets are balanced with revenues at 19 percent of the economy, yet meeting the needs of 78 million more seniors and an infrastructure deficit that is growing as America is falling apart.

Clearly, this is not remotely possible if we're going to enjoy anything like our current quality of life. There is a real-world intersection of budget-saving opportunities with potential areas of agreement. Health care reform is one, but not just by shifting the burden to seniors and the disabled, as the Republicans propose in their fantasy budget.

My home State of Oregon is in the middle of an exciting demonstration of how to squeeze out the waste we all know is there and realign incentives. Instead of the empty ritual of pretending to repeal ObamaCare, let's work together to accelerate reform for all Americans.

If the Oregon experiment works—and frankly, many of these efficiencies, by

the way, are already achieved in other parts of the country and with some private health systems—we could save more than \$1.2 trillion that the flawed sequester is supposed to achieve in the next 10 years.

Another area of irresponsibility in the Republican budget is defense. Instead of increasing Pentagon spending, we should reform it. The most obvious target is the nuclear arsenal larger than anything we need for nuclear deterrence. Ten percent of our nuclear weapons would decimate Russia. A handful of missiles would wipe North Korea off the map, yet they propose to spend over two-thirds of \$1 trillion over the next 10 years on this bloated arsenal.

Before we increase the Pentagon budget, maybe we should figure out why the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is now 7 years behind schedule, 70 percent over budget, and the Pentagon still doesn't know how it's going to meet the more than \$1 trillion in operating and maintenance costs.

Amazingly, the Republicans want to increase spending for the Pentagon, the only major budget so flawed it can't even be audited. There are bipartisan opportunities to reduce and reform the military, but you're not hearing about it in the Republican budget this week.

Instead of a Republican rerun of a bad reality TV show, let's consider working together on areas to change how the government does business and give more value to the taxpayer while we get spending under control.

RETURN THE 27TH AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION TO ITS ORIGINAL INTENT

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

Mr. BARROW of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to join me in support of H.J. Res. 33,

□ 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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which would reshape the way Washington operates.

Because Congress has failed to do its job to find the spending cuts we need to replace the sequester, folks all across this country, including folks in my district in Georgia, will pay the price.

Unfortunately, in Washington there are rules that prevent Members of Congress from being penalized for not doing their jobs. The Constitution doesn't protect the pay of folks back home, so why should it protect the pay of Members of Congress?

The 27th Amendment of the Constitution was written to prevent Members of Congress from giving themselves pay increases, but lately it has been used as a shield to prevent a congressional pay cut. My proposal, H.J. Res. 33, would return the 27th Amendment to its original intent and hold Members of Congress to the same standard as folks back home.

I urge my colleagues to support this proposal.

SEQUESTER PAKISTAN

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, America's young warriors risk it all to protect and serve the rest of us. They put themselves in harm's way not only to protect America, but to defend the freedoms of people they have never seen in lands they have never been. Some join right out of high school with the promise that they can further their education while in the military. This helps not only our troops, but an educated military helps America.

Now the administration has broken another promise. Thousands of troops can no longer go to college because the education program has been scuttled. For the sake of politics, the "Chicken Little Administration" has handpicked programs to cut that would make Americans feel the sequester the most. One of those programs is the Military Tuition Assistance program.

Mr. Speaker, tuition assistance for our military is not much money. The Pentagon, the Department of Defense, has a budget of \$700 billion. This little program is 0.1 percent of the \$700 billion Department of Defense program.

The Tuition Assistance program is great because it's one of the ways our government can take care of our men and women who help us. It has allowed members of the military to take 870,000 courses and graduate 50,000 individuals for several degrees. That is remarkable. But the program is gone, thus saith the White House.

Over the past few weeks, I've been hearing from several southeast Texans who are disappointed because Washington has broken another promise. Dr. Norman Lefee, a science teacher at Klein High School in Texas, said this:

I encourage my students to join the military as a way to open up a possibility for higher education. Oftentimes, they come

from families where they are the first high school graduate and the first person to graduate from college. Now that opportunity is being taken away from them. It's not fair. I got these kids to join the military. Now the administration has broken its promise.

□ 1210

Brian wrote me this:

I am Active Duty Coast Guard and one of your constituents. I was one class away from obtaining a master's degree and the Tuition Assistance program was now canceled. Why?

Jerri from Houston wrote me this:

As a combat medic in the National Guard, I currently use my tuition assistance to pay for my Ph.D. program in clinical psychology. I want to stay in the military. I hope to move directly to a commission on Active Duty as a psychiatrist or psychologist in the Army and serve soldiers with PTSD.

Education is the great equalizer, and servicemembers' access to affordable education will only make our country stronger. Restore our tuition assistance.

There's more, Mr. Speaker.

Last year, the marines spent roughly \$47 million on tuition assistance—\$47 million out of a \$700 billion Department of Defense budget. However, education assistance is not being cut for everybody. During the same year, Washington spent \$12.7 million on higher education in Pakistan. That's right, Mr. Speaker. We spent more than one-fourth of what we spent on education for the marines to fund higher education for the Pakistanis. And that's not all. Since the sequester, the administration has approved \$37 million in foreign aid to Pakistan.

Why are we funding education programs for our Benedict Arnold ally when we can't fund—or don't fund—the education for our military? And to Pakistan of all places, where hatred for America is at its highest. Washington should watch its spending and prioritize.

It's time, Mr. Speaker, to sequester Pakistan. Why are we cutting the aid for our military and educating the people in Pakistan? The administration has the power and ability to make it right; but if this program is not reinstated, I am going to introduce legislation to withhold nondefense foreign aid from Pakistan until this wonderful program for our troops is fully funded.

The President should stop punishing our troops. We have a moral obligation to take care of our warriors that protect us.

The President says he is the education President. Well, Mr. President, let the troops go to school.

And that's just the way it is.

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 11 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. HOLDING) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

Reverend Andrew Walton, Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church, Washington, D.C., offered the following prayer:

We come today with thanks and gratitude for the eternal presence of God, known by many names, that is within, around, and throughout all creation.

May each person in the human family be reminded today in every breath we take of the Spirit that binds and connects us to one another. With every morsel or drop of nourishment taken into our bodies may we remember our interdependence with the soil, streams, seas, plants, and animals of Earth. As we gaze to the sky above may we allow the mysterious vastness of the unknown to stir our imaginations toward creative care of that which is known.

As citizens not only of Nations but also of the Earth itself, may we live this day and every day in harmony with all. And may this Spirit of harmony be that which guides the ideas, conversations, debates, and decisions of our Nation's leaders today and always.

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. The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) will lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. HOYER 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.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. HOYER. Is it in order to request at this point in time a vote on the Journal?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Journal has been approved.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I was seeking recognition to ask for a vote on the Journal when you recognized me to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognized the gentleman to lead the Pledge.