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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
April 15, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable GEORGE E. B. HOLDING 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.

SENIOR HUNGER IN AMERICA

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, for the past 2 months, I have been speaking each week about hunger in America. Today, I want to focus on hunger among our senior citizens, which is a silent scourge in our Nation.

Over 49 million Americans are hungry; and of those, 8.3 million are seniors. That's one in seven seniors and nearly 15 percent of everyone over 60 years old. In fact, from 2001 to 2009,

hunger among Americans over the age of 50 increased by nearly 80 percent—80 percent. That is unconscionable.

One reason for this significant rise in senior hunger is the economy. The recession has made hunger in America worse for everyone, and it's been particularly bad among people between the ages of 50 and 59, a population too young for Social Security and Medicare, but too old for programs that target families with children. And it's not just the very poor. In fact, between 2007 and 2009, the most dramatic increase in hunger was among those whose annual incomes were twice the poverty line.

Food—good, healthy food—is important at all ages, but it is critical for young children and for senior citizens. For kids, nutritious food is critical for physical and mental development. For seniors, good, healthy food is critical for entirely different, but no less important, reasons.

Hunger can exacerbate existing medical conditions, and many medications need to be taken with food. Taking some medicine on an empty stomach can result in illness or hospitalization, problems that not only result in increased medical costs, but can also be deadly to people with reduced immune systems.

A common problem is that many seniors are homebound, unable to travel to grocery stores or food banks to get food. A homebound senior can be a forgotten senior. It's easy to see why senior hunger is a hidden problem. In many cases, the hungry senior is literally hidden away behind a closed door.

That's why it is so important to have senior advocacy groups like AARP, the National Council on Aging, and AmpleHarvest.org—to name a few—who focus on senior hunger. AARP has its Drive to End Hunger campaign with NASCAR and Jeff Gordon. The National Council on Aging is working with Feeding America and other food

banks to prioritize and target hunger among seniors. AmpleHarvest.org is working with seniors to grow their own food. And of course, there is Meals on Wheels, which delivers food directly to homebound seniors.

A recent Brown University report found that for every additional \$25 a State spends on Meals on Wheels each year for a person over 65, the low-care nursing home population decreases by 1 percent. That helps save Medicaid dollars and lowers health care costs overall.

In fact, the cost of feeding a senior for 1 year through Meals on Wheels is roughly equal to the cost of just 1 day in the hospital. And the average patient stays in the hospital for almost 5 days. Funding for Meals on Wheels is an important investment to decreasing health care spending.

I also want to highlight the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, which helps more than 860,000 seniors who make less than \$15,000 per year to have access to local fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets. A qualified senior is awarded between \$20 and \$50 to spend at their local farmers markets. Over 19,000 farmers participate and benefit from the money seniors spend through this program.

Wholesome Wave is an organization that doubles the purchasing power of the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. Its Double Value Coupon program operates at more than 300 farmers markets in 26 States and the District of Columbia. Boston Mayor Tom Menino has a similar program called the Boston Bounty Bucks. These programs allow low-income seniors on fixed incomes to buy more fresh fruits and vegetables with their limited funds.

Mr. Speaker, these are terrific programs, but they simply can't do it all. In the case of senior hunger, we need to make sure that groups like Meals on Wheels and programs like Senior

□ 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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Farmers' Market Nutrition Program are well funded. But we also need to work with doctors and nurses, with Medicare and Medicaid, and with other health care professionals to treat hunger as a health issue. We need to prevent costly hospital readmissions that are preventable with proper nutrition. We need to ensure that seniors aren't falling through the cracks and that they aren't going hungry.

Mr. Speaker, we need Presidential leadership to End Hunger Now, and we need a White House conference on food and nutrition to talk about senior hunger; to brainstorm, plan, and execute a national antihunger plan that will truly end hunger now.

We are the most prosperous Nation in the world. There is absolutely no reason why anyone should go hungry in the United States of America. It is especially shameful that so many older people, people who have made this country great, find themselves in a position where they are hungry. We can do something about it. I hope we come together, and I hope we end hunger now.

CHAINED CPI

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of talk in Washington, D.C., about something called chained CPI. A lot of people don't know what that means. We have assurances from the White House and the Republicans who originated this idea. It's an innocuous sort of little change to Social Security, veterans benefits, and other programs, because we overstate inflation in the CPI.

Actually, particularly for seniors, the reverse is true. The consumer price index, as measured, significantly understates inflation that impacts seniors because seniors have a different buying pattern than 20-year-olds. They're not out buying the latest iPhone. They're buying a lot of medical care, going up much faster than measured inflation, pharmaceuticals going up at phenomenal, obscene rates. Housing, energy, and all those things make up a bigger percentage of their budget in retirement.

For years, I have proposed legislation to accurately measure the cost of living for seniors, which actually would increase their annual cost-of-living adjustments. But now come the White House and the Republicans to say we're overstating inflation. Let's just use chained CPI, it doesn't matter, it's all about substitution. If they can't afford beef, they'll do chicken; if they can't do chicken, they'll do pasta; if they can't do pasta, they'll buy dog food; if they can't afford that, they'll starve. That's kind of the bottom line of these pointy-headed economists out there on how these sort of weird theories work.

Here's a graphic that demonstrates this a little better. This shows for a retired single woman, widowed or other-

wise, how much food would be lost on an annual basis with chained CPI as it eats away at the annual adjustments and the things that she purchases go up faster and faster.

□ 1210

Each shopping cart represents a weekly food budget of \$53. That's not exactly living high on the hog here. At 65, she loses 2 weeks of food. And a woman retiring at age 65 this year has a life expectancy of 20 years. That means at age 85, with this new device, the chained CPI, she would lose 16 weeks worth of her food budget. That's 16 weeks.

Everybody, as they get older, works through their savings and other means of support. And if you live too long, you're going to have a really hard time making ends meet. If we chain the CPI, it will get even harder for the next generation of seniors.

There's kind of a mixed message here. Republicans want to cut entitlements. They never supported Social Security and Medicare, but they just want to cut them to make sure they're there in the future. Well, if you chain the CPI, Social Security, which is supposed to have adequate benefits to pay full guaranteed benefits until 2033, would pick up 2 years. So we cut benefits for 100 percent of seniors retiring now and in the future, and Social Security would last 2 years longer. That doesn't exactly save Social Security, does it?

On the converse, with my plan, where we lift the cap so that people who earn a \$1 million or \$2 million or one of those hedge fund guys earning a billion dollars a year would pay Social Security tax on all of his or her income, we add 50 years to the life of Social Security. That's about as far as you can measure it into the future.

If they wanted to save Social Security, if that's what the White House is up to, if that's what the Republicans are up to, it's a much better way to do it without penalizing seniors. But that's not really what it's about. It's to take a program, Social Security, which is self-funding, doesn't draw on the general fund, doesn't create any deficit, it's to take money from Social Security and use it elsewhere to plug holes in our budget.

That's not right. It's the highest tax paid by many American workers to the Federal Government. Almost half of workers pay more in Social Security taxes, particularly the self-employed, than they do income taxes to the Federal Government. And if you earn over \$112,000 a year, your tax rate goes down. If you get \$1,200,000, your tax rate is one-tenth that of someone who earns \$50,000 a year; \$12 million, one one-hundredth; and those billionaires are paying less than 1 second's wages in Social Security taxes.

If you want to fix the program, lift the cap and make everybody pay the same percentage of their income into Social Security, but don't pretend by

taking food out of the mouths of seniors in the future that you're fixing the problem for full funding of Social Security beyond 2033. You're not. That's a lie. Admit what you're doing. You want to cut benefits to seniors, to veterans and other working Americans with this chained CPI artifice.

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 13 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. WENSTRUP) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

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

Almighty God of the universe, we give You thanks for giving us another day. We thank You that You give us a share in Your creative work, having endowed each with unique and important talents.

On this day, we ask Your blessing on the men and women of the people's House who have been entrusted with the care of this great Nation's people. Because of the great blessings You have bestowed on our Nation, may we embrace the opportunity to build a better world beyond our borders as well.

May all that we do 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 South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina 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.

WE NEED A FAIRER, SIMPLER TAX CODE

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