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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 6, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable KERRY BENTIVOLIO 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.

BANGLADESH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, over the past several years, more than a thousand workers have died from working in Bangladesh's garment industry.

In the latest tragedy, an eight-story building called Rana Plaza collapsed. It housed five garment factories. It has killed more than 650 workers so far, injured more than a thousand, with still more buried in the rubble. This stag-

gering body count occurred just 5 months after the Tazreen factory fire that killed at least 112 workers. Forty more incidents, including explosions and fires, causing death and injury, have taken place since the Tazreen factory fire.

I met with one of the Tazreen survivors when she visited Washington last month. She described the outrageous working conditions leading up to the fire. She toiled in a factory with bars on the windows and no place to run if a fire broke out. She told me how she jumped from the third floor of the burning factory to save her body from the fire so her family could recognize her in case of her death, and many of her coworkers jumped with her, but did not survive the fall. During our meeting, it became clear that it was only a matter of time before the next Tazreen would take place.

Two weeks later, Rana Plaza collapsed.

Unfortunately, these tragedies in Bangladesh are not isolated, and more of these tragedies, undoubtedly, will occur unless the major international corporations that keep these dangerous factories open decide to change their business practices. Clearly, there is a greater role for the U.S. and other governments to play, including the Bangladesh Government. However, the primary burden for action now lies with the major brands and retailers.

Let's remember what is at stake here: the lives of thousands of young women and mothers trying to scrape together an existence by working 12-hour shifts for pennies a garment.

They produce clothing under contract with corporations we all know well: Walmart, J. C. Penney, Mango, Benetton, H&M, The Children's Place, GAP, and Dress Barn, among others. The clothes these women sew in Bangladesh we buy here in America. Unfortunately, these young women are caught working in a garment industry

that pits supplier against supplier and country against country in a calculated race to the bottom.

Often, the margin for these corporations is subsistence wages and the needless disregard for the safety of these young women. That is the subsidy they receive—low wages and unsafe working conditions for the workers who produce these garments. Four million Bangladeshi workers in 5,000 factories provide clothing to Americans and to European brands while earning one of the lowest minimum wages in the world—about \$37 a month.

But they shouldn't have to risk their lives for the fashion industry's profits.

These young women are forced to work in factories with overtaxed electrical circuits, unenforced building codes, and premises without firefighting equipment and adequate exits, and in most cases, the exits are chained closed. Americans who are the consumers of these products are increasingly worried that the label "Made in Bangladesh" actually means "made in a death trap."

Why are the managers of these factories forcing these employees to work in these deplorable conditions? Because of fear—fear that the international brands and the retailers, which we know so well, will take their orders elsewhere because of a missed day of production, a late delivery, or a minuscule increase in production costs. The brands know this. That's why I believe they bear the ultimate responsibility for the horrendously unsafe working conditions in Bangladesh and elsewhere.

Corporate leaders in the fashion industry have a moral imperative to ensure that these tragedies do not happen again. These retailers and brands need to sign on to an enforceable agreement that will improve safety, called the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement. It was developed by the Bangladeshi trade unions and non-governmental organizations to prevent

□ 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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these types of disasters from occurring by addressing the most urgent elements:

One, public reporting of all fire and building audits conducted by independent safety experts;

Two, mandates that factory owners make timely repairs;

Three, an obligation for the brands to terminate a contract if a factory defies its responsibility to keep workers safe;

Four, the right for workers to refuse unsafe work without retribution—to be able to refuse work without being fired, being penalized—and union access to factories, among other labor protections, so they can see for themselves what are the working conditions on any given day.

To make this work, these commitments must be contained in an enforceable contract between the brands and worker representatives because it is the workers' lives that are on the line. The holding companies of Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, Van Heusen, and IZOD have signed on to this agreement already, and a major German retailer has signed on as well. Others are now meeting in Europe to discuss its provisions.

I applaud these efforts toward corporate responsibility. It is now time for the major U.S. corporations, like GAP, Walmart, and J.C. Penney, to join them, but we must also take note and call out any attempt to water down the key provisions of this agreement. Experts believe that this safety agreement will only cost a dime per garment over 5 years in order to make a real difference in the safety of these factories—a dime for the lives of these workers.

The major global brands now face a choice. They can attempt to wait out the storm and go back to business as usual and continue their race to the bottom, or they can chart a different course that includes healthy profits, without a human death toll, by signing on to an enforceable safety agreement.

I hope these American and international fashion brands sign on. In the meantime, the American consumer and those who follow the fashion industry are watching. We want to see which fashion brands will accept blood on their labels and which will not.

COMMUNICATION FROM DIRECTOR OF CONSTITUENT SERVICES, THE HONORABLE ROBERT ADERHOLT, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from Jennifer Butler-Taylor, Director of Constituent Services, the Honorable ROBERT ADERHOLT, Member of Congress:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2013.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: This is to notify you formally pursuant to Rule VIII of the Rules

of the House of Representatives that I have been served with a subpoena, issued by the Circuit Court for Cullman County, Alabama, for documents a civil case to which I am not a party.

After consultation with the Office of General Counsel, I will determine whether compliance with the subpoena is consistent with the privileges and rights of the House.

Sincerely,

JENNIFER BUTLER-TAYLOR,
Director of Constituent Services,
U.S. Representative Robert Aderholt (AL-04).

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. COLLINS of New York) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:
We give You thanks, O God, for giving us another day.

We ask Your blessing upon this assembly and upon all to whom this authority of government is given. Help them to meet their responsibilities during these days, to attend to the immediate needs and concerns of the moment, enlightened by Your eternal Spirit.

The issues of the coming months remain complicated and divisive. Endow each Member with wisdom and equanimity, that productive solutions might be reached for the benefit of our Nation.

Please send Your Spirit of peace upon those areas of our world where violence and conflict endure and threaten to multiply. May all Your children learn to live in peace.

And may all that is done within the people's House 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 gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. FOXX 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.

SAVANNAH RIVER SITE REPROGRAMMING SUCCESSFUL

(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, on Friday, I was grateful to conduct a town hall in Aiken, South Carolina, where I listened to hundreds of constituents who are very concerned about the reprogramming request at the Savannah River site. Fortunately, over the weekend, the President's Office of Management and Budget sent the request to both Houses of Congress for approval.

This is a crucial step to end the 20 percent pay cut for 2,600 employees of Savannah River Nuclear Solutions. I appreciate the town hall participants: President Terra Carroll of the North Augusta Chamber of Commerce; Chairman Ronnie Young of the Aiken County Council; Aiken City Council members, Philip Merry and Dick Dewar; State Senator Tom Young, Jr.; President David Jameson of the Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce; Vice Chancellor Joe Sobieralski of USC-Aiken; DHEC facilities liaison, Shelly Wilson; USC-Aiken student, Hannah McClure. And dedicated congressional staff Ted Felder, Sara Beaulieu, and Baker Elmore were instrumental for success.

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

WORKING FAMILIES FLEXIBILITY ACT

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, for nearly 30 years, government employees have had the option to choose paid time off or comp time in lieu of overtime pay. Private sector employees, however, haven't had that choice because Washington and an old 1938 labor law won't let them.

That isn't fair. When life happens in the form of school plays, Little League games, or family members becoming sick, time and flexibility are essential to working parents and grandparents. Money doesn't buy time. It would certainly help if every worker had the choice to receive comp time when they put in extra hours.

Government shouldn't be standing in the way. There are a lot of moms and a few grandmas in the Republican Conference, and we want a solution for American families. That solution is the Working Families Flexibility Act. Our legislation will ensure all workers, whether public or private, benefit from the flexibility of choices in overtime compensation.