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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BROOKS of Alabama).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,

May 15, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MO BROOKS 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 11:50 a.m.

SEQUESTRATION

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, this week the House will be voting for the 37th time to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

This vote comes at a time when we are facing serious and pressing challenges, one of the most important of which is the operations of the sequester. That is 37 votes to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Let us set aside for a moment the important issue of how health reform is working and making quality care accessible and affordable for more Ameri-

cans. I'll be speaking more about that from this floor in coming days, as I know some of my colleagues will.

What I find—and I believe most Americans find—incomprehensible is how this House could waste its time on such a blatantly partisan vote when the effects of sequestration are having a growing negative effect on our economy and on the lives of so many American families. That ought to be our focus this week and every week until we find a solution, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker BOEHNER has said that this 37th repeal vote is justified because freshman Members have not had an opportunity to vote on that issue. If that is his view, then, by the same reasoning, he should allow a vote on a balanced alternative to the sequester. Freshmen have not had a chance to cast their votes on whether to replace the entire sequester with a big and balanced solution to deficits.

If the House proceeds with a vote on repealing the Affordable Care Act on the grounds that Members deserve an opportunity to be on the record on such an important issue, surely, Mr. Speaker, we also ought to have a vote on replacing the sequester, which we know is having adverse effects on our economy and on our national security.

American families and businesses are facing greater and greater uncertainty as the result of the sequester and the unwillingness on the part of Congress to take a meaningful, bipartisan action to stop it. With this uncertainty, businesses have slowed hiring and in some cases have even begun to lay off workers.

This indiscriminate and irrational nature of the sequestration means that it's ill effects will be felt across our economy and society without regard to our priorities. It also means that none of us, not one of us in this Chamber, is immune in our own districts where constituents will see a reduction in services and dislocation.

Because of the sequester, we are at risk of 70,000 young people kicked off Head Start; 10,000 teacher jobs at risk for title I cuts; 4 million fewer Meals on Wheels for seniors; 600,000 women, infants, and children dropped off the rolls; emergency unemployment insurance cut by 11 percent for 2 million out-of-work Americans; 2,100 fewer food-safety inspections. That's a drop of 18 percent to make sure that our food is safe. And one-third of combat air units are grounded.

The responsible path forward is for Democrats and Republicans to work together on a big and balanced approach to deficits that restores certainty to our businesses and families.

Four times Mr. VAN HOLLEN, the ranking member of the Budget Committee, has offered an amendment to the sequester, which would get to the same deficit reduction, but in a way that was prioritizing those things that are important in our country and eliminating those that are not, and raising some additional revenues, as well.

Not only has that not been considered, but the Republicans have refused to allow that amendment on the floor. Yet we have the 37th time to repeal the health care bill, which is already benefiting millions of Americans. It's not a responsible use of congressional time.

I urge the Speaker and the Republican leader to cancel this repeal vote and get back to business by allowing us to consider a balanced alternative to the sequester this week.

I also urge them to bring to the floor a motion to go to conference on the budget. My Republican friends pleaded for the Senate to pass a budget. The Senate passed a budget; we passed a budget. Regular order is going to conference where we could, in fact, come to an agreement on a big and balanced deal to replace this negatively impacting sequester.

There is nothing on the schedule to do that, either to repeal the sequester

□ 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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and change it or to go to conference, but a 37th vote that will go nowhere. And everybody who knows that to be the case is on the floor this week. How sad.

RETURN THE POWER BACK TO THE PEOPLE

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

Mr. RADEL. Mr. Speaker, in this great country of ours, since our founding, we've always had a distrust of government. And, quite honestly, I think that's a healthy thing, most especially today as we learn about what both the Department of Justice and IRS have done.

What we are learning is that this is a threat to your First Amendment: freedom of speech. And let there be no question the order of importance. It is your very first in your Bill of Rights: freedom of speech.

I believe that these rights are so sacred, so precious that I'm introducing the Free Flow of Information Act to protect journalists from the prying eyes of this Federal Government. It is my hope that Republicans and Democrats alike will support this just like then-Senator Obama did in 2007.

A select few in these agencies represent the worst when it comes to a heavy-handed government working to shut down your basic right to speak out as an individual or report the news as an organization. Now is the time that we stand up and say, Our society is not about I, the Federal Government; it is about we, the people. And to quote my generation's music from Public Enemy to Rage Against the Machine: "We gotta fight the powers that be; we gotta take the power back."

In other words, we need to stand up and say that we see the abuse from a few in Washington and we must return the power back to the people. After all, Washington works for you. Not a party. Not an ideology. Your government—elected and unelected—works for you, not against you.

But now we clearly see that both the IRS and the Department of Justice are working against you, working to stifle, to shut down your God-given right of freedom of speech, that freedom often carried out by the press.

In the United States, we are so unique and so powerful because we really share a common belief of some pretty simple things. You should be able to speak your mind. Again, it's called "freedom of speech." And journalists should be able to do their job and do so without the fear of a heavy-handed tyrannical government threatening or stifling them. It's called "freedom of the press."

But now we see an entire culture of government acting on their own behalf, not even beholden to an administration, party, or even a belief. These are rogue agencies that we are talking about, unelected, unchecked, without

boundaries, without ethics, and without a shred of respect for the Constitution or you. These individuals are some people on some floor of some building named after some dude that you've never even heard of messing with your life.

□ 1010

And if you don't think that wiretaps or IRS audits are going to hit you, think again. Two groups from my home in southwest Florida were hit so hard by the IRS that they quit. They shut down their groups. That was it; enough is enough. This is the clearest example of how the government is coming after you to strip away your most basic rights. These groups were made up of hardworking Americans just like you. Their goal: to teach people about the Constitution. Think about that for a second. They wanted to teach people about the very document that tells you you have the right to say what you want. They're now gone.

And let's look at the Department of Justice wiretapping, seizing and prying into the lives of journalists. I worked as a journalist for almost 20 years, living with what I thought our government also believed in—freedom of the press. The freedom to investigate, share, and speak out on injustice.

And from journalists to partisan pundits, Rachel Maddow to Bill O'Reilly, they're coming for you next. Sean Hannity to Chris Hayes, you'll be tapped next as you try to shed light on truth, on injustice, or just try and get some answers.

Where does all of this end?

Well, this is where the so-called far left and far right need to embrace each other. Whether you are a Tea Partier or part of the Occupy movement, this is about you. Whether you are an evangelical Christian wanting to share the word of God or an atheist simply asking for a more secular society, this is about you. This is about you—your freedom of speech, your ability to express what you believe in. This is about you.

Washington insiders should not be dictating your life. The more it's about them, it's not about you. The more government grows unchecked and unbalanced and out of control, the more it's about them and not you.

I believe in you. Stand with me and let's take the power back and return this government to we the people. I promise to stand with you.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair.

PROTECT BANGLADESHI FACTORY WORKERS

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

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, little more than 100 years ago, a New York State assemblyman

was an eyewitness to one of our Nation's worst industrial tragedies—the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire. He recounted how he saw girl after girl appear in the reddened windows, pause for a terrified moment, and then leap to the pavement below, to land as a mangled, bloody pulp. He said it went on for what seemed like a ghastly eternity, and described how the firemen's life nets were torn by the impact of falling bodies.

This inferno at a sweatshop garment factory in New York City employed mostly poor, immigrant women. One hundred forty-six workers died that day because it lacked proper stairways, fire escapes, and managers had locked all of the exits. This tragedy shook our Nation and led to lifesaving workplace safety reforms.

A century later, I recently met a young Bangladeshi garment worker named Sumi. She, too, jumped from a window of the Tazreen garment factory. She survived, but 12 of her co-workers who jumped with her did not. More than 100 others who never had the opportunity to jump were found inside of the factory dead. This haunting tragedy has many parallels to the Triangle fire: exit doors were locked; fire extinguishers were not working; fire codes went unenforced.

We don't tolerate those workplace conditions in the United States anymore, but those are deadly conditions that are tolerated in other countries that make the clothing that we wear. These tragedies have moved from New York to Bangladesh, driven by the business models and global supply chains of the world's leading retailers and clothing brands. But now Bangladesh has had what might be its own Triangle Shirtwaist fire.

On April 24, more than 1,100 people died as Rana Plaza and its garment factories collapsed. Some 2,000 more were injured, and rescuers are still pulling bodies out 3 weeks later. There have been an additional 40 fires, explosions, and other incidents between the Tazreen fire and the Rana Plaza tragedies. It's simply a matter of time before there is another one.

These incidents shocked people around the globe and laid bare the need for bold action. The lives of 4 million workers in these factories are counting on bold action. But not everyone has been shocked. Major American retailers and clothing brands have refused to change the way they conduct business in Bangladesh, the second largest garment producer in the world after China. They are hoping instead that the heightened attention will pass without having to change their business model. That business model pits sweatshop against sweatshop, country against country, in a race to the bottom to rake in billions of dollars in profits while paying as little as 22 cents per shirt.

In Bangladesh, American and international companies flourish in this system, companies we all know like