

These reports must outline any progress the RO has made as well as the steps it's taking to reduce the backlogs, such as hiring more claims processors or requiring additional training.

I am pleased that this language was included in the committee report accompanying H.R. 2216. This is a move in the right direction as Congress continues its oversight of the VA to improve the lives of our veterans.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF FOUR FALLEN HOUSTON FIREFIGHTERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise with a very sad duty and, as well, an appreciation to my colleagues from Texas who joined me yesterday with a 1-minute request of silence, commemoration of the four fallen firefighters in Houston, Texas.

First responders belong to all of us, no matter where they live. When a devastating incident occurs that causes them to lose their lives, we all feel the pain and sadness for them and the families that mourn them.

We in Texas recently lost a number of firefighters in West, Texas. Now, sadly, I come today to acknowledge the loss of four firefighters in the Houston Fire Department in the city of Houston: Matthew Renaud, Robert Bebee, Robert Garner, and Anne Sullivan. Unfortunately, these wonderful people lost their lives in a fire where they were fighting to save the lives of others.

The mission of firefighters is constantly with courage and commitment and compassion, and today I recount the history of the Houston firefighters and fire department.

March 14, 2012, was the last time the city of Houston lost a firefighter in the line of duty when Senior Captain Thomas Dillon died. 1929 marked the last time more than two firefighters lost their lives in the line of duty, when Edgar Grant and Harry Oxford and John Little were killed when their engine was struck by a train.

But on May 31, just a few days ago, 2013, a 5-alarm fire, just after noon, at the location of a motel and restaurant, is now the most deadly fire in the history of the 118 years of the Houston City Fire Department.

Sadly, Captain EMT Matthew Renaud of Station 51, Engineer Operator EMT Robert Bebee of Station 51, Firefighter EMT Robert Garner of Station 68, and Probationary Firefighter Anne Sullivan of Station 68 died in the line of duty.

All we can see as we look to the heavens is that we hope that they will rest in peace. But they were our brothers and our sisters.

Anne Sullivan of Station 68 was a gifted athlete who played soccer and was a cross-country runner, focused her life's ambition upon graduating

from high school to become a firefighter and began her quest by joining the Wharton County Junior College Fire Academy. After graduation, she became a student at the Houston Fire Department Academy, while also previously doing work in another jurisdiction.

Whereas, Firefighter EMT Robert Garner of Station 68 was proud to call himself a Houston firefighter who sought out this honor after leaving the United States Air Force, where he honorably served his country and completed two tours of duty in Iraq and his fire department career at the Val Jahnke Fire Academy.

Captain Matthew Renaud, who served the Houston Fire Department for 11½ years, joined the Houston Fire Department in October of 2001 and was assigned to Station 51 upon graduation from the academy and awarded the Unit Meritorious Medal for saving a female who had been trapped in an apartment.

And Engineer Operator EMT Robert Bebee of Station 51 graduated from Dobie High School in southwest Houston in 1990 and began his fire department career at the fire academy on August 6, 2001, but served the majority of his career at Station 51.

Over the last couple of days, I've visited the command station, logistics, and the firemen's union, and then went to Fire Station 51.

To Fire Stations 51 and 68, we offer our deepest sympathy in understanding that your brothers and sister have been lost. But today we also pay tribute, because the members of the Texas delegation will be introducing a resolution in honor of these heroes. And we're reminded of their words and the words in the Fireman's Creed, that their work is to save lives, the lives of men, the lives of women, but it is God's work.

Those fallen heroes were engaged in God's work, for they were looking for lost souls that might have been in that building, that horrific, horrible fire that has seen thousands of Houstonians go by to pay tribute; and thousands more to go by and pay tribute at Fire Stations 51 and 68 and also to acknowledge Local 341.

Tomorrow, Houston will grieve together and, as well, I want them to know that the Members of the United States Congress grieve with them as we introduce this resolution.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 49 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WOMACK) at noon.

PRAYER

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, Kauai Aadheenam Hindu Monastery, Kapaa, Hawaii, offered the following prayer:

May today's session of the House of Representatives, to which Americans rightly turn for leadership, be abundantly blessed by the Lord Supreme.

Through personal introspection, a collaborative heart, and by God's all-pervasive grace, may the Members present here, despite differing views and staunchly held convictions, find the wisdom to craft mutually acceptable solutions to our Nation's challenges.

The tragic Boston Marathon bombings, still vivid in all our minds, implore us to advocate the humanity of a nonviolent approach in all of life's dimensions. Hindu scripture declares, without equivocation, that the highest of high ideals is to never knowingly harm anyone.

May we here in this Chamber, and all the people of our great Nation, endeavor to face even our greatest difficulties with an unwavering commitment to seek out and to find nonviolent solutions.

Peace, peace, peace to us, and peace to all beings.

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 Arkansas (Mr. COTTON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. COTTON 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.

WELCOMING SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, Congresswoman TULSI GABBARD and I are proud to have the opportunity to welcome Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, the spiritual leader and head of Kauai's Hindu monastery. He has come here today to give the opening prayer on the Hindu American Foundation's 10th Annual Capitol Hill Advocacy Day, and he is a true leader in the Hindu community.

Satguru has been head of the monastery since 2001, and works to spread

the principles of peace and inclusiveness around the community. Additionally, his achievements have international reach. Not only does he oversee the Himalayan Academy's various publications, he serves as a publisher of the international magazine Hinduism Today.

Furthermore, Satguru dedicates his time to cultivating the religious instruction of Hindu youth around the world through producing a series of books that teach Hinduism's ethical restraints, and teach religious observances as well.

Thank you, Satguru, for your opening prayer.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

HONORING THE MEMORY AND SACRIFICE OF CODY CARPENTER AND JOEL CAMPORA

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

Mr. COTTON. Today, on behalf of a grateful State, I rise to honor Scott County Sheriff Cody Carpenter and Arkansas Game and Fish wildlife officer Joel Campora, who died heroically last week trying to save their fellow Arkansans from flash floods.

Sheriff Carpenter leaves behind a wife and four children. Officer Campora leaves behind a wife and two daughters. Along with my fellow Arkansans, I want to express my deepest condolences to their families, their communities, and their brothers and sisters in law enforcement.

But even as we mourn their deaths and console their loved ones, let us also honor their sacrifice and courage. Sheriff Carpenter and Officer Campora died in the line of duty protecting their fellow citizens. John 15:13 says:

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

These men volunteered for duty that can call for that ultimate sacrifice every day. Now that they have laid down their lives, I join my State and my country in mourning and celebrating their cherished memory.

JOBS NOW ACT

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

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it has now been 884 days; no serious jobs bill yet.

I'm proud to announce a powerful alternative to this shameful inaction. Today, I am again introducing the Jobs Now Act, a bill that would give local

officials the resources and flexibility they need to retain, hire, and train workers immediately.

If this sounds like some left-wing idea, I ask you to consider who served as the key initiator and advocate for the CETA program on which this legislation is based: President Richard Milhous Nixon.

I have no doubt that many Americans hearing me today benefited—either directly or indirectly—from CETA.

Mr. Speaker, let's return to the days when investing in job creation and human potential was a bipartisan cause. Let's bring this important bill to the floor for a vote.

Our mantra in this Congress should be jobs, jobs, jobs.

DEAL WITH THE DEBT NOW

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, this week the national debt reached an unprecedented record of over \$16.85 trillion. Such a figure is so mind-boggling that I will make this simple. This means that every person in the United States now owes \$53,329 to pay down the debt, and every U.S. taxpayer's debt share is now \$148,186.

With a debt at such high levels, it is not surprising that we are still experiencing an anemic 2 percent growth rate, which has produced the lowest job participation rate in 30 years. The ever-rising public debt threatens to drive up interest rates, crowd out private investment, and increase inflation. The implications will be severe and pronounced for all Americans, but most especially for the poor, the elderly, and the middle class.

Mr. Speaker, if we don't deal with the debt now, the debt will deal with us.

□ 1210

LET'S BRIDGE THE INFRASTRUCTURE GAP

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

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, last month we saw two bridges in this country collapse in 1 week. If that fact doesn't get us to act, maybe this one will:

According to the Federal Highway Administration, over 70,000 bridges nationwide have been "deemed structurally deficient." That's one in nine bridges.

Congress can't continue to kick this can down the road on this critical issue. That's why I've called on my colleagues on the Transportation Committee to hold hearings to focus on the state of our Nation's bridges.

Last week we had the Special Freight Transportation Panel in southern California on a 3-day fact-finding trip to

see how businesses rely on our transportation arteries, bridges, highways, ports to grow and sustain the trade industry and our global economy.

When we invest in our infrastructure, we create a future with good-paying jobs; a strong, thriving economy; and an efficient, safe transportation system.

We have Americans who need work. We have an infrastructure that needs fixing. Let's bridge that gap.

THE NORTH FORK WATERSHED PROTECTION ACT

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

Mr. DAINES. Mr. Speaker, as a fifth-generation Montanan and sportsman, I know how special the Treasure State is. Our State's rivers and mountains and our outdoor heritage are an important part of every Montanan's way of life and play an important part in our State's economy.

It's important that we work together to protect these valuable resources so that future generations can enjoy them for years to come. The North Fork Watershed, on the western slope of Glacier National Park, is critical to our State's outdoor heritage and the tourism economy in the Flathead Valley.

Efforts to protect the North Fork Watershed, like the North Fork Watershed Protection Act, is a good example of how we can work together to put Montana first. That's why I'm introducing legislation to protect this valuable resource, while also ensuring that current recreational uses, livestock management, and forest management in this region are maintained.

I'm glad to be part of this important, bipartisan effort in leading the charge in the House to achieve the goals that the Flathead community supports.

IT'S TIME FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

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

Mr. SWALWELL of California. I rise today to ask Speaker BOEHNER to recognize that the time is now for this House to take up comprehensive immigration reform.

I spent all of last week on an innovation road show. I went up and down Silicon Valley—and I have northern Silicon Valley in my district—and I listened to the job creators, I listened to the innovators. And one message is clear: we have unfilled jobs here in America that require immigration fixes, require increasing the H-1B visas so that we can create jobs behind high-skilled immigrants.

We know that Silicon Valley was built on a three-legged stool: access to capital, brain trusts, and a risk-taking culture. And we know that immigrants