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Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 7, 2013, at 9:30 a.m.

House of Representatives

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2013

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 5, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable STEVEN M. PALAZZO 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.

LEGALIZING MARIJUANA

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, since I was a high school student, I've

watched the escalation of the war on drugs, especially marijuana. I slowly became aware of its widespread use. As a freshman legislator in Oregon 40 years ago, my opinion was set by a hog farmer from eastern Oregon who was a State representative named Stafford Hansell.

Stafford held the Oregon House, and the people crowded into the gallery spellbound with his tutorial on marijuana and its comparison to other addictive substances, both legal and illegal. This older gentleman, who didn't smoke, didn't drink alcohol—let alone use marijuana—made his case. He pointed out how tobacco was highly addictive and killed hundreds of thousands of Americans per year. He discussed alcohol, whose damaging properties had once led the country into a foolish, costly and ultimately self-defeating experiment with prohibition. Alcohol use was damaging for some, led to dependency for many, while contributing to tens of thousands of highway deaths every year, and serious health problems for countless others.

By the time Representative Hansell got to marijuana, he'd convinced me that the bill he was advocating—two plant legalization—was not just worthy of my support, which I was already inclined to do, but something that I should advocate that Oregonians should be allowed this choice, less damaging and addicting than tobacco.

We didn't legalize marijuana in 1973, although I was assured that if the 22 of us who had voted for the bill had been supported by the people who used it but voted no, the measure would have

passed easily. We did make Oregon the first State to decriminalize the use of marijuana. Possession of a small amount was made a minor infraction, treated like a traffic ticket. Today, 40 years later, the case is even more compelling. Fourteen States have now decriminalized policies like Oregon passed in 1973.

In 1996, California pioneered the legal use of medical marijuana whose therapeutic qualities have long been known and employed. And since then, 18 States and the District of Columbia have approved medical marijuana initiatives, allowing its use to relieve chronic pain, nausea, and other conditions. Notably, two-thirds of these approvals were a result of voter initiatives.

Last fall, voters in Colorado and Washington approved adult recreational use with 55 percent approval margins. Studies show that a majority of Americans now agree that marijuana should be legalized. It is time that the Federal Government revisit its policies. Drugs with less serious classifications, like methamphetamine and cocaine, have more serious health and behavioral impacts; yet marijuana retains its Schedule I classification.

In 2011, two-thirds of a million people were arrested for using a substance that millions use, many more have tried, and a majority of Americans feel should be legal. Because there are stark racial differences in enforcement and incarceration, there are wide disparities in the legal treatment for communities of color versus their white counterparts. Medical marijuana is

□ 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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widely accepted but subject to inherent conflict with Federal law that is unfair, confusing and costly.

A bipartisan group of legislators is developing a comprehensive package of legislation to clarify and reform outdated, ineffective, and unwise Federal policies. In a time of great fiscal stress and a sea change in opinion of voters, this is a unique opportunity to save money on enforcement and incarceration, avoid unnecessary conflict and harsh treatment of users, provide a framework for medical marijuana, and even reduce the deficit—all by honoring the wish of two-thirds of Americans to respect states' rights for marijuana, just like we do for alcohol.

I would invite my colleagues to join this effort in developing a marijuana policy that makes sense for America today.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, January is the traditional month in which New Year's resolutions are developed. I'm suggesting that President Obama and Mrs. Obama adopt a resolution in the event they failed to do so in January. President Obama and Mrs. Obama, it appears to me, Mr. Speaker, regard Air Force One very casually; and I believe that on some occasions two planes, at least two planes, have been dispatched to the same destination.

Air Force One, Mr. Speaker, belongs to the President and Mrs. Obama, but Air Force One also belongs to the American taxpayer, and I would welcome a New Year's resolution that would provide a generous lease of all future Air Force One dispatches with prudence, discipline and, last but certainly not least, fiscal austerity. America's taxpayers will be appreciative.

Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, Air Force One, designated by the Air Force as VC-25, incurred an operational cost per hour of \$179,750. And on some occasions, additional aircraft accompanied Air Force One, naturally adding to the cost.

I'm going to now, Mr. Speaker, insert my oars into waters that involve the former Secretary of State, Mrs. Clinton, during a recent Senate hearing. A Senator who was examining Secretary Clinton suggested or implied that the administration may have misstated the nature of the Benghazi attack, to which Mrs. Clinton responded: "What difference at this point does it make?"

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the survivors of the four Americans who were murdered in that attack would welcome any and all information surrounding that infamous invasion. The survivors are grieving, and any information that could illuminate in any way this tragedy that occurred in Benghazi would welcome any and all information, it seems to me.

Yes, Secretary Clinton, at this point it may well make a difference.

HUNGER IN AMERICA

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the problem of hunger in America. We are the richest, most prosperous Nation in the world. Yet the sad fact is that in 2013 more than 50 million people in this country are considered food insecure by the United States Department of Agriculture. Food insecurity, Mr. Speaker, is a technical term for the hungry. That's right, there are more than 50 million hungry people in this country. We cannot and we should not stand for this. It is time that we end hunger now.

Certainly, our fragile economy has a lot to do with the high levels of hunger. Millions of people either lost their jobs or saw their wages fall. Food and energy prices went up. For many middle- and low-income families, everyday costs like rent, utilities, and food became more difficult. And in many cases, families were forced to choose between things like food and electricity.

□ 1010

But even before the recession started, tens of millions of Americans went hungry at some point during the year. That, too, is unconscionable. And when we turn this economy around, and our economy will rebound, we need to make sure that people do not fall through the cracks again.

We need to end hunger now. We may not be able to wipe out all disease. We probably can't eliminate all war. But we can end hunger now if we make the commitment to do so. We have the resources. We know what it takes. We just have to muster the will to end hunger once and for all. Hunger is a political condition.

It's important to point out that even though over 50 million people were food insecure, the vast majority had a safety net that prevented them from actually starving. That safety net is called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. Formerly known as food stamps, SNAP is a program that provides low-income families with food that they otherwise could not afford to buy.

Last year, over 47 million families relied on SNAP to feed their families. SNAP is literally a lifeline for these 47 million people who struggle to make ends meet. Now, I don't deny that this is a big number, but it's a big number because it's a big problem.

Mr. Speaker, America's hunger problem would be dramatically worse without SNAP. Just imagine what this country would look like if we didn't have the safety net that SNAP provides for low-income families in this country.

Our churches, our synagogues and mosques do their best to help feed families who need help, but they cannot do it on their own. There are nonprofits and food banks that do as much as they can, but they cannot do it on their own. The private sector simply cannot meet the need.

And with the economy not expected to fully recover for some time, we know that there will continue to be those who struggle to afford food. These are the people we need to worry about, the people we must help, the people who need their neighbors to lend a helping hand.

SNAP, Mr. Speaker, is a helping hand. Relying on SNAP is no walk in the park. It is not champagne and caviar. No, Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the average SNAP benefit is less than \$1.50 per meal. That doesn't buy a whole lot of healthy, nutritious food.

And there's a common misconception—some would say it's a purposeful mischaracterization—that SNAP promotes a culture of dependency. Some detractors even talk about SNAP like it's a golden ticket, that getting on SNAP is like winning the lottery; everything's taken care of forever.

Give me a break. People don't want a handout. They don't want to rely on government assistance. No, Mr. Speaker, people want to provide for themselves and their families. That's why half of all new SNAP participants receive benefits for 10 months or less, and 74 percent actually left the program entirely within 2 years.

Now, I don't know why there is such a vitriolic opposition to this important program by some here in Congress, nor do I understand why some of my colleagues believe we should balance the budget by cutting programs that help the most vulnerable.

The truth is that without SNAP people would go hungry because they are poor. Eighty-three percent of families on SNAP make less than \$24,000 a year for a family of four. Less than \$24,000 a year. I challenge anyone in this body to live off that income for a year.

Our budgetary challenges are clear. We need to tackle the debt and the deficit, but we need to do so smartly and with reason. There is a reason not a single bipartisan deficit proposal, from Simpson-Bowles to sequester, cuts SNAP. That's because SNAP is the most effective and efficient anti-hunger program we have. That's because cutting SNAP will literally take the food away from families in this country. That's because the authors of these plans, from liberal Democrats to conservative Republicans, all recognize the importance of this program.

Yet there are those who would want to undermine this and other programs that provide a circle of protection for those in need. It is time for a nationwide effort to end the scourge of hunger.

I call on the President of the United States to coordinate a White House conference on food and nutrition so we