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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. AMODEI).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 10, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK AMODEI 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.

END THE SEQUESTER

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, beginning this week, literally hundreds of thousands of civilian workers are being furloughed at defense installations in Maryland's Fifth District, across the State, and around the country. That means as of Monday, more than 650,000 hardworking, middle class defense employees are being forced to take a 20 percent pay cut for the remainder of the fiscal year.

It isn't because they are not doing their job well; they are.

It isn't because they don't have enough work; they do.

And it isn't because we don't need their talents, their experience, and their dedication to service; we need them more now than ever.

These employees are being furloughed because Congress has failed. Congress has failed to achieve deficit reduction in a balanced and responsible way. In fact, we passed a budget through the House of Representatives; the United States Senate has passed a budget. But the House of Representatives, Republican leadership, refuses to go to conference, refuses to follow regular order for which they've called so frequently, refuses to try to bring a compromise agreement back to this floor. This Congress has failed to achieve deficit reduction in a balanced and responsible way.

Instead, we now have the sequester—a senseless, stupid, irrational policy. It's a real shame, Mr. Speaker, that partisan politics is keeping some of our country's best and brightest from doing their jobs supporting our warfighters as they serve in Afghanistan and around the world.

Last Tuesday, I met with some of the outstanding men and women who work in civilian defense jobs at Pax River Naval Air Station in my district. When you go to Pax River, you often see uniformed and civilian personnel sitting side by side, working to accomplish the same mission, serving with the same dedication, partners in making our government stronger and making our defense stronger, each complementing the work of the other.

Now, as a result of these furloughs, one of them will get a 20 percent pay cut. One of them will be told to go home. One of them will be told you can't even volunteer to come back and get the job done. And the other will get one day a week of having to carry out the mission alone.

At that meeting, I heard from members of the Pax River community who

are deeply concerned about the effects of these furloughs on our military readiness, our ongoing missions, on Department morale, and on the local economy. They were concerned about themselves, but they were mainly concerned about the job that was going to be left undone, finished late, undermining our security. One person scheduled to be furloughed this Friday told me:

I have a strong work ethic, and I want to get the job done, whether it's late nights and weekends. And I'm worried someone will come to me on a Thursday and I'll have to say, I can't get the job done until Monday.

Because, Mr. Speaker, we are telling that person you can't come to work.

Another employee who was there last Tuesday emailed me afterward about the upcoming furlough writing:

There are many people in this organization who stretch themselves day after day, happily, to get the work done that needs to get done to support the Department of Defense and the warfighter.

I will tell you, and so many Members on both sides of the aisle have met these folks, not these specific folks perhaps at Pax, but around this country who are dedicated, patriotic, hard-working, and want to make sure that their country is strong and that we serve our people.

This one constituent continues:

"I've already started to see some of these same people giving less of themselves because they feel our Congressmen," that's meaning all of us, "and our country no longer put value in what they do."

We are undermining the morale of the American workers. We are undermining the ability of the American Government to be as effective with respect to national defense as it needs to be.

Mr. Speaker, this sequester is harming morale and may lead skilled employees to leave for the private sector just when we need them most.

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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The effects of the sequester extend beyond the gates of our installations and affect entire communities with local businesses standing to lose as a result of belt tightening by families experiencing furloughs.

At the Naval Surface Warfare Center at Indian Head, also in Maryland's Fifth Congressional District, 97 percent of civilian personnel will be furloughed. That's more than 1,870 people.

Mr. Speaker, there's no reason why our civilian defense workers should be kept from doing their job just because Congress hasn't done its job. As long as the sequester remains in effect, and as long as Republicans refuse to compromise on a balanced approach to deficits that can end it, I'll keep coming to this floor and remind them exactly what is at stake. And I continue to call on Speaker BOEHNER to end the unnecessary delay in appointing budget conferees, which would be a significant step toward beginning negotiations in earnest that could lead to a big and balanced compromise on deficits.

We need to bring deficits down. We need to get our country on a fiscally sustainable path, but we need to do so in a rational way which does not undermine our national security, does not undermine the services being rendered to the people who are relying on them, and that does not send a message to our employees and those whom we need to recruit in the future that we are a good employer, we're a caring employer, we're an effective employer, and you ought to work for us, you ought to work for your country, for your fellow citizens.

Mr. Speaker, we need to go to conference. We need to get rid of the sequester. We need to put America on a rational path to fiscal responsibility and effectiveness.

BENGHAZI MATTERS

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

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, Benghazi matters, and the American people deserve answers.

On the evening of September 11, 2012, terrorist factions successfully attacked America in Benghazi, Libya, when they torched our consulate and killed four Americans. Early in the morning the following day, they attacked our annex.

Secretary Clinton's response to the American people was that these attacks were in response to a video posted on the Internet. The following Sunday, on September 16, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice repeated Secretary Clinton's assertion on five separate television talk shows.

Today is July 10, 2013, and we now know that without question these attacks were strategically planned and had no relation to Secretary Clinton or Ambassador Rice's initial assertions. The investigation into our failure to

protect those four Americans who were killed, our consulate, our annex, and the administration's abysmal explanation for informing the American public must continue.

Mr. Speaker, Secretary Clinton appeared before a Senate hearing and was asked about certain facts surrounding the attack. She replied: What difference does it make?

I suggest that Secretary Clinton may want to consult with the survivors of the four Americans who were slain and ask them what difference does it make. I take umbrage with her response, and I think it was done in a rather uncaring and very impersonal way.

Investigating this scandal is our duty and obligation as representatives of the American people and protectors of the public trust. To date, congressional hearings have raised far more questions than answers. We have to look no further than the testimony of Mr. Gregory Hicks before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Mr. Hicks is the former Deputy Chief of Mission in Libya, and his testimony is replete with contradictions from what Secretary Clinton and Ambassador Rice and others have told the American public. The matter, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, smacks of a coverup. We must continue to pursue and develop answers and explanations as to what happened so we will ultimately know what really did occur on that fateful night and ensuing days.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, Benghazi matters, and we must continue thoroughly to examine this until the truth ultimately surfaces. It matters, and the American public, Americans taxpayers, here, there, and yonder, deserve a final resolution to this episode. I suggest that we continue to keep our eye on the ball, otherwise this is going to disappear into the wind and that would be inexcusable.

CALL TO ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, President Obama's call to action on climate change is another reminder of the large and growing threat posed by the warming of our atmosphere. Yet instead of taking a leading role to address the problem, Congress has been held hostage by those who would deny the science altogether. Every day that we delay, we are losing ground in the race to develop new sources of energy that can protect the planet and break the grip of our dependence on fossil fuels.

This past year was one of the most extreme years for our Nation's weather. It was the warmest year on record for the U.S.; and droughts, wildfires, and floods were far more frequent and far more intense. In fact, nine of the 10 hottest years since 1880 have been in the past decade.

In 2012, 9.3 million acres of land across the country burned in wildfires,

more than double the annual average, and the second highest ever. Rainfall was far below the average, and it was one of the driest years in memory. Droughts, heat waves, and wildfires are now the norm rather than the exception.

The extreme weather was also a significant drag on our economy: Superstorm Sandy cost \$65 billion; western wildfires cost over \$1 billion; and losses from drought cost \$30 billion. Greenhouse gases emitted as a result of human activity are the biggest drivers of climate change. That is a fact that is accepted by virtually every scientist around the world.

We're only beginning to understand the impact of a global temperature rise on a nation's long-term environmental health and the health of the world; but with each new report by NASA, by the U.N., by universities here and overseas, we see that the threat grows and the possibility that we can avoid catastrophe and catastrophic consequences in the future recedes.

Some in this body have questioned the science, noting that droughts, floods, and climatic variations have been observed for centuries, often recalling Noah and his ark; but the speed and magnitude of the changes we are witnessing are consistent with scientific modeling of the effects of human activity on the climate. We must act now.

First, we have to diversify our energy sources. Instead of tax breaks for Big Oil, we should be investing in the development of new and renewable energy sources.

Second, we must work to reduce our emissions. Power plants are the single largest source of emissions in the U.S., accounting for roughly 40 percent of all domestic greenhouse gases, and the EPA must put in place Federal standards that will regulate both new and existing power plants.

Third, we must build a 21st-century transportation infrastructure and system that will support a growing economy and population. This means we need to invest in mass transit systems, and car makers must continue to improve fuel economy standards.

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And fourth, we need to work with the international community, not against it, as many in this body have tried to do. America must take a leadership role. We need the cooperation of China and India, but we should not let their foot-dragging prevent us from taking actions that will protect our future.

President Obama took an important step in exerting American leadership on climate change when he called for action at the Federal level to curb carbon pollution, just as we limit our toxic chemicals, like mercury, sulfur, and arsenic. The President also wants to allow wind and solar energy companies to use government-owned land to generate more power.

These are good ideas, but a major effort on climate change depends on congressional action, and so far we have