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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. COLLINS of Georgia).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 13, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DOUG COLLINS 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, the President spoke to us last night and he talked to us about avoiding the sequester. I was at a political event being interviewed and a gentleman, Mr. POMPEO from Kansas, was with us as well, and he spoke before I did. He talked about the sequester and he said:

It's going to be a home run. We're doing what the American people ask the United States House of Representatives to do in 2010 when I came here.

He then said, in referring to the sequester:

I think the American people . . . will have tremendous respect for what its House of Representatives led and what its Federal Government was able to accomplish.

A profound disagreement. I think the gentleman from Kansas is profoundly wrong. The sequester will have an extraordinarily negative effect on this country, on its people, on its economy, and on its national security, and I might say on the confidence that the world at large has in the United States' ability to pursue rational policy.

In the State of the Union address last night, Mr. Speaker, with regard to deficits, the President said this:

None of us will get 100 percent of what we want. But the alternative will cost us jobs, hurt our economy, and visit hardship on millions of hardworking Americans.

He went on to say:

The greatest Nation on Earth cannot keep conducting its business by drifting from one manufactured crisis to the next.

Every 30 days, every 60 days, every 90 days, a manufactured crisis, evidence of a dysfunctional and willful Congress.

He went on to say:

Let's agree right here, right now, to keep the people's Government open, pay our bills on time, and always uphold the full faith and credit of the United States of America.

That seems to be reasonable policy.

We now have two and a half weeks before the sequester takes effect, with devastating consequences for our economy and national security, yet the gentleman from Kansas welcomes that policy. In fact, the Republican leadership of this House has not put a single bill on the floor in this Congress that would have any impact on avoiding the sequester.

We now find ourselves facing yet another manufactured crisis. Instead of preventing it, as I've said, Republicans appear to be willing and enthusiastically welcoming the sequester.

Mr. Speaker, every American ought to take note of that enthusiasm for an

irrational policy, referred to as irrational by its own leader, Mr. CANTOR, who said it was not the way we ought to do business. He's right, but he's brought nothing to the floor to avoid it.

The sequester, though, was meant to be so undesirable an outcome that it would force us to agree on a better approach. It married the worst consequences for both parties when it came to spending cuts: indiscriminate cuts to the defense budget alongside cuts to critical domestic programs.

In politics, often the key to compromise is crafting a package that contains something, some provision that everyone can love, although everyone will not love every provision. Here, Congress took the opposite approach and included something everyone could despise.

A faction of the majority, which is not a majority of this House by itself, has become so zealous in its drive to pursue a spending-only approach that it has embraced the sequester's Draconian cuts. Mr. POMPEO's quote this morning affirms that assertion.

They've used their clout within the majority to hold Congress hostage from one manufactured crisis to the next, and they nearly brought us to the edge of default for a second time last year. There have been several reports in a number of news outlets that Speaker BOEHNER promised their faction that the topline for appropriations would not exceed the level it would be after sequestration cuts, already adopting the premise that sequestration has gone into effect.

It was further reported that while the sequester levels would be kept, the cuts would be rearranged in order to protect defense spending at the further detriment to domestic parties, like NIH, cancer research, heart research, prostate cancer research, diabetes research, all the other maladies that—Dr. BERA is sitting here shaking his

□ 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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head—afflict us in this country and around the world.

By injecting additional partisanship in this way, Republicans would be taking a further step away from compromise. We need compromise. Each of us in this body understands we represent a certain segment of society, but not everybody agrees with everything we believe. Therefore, if we are to act on behalf of the country in a responsible, effective fashion, it's necessary to compromise.

Mr. Speaker, the sequester is real and is rapidly approaching. It is not a rational approach to deficit reduction. Even Republican Leader CANTOR, as I said, admitted on "Meet the Press" on Sunday about the sequester, and I quote the Republican leader:

I don't want to live with the sequester.

Let me repeat that.

I do not want to live with the sequester. I want reductions in spending that make sense.

These indiscriminate reductions don't make sense. That's what Mr. POMPEO was welcoming: indiscriminate cuts that do not make sense. We need serious action in Congress to deal with the sequester, and that action cannot wait. But there's been nothing on the floor in this Congress to deal with that sequester—nothing. Not a single piece of legislation has been brought forth by the majority.

I used to be the majority leader, Mr. Speaker, and I had the power to bring legislation forward, and I would do it. I'm no longer the majority leader. The majority leader, notwithstanding this quote that these indiscriminate reductions don't make sense, has not brought an alternative to this floor.

Democrats are ready to make tough choices, and we're ready to work with Republicans to do what is necessary to solve this problem of our deficits in a balanced way. We must reduce spending, but we also need to raise revenues. Every bipartisan commission, everyone has said the only way you're going to solve the arithmetic is to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to yield back the balance of my time so that my colleagues have an opportunity to say their piece, but I lament the fact that we're going home next week. We ought to be here working to avoid what the majority leader says are indiscriminate cuts that are not the way to do business. Yet, we rush headlong to do that.

□ 1010

I hope the Senate acts. I hope the Senate passes a bill that will be rational, will get us out of this conundrum of a sequester that nobody should want, and that when it does, Majority Leader CANTOR and Speaker BOEHNER will bring it to the floor and let us vote. And if you don't like it, vote against it. But let the American people know where we stand.

Let us avoid the sequester. Let us get ourselves on a fiscally balanced path, but let us do so responsibly.

NATIONAL CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as cochair of the bipartisan House Career and Technical Education Caucus in order to recognize February as National Career and Technical Education Month. Career and technical education programs continue to evolve in order to ensure that workers are prepared to hold jobs in high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand career fields like engineering, information technology, health care, and advanced manufacturing for the 21st century.

During this time of record-high unemployment, career and technical education programs provide a lifeline for the underemployed who look to begin new careers alongside young adults just starting out of high school in the rapidly evolving job market.

Career and technical education, while historically undervalued, helps tackle critical workforce shortages and provides an opportunity for America to remain globally competitive while also engaging students in practical, real-world applications of academics coupled with hands-on work experience.

Now, as we move toward fiscal year 2014, I join with a bipartisan group of my colleagues in not only recognizing the importance of maintaining these Federal investments for our country's future but also in saying thank you to the countless men and women who make these programs possible—the faculty, the teachers and the instructors within our career and technical education schools throughout this great Nation.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Career and Technical Education Month, I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me and my good friend, Representative LANGEVIN from Rhode Island, the cochair of the House Career and Technical Education Caucus, as we continue our work together of the bipartisan Career and Technical Education Caucus.

The goals of this caucus are to provide promising futures for individuals who are seeking opportunities for work within this great Nation, and for employers, many of whom are in situations, despite record high unemployment for the longest sustained time since the Great Depression, of having great-paying jobs that are sitting open and available where they can't find a qualified, trained workforce and, quite frankly, for America, whose competitiveness into the future will depend on how well we make these investments.

THE SEQUESTER AND AN OLIVE BRANCH

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. We had a historic occasion last evening, but I rise to comment on a number of issues. I first want to acknowledge and pay tribute to a Texan who was buried yesterday in a tragic incident, Chris Kyle, a Navy SEAL who had served this country, loved this country, and came back to his family and children and took as his cause to help serve troubled veterans. As he was doing so, along with his friend, Chad, one of those troubled veterans shot both him and his friend.

What a tragedy. I think it is important to note the thousands who mourned him and the procession that took him to his burial ground yesterday and to say thank you for not only serving this Nation, but coming home to care about those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

That leads me to bring up this whole question of sequester. In my own city of Houston, I was able to, some 4 years ago, establish the first post-traumatic stress disorder center in a hospital that was not a veterans hospital. The Riverside General Hospital for a period of years continued serving our post-traumatic stress disorder veterans in a small, attentive setting where they could sit with others who were troubled as well. I've become a champion of the needs and the purpose of post-traumatic stress disorder medical services and beg and cry to the Department of Veterans Affairs and to the Pentagon from where this grant came. We cannot abandon our soldiers who have served us well. And I would hope that the grant for this hospital will be continued because Texas has been known to have the largest number of returning Iraq and Afghanistan troops.

Mr. Speaker, that speaks loudly to the question of sequester. I'm delighted that the President last evening could not have offered more olive branches on economic reform and tax reform. His idea is that we can do this budget together, not a sequester and not a self-inflicted wound, which is what we did to ourselves, but, more importantly, to talk about innovation and growth. This is something that I've spoken about over and over again as a member formerly of the Science Committee and now Homeland Security.

Where is America's genius? Right outside the beltway. Why are we dividing ourselves along Democrats and Republicans, refusing to put revenue alongside of cuts? Mr. Speaker, we're at the bone, almost, and sequester that is across-the-board cuts will literally destroy us and put us in a recession. All the talking heads that are suggesting that the President was not bipartisan and how there was nothing that they heard, well, Mr. Speaker, may I ask them to take some cotton out of their ears. Because in actuality, the President extended his hand of friendship.

We want to get down to work. We can pass comprehensive immigration reform. We can pass in tribute and recognition of Sandy Hook, Hadiya, and