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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. MASSIE).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 23, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable THOMAS MASSIE 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.

TAX REFORM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the groundwork that is being carefully laid by Senate Finance Chair BAUCUS and Ways and Means Committee Chair CAMP. It's absolutely essential that we reform a tax code that is hopelessly complex, unfair, and often counterproductive. The system is reaching the point of breakdown. The complex patchwork is difficult to ad-

minister, invites tax engineering, if not outright evasion, and is hugely expensive for those who are just trying to meet their obligations.

Through mistake and evasion, we lose approximately \$365 billion of revenue each year that should be paid to the Treasury—\$1 billion a day—and the estimated cost of compliance is \$168 billion. With simplification and careful enforcement, we could easily gain tens of billions of dollars of revenue and allow individual taxpayers and businesses to shift resources away from compliance and tax engineering to growing the economy and providing for our families.

While we all may disagree with some fundamentals, it would be a mistake to begin with our areas of disagreement. I commend the chairmen for working to build common understanding on a path forward.

There is one area that has not been part of the tax reform discussion but is every bit as critical as solving our budget deficit, and that's to deal with our infrastructure deficit. Every day brings more stories of a Nation slowly falling apart and falling behind other nations that are modernizing their infrastructure, like Japan, China, India, and the European Union, all of whom spend more of their economy on infrastructure than does the United States.

Last week's potential water emergency in Prince George's County underscores a point made by my friend, Representative DON YOUNG from Alaska: we leak more water than we drink; 1.9 trillion gallons of water is lost due to inadequate infrastructure underground. It is water, sewer, the electrical grid, transit, roads and bridges—the American Society of Civil Engineers has estimated we need to spend \$2.3 trillion in the next 5 years just to maintain basic standards.

Transportation reauthorization finance is under the committee's jurisdiction, and it's fast approaching, with

a highway trust fund unable to meet even current inadequate requirements. This resource gap prevented us from being able to enact a full 6-year reauthorization last Congress, hence, we're facing it again next year.

In the 20 years since the gas tax was last increased, the purchasing power of the fund has eroded dramatically due to inflation and increased fuel economy, so that the average motorist is only paying about half as much per mile as they did in 1993.

The failure to meet the revenue needs has required increased borrowing from the general fund, adding \$55 billion to the deficit just to meet the current inadequate levels. At the same time, we've seen a collapse in the construction industry, costing hundreds of thousands of family wage jobs and slowing our economic recovery.

Resources have become increasingly inadequate to meet basic transportation needs, but at the same time the consensus among key road users in support of an increase has grown ever stronger.

A vast coalition has emerged in support of raising the fuel tax, which includes business, the professions, organized labor, nongovernmental organizations, the truckers, transit, and cyclists. The list of supporters is as long as it is varied.

Allowing an inflationary increase for the highway trust fund was part of the Clinton deficit reduction plan back when we had balanced budgets. More recently, it was included in the recommendation of the chairs of the President's deficit reduction committee, Alan Simpson and Erskine Bowles. Making infrastructure a part of the larger tax reform proposal will meet a critical and growing need for our economy. It will help satisfy the concerns of those who were insisting on more revenue, but do so in a manner that's supported by a broad, diverse, and powerful coalition of interests.

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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We all have a stake in funding to rebuild and renew America. It's not just the quickest way to put people back to work but also to make our communities more livable, our families safer, healthier, and more economically secure. And it just might be the smoothest path to tax reform as well.

SIXTH UNANSWERED BENGHAZI QUESTION

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

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, with only six legislative days left before the Congress departs for August recess, I am increasingly concerned that we will not learn the answers to any of the questions I have raised over the past week before the one year anniversary of the attack on Benghazi, if ever. This is due, in large part, to the secretive nature of the investigation to date. Most of the key hearings into what happened that night in Benghazi have happened behind closed doors and in classified settings, including a June hearing with General Carter Ham, who was the head of the U.S. Forces in Africa the night of the attack.

That is why I was surprised to hear comments made by General Ham at the Aspen Security Forum last week where he spoke freely about the U.S. response to the attack.

Does it bother any of my colleagues that General Ham can publicly speak about the military's response at a forum in Aspen, Colorado, where the tickets were \$1,200? The American people should not have to pay \$1,200, and yet, his testimony before Congress was behind closed doors.

According to a CNN report, General Ham told the Aspen audience that by the time an American drone arrived above the U.S. consulate “the attack on the mission was winding down.” By that time Ham knew Ambassador Stevens was missing and believed he could have been possibly kidnapped.

General Ham was then quoted as saying:

In my mind, at that point we were no longer in a response to an attack. We were in a recovery. And, frankly, I thought we were in a potential hostage rescue situation.

The article continued:

Ham said although he had authority to scramble a jet to the scene, he decided there was “not necessity and there was not a clear purpose in doing so.”

“To do what?” Ham asked. “It was a very, very uncertain situation.”

It was a very uncertain situation, indeed.

Uncertain as to whether the terrorists held our ambassador as hostage? Uncertain as to whether the terrorists would target the annex, as they did? Uncertain as to whether this situation would last hours, days, weeks, or months? Or years?

Which raises the question: If his command required no additional authority to respond to what he then believed to

be a hostage rescue situation, why did it take another 7 hours before AFRICOM ordered a C-17 aircraft in Germany to deploy to Libya to evacuate Americans? And why did that plane not leave Germany for another 8 hours after that?

If the situation appeared to be deteriorating throughout the night at the annex, why wasn't there any additional effort to accelerate air support or even planes to evacuate American personnel directly from Benghazi?

And given the betrayal of our supposed allied Libyan militia forces when calls to defend the consulate went unheeded, why would the Pentagon not move even faster to ensure there was a reliable evacuation and hostage response force to assist the Americans in Benghazi?

And given that no American plane arrived in Benghazi to support the evacuation, just what planes were used to evacuate the Americans on the morning of September 12?

The State Department's Accountability Review Board said two planes were used to transport Americans from Benghazi to Tripoli. We know that one was a Libyan Air Force C-130 that brought back the bodies of Ambassador Stevens, Sean Smith, Ty Woods, and Glen Doherty. But the first to depart was a private chartered jet that took off at 7:40 a.m. with evacuees, including all wounded personnel, according to an unclassified version of the report. But just who owned that jet? Was it the same jet that brought in the seven-person response team from Tripoli earlier that night? Was it really chartered or was it commandeered? How many wounded were evacuated on that jet? Of the wounded, how many were State Department employees, CIA employees, or security contractors?

The ARB said when the first plane arrived in Tripoli, wounded personnel were transferred to a local hospital, in exemplary coordination that helped save the lives of two severely injured Americans.

Despite my letter I sent to Secretary Kerry, I have never received a full accounting of how many Americans were injured in the attack. Are any of the wounded still receiving care in military hospitals or other medical facilities? Will we ever officially learn their names and the heroic actions that night that resulted in their serious injuries?

I think we can all agree that it would be constructive for those that were in the chain of command that night to publicly testify and answer these questions.

The American people are losing confidence in their government. How will history judge the actions or inaction of the Obama administration and the response of the Congress to the Benghazi attack?

BURDENING FUTURE GENERATIONS WITH DEFERRED MAINTENANCE

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

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, CBO's May report shows the deficit has dropped another \$220 billion. The Federal deficit continues to fall faster now than it has since post-World War II demobilization in the late forties and early fifties.

Earlier this month, OMB released its mid-session review that estimates deficits will be reduced to below 3 percent of GDP by 2017, and will continue to fall, reaching 2 percent by 2023. This recent good news hasn't eliminated the need to address our long-term fiscal crisis, but it has created some breathing space for us to renew our investments in America.

We're now 5 years removed from the financial crisis, and have yet to demonstrate an ability to balance competing needs between the long-term deficit reduction need and investments in the future that made America great. House Republicans have been obsessed by the debt, but struggle to recognize any need for investment in education, R&D, and infrastructure.

A few weeks ago, Larry Summers best summarized our predicament when he said:

Just as you burden future generations when you accumulate debt, you also burden future generations when you defer maintenance.

Given the current market, we're refusing to maintain our infrastructure at a time when investors are literally throwing money at us. To be clear, yields on the 5-, 7-, and 10-year Treasuries have been negative for the past 2 years. This past month, we've witnessed a rate jump as markets fret about QE3, yet real Treasury yields still remain below 1 percent. When accounting for inflation, rates have not been this low for many, many decades.

Republicans look the other way when it comes to this question, and I'm shocked that my colleagues who persistently say we ought to run the government like a business have so little interest in taking advantage of one of our generation's great opportunities in financing investment for the future. This is a far cry from the party of Lincoln that invested in the Homestead Act, invested in the Transcontinental Railroad, or Eisenhower's interstate highway system.

Unfortunately, Congress continues to fiddle while Rome burns. Two months ago, the I-5 bridge collapsed in the State of Washington. It was a miracle nobody died considering that 71,000 vehicles a day use that critical connection, the main route connecting Seattle to British Columbia.

□ 1015

According to the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, my own State of Virginia has 3,500, nearly one in four