



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 159

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2013

No. 135

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 o'clock and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HARPER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 3, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable GREGG HARPER 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.

EXTENDING THE SPECIAL IMMIGRATION VISA PROGRAM

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the floor of this House has been the scene of many heated exchanges of late—the shutdown controversy around the Affordable Care Act and budget differences—but in the midst of some real tension and frustration, there was a bright spot last evening.

I was pleased that there was a unanimous consent agreement to approve

H.R. 3233 that I introduced with Representative ADAM KINZINGER that kept the Special Immigrant Visa program alive for Iraqi nationals who helped the United States during the war effort at great peril to themselves and their families. These are the interpreters, the guides and drivers, people who performed a myriad of functions that were essential for American operations both militarily and diplomatically and for our development efforts.

Since I introduced the first legislation on these refugees 6 years ago, I have watched impatiently as the flawed Special Immigrant Visa program has sputtered, leaving Iraqis and Afghans twisting in the wind trying to escape those countries, away from people with long memories who seek to do them harm.

Then, Monday night, it died. September 30, the visa program for the Iraqis expired. After 72 hours of furious activity, last night, the United States sent a signal that we were not going to leave them behind. Last night, Congress came together—the House and the Senate, Republican and Democrat—to make it possible to uphold our end of the bargain. But, unfortunately, the program still is horribly flawed, disastrously slow, and in dire need of reform. But we can take heart that the bipartisan leadership displayed on this issue might make it possible for us to actually make it work.

I would thank my colleagues, ADAM KINZINGER, TULSI GABBARD, CHRIS GIBSON, STEVE STIVERS, and STENY HOYER and others who stepped in during this tumultuous time to make sure the project continued.

Despite what was going on behind the scenes, there were many staff without whose tireless dedication to doing the right thing this would never have happened. I would like to thank Robert Kareem in Leader CANTOR's office; Mariah Sixkiller in STENY HOYER's office, Dimple Shah in Chairman GOOD-

LATTE's office, and Chad Kreikemeier in Senator SHAHEEN's office. The Senator helped spearhead that effort on the other side of the Capitol.

And off the Hill there were veterans, veterans like Matt Zeller, who was not going to let the person whom he depended on in Iraq suffer that fate. Organizations off the Hill, like the Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project and their staff, Katie Reisner and Becca Heller, were invaluable in keeping the progress going.

It was kind that Chairman GOODLATTE, the Judiciary Committee chair, introduced the unanimous consent request. There was lots of scrambling and many items at loose ends, but somehow we were able to follow through with this small but critical step to keep the program alive. Now the challenge is to finally make it work for these desperate Iraqis and Afghans.

Kirk Johnson's book, "To Be a Friend Is Fatal: The Fight to Save the Iraqis America Left Behind," is a call to action. It details what we need to do to meet our obligations.

In the midst of all the controversy and frustration here on Capitol Hill, we were able to come together for a brief moment this evening. Let's not let the shutdown overshadow the myriad of details that are important—even life and death—for people at home and abroad. Those who risked their lives for the American mission in Iraq and Afghanistan deserve our best efforts. Last night we saw a glimpse of it. I hope we are able to follow through.

PASS DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SPENDING BILLS

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

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to represent Redstone Arsenal, one of America's premier military bases and home to the

□ 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.



Printed on recycled paper.

H6177

Army Materiel Command, Aviation and Missile Command, Security Assistance Command, Contracting Command, Expeditionary Contracting Command, Space and Missile Defense Command, and numerous other program executive offices, agencies, and centers.

According to the Department of Defense, “of the Department’s 800,000 civilian workers, about half will be furloughed.” That means President Obama, our Commander in Chief, in his sole discretion, publicly declared that roughly 400,000 DOD civilian employees are not “essential” to America’s national security.

While I disagree and question why any Commander in Chief would, in his sole discretion, slight 400,000 defense workers by declaring them superfluous to America’s national security, that is not why I address the House of Representatives today. What I want to know is: Why do President Obama, Democrat Senate Majority Leader HARRY REID, and their allies pointlessly insist on shutting down the DOD?

Let me elaborate.

On June 14, 2013, almost 4 months ago, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1960, the National Defense Authorization Act, on a 315–108 bipartisan vote; 103 House Democrats, a Democrat majority, joined 212 Republicans to pass the National Defense Authorization Act.

On July 24, 2013, almost 3 months ago, the House passed H.R. 2397, the Defense appropriations bill on a 315–109 bipartisan vote; 95 House Democrats joined 220 Republicans in passing the Defense appropriations bill.

I publicly thank the House Democrats who supported the programs and funding that help America’s warfighters protect American lives. Collectively, these defense bills restore funding lost because of sequestration and fully fund America’s military and national defense. If these defense bills become law, then national defense is exempt from President Obama’s shutdown orders.

Unfortunately, there is an unhappy ending to the House’s bipartisan support for national defense. Democrat Senate Majority Leader HARRY REID needlessly obstructs votes on both bills, thus causing them to languish 3 and 4 months in the United States Senate.

Senate intransigence means the Department of Defense is subject to President Obama’s shutdown orders and 400,000 defense workers are, as of today, barred from helping our warfighters who risk their lives for America both here and abroad. Each day these 400,000 defense workers do not work is another day America’s warfighters are without their help, is another delay that denies our warfighters the cutting edge in high-tech weaponry needed to defeat America’s enemies with minimal loss of life.

Mr. Speaker, Democrat Senator HARRY REID should stop his obstruc-

tionism and allow a vote—just a vote—on the defense bills that have passed the House of Representatives with bipartisan support. If he does, both bills will pass and become law and national defense will be fully funded and exempt from President Obama’s shutdown orders.

Mr. Speaker, the Senate, White House, and Congress agree on close to 99 percent of our appropriations bills. The White House and Senate must stop using a Federal Government shutdown and the loss of 400,000 national defense jobs to coerce the House of Representatives into spending money America does not have on a socialized medicine program that does not work and that a majority of Americans do not want. The responsible thing to do is to fund the 99 percent, end the Federal Government shutdown, and then debate and negotiate the 1 percent that we legitimately disagree on.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Democrat Senate Majority Leader HARRY REID to join our bipartisan House effort to compromise—yes, compromise—and pass the National Defense Authorization Act and Defense appropriations bill, thereby securing America’s national security while at the same time restoring 400,000 jobs America’s economy sorely needs.

WE NEED LEADERSHIP, NOT THE BLAME GAME

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

Mr. BERA of California. Mr. Speaker, day No. 3—day No. 3—of a government shutdown that doesn’t need to happen.

Mr. Speaker, we need leadership, we don’t need the blame game, and yet that is what we are seeing. Republicans blaming Democrats, Democrats blaming Republicans, the House blaming the Senate, the Senate blaming the House, and the House blaming the President.

That isn’t getting us anywhere. And to the American people, they’re not saying: Oh, it’s the Democrats’ fault or it’s the Republicans’ fault. They’re looking at Congress and saying: Why can’t you do your job? Why can’t you come together as Democrats and Republicans, bring your best ideas forward and compromise and negotiate?

What this House is doing, what Congress is doing, is reckless. It’s irresponsible. We need to start putting the American people’s interests first because they’re the ones that we work for. That’s who sent us here.

We’re not asking anyone to give up their convictions. We all have our convictions, and we all have our districts and the people back home. What we’re asking for, the Members in this body, the Republicans and the Democrats, is to think about the country. Now is the time for us to put the American people first. That means we’ve got to be able to come forward and understand and learn how to listen. It’s hurting real people.

I’m a doctor by training, and I look at this from the perspective of being a doctor and the American patients. As reported in my hometown newspaper, the Sacramento Bee, at my hometown hospital where I’m still a clinical professor, UC Davis Medical Center, here is what they said:

For cancer patients, government help—in the form of clinical trials sponsored by the National Cancer Institute—can be a matter of life and death. And the NCI, a Federal agency, has closed its doors for the duration.

One of my colleagues, Dr. David Gandara, a UC Davis Cancer Center lung cancer specialist, said this:

We have California patients from our center who have been going through clinical trials there and have been told to go home. The program has been shut down.

Now, I know yesterday you brought a bill to the floor, a resolution that restored partial funding to the NIH for 3 months, through December. But as a doctor, cancer patients are not looking at 3 months. They need some certainty. We need some certainty in the practice of medicine when we’re sitting with our patients. So I implore this body to come together as Democrats and Republicans to think about those patients and to think about those Americans who are being hurt by our inability to do our job.

Now, as a Democrat, I’m going to continue talking to my Republican colleagues and looking at ways that we can move forward, but inflammatory rhetoric and the blame game is not going to get us anywhere. We’ve got to learn how to listen to one another, we’ve got to learn how to speak to one another, and we’ve got to learn how to put the American people ahead of political parties. That’s who we work for.

The oath I took as a doctor is borne on a foundation of two solid principles: benevolence, to do good; nonmaleficence, to do no harm.

Mr. Speaker, Congress’ inability to get the job done is doing irreparable harm to Americans and to American patients, and we certainly are not doing any good by not getting a budget put together and getting America back on track. Let’s do our job. Let’s do what the American people sent us here to do. Let’s work together as Republicans and Democrats and learn how to listen to one another again and do the work of the American public.

Mr. Speaker, the public is watching.

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH HAS OFFENDED WORLD WAR II VETERANS

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

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, I am pleased to hear the gentleman from California from the other side of the aisle who just spoke and his willingness to work together. I think that’s the kind of cooperation that the American people are looking for and that Congress needs to adhere to in coming together and resolving this.