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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 New York).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 9, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHRIS 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.

LEAVING THIS WORLD A LITTLE BETTER THAN YOU FOUND IT

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, "Try and leave this world a little better than you found it." Those were the parting words of Robert Baden Powell, a soldier, writer, and founder of the world scouting movement. This was a message to all Scouts that was found among his papers after Powell's passing in 1941.

I am a scouter, Mr. Speaker. It is part of who I am, both as an American

and an elected official proudly representing Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District. Scouter Powell's words today are part of scouting's principles, to always leave the campsite cleaner than when you found it. It is into service, serving others, and making the world a better place. They also ring true in the debate taking place now in Washington.

Today we are saddling future generations with mountains of debt. We have made promises we cannot keep. We are leaving the next generation worse off than our own. We face a Nation with grave challenges, challenges that aren't being addressed. The fact of the matter is that Congress has yet to deal with the real drivers of our debt, a large portion of which is health care costs.

Mr. Speaker, I don't care who won the White House or which party holds the majority in Congress. Why? Because not until we actually tackle the tough issues, the tough challenges, can we honestly say that Congress or the White House is doing what is right for the country. Right now we aren't making necessary progress, not on our budget and deficits, not on our long-term debt, not on bringing down the cost of health care. Though we have made some progress on spending, we are nowhere near where we need to be.

We are also leaving the health system worse than where we found it. Here are just two letters from my constituents that my office has received.

Tina, from Jefferson County, Pennsylvania, writes:

Please do not vote in any way to continue funding the Affordable Care Act. It in no way improves the situation of the average American. Yes, it provides another option for health insurance, but the rates are no more affordable than the private insurances; and therefore, if a person cannot afford the private insurance, there is no way they will be able to afford the government plan. In addition, the act places further strain on the system and will cause the shutdown of more

hospitals, cause more physicians to leave the system, and further crowd our Nation's emergency departments.

Catherine from DuBois wrote:

I am fortunate to have good insurance through my employer. However, I found out from them that they may provide a lesser form of health care due to the no-Cadillac plan. They understandably want to avoid a penalty for providing a good plan. This seems unfair to me, as if we are being penalized for working and having a good employer. If they are willing to provide a good health plan, why should they be penalized and why should they have to lessen our coverage? I am very distraught about many layers of the health care plan that are starting to come to light. I don't know if anything can be done.

I cannot stand idle as Congress acts like it is solving problems when, in fact, it is failing to tackle the tough issues, health being one of them. Let me be clear that a government shutdown is unacceptable. However, each day we stall and fail to deal with these challenges, the worse it gets for the next generation.

The real debate needs to be about how we get our fiscal house in order and set a course of long-term job growth. Not until then will I be satisfied. It should be about addressing the challenges the people elected us to solve. Again, not until then will I be satisfied. It is about trying to "leave this world a little better than you found it."

GETTING TO A BIG DEAL

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker said that the shutdown should be unacceptable. I agree with that. We could all, within the next half an hour, vote to make the unacceptable not the policy that we are pursuing.

Mr. Speaker, our government has now been shut down for over a week

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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and the American people are looking to Congress for solutions, not spin. Thousands of dedicated Federal employees here, but more profusely around this country, continue to be furloughed without pay, all because a faction of Republicans insist on keeping government closed until we repeal the Affordable Care Act, a demand that has nothing to do with keeping our government open.

Debate about the Affordable Care Act is legitimate. There are people who disagree with it and people who agree with it. But holding ransom the people's government is and should be, as the previous speaker said, unacceptable.

Americans are tired, I am tired, I think most Members are tired of hearing the same rhetoric from politicians over and over. Instead, they want real solutions that can restore fiscal sanity, end the irrational sequester which HAL ROGERS, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, a conservative Republican from Kentucky, says does not work and cannot work, and break the cycle of manufactured crises that do nothing to help our economy and, in fact, are doing it great harm. So the question, Mr. Speaker, we must ask ourselves is: How do we reach a solution? How can this Congress achieve the big, balanced deal that our constituents expect from us?

First and foremost we must end the shutdown. Mr. Speaker, 200 Democrats—we have a vacancy—200 Democrats will vote this very day, this very hour, to open the government. That means, Mr. Speaker, we only need 18 Republicans. The previous speaker said it is unacceptable where we are. We can change it, and we can change it within the hour, with only 18 Republicans joining 200 Democrats to say let the people's government be open; let the people's government be serving them.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, we must end this shutdown and take action to prevent the United States from defaulting on its bills for the first time in history. A solvent nation should not be taken hostage to accomplish an objective. Once these immediate threats are removed, Congress should then vote to go to conference on the differences which are legitimate between our two budgets. Republicans have refused, for the last six months in the House and in the Senate, to go to conference.

The Speaker talks about negotiation. That is where you do it. That is the mechanism that is set up under our democracy to resolve differences. Go to conference. There we can have the opportunity to agree on a comprehensive, balanced plan to put our country on a fiscally sustainable path, not for the next week, the next month, the next 180 days, but for decades to come; and if we do that, our economy will explode, jobs will be created, and Americans will again feel good, not only about their country, but about their Congress.

The shutdown and the threat of default are standing in the way of a real

negotiation process for a long-term solution. Democrats, I say, Mr. Speaker, are ready to sit down and talk with our Republican colleagues about a long-term agreement. We know that will require tough decisions, but Republicans should not demand their own policies as ransom required to reopen the government and make sure America pays its bills.

Democrats have already made the difficult choice to accept the Republican's preferred budget level for the short-term funding bill. How do I know it is their preferred funding bill? Because they voted on it and sent it to the Senate, Mr. Speaker, and the Senate said, We will accept your number, and they sent it back here; and my Republican colleagues will not say "yes" to their own number.

A big and balanced agreement on a budget. After we take the Republican number to open up government, go to conference, have discussions, a big and balanced agreement on the budget and on getting our debt under control will require real compromise and difficult decisions. My colleagues, we should have the wisdom and, yes, the courage to make them; and if we do, future generations will thank us.

I continue to believe, Mr. Speaker, that there is a bipartisan majority of Members in this House who are ready to work in good faith towards achieving such an agreement. My observation, however, is, after 33 years in this body, that there is a small faction on the Republican side of the aisle—it may be 50, it may be 60—that is holding captive the 170 of their colleagues who want to make sense and move forward.

I hope that Speaker BOEHNER will take the important steps necessary to enable those negotiations to begin by allowing a vote on the Senate's bill at the House number to reopen government and another one on a clean measure to prevent an unthinkable and economically catastrophic default. Once those occur, Mr. Speaker, we will be able to resume work on achieving real and lasting results for the American people when it comes to our long-term fiscal health.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the majority leader, Mr. CANTOR, would bring the bill to open our government, the people's government, to the floor this day.

THREE CRISES

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

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, this October fiscal crisis is punctuated by three developments that are becoming increasingly obvious and disturbing. The first is the refusal of the Senate and the President to resolve their differences with the House through negotiation and compromise on the bill that would actually fund the government and end this shutdown. In recent

days, senior administration officials have said they don't care how long the shutdown lasts because they are winning politically and the President would rather the Nation default than negotiate with the House.

Our form of government cannot operate in such a manner. Congress is a bicameral legislature. That means two Houses that are specifically designed to have a different perspective on issues. The two Houses of Congress were designed to disagree. The only way a bicameral legislature can possibly function is through each House exercising its own best judgment on a given issue and then coming together and meeting to isolate their differences and resolve them through negotiation and compromise.

The conference process of Congress has evolved over centuries. It is very effective at resolving the differences between the two Houses; but it takes two Houses to operate it, and the Senate is refusing to do so. This malfunction is at the very heart of our stalemate.

The second development is the deliberate decision by the administration to amplify the public's suffering and inconvenience during this stalemate. This government has gone through 18 shutdowns now in the past 37 years, but never has a President barricaded open-air venues like national memorials. In fact, he has gone so far as to forbid the use of turnouts on public roads that offer passersby distant views of Mt. Rushmore and Yosemite. He has ordered people out of their own homes and ordered businesses to close just because they lease land from the Federal Government. He has even tried to close the Atlantic Ocean to Florida fishermen.

In the past, Presidents have done everything they could to minimize the impacts of shutdowns. This President is going to ridiculous extremes to maximize the suffering that people must endure. One park ranger told a reporter, "We've been told to make life as difficult for people as we can." And then he added, "It's disgusting." And when this House has passed stopgap measures to minimize these impacts, the President and the Senate have summarily rejected them.

The third development is the rapid unraveling of ObamaCare. As it has rolled out, millions of Americans have discovered that their health insurance rates have skyrocketed or they are losing their health plans entirely or that they are having their hours cut back at work. It is very clear that the public isn't buying these new government-brokered policies. One hundred and seventy thousand people visited the Maryland exchange looking for affordable insurance since it opened more than a week ago, but only 326 have actually bought these plans, less than 0.2 percent.

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