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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. CRAMER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 30, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable KEVIN CRAMER 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.

MILITARY BUDGET WOES

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

Mr. WILLIAMS. Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day in America when Army Secretary John McHugh says that, in today's fiscal environment, the best case scenario for our military's budget is treacherous. Army Chief of Staff Ray Odierno said budget cuts hamper the military's ability to train its own troops.

While there is waste and overlap in every Federal agency—the Pentagon's budget not excluded—there is much to

be said for Congress' doing its primary job of governing: passing a budget. For the last 4 years, we have seen the constraints that continuing resolution after continuing resolution have placed on our military.

Earlier this year, we saw the rigid requirements that harmed the Department of Defense when President Obama's sequester took place. Before these cuts, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said our defense program was already underfunded by 5 percent with modernization underfunded by 10 percent. Thankfully, Congress took quick action that allowed the DOD to operate under a budget in order to meet all of their fiscal requirements and have more flexibility as they absorbed the across-the-board sequester cuts.

General Odierno revealed this week that just two Army brigades are combat-ready and that training has come to a halt. This is a terrifying reality given that only 2 months ago President Obama addressed Congress and the public, asking for support for a military attack on Syria. We absolutely cannot send our troops who are not trained, not equipped, and not prepared into harm's way. Our military readiness should never, ever be threatened like this. As the world's superpower, our Armed Forces must be ready to deploy thousands of troops should the need arise.

As the military continues finding ways to operate under current spending levels, it is also downsizing in Afghanistan and is preparing for future programs with no certainty of any financial stability. Our Nation has serious financial problems. Our deficit is growing; our spending is increasing; and it seems that, in nearly every budget battle, our military is thrown in as a bargaining chip. This is not the American way, and it must become a thing of the past. Other government agencies have bloated budgets with wasteful, overlap-

ping programs, fraudulent spending, and blatant abuse of taxpayer dollars. All the while, our military budget is being stripped to its bare bones.

The last time I checked, Mr. Speaker, we were still a Nation at war. Now is not the time to gut essential programs for our warriors and their families. We owe it to our military to have them operate under regular order, pass and conference our appropriations bills so our fighters can continue to be the best and the most prepared in the world.

Texas' 25th District is home to Fort Hood, the Army's premier installation to train and deploy heavy forces, and it is one of the largest military installations in the world. Fort Hood ranks highest in terms of future capability and support, and it can sustain more than 50,000 soldiers and their families.

I urge my colleagues in Congress to honor our commitment to these troops and to put an end to the financial uncertainty in the military. Let's simply do just the right thing.

May God bless our troops. May God bless America.

And always in God we trust.

BUDGET CONFEREES

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, budget conferees are now meeting—or will be meeting shortly—to negotiate a budget for the remainder of this fiscal year, and they have a real opportunity to look beyond that mission and to lay the groundwork for a long-term solution to our deficits that is balanced and restores certainty to our economy.

What we do not need are more gimmicks and partisan games like we will have today, frankly. We are going to have a vote on the resolution which is disapproving of the raising of the debt limit. Everybody knows that is not a real vote, and almost everybody on this

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floor knows that, if we pursued that policy, it would be damaging to America, to the military, as was just brought up, and to our Nation. Every Republican leader has said that not increasing the debt limit is an alternative that ought to be pursued. Yet, we have this vote. That resolution has already been rejected by the Senate, and it stands no chance of surviving a Presidential veto. It is, frankly, simply political cover and a waste of our time.

The keys to any budget solution, Mr. Speaker, must be compromise and a seriousness of purpose. Americans want to see that seriousness, and they want to see much, much, much less of the political gamesmanship, some of which we will practice today, unfortunately.

Republicans and Democrats, I believe, in looking beyond a small fix and toward negotiating a long-term solution, will find that we actually agree on many things. We agree that gradual reforms are better than sudden ones. We agree that sequestration is not a sensible approach to achieving deficit savings.

Let me say as an aside: no matter how many times it is said on this floor that the sequester is President Obama's policy, it will not make it fact. It is dead, flat wrong.

The sequester is incorporated in the Republican budget that was passed in this House just some months ago. No Democrat voted for that budget, because they believed the sequester—as the previous speaker said, but he voted for the budget which implemented the sequester—is harming our national security and harming our domestic security and harming our economy and harming the growth of jobs.

In fact, sequestration—which I point out to people starts with “s,” which stands for “stupid”—is a terrible approach that was never meant to come into practice. Many of us all agree that, in replacing the sequester, we will need to find savings through revenue policies and reforms to mandatory spending that could pay dividends for the budget and the economy in the future.

The key to compromise, of course, is balance. Every American understands that. Every husband, every wife, every parent understands that compromise is essential within a family, within a business, within a community, and, yes, within a country. The key to compromise is balance, which is what both the Domenici-Rivlin and Bowles-Simpson bipartisan commissions embraced as a framework for agreement.

A balanced compromise is critical because Democrats and Republicans are going to have to work together to pass any agreement through both Chambers and have it signed into law. Democrats are ready to make the tough decisions necessary to set our fiscal house in order, but we have made it clear that we will not allow the most vulnerable Americans to carry the burden of deficit reduction, and it is not necessary that they do so.

Our goal remains a balanced approach to deficit reduction and an agreement that restores certainty to our economy. My Republican colleagues and friends said much about restoring certainty, particularly in the 2010 election. Unfortunately, for our economy, for our businesses, for our people, we have done anything but restore certainty. In fact, we have governed by crisis—30 days, 90 days, 180 days, a year. Arbitrary deadlines were put in place, which brought the country to the brink of default and to the brink of closing down government. In fact, of course, just recently, we did, in fact, shut down the government.

Now, my Republican colleagues say we wanted that to happen on our side of the aisle. Ironically, 198 Democrats voted to open the government. That is to say, every Democrat who was voting on this floor voted to open government. Of my colleagues who say they didn't want to shut down government, 144 of them voted to keep the government shut down, Mr. Speaker, and 87 of them voted to open up the government.

So the American public is not fooled as to who wanted to shut down government, but it was a bad policy, and it led to uncertainty in our economy. Reaching an agreement only for this fiscal year, in addition, will mean more left to do, more of sequester left to replace, and more confidence to instill.

I hope the conferees will take a broader view and will send us a budget worthy of this Nation, worthy of the Nation it will serve—one that reflects our priorities to grow our economy, creates jobs, gives opportunity to our people, ensures that our national security is protected and that our Nation's long-term competitiveness is enhanced.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we ought to do. That is what the American people expect us to do. That is what the American people hope we will do. Let's warrant the faith and confidence of the American people by keeping faith with them and with our country.

LOWER LEVEL OPERATIVES TO BLAME

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, is the administration aware of the actions that are taking place in the administration?

A little history:

Fast and Furious:

Everyone knows the President did not know about this tactic until he heard about it through the news media.

A quote from White House Press Secretary Jay Carney.

So lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

Benghazi: 5 days after the attack, the administration still blamed it on a video. We learned later that the White House was told that this was a terrorist attack within 3 days of the attack.

So when did the President find out this was a terrorist attack?

In any event, no accountability. Video blamed. No one in the administration was held accountable, and the killers have not been brought to justice.

The Department of Justice's wiretapping of the Associated Press:

Other than press reports, we have no knowledge of any attempt by the Justice Department to seek phone records of the Associated Press.

Once again, this was from White House Press Secretary Jay Carney.

Lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

The IRS scandal: The investigation was not a matter that should be conveyed to the President.

That was Jay Carney once again.

Lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

ObamaCare Web site disaster: Secretary Sebelius claims the President was not aware of the Web site problems until the Web site was launched.

Once again, lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

NSA spying on foreign leaders? U.S. officials claimed the President did not know about this. The President refuses to say whether he knew or not.

But anyway, lower level operatives officially blamed.

NSA spying on Americans: The President claims he did not know the extent of the spying on Americans.

Lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

Mr. Speaker, exactly who is running the country—lower level operatives? Has the government gone wild? Is there a shadow government operating without the knowledge of the White House? Is the President out of tune with what is taking place in his own administration or is he aware of those actions?

If the President were unaware of all of this, the White House needs to hold people accountable, to hold these lower level operatives accountable for their actions—their improper actions, their bungling, their incompetence. The White House needs to fix this out-of-control government immediately.

The White House needs to take responsibility for the actions of his administration and quit blaming others and lower level operatives. That is the White House's responsibility. After all, to quote the constitutional law professor, “The buck stops with me.”

And that's just the way it is.

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SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA PROGRAM

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, last night, I was at National Airport awaiting Delta Flight 3395, 9:52 p.m.

Shortly after 10 p.m., Janis Shenwari, his wife, and two small children emerged to be greeted by Captain