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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. HOLDING).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 19, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable GEORGE HOLDING 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, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

THE TOLL OF OBAMACARE

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

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, we are now 7 weeks into the implementation of ObamaCare. We know that in the first 4 weeks, 106,000 Americans placed health plans in their shopping baskets, although it is not clear how many of them actually purchased plans. Meanwhile, it is estimated that 5.5 million Americans have lost the health insurance that they had, that they liked, and that they were promised that they could keep.

The inconvenient truth is that this law has dramatically increased the ranks of the uninsured. Yesterday came word that college students are seeing their low-cost student plans canceled, with replacement costs as much as 1,800 percent higher under ObamaCare.

Although the President recently assured the Nation that the cancellations are confined to the individual market, we are now learning that his administration gives a mid-range estimate that two-thirds of the small employer plans and 45 percent of the large employer plans face cancellation as well. Some estimates are as high as 93 million Americans who have employer-sponsored plans will lose their plans next year.

And these reports don't account for the millions more who are seeing massive rate increases in their current plans; nor do they account for the millions more who have had their hours cut back to part time or had their wages cut back or have lost their jobs altogether as employers struggle to stay in business while bearing these staggering costs; nor do they account for those who discover that by accepting ObamaCare plans, they are losing their doctors.

Walmart now warns that the financial impact of this law on families could materially depress holiday shopping.

Mr. Speaker, we are watching nothing less than the wholesale destruction and collapse of the American health care system, which, for all of its flaws, was still the most advanced, accessible, adaptable, and responsive health care system that the world has ever known; and if you doubt that for a second, ask yourself where the world's elites came when they needed first-class medical care. It wasn't to Canada or England or Mexico. It was to the United States. And now we are losing that.

There was nothing unforeseen about this fiasco. Republicans have been

warning of these outcomes from the very beginning.

When we warned that Americans would not be able to keep their health care plans, we were called extremists. When we warned that ObamaCare would result in massive cost increases on consumers, we were called alarmists. When we warned that many Americans would lose their jobs, have their hours cut back, or see salary cuts, we were called racists. When we asked for a 1-year delay in this program to address these issues, we were called demagogues, arsonists, and jihadists.

But, now, all of these warnings are coming to pass, and still the Democrats persist in imposing this law on an unwilling Nation. In doing so, great violence is being done to our Constitution.

In implementing this takeover of one-sixth of the American economy, the President has repeatedly asserted what can only be described as a doctrine of executive nullification—the authority to ignore the parts of the law that he finds inconvenient or embarrassing and to pick and choose who must obey the law and who need not.

He has granted some 1,600 exemptions for well-connected interests—mainly labor unions. He has excused big businesses from the requirement that they provide health care to their employees, while forcing employees to fend for themselves. He has excused Members of Congress and their staffs from paying the full cost of ObamaCare policies.

And last Thursday, he announced that health insurers can ignore the law that requires them to cancel existing policies. Notice that he didn't say that he was going to seek to change the law. He said he would ignore the law for a year. He invited health insurers to do the same, in direct violation of the principle constitutional responsibility of the Presidency to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed."

□ 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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Mr. Speaker, I appeal to my Democratic colleagues to consider the damage that this law is doing, both to the American health care system and to the rule of law itself and, above all, to the families who are struggling to deal with its effects.

I ask them to heed the growing pleas of the American people to have their health plans restored to them. I ask them to join Republicans in repealing ObamaCare and to help us replace it with the patient-centered health care system that we have long proposed: reforms that preserve the best of American health care while repairing its flaws.

BUDGET CONFERENCE

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, we have 10 days left in this year's session, according to the schedule. We are supposed to adjourn on December 13—somewhat ironically, Friday the 13th; and yet, Mr. Speaker, we see time is running out and we are not addressing the critical issue and the critical responsibility of funding the government and of applying resources to our priorities.

Time is running out, Mr. Speaker, for budget conferees to send us legislation so we can avoid another government shutdown in January.

A budget conference agreement will require compromise from both sides—a step that Budget Chairman PAUL RYAN and many of his colleagues seem unprepared to take.

Mr. Speaker, it has been my premise that the reason we did not go to conference for the last 7 months, notwithstanding the fact that the Senate passed a budget and the House passed a budget, is that Chairman RYAN knows there is no compromise that he could reach that he could bring back and have the support of his colleagues on the Republican side; and as a result, we have no compromise. As a result, we have no product to consider.

This is an extremely disappointing position, Mr. Speaker, because it is clear that the Ryan budget is not a viable blueprint for governing. It was not when we passed it, and it is not now. It was a pretense of fiscal responsibility without any of the substance of fiscal reality or courage. That fact was made evident this summer as Republicans could only pass funding bills for defense and veterans programs, pulling their transportation funding bill and not even bringing the other appropriations bills to the floor.

Yesterday, all 12 of the Republican subcommittee chairs of the Appropriations Committee sent a letter to PAUL RYAN, CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, Senator MURRAY, and Senator SESSIONS, saying, We need to have a budget. We need to have a compromise agreement; and we need to have a sequester number eliminated and a rational number replacing it—a number that can work for America.

In fact, they said, If you don't do it, we are going to have to have a meat-ax—their verbiage, not mine, Mr. Speaker—not only on the domestic side of the budget—education, health care, the environment, law enforcement—but also on the national security side of the budget.

We all know how the budget that was offered by Mr. RYAN achieves balance—severe cuts, in the same vein as the irrational sequester, that target the most vulnerable Americans and place our economic recovery in jeopardy.

It is somewhat ironic that on the front page of The Washington Post today we see where Mr. RYAN was not focused on the budget; he is focused on the poor. That is a proper focus, and this Congress ought to be focused on that. But it is interesting that the Ryan budget does exactly the opposite of what we need to do to make sure that the poor are reduced in number and the middle class are expanded in number.

That is why, in my view, Mr. Speaker, regarding this budget, so many of his own party could not support appropriations bills within the framework of the Ryan budget. That is why the bills were not brought to the floor.

Already, some Republicans are admitting that only a balanced approach will enable us to achieve the level of deficit reduction we need; and contrary to Mr. RYAN's view, this means that revenues—that hated word—must be on the table.

Representative TOM COLE of Oklahoma, the former chairman of the Republican Campaign Committee is one of them, telling reporters on October 25:

I think both sides would like to deal with the sequester. And we're willing to put more revenue on the table to do that.

Mr. COLE was one of the signers of that letter to which I referred that said, Let's replace the meat-ax represented by the sequester. Unfortunately, Chairman RYAN continues to rule out any talk of revenues, which is the key to any meaningful compromise that will replace the sequester.

Mr. Speaker, as you probably know and as I think my Republicans colleague know, I have said now and I have said in the past that we must also deal with entitlements. We need a balanced plan, not an unbalanced plan; but without a balanced plan, the sequester will remain in place, and it will hurt America.

Instead of just saying what he is against, it is time for Mr. RYAN and Republicans to show a readiness to compromise to achieve results for the American people.

Mr. RYAN is the chairman of the conference committee. Yet he has to this date not put on the table what chairmen always do—the chairman's mark, chairman's suggestion, or chairman's proposal.

Democrats have been clear that we are willing to compromise and are ready to do what it takes to achieve a

balanced and bipartisan deal on the budget. This was evident when we voted unanimously alongside 87 Republicans to end the government shutdown, even when it meant supporting a continuing resolution—an appropriations bill for the government—at a level we believed was too low. But we understood compromise was necessary. And so all 198 Democrats voted to open up the government and to pay America's bills, while 147 Republicans—approximately 62 percent of the Republicans—voted to keep the government shut down and to not pay America's bills.

I was encouraged to read the letter sent yesterday, as I said, by Chairman ROGERS and the Appropriations Subcommittee chairs, making clear how important it is for conferees to send us a budget by Thanksgiving—that would have to be this Friday, because we are not going to be here next week—rather than risk another painful shutdown and the continuation of the irrational sequester this coming year.

Many Republicans now agree with Democrats that the sequester is unworkable.

Who says so? Mr. RYAN says he doesn't like the sequester. Mr. CANTOR, the majority leader, says he doesn't like the sequester. And HAL ROGERS has said it is unworkable and inadvisable.

The Budget Conference has a larger mission than to simply rearrange the sequester's severe cuts. This is an opportunity to replace the sequester with a sensible approach that permits Congress to look strategically at our budget priorities and our long-term fiscal and economic goals. If we do so, in my view, it will be the most important stimulus of our economy and job-creating action that this Congress could take.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that Chairman RYAN will set his flawed budget aside and instead embrace the approach that many of his Republican colleagues are already recognizing is the only realistic path toward a compromise by this committee. To do so could usher in a historic agreement to achieve real fiscal responsibility for America for years to come. I hope Mr. RYAN's leadership will result in that objective.

□ 1015

27TH CENTRE COUNTY TOYS FOR TOTS CAMPAIGN

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, in 1947, Major Bill Hendricks, with the support of his Los Angeles Marine Corps Reserve unit, collected and distributed 5,000 toys to needy children. Since the program's adoption nationally as Toys for Tots in 1948, the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve's Toys for Tots program has collected