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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MESSER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 4, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable LUKE MESSER 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 1:50 p.m.

UNFUNDED MANDATES INFORMATION AND TRANSPARENCY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, every year Washington imposes thousands of pages of rules and regulations on small businesses and local governments across this country. Hidden in those pages are costly mandates that make it harder for companies to hire and for cash-strapped States, counties, and cities to keep streets clean and parks safe.

Republicans and Democrats alike agree that each regulation the Federal Government dictates should be deliberative and economically defensible. That is why I've banded together with Democrats LORETTA SANCHEZ, MIKE MCINTYRE, and COLLIN PETERSON and Republican JAMES LANKFORD to introduce H.R. 899, the Unfunded Mandates Information and Transparency Act. This legislation will ensure a public and bureaucratic awareness about the cost, in dollars and in jobs, that Federal dictates pose to the economy and to local governments.

There is precedent for bipartisanship on this issue. In 1995, Members from both parties got behind, and President Clinton signed, the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA), which sought to expose Washington's abuse of unfunded Federal mandates. By forcing the Federal Government to estimate how much its mandates would cost local governments and employers, regulation would necessarily become better and more efficient for everyone involved. And it has, to a certain extent.

But over the years, weaknesses in the original legislation have been revealed, weaknesses that some government agencies and independent regulatory bodies have exploited. The Unfunded Mandates Information and Transparency Act will correct these oversights and put some weight behind UMRA to ensure no government body, purposely or accidentally, skirts public scrutiny when jobs and scarce resources are at stake.

The spirit of the Unfunded Mandates Information and Transparency Act and its underlying principle, that the American people would be better served by a government that regulates only with the best information, is truly bipartisan.

Lawmakers and unelected regulators should know the price of their dictates. So, too, should the people, private enterprises, and governments, all of whom are being asked to foot the bill.

Funds are very tight for families across this country. Millions of Americans remain unemployed, and many more still rely on small businesses and local governments for jobs, health care, public safety, and education. Washington should think carefully before it decrees mandates that could siphon from the limited dollars governments and private sector job creators use to keep people employed and localities functioning. But as loopholes within the original UMRA legislation have revealed, Federal mandates are not universally preceded by thoughtfulness. The Unfunded Mandates Information and Transparency Act we have introduced will require that from government.

DOING OUR BUSINESS DIFFERENTLY

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. What's so maddening about the sequester drama, just like the earlier fiscal cliff drama and the looming government shutdown drama, is that it is hopelessly beside the point.

The path to fiscal sustainability is not merely cutting budgets, raising tax rates, or closing a few loopholes. It is about fundamentally doing business differently.

Health care costs demand that we accelerate health care reform, which we're already working on in Oregon and in a number of other communities and health care systems across the country. These reforms, if put into effect nationally, would save more in health care costs over the next 10 years than the entire \$1.2 trillion sequester.

Everybody is getting excited about across-the-board cuts in the Department of Defense, but no one is talking about how we fundamentally change

□ 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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our philosophy of military compensation, benefits, and the size of the force to come to grips with the cost of an all-volunteer Army.

Of course, at a minimum, we should also dramatically reduce and shift resources away from the vast nuclear weapons stockpile and the three redundant delivery systems which we haven't used in 68 years and probably never will. We have 10 times more nuclear firepower than we need for deterrence. It is past time to scale down that archaic symbol of the Cold War and save hundreds of billions of dollars at no risk to American security.

It is time for Congress and the administration to work meaningfully for agriculture reform to give more support for America's farmers and ranchers at a fraction of the cost. We should reform the outrageous, inefficient, and unproductive crop insurance program. We should restore investments in nutrition, conservation, research, and marketing that will make a difference for most farmers and ranchers, improve long-term productivity, and support value-added agriculture. This saves money in the long run and doesn't distort our trade position or make Americans unhealthy.

By all means, we must reform our Tax Code, but reform is not likely to raise anything near what a growing and aging America is going to need.

Yes, close more of the egregious loopholes, but we need another broad-based source of revenue. A carbon tax would fit the bill, help reduce the deficit, and help us protect the planet from increasingly catastrophic weather events and the budget-busting disaster relief that inevitably follows.

We should, for the first time in 20 years, increase the gas tax, as recommended by the Simpson-Bowles report, a user fee that will help enable us to provide more support for transportation, put more people to work rebuilding and renewing America.

We might take a lesson from the history and our failed 14-year effort to prohibit alcohol, where the government spent a fortune in a fruitless effort to enforce prohibition, lost a fortune in revenue, and made a fortune for the Mafia, the underworld cartels of the 1920s, that haunts us to this day.

□ 1210

We ought to treat marijuana like we treat alcohol: the Federal Government regulates and taxes while the States decide what they want to do to legalize for medical or recreational use. Given what's already happened in 23 States and the District of Columbia, let's save money on enforcement, raise revenue from taxation, and invest in drug treatment and efforts to keep drugs out of the hands of children.

Let's take a break from the endless debates that are basically beside the point. Let's commit to doing business differently with health care, the military, enact broad-based taxes to both raise money and fix a broken Tax Code,

stop cheating the majority of farmers and ranchers and the environment.

This is not rocket science. We could start now if people address the big issues in a thoughtful way. Even when some of the measures may be controversial or hard, it's a whole lot better than doing stupid things that alienate everybody.

THE PARADOX OF HUNGER AND OBESITY

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, in our efforts to end hunger now, it is important to look at all aspects of hunger. Today, I want to talk about hunger and obesity and to highlight the unfortunate paradox between these two conditions.

How can an obese person also be food insecure? To put it bluntly, how can an overweight person be hungry? The question may be simple, but the answer is not. Unfortunately, this link is all too prevalent among millions of low- and middle-income people.

The simple truth is that hunger exists because people do not have enough money to buy enough healthy food, but obesity is more complex. Just because someone has enough money to buy food doesn't mean they have the resources to buy nutritious food. Ultimately, this is a problem of poverty in America.

The families who struggle with hunger not only struggle to put food on their tables, they struggle to make the food they can afford on a few dollars a day as nutritious as possible. For a variety of reasons, even well-to-do families are finding it more difficult today to prepare nutritious meals. A big part has to do with the amount of widely available, inexpensive, nonnutritious food—high-calorie, high-fat, low-nutrient food—and part of that has to do with the time constraints on families today.

But it is even more difficult for low-income, food-insecure families because they generally don't have access to full-service grocery stores. The local stores they do have access to, for the most part, do not sell fresh produce, and the fresh produce they do sell is expensive. So in order to stretch their food dollar, these families buy high-calorie, low-nutrient food that is more affordable.

Obesity, like hunger, is often a function of poverty, and low-income families are especially vulnerable to obesity because of the additional risk factors associated with poverty. When taken together, these risk factors make it easy to see how obesity and hunger are related.

There are at least four general risk factors for obesity that are associated with poverty:

First, low-income neighborhoods are underserved by full-service supermarkets. In inner cities, food is most

readily available at small neighborhood convenience stores where fresh produce and lower-fat food items are most limited. In rural areas, full-service grocery stores are many miles away. This is commonly referred to as a food desert, something that can exist in both urban and rural areas;

Second, when healthy food is available, it is oftentimes more expensive than less healthy options. Low-income families must stretch their budgets in ways that make it difficult to purchase higher priced, more nutritious food items. This means that these families are forced to buy cheaper, high-calorie, high-fat, high-sodium food that lasts longer just so they can make their food budgets stretch through the month;

Third, there are fewer opportunities for physical activity in neighborhoods and schools. Safe open space can be difficult to find in many of our neighborhoods where lower income families live, sometimes because of lack of parks and other times because of higher crime rates;

Fourth, high levels of stress and limited access to health care can contribute to weight gain. Hunger is truly a health issue, and it is important to note that stress and lack of access to quality health care can trigger physiological responses that contribute to obesity.

Mr. Speaker, I remind people that food is medicine. My grandmother used to say "an apple a day keeps the doctor away." It used to annoy me, but she was right. We missed an opportunity during the Affordable Care Act to address the issues of hunger and nutrition. We must do so now.

Adequate access to good, nutritious foods can help lower the instances of diabetes and heart disease. That will improve the quality of life for people, but it will also save us money from avoidable health care issues. Hunger costs us dearly, and the cost to fix and solve the problem is cheaper than the status quo.

So to all my colleagues who believe that the only problem we face is the budget deficit, I urge you to join us in this effort to end hunger now. It is fiscally the right thing to do, and it is our moral obligation.

Hunger and obesity are two sides of the same coin. Yes, we have excellent antihunger safety net programs like SNAP and the school meal programs that help reduce incidences of hunger in America; yes, the First Lady's Let's Move campaign is working to address obesity in America, primarily among children; but we must do more to address these two issues together. Because of all of these factors, it is clear that we simply cannot address hunger or obesity. We must address both of these issues at the same time if we are going to end hunger now. It is why I believe we need a White House conference on food and nutrition, a Presidential summit that brings all the stakeholders together, a forum where we can develop and agree on one strategy to reduce hunger and obesity together.