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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. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 18, 2014.

I hereby appoint the Honorable GLENN THOMPSON 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 7, 2014, 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.

THOUGHTS ON AL SHARPTON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, the recent rumors circulating around Capitol Hill suggest that President Obama may seek advice and counsel from Al Sharpton regarding the identity of our next Attorney General. I hope this is only a rumor.

Al Sharpton seeks out matters that involve conflict, turmoil, and violence. I do not recall Al Sharpton appearing at an event where racial harmony was

promoted and encouraged. Permit me to compare Al Sharpton with Loretta Lynch, President Obama's recent nominee to become our next Attorney General.

Mr. Speaker, I was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, and decades later, Loretta Lynch was born in Greensboro. I am about to insert oars into unknown waters to me, that is, Senatorial waters involving judicial nominees. What I know about Loretta Lynch, Mr. Speaker, is limited, but what I do know about her is favorable, and she has been twice confirmed by the United States Senate.

Some have compared Al Sharpton with Dr. Martin Luther King, not a good comparison.

Dr. King was a unifier, a promoter of racial harmony. The good news is Al Sharpton does not measure up to Dr. Martin Luther King. More good news: Loretta Lynch is no Al Sharpton.

LEGALIZING MEDICAL MARIJUANA FOR VETERANS

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the front page of last Sunday's Washington Post had a poignant story about Army veteran Amy Rising, who uses medical marijuana to help her deal with her posttraumatic stress disorder. Now, we weren't told exactly where she lives, just that medical marijuana is legal where she uses it, so she could be in any one of 23 States and the District of Columbia.

Fifty-seven percent of Floridians voted to legalize medical marijuana earlier this month, more votes for medical marijuana in Florida than any statewide politician on the ballot. This is part of a growing trend across the country.

But Amy's predicament is that the Federal Government does not allow

physicians in the Department of Veterans Affairs to be able to help their patients with medical marijuana, whether it is right for them; instead, people are forced away from their primary care physician and the veterans' benefits that they have earned.

Why do they have to seek out someone else who doesn't know them as well, doesn't have the same relationship, and then bear that extra cost? This actually should be a terrible embarrassment.

I had a proposal during the appropriations deliberations that would have clarified this policy, which actually isn't based on any law or regulation. It is simply what is termed "guidance." My proposal would have enabled doctors to be able to work with their patients in the VA.

Now, I am not suggesting by any stretch of the imagination the nature of those conversations and what the conclusion should be. Some physicians are strongly supportive of medical marijuana. Others have reservations. Others simply don't know. But it is outrageous that the people who know our veterans best are forbidden to work with them on this therapy.

I will be introducing legislation that would put in law what we had for that budget amendment. This is one of several things that I hope this Congress does something about before we adjourn.

While we are at it, shouldn't we want to stop the lunacy of making marijuana an all-cash business by denying them bank accounts? What about giving people tax justice by repealing an outmoded and unfair provision known as 280E, so that it will allow perfectly legal businesses, hundreds of them across the country, to deduct their legitimate business expenses? Otherwise, these hundreds of small legal businesses will continue to pay punitively high tax rates.

Now, the Obama administration is slowly lurching in the right direction.

□ 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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The President famously said that he had bigger fish to fry than trying to prevent Washington and Colorado from implementing what their voters have approved. Just this last week, we had more approvals from the State of Alaska, the District of Columbia, and in my home State of Oregon. Marijuana got more votes in Oregon than anybody on the Oregon ballot.

While States are still influencing the reform, we need to bring Federal policies out of the Dark Ages. We need to be able to harness the therapeutic power of marijuana. We shouldn't force, for example, families to have to move to another State to be able to get relief for their children who suffer from torturous, violent epileptic seizures, simply because they live in a nonmedical marijuana State when medical marijuana has proven to be one of the few areas of relief for these children.

While the States are moving in this direction, the public is moving in this direction, it is not too late for Congress to move with these small steps that will make a difference.

We should start with our veterans, to give them access to their doctors, to understand what this tool is, to see if it can provide relief for them as it has done for hundreds of thousands of other people, especially veterans with chronic pain and PTSD.

Make no mistake, this is not a Republican issue or a Democratic issue; it is a veterans' issue. It is allowing the public to be able to take advantage of the proven therapeutic value, as over a million Americans are able to do today.

It is past time the Federal Government makes its policies consistent in the States in which our veterans reside. Give them this right, allow them access to the therapy, give them access to their own doctors.

Here is an opportunity for Congress to catch up with the voters, to catch up with the developments in therapy, catch up with veterans' advocates, and do something far less risky and more beneficial than what is too often inflicted upon them.

States have been showing leadership on marijuana reform and hemp legislation. Now is the chance for Congress to make progress, especially for our veterans.

INTRODUCING THE PATIENT FREEDOM ACT

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

Mr. JOLLY. Mr. Speaker, once again, the President's health care plan, known to the Nation as ObamaCare, is in the news, both because it is open season for individuals to choose their level of health care coverage, but also because of the now-made-public suggestion by a senior architect of ObamaCare that the administration would have to rely on, in his words, the "stupidity" of the American people to get the President's plan enacted.

Those are shameful words that disrespect every American and have rightfully been condemned by Members on both sides of the aisle. I think the American people know exactly what is in the bill.

We are reminded of it every day that we now live in a country where our government will fine you—fine you—for not having the health care coverage that it deems adequate. It is called the individual mandate, and it is a classic government-knows-best ruse, but this time with the threat of fines and penalties on individuals who don't comply or, in the interpretation of the Supreme Court, with new taxes just for you.

These fines will steadily increase each year. By 2016, it is estimated that 6 million Americans will be subjected to individual fines from their government.

I take a very different view than many in the current administration. First, I think the American people are smart enough to make health care coverage choices for themselves. Second, I don't believe our government should be mandating on individuals the health care coverage that is right for them and their family, particularly under the threat of penalties and fines and additional taxes.

That is why this week I have introduced legislation to rescind the individual mandate in ObamaCare as though it never happened. Unlike the 906-page bill that was ObamaCare, this bill, the Patient Freedom Act, is merely two pages. Every Member of this body can know what is in this bill before we pass it.

Many of us believe that a full repeal of ObamaCare is appropriate and right for the country, but it is foolish for us to think that the President will sign a repeal of his signature legislative achievement. That is why my bill covers only one provision, the individual mandate.

Let's have a government that, again, trusts the people to make their own discussions, that does not suggest, in the terms of this now-famous adviser to the administration, that the American people are too "stupid" to make their own health care coverage choices. Let's empower people with true patient freedom, true health care coverage choice.

This modest compromise is very simple. It says to the American people, "If you like your ObamaCare, you can keep it, but if you believe that you should have different coverage, you are empowered, you are entrusted, you have complete control over the health care coverage discussions for you and your family."

We are entering a period in January when compromise will be required for this Congress and this President to work together. This is a simple two-page bill that says the American people are indeed smart enough to make their own health care decisions for themselves.

I urge my colleagues to consider this commonsense bill. Let's put it on the President's desk and ask him to do what is right for the American people.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN USED EXECUTIVE ACTION

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

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, last week, we celebrated Veterans Day, so naturally, there was a lot of talk about the military, but there was also a lot of talk about President Obama taking executive action on immigration. It got me thinking about Harry Truman.

Like me, Harry Truman was from the Midwest and a plain talker who didn't mince words and sometimes made his fellow Democrats uncomfortable. Like every Republican and Democratic President in modern history, including this current one, Harry Truman was not afraid to use his executive power to fight for justice in the United States, even when Congress failed to act.

In 1946, we had just defeated fascism. We were already locked in a cold war. Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American troops had helped deliver that victory against fascism, but when the war was over, they faced the same segregation, discrimination, Jim Crow, and violence that they had before they were deployed, markers of an era from which we continue to feel the lasting effects to this very day.

In response, Truman established a Committee on Civil Rights. One concrete step the President wanted to take was to desegregate the military, but President Truman knew that legislation mandating desegregation would not pass through the U.S. Congress, which was dominated by Southern segregationists who, it is worth remembering, were mostly just like Truman, Democrats.

But he pushed forward, and Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948. The last all-Black unit in the United States military was finally abolished years later. Congress caught up with reality and with the President, but it took many years.

I am fairly confident that Democrats from North Carolina, Arkansas, Georgia, and Louisiana asked Harry Truman not to do a thing, but he did it anyway. I would venture to guess that there aren't too many Members of Congress today who wish that Truman did not desegregate the military or had waited however long it took for Congress to evolve on the issue of segregation. He used his pen, and we celebrate his courage today.

Here is one big difference between what Truman did and what President Obama is considering: President Truman never, ever asked Congress for legislation to desegregate the military, but President Obama, as he contemplates taking executive actions to keep families together and spare certain immigrants from deportation,