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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. STEWART).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 2, 2014.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHRIS STEWART 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.

SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA PROGRAM

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, one of our responsibilities in this Congress is to protect the men and women from Iraq and Afghanistan who put their lives on the line to assist the United States.

Thousands of Afghans and Iraqis who helped us as guides, as interpreters, must not be left to the tender mercies of al Qaeda, the Taliban, and others

with long memories who seek to punish those who helped us.

Yesterday's Wall Street Journal had a front-page story about an Iraqi family that is caught in the bureaucratic pipeline for the families seeking safety after years of service and now facing intense threats against them.

There was a recent HBO feature by comedian John Oliver on his program, "Last Week Tonight," that, in graphic, satirical, somewhat profane terms, captured the essence of the bureaucratic nightmare faced by thousands in Iraq and Afghanistan. They and their family members are at risk of being assaulted, kidnapped, tortured, raped, or killed simply because they were there helping Americans.

We are seeing some progress. I deeply appreciate the tireless efforts of Chairman BUCK McKEON, Ranking Member ADAM SMITH, and their staff, the work on the National Defense Authorization Act, which will help us uphold commitments to our Afghan allies.

However, all of us in Congress have a responsibility, and there is an opportunity for all of us to step up and help this desperate situation. Over the last 7 years, it has been a battle to have America honor its obligations by effectively implementing this Special Immigrant Visa program authorized by Congress to help those who helped us to escape.

We are seeing the results of many on this floor who encourage the State Department to more aggressively implement this Special Immigration Visa program. The Afghan program went from an embarrassing 32 visas for all of 2012 to an average of 400 each month this year. This is due to enhanced oversight and pressure and cooperation from Congress. The program is now functioning at a level that almost allows us to keep our promises to our allies.

One thing we all can do is to join me and my colleague, ADAM KINZINGER,

who has been a tireless champion for justice for these Afghan and Iraqi nationals, in directing a letter to our friends on the Appropriations Committee asking that they, like last year, authorize urgently needed Afghan SIVs in the end-of-the-year appropriations package that we will soon have here on the floor.

We have stepped up before, but we need to avoid this Special Immigrant Visa roulette so that these people are not in limbo, or, worse, resigned to the hell inflicted on them by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Even with the leadership of the Armed Services Committee, we will still fall short of upholding our commitments for a need as great as 9,000 visas for Afghanistan alone. That is why our appropriators must help shoulder the responsibility, and they need to hear from us, every Member of Congress.

It is our moral obligation to take action to protect, not just those people, but the security interests of the United States. It is not just their innocent lives that are at stake. Think about the trust that is going to be necessary when we need help in the future from foreign nationals for our soldiers, our diplomats, and our aid workers.

Let's sign the letter. Let's all detail someone on every staff to pay attention to this issue. Add our voices. It is being done by the Armed Services Committee. Help the Appropriations Committee in this next critical step.

It should not be left to a comedian like John Oliver, God bless him, to carry this banner alone. Sign the letter, speak out, take up the cause.

We must not fail those who are at risk only because they believed our promises and they helped Americans in some of the most difficult circumstances we have ever asked our soldiers, diplomats, and aid workers to face.

This is a failure we can avoid, and we can end this Congress on a positive

□ 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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note that can make everybody feel better as we approach the holiday season.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 6 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. GARDNER) at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Dr. David Gray, Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, Maryland, offered the following prayer:

Gracious God, Your love is never ending. In these hallowed Halls, Your sovereign spirit comes to us, calms us, calls us, and infuses us with Your grace.

Give us strength this day to look outside ourselves for the opportunities which come from connection and collaboration. Give us faith to bring our best selves and to seek Your will. Give us confidence that solutions can be found and problems solved.

Grant us gratitude for the trust placed in us, for the privilege of living in this free land, and for Your presence here with us. Allow us to rest in and rely on Your hope-filled spirit.

Loving God, we ask Your blessing upon this body and all who gather here. Help us to receive Your assurance, Your encouragement, Your wisdom, and Your inspiration for the tasks to which we have been called. We pray this day.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. PITTS led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING REVEREND DR. DAVID GRAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Ohio

(Mr. TURNER) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to welcome my good friend Pastor David Gray as our guest chaplain today.

Born in Dayton, Ohio, Pastor Gray grew up active in the Presbyterian church and has gone on to lead a distinguished life of service.

Holding both a law degree and a doctorate of ministry, Pastor Gray is a former public servant, having served as a staffer in the Senate and a true spiritual leader that has helped numerous individuals and families grow in their relationship with God.

Currently, Pastor Gray serves as the head pastor at Bradley Hills Church and resides in Bethesda, Maryland, with his wife, Bridget, and their four children.

On behalf of the United States Congress and the people of his hometown in my district of the 10th Congressional District of Ohio, I want to thank Pastor Gray for his commitment to his faith and for opening the House today with his prayer.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

CALIFORNIA ABORTION MANDATE

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, we have seen this administration casually ignore the law when it comes to immigration, EPA regs, and ObamaCare. Now, we are going to see whether they ignore the law when it comes to forcing churches in California to pay for abortion.

For many years now, Congress has included language in the appropriations bills that prohibits States from forcing health insurance plans to cover elective abortion: the Weldon amendment, named for my good friend and former colleague, Dr. Dave Weldon of Florida.

Now, the State of California has issued a bureaucratic edict that every health insurance plan in California regulated by the State must pay for the procedure, and this includes even plans purchased by churches, religious schools, and charities.

HHS must not hesitate to protect the right of Americans to prevent their health care dollars from going to something they find to be profoundly immoral. The agency is required to inform the State of California of this violation and remind them that they risk the loss of Federal funds.

There doesn't need to be any delay from HHS. This is exactly why the Weldon amendment was created.

FUNDING FOR ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RESEARCH

(Mr. QUIGLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of funding for Alzheimer's disease research.

Alzheimer's is a particularly devastating disease both for the patients and their families. Families watch their loved ones effectively disappear before their eyes. There are currently more than 5 million Americans suffering from this disease, with one American being diagnosed every 67 seconds.

We must take preventive actions to address the growing population of Alzheimer's patients in this country. In the fiscal year 2015 appropriations process, I urge my colleagues to support increased funding for this research. This research will help find ways to prevent, treat, and even slow the progression of the disease, helping to ease the burden on patients, caregivers, and the Medicare system.

Congress must continue its commitment to fight against Alzheimer's by providing this crucial funding.

ECONOMY

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, many North Carolina families know all too well of the struggle to find a job and pay the bills. Some are facing these challenges right now, and we all have family members, neighbors, or friends who are facing hard choices to make ends meet. Back home, I am often asked what Congress is doing to help people back to work and restore opportunity for everyone.

For the last 2 years, the House has passed numerous pieces of legislation to encourage job growth and strengthen America's standing in the global economy. We have also passed bills that would decrease energy costs, that would allow workers to have more flexibility in order to spend time with their families, and that would increase transparency in how tax dollars are spent.

While Congress cannot create prosperity, we can work to ensure entrepreneurs and employers aren't crushed under red tape. The 114th Congress is a fresh opportunity to help put more Americans back to work and to improve our economy. I look forward to working with the new majority in the Senate to accomplish those goals.

CONGRESS HAS YET TO TAKE UP THE BIG QUESTIONS FACING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

(Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)