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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 24, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JEFF DENHAM 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 6, 2015, 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 1:50 p.m.

CONGRESS OF CLIFFS

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of talk of cliffs here in our Nation's Capital. We have fiscal cliffs that we faced with the debt ceiling. There was the sequestration cliff. We had, obviously, the cliffs surrounding the government shutdown.

This week, we face a Homeland Security cliff. Because our Republican friends have been unable to reach agreement and have held hostage the

budget of the Department of Homeland Security, we face a situation where we will either shut down those operations or, hopefully, people will come to their senses and take action. But, again, it is government by cliff.

In March, we are facing the SGR cliff. If the government doesn't move forward to deal with a meaningful solution to the sustainable growth rate, we are going to see a dramatic reduction in government reimbursement under Medicare to providers.

And looming in the background—something that we talked about last summer because Congress refused to deal meaningfully with transportation funding—there will be another cliff May 31 as the transportation fund loses its ability to fund. Already, there are programs around the country in local and State government that are trying to factor in reductions of important construction work that they aren't certain they can do this summer.

Well, we are putting in the background another cliff. It is one that will probably not get the attention that it deserves, but one that deserves people to focus on because it will impact 11 million of our most vulnerable citizens.

Over the course of the years, there have been opportunities within the trust fund that funds retirement and disability, which are basically, for most people, synonymous—they are paid for by the same tax on our earnings and that our employers pay, but they have been segregated into two accounts, one dealing with disability and one dealing with retirement.

Over the history of these two programs they have spent at different rates. Eleven times in the past, under Republican and Democratic Presidents alike, Congress has moved to shift money from one trust fund to another to be able to even it out and not run out of the ability to pay benefits. The last adjustment was made in 1994, but the disability account was only adjusted for about 20 years.

At the time, it was understood that there would be a need for more action dealing with disability because of a very fundamental demographic change: we have a lot more women in the workforce and the baby boom generation is moving into the years in their careers where they are more prone to disability claims. And, sure enough, that projection is right. Around December of next year, we will no longer be able to pay full disability payments unless there is an adjustment.

Well, the fix that has been done 11 times over the years, on a bipartisan basis, has been made infinitely more difficult because of a rule change that our friends on the Republican side have adopted for this Congress. Under what they have approved, it will be impossible to make that simple adjustment that we have done time and time again if a single Member of the House of Representatives objects.

This is setting up an artificial crisis. There is a need to adjust funding for both Social Security and disability because, combined, in about 2033 or 2034 they will not be able to pay out full benefits. That is why it is important for Congress to be able to step forward and deal with it meaningfully, but it is not something you do in a crisis, and it is not something that should be done by picking out the one area in which 11 million citizens rely on these for disability payments. It should be done thoughtfully and carefully.

If people are concerned about fraud and misuse, I would suggest that my Republican friends look at what they did in the budget process. Over the last 3 years, they have cut 7 percent out of the budget for the Social Security Administration that could have gone to deal with enforcement and that could have gone to deal with fraud and abuse. It could have gone to make sure that the program is operating properly.

Instead, we have set up a crisis to try and force reductions in benefits for

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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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some of our most vulnerable. I think it is not the way we should go. We shouldn't be having government by cliff, but we also ought to be dealing with it in a thoughtful and reasonable fashion to make the adjustments that make it sustainable.

In the meantime, the Republican leadership ought to waive that rule—like they routinely do for things that they care about, like passing billions of dollars of unfunded tax cuts—to be able to allow the rebalancing to occur and the decisionmaking to be made in a thoughtful and reasonable fashion.

TWITTER AND FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this week we learned that three British school girls between the ages of 15 and 16 left their families and have gone to fight with ISIS in Syria.

How were they recruited to join? Well, apparently through social media. And they are not alone. Terrorists have used Twitter to radicalize thousands of young impressionable minds throughout the world and recruit new jihadists. They have also used it as a way to fundraise millions of dollars for their reign of terror. ISIS also uses Twitter to broadcast its barbaric acts and propaganda to the world.

On February 3, ISIS tweeted a video of its evil, horrific burning of a captured Jordanian pilot. Last August, when ISIS released a gruesome beheading of American journalist James Foley, it did so on, yes, Twitter. There are many more examples.

All of these groups—ISIS, AQAP, AQIM—are officially listed as designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations by our government. Federal law prohibits giving aid or helping a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization. These FTOs use Twitter, an American company, as a tool, and no one is stopping them.

Why are American companies and the U.S. Government allowing social media platforms to be hijacked by terrorists? Some suggest that if the U.S. Government were to shut down terrorists' social media accounts, such measures would be violating terrorists' free speech rights. They are wrong. There are no constitutional protections to those who incite violence. No one supports the Bill of Rights more than I do, but free speech has its limitations, just as there are no constitutional protections for child pornography.

Terrorists should not have access to an American-controlled social media platform so they can kill, rape, pillage, and burn. There is precedence for this position. The Supreme Court has already ruled and held in the case of *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project* that if someone has aided a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, they do not have constitutional protections of free speech.

Twitter has argued that the Feds do not want the terrorists' Twitter accounts taken down because they, the Feds, want to track the bad guys. However, keeping these Twitter accounts up has neither stopped nor slowed the terrorists' recruitment, propaganda, calls for violence, or fundraising efforts. Instead, allowing the terrorists to continue using Twitter has helped radicalize hundreds of foreign fighters and raised millions of dollars for them.

The sad reality is that today, there are more terrorists using social media than ever before. Private American companies should not be operating as the propaganda mouthpiece of designated foreign terrorist organizations.

Mr. Speaker, during World War II, we never would have allowed America's foreign enemies to take out ads in The New York Times recruiting Americans to join the Nazis and go abroad and fight and kill Americans. Today is no different. Social media companies need to do more. Private companies not only have a public responsibility but a legal obligation to be proactive.

Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act states that it is unlawful to provide a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization—like ISIS—with “material support or resources,” including “any property, tangible or intangible, or services.” That is about as comprehensive as you can get. You don't need to be a law school professor to understand this law actually applies to Twitter.

It is mind-boggling to think that those who behead and burn others alive are able to use our own companies against us to further their cause. This is nutty. But that is exactly what is occurring. As a result, there are more than 15,000 foreign fighters, many of whom have been radicalized online, now fighting in Iraq and Syria. That is more than there were in the 14 years of war in Afghanistan.

Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations should not be allowed to use private American companies to reach billions of people with their violent hate propaganda and recruitment. It is time to put a stop to this. It is time for Twitter to take down terrorists' accounts.

And that is just the way it is.

HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what the gentleman has just said about those challenges and threats, along with the undermining of our national security, but it is further at risk this week by our own hand; that is, the Congress of the United States.

The Department of Homeland Security will not be funded. There are 230,000 people who work at that Department, and 30,000 of them, mostly administrative personnel, will be laid off. The others, known as critically impor-

tant—essential employees who are on the front line—will work, but they won't get paid.

We can lament what others have done to undermine our national security and share—I think in a bipartisan way—the conclusion that we ought not to further those enterprises, but as I said, Mr. Speaker, by our own hand we are about to shut down the Department of Homeland Security. We have but 4 days to pass a bill continuing its funding.

I will say with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, to my friends on the other side of the aisle, shutting down the government is a strategy they have employed on a number of occasions. In 1995, we shut it down twice, for almost a month, maybe a little longer.

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Just a few months ago, we shut it down again as a strategy—not as a happenstance, but as a strategy.

Again, Mr. Speaker, there are those who are saying in this House: Well, it won't matter if we shut down the Department of Homeland Security. Some of the folks are funded on fees, others will be required to work anyway, so let's just keep playing this Russian roulette with America's security and the safety of Americans.

Mr. Speaker, we are approaching the eleventh hour, and the House has not yet been given the opportunity to vote on a bill that, essentially, was agreed to by the Republican Appropriations Committee and reported to this floor, and we essentially passed it, but we passed it for a short period of time.

There was no debate on funding levels, Mr. Speaker. There was no debate on whether this provision and that provision should or should not be in the bill. We passed it.

Then the Republicans, Mr. Speaker, to accomplish another objective, have done what they said in the pledge to America they would not do, and that is put two different issues in the same bill. Well, they have put a poison pill in this bill.

If we fail to act and send the President a bill he can and will sign, a bill free from partisan policy riders, then thousands of our Homeland Security agents will be furloughed, and almost—as I said—200,000 others will be forced to work without pay.

Is that what America has come to? Surely not—the impact on our border security, law enforcement, and homeland security will be serious and make our country more vulnerable to threats.

I came to the rostrum after a gentleman on the other side of the aisle correctly expressed concerns about the threats that confront us. I would hope he would join me in advocating and urging the Republican leadership to bring to the floor a clean—and by clean, I simply mean a bill on which both parties have essentially agreed.

Chairman MIKE McCaul, the Republican who leads the House Committee