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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,
March 17, 2015.

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 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 11:50 a.m.

FUNDING AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, today the House Budget Committee will reveal the budget for fiscal year 2016. That budget will contain more money for Afghanistan, which is why I am speaking on the floor today. Afghanistan is an absolute waste of taxpayer money. It is a true graveyard of empires.

Mr. Speaker, just 2 years ago, I was speaking on the floor about a New York Times article titled, "Karzai

Says He Was Assured CIA Would Continue Delivering Bags of Cash." I will quote from that article again today: "The CIA money, Mr. Karzai told reporters, was 'an easy source of petty cash,' and some of it was used to pay off members of the political elite and a group dominated by warlords."

This past Sunday, an article was published in a Raleigh, North Carolina, paper titled, "CIA Cash Helped to Refill Al Qaeda Coiffers." According to the article: "The CIA contribution to al Qaeda's bottom line was just another in a long list of examples of how the United States, largely because of poor oversight and loose financial controls, has sometimes inadvertently financed the very militants" who have been killing American soldiers. Finally, the article stated: "The cash flow has slowed since a new Afghan president, Mr. Ghani, assumed office in September, Afghan officials said, but they added that cash was still coming in."

For at least 5 years, it has been reported that cash from the United States has been funneled to the Afghan Government through the CIA as a sort of slush fund, and some of that money has made its way to al Qaeda. This is only one example of the waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan, yet the current administration has obligated the American taxpayer and soldier to 9 more years in Afghanistan, without even a debate on the floor of the House.

Let me remind the House: Al Qaeda is our enemy. Congress owes the American people and the soldiers a debate to end this failed policy.

Mr. Speaker, after over \$685 billion in taxpayer dollars, blood, and limbs lost in Afghanistan, it is time to stop the waste, fraud, and abuse of American taxpayer money there and to start reallocating that money right here in America to help our veterans, to help the infrastructure of America, and to help our children, America's future. Why are we spending this kind of

money in Afghanistan that is abused and wasted and used to kill American soldiers? I do not understand it, Mr. Speaker.

Our debt is over \$18 trillion. When President Clinton left office in the year 2000, our debt was \$5.6 trillion. Today, it is over \$18 trillion in debt, and we are going to continue with 9 more years of waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan. We, in Congress, owe the American people a debate.

With that, Mr. Speaker, before closing, I will ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform. God, please bless the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. And I will ask God to please bless the President and the House and the Senate, that we will do what is right in the eyes of God for God's people today and God's people tomorrow.

HONORING TED FOWLER ON HIS RETIREMENT

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

Mr. HOLDING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Ted Fowler, who recently retired from a storied career at one of North Carolina's and, indeed, one of America's famous dining establishments, Golden Corral.

An inspirational leader, Ted retired after nearly 40 years at the helm of Golden Corral. A humble yet enthusiastic man, Ted is a relentless competitor who achieved great success by demonstrating tireless commitment to his company, employees, and customers.

Ted joined the Golden Corral family not long after its first restaurant opened in 1973. He oversaw the expansion of the franchise from a one-family steakhouse in Fayetteville, North Carolina, to over 500 restaurants nationwide. This includes operations in 41

□ 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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States with over 9,000 employees and revenues upward of \$195 million. Mr. Speaker, that is no small feat.

Ted steered the company through its brand transition, which was a difficult undertaking in today's restaurant industry. He worked hard to ensure the upward mobility of his employees so that every employee had a chance to achieve a better life. For example, Mr. Speaker, he initiated a company program that helped entry-level employees become managers within a year; and within 5 years, they could run their own franchise.

Mr. Fowler is more than just a respected leader in the restaurant industry. He truly cared about the people who worked and dined at Golden Corral. For instance, since 2001, Golden Corral has served more than 4 million free meals to active and retired military personnel on Veterans Day. He also oversaw Camp Corral, a free, one-of-a-kind summer camp for children of wounded and disabled or fallen military servicemembers. Since its founding, Camp Corral has grown to 20 camps in 16 States and has served over 4,000 children. It is because of big-hearted causes like these that I am proud to call Ted Fowler a friend.

Encouragement and leadership exemplified through many of his company programs are some of the reasons why Mr. Fowler is a past recipient of the North Carolina Restaurateur of the Year Award, the Foodservice Operator of the Year, and the Gold Plate Award.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize and congratulate a proven job creator and an even better man. Ted Fowler embodies all the qualities of a noble, compassionate businessman. I wish him good health and happiness in his retirement.

PRESERVING SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. REED) for 5 minutes.

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about an impending crisis that is going to be coming upon us in 2016. Mr. Speaker, not too many people know or realize that our Social Security disability trust fund is going to be insolvent, bankrupt, underfunded—whatever term you want to use—by the middle of 2016. Mr. Speaker, what that means is that our fellow Americans—approximately 11 million of them—who receive Social Security disability checks are going to be looking at a 20 percent reduction in their benefit come the middle of 2016 if we do not step up to the plate and reform this critical program.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I serve on the Ways and Means Committee here in Washington, D.C., and 2 years ago, I questioned our Treasury Secretary from the White House. I said: Mr. Lew, where is the White House's proposal to deal with this issue? Nothing in the budget from the White House, nothing in the Treasury Secretary's testimony

addressed this canary in the coal mine that is coming down upon us in 2016.

This year I asked the same question, and essentially what I got was the proposal that they are going to take from Social Security retirees the contributions they make to Social Security retirement and transfer them into the disability trust fund.

Mr. Speaker, in my private practice, my private life as a businessman before I came to Washington, D.C., that was essentially robbing Peter to pay Paul. That is not acceptable.

We need to protect Social Security retirees. We also, Mr. Speaker, need to protect our fellow Americans who suffer from disabilities. We need to do better than robbing Peter to pay Paul. That is why I am looking for input from colleagues on the other side of the aisle, for people across the Nation to say, How can we reform the Social Security disability trust fund so that it meets its obligations and it stands with the disabled community in a way that says, You know what? If you want to return to work, you can.

Because right now, Mr. Speaker, in my humble opinion, the Social Security disability trust fund penalizes those who suffer from disabilities if they return to work because then they lose their benefit. That doesn't make sense.

I support the work ethic of America, and that is why I support reforms that are going to take care of the disability trust fund, that make sure that our fellow Americans receive the benefits that they need and rely upon. But we are also going to stand with our disability community and make sure if they want to return to work and have a capacity to return to work, we in Washington, D.C., will stand with them and reward that work ethic.

Bottom line: I am going to protect our Social Security retirees because to put them in further harm's way, as we know the impending Social Security crisis that is going to come to a head in 2033, just around the corner, will do—to take from that retirement fund is further weakening our Social Security system. We can do better. We must do better.

I care about those retirees. I care about those disabled fellow Americans. That is why I say today that we are not going to maintain the status quo of robbing Peter to pay Paul, but we are actually going to get to the business of reform. We are going to protect retirees and take care of our fellow Americans who are disabled.

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 11 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. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania) at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Jon Randles, Victory Life Church, Lubbock, Texas, offered the following prayer:

Holy and most high God, we come before You, grateful for Your gift of life. All good things come from You. We acknowledge that powerful truth.

I pray for these leaders who serve in this Congress today the wisdom to make choices that are righteous, just, and good for all Americans and beyond. I pray those leaders the humility to remember that if they seek Your ways, You will guide their journey to those choices that are always best. I pray that all of us, as Americans, strive to know who we are, to know Whom and what we serve, and to know where we are going.

Bless them as they lead us, and may we all seek with our lives to leave a shadow that makes a difference for freedom, truth, goodness, and always with encouragement.

Acknowledging You, we pray.

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 Minnesota (Mr. EMMER) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota 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 JON RANGLES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. NEUGEBAUER) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to welcome to the House of Representatives today's guest chaplain and my fellow Lubbock, Texas, native, Jon Randles. Jon is joined here today by his wife, Kelly; his two sons, Zack and Sam; and their wives, Autumn and Jennifer; his daughter, Hayley; and her husband, Chance; as well as their grandchildren. Also here are 70 members of his congregation.