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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 12, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable STEVE WOMACK 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.

GROWING U.S. NATIONAL DEBT

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, last week, while we were in recess, I traveled through my district and had the opportunity to appear on local television and to speak at civic clubs. Every time I mentioned that we have an \$18 trillion debt, eastern North Carolinians were astounded and could not believe it.

To put the debt into perspective, on January 20, 2009, the total Federal debt stood at \$10.6 trillion. As of last Fri-

day, May 8, 2015, it has risen to \$18—an increase of \$7.5 trillion. Our debt now stands at over \$200,000 for every full-time private sector worker. I agree with my constituents that it is time Congress stopped passing legislation that is not paid for.

Republicans have control of both Chambers of Congress now because voters want us to cut the debt and deficit and stop passing legislation that is not paid for.

In an April article for Forbes Magazine, Stan Collender wrote:

If you haven't noticed that Congress is about to increase the Federal deficit substantially, you haven't been watching carefully . . . or at all. Virtually every policy change that has already or soon will be considered seriously in the House and Senate will make the deficit higher rather than lower.

He further writes:

Based on what Congress is now considering, the deficit could be \$100 billion or more next year than it otherwise would be if you just put Washington on autopilot; that is, if you made no changes to existing tax and spending policies. That would be an almost 21 percent increase.

It is obvious that our current fiscal policies are unsustainable.

Mr. Speaker, I have been speaking for months and even years about the waste of money in Afghanistan. It is sad to me that we have been pouring money down a rat hole known as Afghanistan.

We have spent over \$685 billion in Afghanistan in the last 14 years, and President Obama just entered into a bilateral security agreement with Afghanistan late last year that ties us—our Nation—to a failed policy for another 9 years.

What have we gained there, with over 2,000 American troops killed, over 20,000 wounded, and billions of dollars spent? My answer to my own question is: nothing. Absolutely nothing.

A couple of weeks ago, I visited Walter Reed Army Medical Center to meet some of our veterans who had been

wounded and are trying to heal. Some have wounds that will never truly heal.

Congress owes it to them—and all of our men and women who serve—and the American taxpayer to have a serious debate about our future in Afghanistan. I think it is high time to leave Afghanistan. Nine more years is absolutely fruitless.

Mr. Speaker, out of fairness to American taxpayers and future generations, we can no longer delay the need to pay down our debt and work toward sound economic policies. And out of fairness to our veterans and the men and women who serve in the military, we need to have a serious debate about spending more money and time in Afghanistan, when it has been proven and is well known by historians to be the graveyard of empires. Is it worth it, Mr. Speaker? I think not.

May God continue to bless our men and women in uniform and may God continue to bless America.

TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, as I rise on the floor of the House, the Senate is about to begin debate on trade promotion authority, which is Congress ceding all authority to the President to negotiate agreements secretly, bring them before these bodies, and to say take it or leave it, an “up-or-down” vote, no amendments—ceding our constitutional authority. I hope the Senate turns him down.

Now, the President went to Oregon last week, to Nike, who originated the idea of chasing cheap labor around the world and outsourcing U.S. production. He gave a speech. I wasn't invited. That was fine with me. He went there to make fun of people like me who have fought these trade agreements for more than 20 years and have been more

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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right than wrong about the impacts of these trade agreements.

He talked about labor, saying: Don't worry. This is going to put enforceable labor provisions on Vietnam, where you can't have a union, where you have child labor, prison labor, and you get paid 60 cents an hour. He says: We are going to fix all that.

Well, I have read that chapter. I can't talk about it. It is classified. But I can say this. It will be as effective in dealing with the abuses—and, Brunei is even worse than Vietnam—in Brunei or Vietnam, in terms of their labor and working conditions, as the recent U.S. Colombia Free Trade Agreement. Guess what? In Colombia, they still kill people who try and form unions, and we have no recourse against them. So it is not going to fix that problem.

He says: Well, I was in law school when NAFTA passed, and these people are just living in the past. Well, unfortunately, you are bringing the past to the future.

This agreement has been vetted by 500 corporations in real time. They can put it on a big screen in their boardroom, bring in all their lawyers and staff, and say: Let's change these words. Let's make it look like the labor stuff is enforceable, but then we put this here, and it isn't.

I can read it, too. I can go to the basement of this building and I can read it in secret, and I can't talk about it.

So this is an agreement that is for labor, for the environment, for consumers, when it is being written in corporate boardrooms and then submitted to the Special Trade Representative who then puts that text into a special agreement we can't see? No, the President is very, very wrong about that.

He says we are wrong because we are making things up about undermining regulation, food safety, worker safety, and even financial regulations. Well, we are not. This has something called investor-state dispute resolution, which means anyone can challenge any U.S. law. Any foreign corporation, Japanese corporation, or Bruneian corporation can challenge a U.S. law in a secret tribunal staffed by lawyers who have no conflict of interest, no legal body underlying their decisions, and who one day represents corporations and the next day sit as judges.

And he is right, they can't make us repeal our laws. He is absolutely right. But they can make us pay to keep them. We had to pay hundreds of millions of dollars to Brazil to keep subsidizing cotton in this country.

Now, I wasn't into subsidizing the cotton, but it really irks me that we were subsidizing it here, and because of the power of the farm lobby, we paid Brazil hundreds of millions of dollars to keep that subsidy.

The Japanese were killing dolphins to catch tuna, and we passed a law to just label dolphin-safe tuna so consumers could decide, too. We had a big campaign with friendly dolphins.

The Mexicans won in the same process. They won a judgment against the United States of America—that it was an unfair trade barrier—and we had to pay the Mexicans to not fish for dolphins. And then they appealed yet to another place and actually made us eliminate dolphin-safe altogether.

Yes, it can undermine our labor laws, it can undermine our environmental laws, and it can undermine our consumer protection laws when they are challenged by a foreign corporation. So the President is yet wrong again. We are not making stuff up.

Currency manipulation, the Japanese wall—every U.S. auto manufacturer knows about this. They manipulate currency. Therefore, their vehicles are \$8,000 cheaper than they would be if their currency was fairly traded—\$8,000—and we are going to compete on a level playing field?

This agreement gives them full access, with no tariffs, to our pickup truck market, which means the end of pickup truck manufacturing in America. The iconic Fords and Chevys, forget about it. They are gone with an \$8,000 advance.

We couldn't put currency manipulation into this and say that is not fair, because the Japanese didn't want it. But they are giving us a big concession. They are going to buy some American rice. Well, isn't that great? We are trading tens of thousands of auto jobs for a few jobs working in the rice fields in California. And that will only last until the Japanese challenge the rice farmers. Because they get subsidized Federal water, they will ultimately be barred from the Japanese market because they will lose in a secret tribunal under this ISDS provision.

Finally, I have just got to wonder what the President is talking about when he says we are speculating and it is made up.

Oh, Mexican trucks. I predicted when we had the agreement with Mexico that they would force us to let Mexican trucks drive freely in America. Guess what? We lost that, and they put tariffs on our goods because they couldn't drive their trucks all around our country.

There is great precedence here. He hasn't fixed a darned thing. He probably hasn't even read the agreement.

WOMEN'S HEALTH WEEK AND NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Women's Health Week and National Nurses Week.

Yes, this week is Women's Health Week—a time to raise awareness about manageable steps women can take to improve their health.

Currently, one in five women is in fair or poor health, and almost 40 per-

cent report struggling with mental health issues. Women are less likely than men to be employed full time, meaning they are less likely to be eligible for employer-based health benefits.

Difficulty finding and maintaining employer-based coverage is especially pronounced for older women, who are more likely to develop conditions like breast cancer. But thanks to ObamaCare, women's health took a monumental step forward.

Before ObamaCare, insurance companies could discriminate against women, denying coverage to women—of course, to all people—due to preexisting conditions, such as cancer and even previous pregnancies. Today, being a woman or becoming pregnant is no longer a preexisting condition.

The National Women's Law Center estimates that insurers' practice of gender rating cost women about a billion dollars a year before ObamaCare. ObamaCare ends gender rating. It requires health plans to cover women's preventive services, like contraceptive care and OB/GYN visits, without cost sharing.

Accessible contraceptive coverage is particularly important. Prior to ObamaCare, more than half of all women between the ages of 18 and 34 struggled to afford it.

In addition, every health insurance plan is now required to offer maternity care. Prior to the passage of ObamaCare, the National Women's Law Center found that only 12 percent of private plans included maternity services.

And even without those major improvements, health care accessibility remains a challenge. Almost one out of three women reports not visiting a doctor due to the cost.

Women are still less likely to be insured than men. And even when they have insurance, women face increasingly high deductibles, copayments, and other cost sharing requirements, forcing major sacrifices just in order to make ends meet.

A recent study found that over 40 percent of women have unmet medical needs due to the cost of medical care. This problem is particularly acute in States that have not expanded Medicaid. Currently, 3 million uninsured women live in States that have not expanded Medicaid coverage.

So we have come so far in increasing access to affordable and adequate health care for women, but we still have a long way to go.

This week is also National Nurses Week, and I can't pass up the chance to recognize the important contributions that nurses make—improving women's and men's health care every day. After all, we might not have ObamaCare if it weren't for the support and advocacy for nurses all across the country.

This year's National Nurses Week 2015 theme is: "Ethical Practice. Quality Care." It recognizes the importance of ethics in nursing and acknowledges