



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

No. 121

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FLEISCHMANN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 29, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHARLES J. FLEISCHMANN 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. morning-hour.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, predictably, Congress is sidestepping the transportation funding issue for the 34th time with yet another short-term extension, this one until the end of October.

No nation has become great building its infrastructure 3 months, 8 months, 10 months at a time. This is a symbol of the failure of Congress and the last

two administrations to deal meaningfully with the need to rebuild and renew America.

Our country is falling apart as we fall behind. We all can remember the days when the United States had the finest infrastructure in the world. Well, those days have long since passed. By any objective measure, we are now down about 25th in the world, and we continue to fall further.

This failure has consequences for Americans every single day. The average damage to a car is over \$500 a year in maintenance costs due to poor road conditions, more than \$125 billion a year to the economy with congestion, being stuck in traffic.

Because of poor road conditions, infrastructure failures, and an inability to keep pace with growth, there are people being killed and injured every day across America. It doesn't have to be this way.

The failure to get a 6-year reauthorization, which we haven't had since 1998, is due to one simple fact: Congress is still trying to pay for 2015 infrastructure with 1993 dollars.

The solution is simple. Over three dozen Members of Congress have cosponsored legislation to raise the gas tax for the first time in 22 years, legislation that is supported by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, AFL-CIO, local government, transit, environmentalists, contractors, the largest collection of groups supporting any major issue before Congress.

It is a solution that was advocated by President Ronald Reagan when he led the effort in his administration to raise the gas tax 125 percent. It is a solution that has been embraced by six red Republican States already this year.

The latest failure to slide into the end of October could actually be our salvation. I have personally lobbied President Obama to call for an end to this charade. The President believes in infrastructure and every year has offered up an approach from his perspective.

I would urge the Congress and all of us to draw one final red line. This October 31 deadline ought to be it. Let Congress stew. Let things grind to a halt if we don't do our job.

The gas tax legislation is already written and can be approved if the Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee would deal with it for a week.

It is a simple one-page bill. It is not necessary to tie ourselves in knots. And then, if we give a number to the authorizing committee, in a matter of weeks, they can develop that 6-year bill that would make such a difference.

We could meet the President's deadline, have this done once and for all, put hundreds of thousands of people to work at family-wage jobs all across the country, improving the quality of life, making our communities more livable, our families safer, healthier, more economically secure, and stop playing with gimmicks that highlight our dysfunction.

Let's prove to the American public and, more importantly, to us that we can actually function the way things were designed, using a user fee that is perfectly attuned to road needs that have served us well for over half a century.

So, please, Mr. President, why don't you make it clear that you are going to call an end to this charade. Give Congress 3 more months to do our job. It doesn't need any more.

We operate from cliff to crisis. Deadlines are simply an alarm clock to get started. Well, this particular alarm clock could start ticking now if you are calling a halt to our continued irresponsibility.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair.

□ 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.



Printed on recycled paper.

H5595

IRAN-NORTH KOREA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, a bad deal is a bad deal under a Republican President or a Democratic President. This Iran nuclear deal is a bad deal because we have seen this movie before. We know how it ends.

I have repeatedly stated that Iran has been following the North Korean playbook on exactly how to extract concessions from the United States and the international community while simultaneously continuing to improve its nuclear program, expand its infrastructure, and support its illicit activities.

Many analysts have made the same observations, including Alan Dershowitz in a Jerusalem Post article last week.

It is not just how the process unfolded and how the international community fell for the tricks of the rogue regimes that are so scary.

Because, obviously, Iran saw North Korea as having been the victors in its battle over its nuclear program; so, naturally, it would want to replicate that.

But it is alarming and striking just how similar the rhetoric is between President Clinton's announcement of a nuclear agreement with North Korea and President Obama's announcement of a nuclear agreement with Iran.

Let's look at the similarities that Mr. Dershowitz noted between President Clinton's remarks in 1994 and President Obama's from earlier this month. Then, Mr. Speaker, it will be easy to understand why so many of us oppose this nuclear deal.

In 1994, President Clinton said that the North Korea agreement will make the U.S., the Korean Peninsula, and the world safer. Earlier this month President Obama said that this deal will bring about change that makes the U.S. and the world safer and more secure.

In 1994, President Clinton assured the world that the North Korea deal "does not rely on trust. Compliance will be certified by the International Atomic Energy Agency."

Last week President Obama proclaimed, "This deal is not built on trust. It is built on verification."

President Clinton predicted—as we now are painfully aware, inaccurately—that the North Korea agreement would be "a crucial step toward drawing North Korea into the global community" and predicted the end of the rogue regime's isolation.

Similarly, last week's statement poses that the Iran deal "offers an opportunity to move in a new direction" because we have taken a different path that "leads to more integration into the global economy, more engagement with the international community, and the ability of the Iranian people to prosper and thrive."

And, of course, there was the spurious promise to an ally to assuage them that we didn't just put their national security in jeopardy.

First, President Clinton reaffirmed our commitment to protect South Korea. Now, President Obama, already knowing that Israel vehemently objects to this deal and feels as though this gives Iran—an existential threat to its existence and a regime that has promised to wipe the Jewish state off of the map—the ultimate weapon to achieve its goals, promises to "continue our unprecedented effort to strengthen Israel's security, efforts that go beyond what any American administration has done before."

Not only are these empty words, Mr. Speaker, but they are disingenuous to boot.

When the North Korea deal was reached, one of the most significant flaws was that it failed to dismantle any of North Korea's nuclear infrastructure.

The deal was designed merely to delay the North Korean bomb, not prevent it. That is what this nuclear deal with Iran is designed to do.

We saw what happened with North Korea, and we can be sure that Iran plans to follow suit.

The totality of this deal hinges on a bet by the administration and the rest of the P5+1 that the Iranian regime will see the error of its ways and wants to be part of the global community and forsake its support for terror and other illicit behavior.

That is a dangerous gamble to make with U.S. national security, and it is not a gamble that I or any one of us should be willing to take.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, we must reject this deal and demand a better deal or else reimpose the sanctions and use the only thing, the only tactic, that Iran understands—strength—to force it to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

 PUERTO RICO

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

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke about Puerto Rico's debt crisis and how there must be a sense of urgency because, without action, bondholders will be paid, but teachers, cops, and nurses won't.

I want to continue today and make two points. Number one, let's not let bondholders bleed Puerto Rico at a discount. Number two, let's work together on what unites us, not what divides us.

Because the only way we will make any progress is if the people of Puerto Rico come together to make a plan and demand that the Congress of the United States work with Puerto Rico on Puerto Rico's plan.

Without consistent and persistent pressure from Puerto Rico, Washington will do nothing, as both the administration and the Congress are content to

let the bondholders on Wall Street call the tune.

We all know Washington should start with H.R. 870, the bankruptcy bill. It is simply a bill that will allow Puerto Rico to declare bankruptcy and restructure its debt within the U.S. legal system.

This would allow an orderly and fair restructuring of the debt in a court of law. It is an important step, but will not solve all of Puerto Rico's problems.

What Puerto Rico should do right now is demand to know what Wall Street vulture capitalists are paying for the bonds.

We hear a report that the bonds are selling for 15 and 20 cents on the dollar, yet the bond owners want a full dollar's worth of interest.

I say Puerto Rico should pay interest based on the price the billionaires actually paid and that they should disclose this amount, just as a congressman does in this Congress every time we make an investment.

Then Puerto Rico can service its debt based on what was paid to buy the debt. I came here to protect people, not the profits of billionaires on Wall Street.

Secondly and most importantly, for the time being, we must set aside politics and get away from the smoke-screen of the status issue in Puerto Rico.

Whether Puerto Rico should be a State, an independent nation, or remain a commonwealth cannot be the priority right now before this Congress.

If everyone leaves Puerto Rico—and they are leaving by 5,000 a month—it will not matter what kind of government is left behind.

Mr. Speaker, nobody should use the current debt crisis as an opportunity to score political points for their party.

At a time when the people of Puerto Rico must be clear, precise, and unified, the status issue divides Puerto Ricans.

I read in The New York Times the argument of the Resident Commissioner of the Statehood Party that the only solution to Puerto Rico's problems is to make it a State.

Really? That is going to solve the debt crisis? The power crisis? The public employees' pension gap crisis? The Medicare Advantage budget crisis?

We should be working together to figure out how Puerto Rico is going to pay teachers and honor their pensions, how we will make sure health care is delivered to all and bridges do not collapse. A statehood bill is not going to provide housing, create a job, or heal a sick child.

When Members of Congress ask me about Puerto Rico, they ask me: Which is it? Is it statehood? Do you want a bankruptcy bill? Do you want more Medicaid?

We have to prioritize. We have to be clear and put aside the status issue. Please, we need to work together.

I would like to use my remaining minute to restate my call to action in Spanish.