



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2015

No. 153

House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 20, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN R. MOOLENAAR 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.

THE GRAVEYARD OF EMPIRES

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, this weekend, I learned that there would be no cost-of-living adjustment this year for those living on Social Security. Not only will Social Security recipients not see a cost-of-living increase this year but, also, disabled veterans.

There are over 131,000 veterans on disability in North Carolina who will be suffering this year. Our senior citizens and disabled veterans are having a

difficult time making ends meet, and it is not fair that the Federal Government continues to waste money with failed policies like Afghanistan. It is disgraceful.

Mr. Speaker, we will be raising the debt ceiling of this Nation for years to come because of wasteful spending. This means we will be borrowing more money to continue spending more than we take in. Our annual Federal deficit is still over \$400 billion a year.

The American people are sick and tired of our wasteful spending, and I know they are frustrated. Once again, our failed policy in Afghanistan is a prime example of the waste, fraud, and abuse of the American taxpayer dollar, but it continues on and on for years to come.

In the recent House-Senate conference bill, Congress included \$38 billion for the Overseas Contingency Operation, which is a slush fund used to get around sequestration spending caps for the Department of Defense.

We have already spent over \$685 billion in Afghanistan since 2001, and according to the Congressional Budget Office, we will be spending at least \$30 billion a year in Afghanistan for the next 8 years, and Congress has never debated the policy of Afghanistan.

This slush fund goes to fund our never-ending wars in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. We continue to spend money on a fool's errand in the Middle East. Meanwhile, our disabled veterans at home cannot keep up with the rising costs of daily living. President Obama will be keeping 10,000 troops in Afghanistan through all of next year and at least 5,000 there after 2016.

Mr. Speaker, years ago, I reached out to a former commandant of the Marine Corps whom I knew, and I asked him to give me his advice on Afghanistan. Many times he has given me his best advice, but one that has stuck with me for years is this—and I quote the commandant:

"What do we say to the mother and father . . . the wife . . . of the last marine or soldier killed to support a corrupt government and corrupt leader in a war that cannot be won?"

Mr. Speaker, that is Afghanistan. It is a waste.

How ridiculous it is that Congress and the administration think we can change history. The history of Afghanistan has shown that no outside military force has ever changed it, from Alexander the Great, to the British, to the Russians. It is truly the graveyard of empires, and I hope we won't have a headstone there, waiting, that will read, "Welcome, America, to the graveyard of empires."

Mr. Speaker, this poster beside me is a reminder of the cost of war in Afghanistan. There is a little girl holding her mother's hand as they are waiting to follow a caisson down to bury the little girl's father and the wife's husband.

Congress, wake up. We are heading for collapse in this country. Let's not continue to spend and waste money, blood, and limbs in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform, to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform, and, God, please bless America and please wake up the Congress before it is too late.

NURSING HOME ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

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

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, we have a problem in making sure that all of our senior adult population is treated with the utmost respect and proper care.

HUD's Section 232 Program was intended to provide Federal loan insurance for loans covering the needs of

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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nursing homes and other elder-care facilities. However, while HUD requires these applicants to submit their latest quality ratings, which is a one-star to five-star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, or CMS, the quality rating is not a deciding factor.

This has allowed nursing homes that provide routinely poor care to receive repeated taxpayer insurance loans. Among others, this is seen in the rise in the number and volume of one-star facilities that received HUD insurance each year from 2009 to 2012 but, also, in reports over two decades from GAO's and HUD's inspectors general.

Clearly, HUD's steps haven't gone far enough to provide real reform to ensure that taxpayer dollars do not go to nursing homes that consistently provide poor care to our seniors and to our needy. We must ensure that taxpayer support is going to nursing homes that provide quality care for their residents, not to facilities that provide continually deficient care.

By linking CMS' quality ratings to loan eligibility, the Nursing Home Accountability Act ensures that new federally backed loans go to nursing homes with a demonstrated commitment to quality care for their residents.

Bottom line, what my bill states is this:

Under CMS' Five-Star Quality Rating System, if a nursing home receives a rating of two stars or less for 30 consecutive months, the nursing home will then be ineligible for any future section 232 loans.

After a nursing home becomes ineligible for future section 232 loans under this Act, it can become eligible once more for future loans if the facility maintains a rating of three stars or more for 30 months.

Regarding ratings, all nursing homes receive a blank slate when this law is enacted, and HUD is allowed to continue to service previously issued loans under this law.

I would also like to say thanks to our local FOX affiliate for researching the gross mismanagement of Federal funds and bringing a greater awareness of this important matter.

Overall, I look forward to opening the national conversation of how we can better focus this program on the quality of care provided to our seniors and to the needy.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 8 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WOMACK) at 2 p.m.

PRAAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

As the Members return, we ask Your blessing on all those who are discerning significant options about leadership here in the people's House. May a spirit of freedom and public responsibility prevail among the other voices competing for ascendancy in the conversations and debates that ensue.

Bless all Members with wisdom in good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over—that the legacy of great legislators of our history might be carried on with integrity for the benefit of all.

May all that is done in the people's House be for Your greater honor and glory.

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 Georgia (Mr. CARTER) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia 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.

SOUTH CAROLINIANS ARE AN INSPIRATION

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the past 2 weeks in South Carolina have been inspiring as I learned and saw spontaneous acts of thoughtfulness and compassion for flood victims.

The thousand-year rain event was a disastrous collision of a weather front from the west meeting a moisture-laden trough from the east caused by Hurricane Joaquin bypassing the State, dumping 11 trillion gallons of water, inundating communities with rainfalls up to 26 inches overnight. The volume was equal to filling the Rose Bowl over 130,000 times.

Governor Nikki Haley and National Guard Adjutant General Bob Livingston, backed up by the State Guard, have continued to lead dedicated personnel for safety and recovery. Colonel Kevin Shwedo will be the recovery coordinator.

Individual acts of heroism arise daily, such as the courage of Frank

Roddey, Ryan Truluck, Drew Bozard, and Zack Hudson, who were cited by The State for rescuing, by boat, neighbors from their submerged Lake Katherine homes. Every church and school has energized volunteers and relief efforts for families.

The Salvation Army thanked Mary and J.T. Gandalfo with Rich O'Dell for raising over \$141,000 in a WLTX telethon, with Columbia Rotary Club members receiving the calls.

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson deserves praise for his dedicated FEMA personnel and SBA representatives implementing Federal assistance.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and the President by his actions should never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

NATIONAL FOREST PRODUCTS WEEK

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

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of National Forest Products Week.

The forestry and wood product manufacturing industry support over 44,000 jobs in the State of Georgia.

Over the past several years, many architects around the world have demonstrated the successful application of next-generation lumber and mass-timber technologies. These new technologies are providing a new, sustainable solution for building safe, cost effective, and high-performing buildings, most of the time in densely populated cities around the world.

By making forests sustainable and promoting wood product innovation, we can ensure that the wood product industry will continue to be a significant employer throughout the United States. I encourage continued support of forest lands and support for strong wood product markets so we can keep this industry healthy for future generations.

I thank those in the forest product industry for your continued contributions to our local economy, the State of Georgia, and the entire Nation.

CONGRATULATING STUDENTS AT MARVIN WARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to recognize the students and faculty at Marvin Ward Elementary School in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

With news of the destructive flooding in South Carolina on their minds, this title I school conducted an informal collection of supplies for those impacted by the devastation. In just 24 hours, the school community had come together for the people of South Carolina and collected clothing, blankets,