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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. FLEISCHMANN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 3, 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.

EXPAND AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, too many people in our country—the richest country in the history of the world—are hungry, and it is a sad reality. Hunger has many faces: children, seniors, veterans, the disabled. One group that experiences hunger and is often overlooked is working families.

Millions of people who work for a living don't earn enough to ensure that

their families have enough to eat. They don't earn enough to ensure that their kids have access to quality child care. For millions of working families, every single day is a struggle. We in this Chamber ought to do more to help.

In his State of the Union Address, I was pleased to see the President identify specific ways to support working families: tripling the child care tax credit; increasing the number of slots available and investing in high-quality, affordable child care programs. These are investments that are important to all families but especially working and poor families.

We know that the early years of a child's life are critical to shaping healthy cognitive, social, and emotional development. Ensuring that all of our young children have an opportunity to thrive in a safe, nurturing environment is one of the best economic investments that we can make. It is the right thing to do, and it pays huge dividends later on.

Families at all income levels know how expensive child care is today. In 2013, the cost of full-time care for an infant in a child care center was about \$10,000 per year, more than the cost of in-state college tuition in many States, and many of the best child care programs cost more than that.

For poor families, the cost of quality child care can be an untenable burden. For these families, it may mean being forced to choose between paying rent, getting medicine, or buying food.

No parent should find themselves in the difficult situation of having to drop their child off at a program that is unsafe or of poor quality just so they can get to their job. Parents shouldn't have to choose between safe child care and keeping their job to pay the bills. For poor families in particular, it is a daily struggle to balance everything and still make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, last week, the Census Bureau released figures that showed

that one in five children in this country received food stamps last year. Let me repeat that. One in five children relied on SNAP. That is 16 million children who relied on SNAP to keep them from going hungry last year, more than at the start of the Great Recession.

We know that our economy is improving slowly, but the gains aren't shared evenly among all Americans. Too many poor and working families are still struggling to make ends meet. We know that despite some of the false rhetoric, the majority of SNAP participants who are expected to work and are able to work, in fact, work.

Families with children have even higher rates of employment than other households on SNAP. More than 60 percent of families with children receiving SNAP have someone in the household working.

Mr. Speaker, these families have a working adult but still make so little that they qualify for SNAP. Without SNAP, these families would not be able to put enough nutritious food on the table for their children and for themselves.

Being poor is hard, and it is expensive. We should do everything we can to support working families. Expanding and investing in child care is an important step toward achieving that goal.

I urge the Republican leadership to support the President's initiatives to expand and improve access to high-quality, affordable child care programs. At the same time, I urge the Republican leadership—I plead with them—to refrain from cutting food and nutrition programs that are essential to a child's healthy development.

It is the right thing to do to support these families, to support food and nutrition programs, to support quality child care programs. It is the right thing to do for all American families. It is especially the right thing to do for our low-income families who have not

□ 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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shared in recent economic improvements and who face tough choices every day.

Families should not be forced to choose between good, safe child care and putting food on the table. That is a false choice; and, quite frankly, in this country, it is shameful that they have to make that choice.

I urge my colleagues to make a renewed commitment to end hunger now. We have the resources, we have the food, we have everything, but we lack the political will.

Hunger is a political condition. We can solve this problem in a bipartisan way if we choose to, if we make it a priority. There are millions and millions of our citizens who are depending on us to do more than we are doing now. I hope that we live up to that challenge. We can and we should do much better.

DEFAULT PREVENTION ACT

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

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, amidst all the controversies gripping Congress, certainly, we should all be able to agree that the full faith and credit of the United States should not hang in the balance every time there is a fiscal debate in Washington.

This Nation now staggers under \$18 trillion of debt, nearly \$7.5 trillion of it run up during this administration. The interest on that debt is one of the fastest growing components of the Federal budget.

If there is ever any doubt of the security or reliability of that debt owed by this government, interest rates would quickly rise, and our precarious budget situation could rapidly spin out of control.

Ernest Hemingway put it this way. He asked:

How do you go bankrupt? Two ways. First gradually, then suddenly.

So it is with nations.

The debt limit is how we regulate the Nation's debt. It is the national equivalent of a credit card limit. That limit has to be periodically adjusted. It is appropriate for Congress to take responsibility when it is raised. When it is raised, it is also appropriate for Congress to review and revise the policies that are driving that debt.

The fundamental problem under both Democratic and Republican Congresses is that this process is fraught with controversy—the bigger the debt, the bigger the controversy; the bigger the controversy, the more credit markets are likely to be spooked into demanding higher interest payments to meet their greater risk. Given the size of our debt, that could produce an interest tidal wave that could sink our budget and our Nation along with it.

I am, today, introducing the Default Prevention Act with 43 cosponsors to guarantee that the sovereign debt of

the United States Government will be paid in full and on time, under any circumstances, even total political gridlock.

It simply provides that if the debt limit is reached, the Treasury Secretary may continue to borrow above that limit for the sole purpose of paying interest and principal that is due. It is an absolute guarantee that the debt of the United States will be honored.

Most States have various laws to guarantee payment of their debts. Three years ago, in testimony to the Senate, Ben Bernanke praised these State provisions for maintaining confidence in their bonds.

This act passed the House in the 113th Congress, but it was never taken up by the Senate. Now, we are approaching the expiration of the government's current borrowing authority. We will soon have serious discussions over the level of our debt and the additional measures necessary to bring that debt under control. We all hope these discussions will go smoothly, but we all know that sometimes they don't.

The Default Prevention Act says loudly and clearly to the world that no matter how much we may differ and quarrel, the sovereign debt of this Nation is guaranteed, and their loans to this government are absolutely safe.

Last session, the Democrats opposed this measure, charging that it is an excuse not to pay our other bills. Do they actually suggest that all these other States—that have guaranteed their sovereign debts for generations, some for centuries—have ever used these guarantees as an excuse not to pay their other bills?

On the contrary—by providing clear and unambiguous mandates to protect their credit first, they actually support and maintain their ability to pay for all of their other obligations.

The most outrageous claim the Democrats made was that this measure paid China first. What nonsense. More than half of our debt is held by Americans, often in American pension funds. This act actually protects Americans far more than Chinese or other foreign investors.

Whether our loans come from China or Timbuktu, from Grandma's pension fund or Johnny's savings bond, without the Nation's credit, we cannot meet any of our other obligations.

Principled disputes over how the debt limit is addressed are going to happen from time to time. Just a few years ago, then-Senator Barack Obama vigorously opposed an increase in the debt limit sought by the Bush administration.

When these controversies erupt, as they inevitably do in a free society, it is imperative that credit markets are supremely confident that their loans to the United States are secure.

Providing such a guarantee could prevent a future debt crisis and give Congress the calm it needs to negotiate

the changes that must be made to bring our debt under control before Congress authorizes still more debt.

I urge its speedy consideration.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S BUDGET

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this is the week where the President submits his budget. We are seeing a great deal of conversation about many of the provisions. One area that I am pleased has been greeted with positive reaction is his emphasis on infrastructure, on rebuilding and renewing America.

This is a debate that is very important. It is long overdue to focus in on solutions. It is an area of potential agreement: the need to address the fact that America is falling apart while we are falling behind, somewhere on the order of 25th in the world rankings. Where once we had the finest infrastructure in the world, that is no longer the case.

The American Society of Civil Engineers gives us a grade of "D." It is going to cost \$2.2 trillion by 2020 to be able to bring us up to standard. The longer we wait, the worse the situation.

It is costing each American \$323 a year, on average, in damage to their cars because of inadequate infrastructure, to say nothing of thousands of lives lost because of unsafe road conditions and the potential disruption of business and commerce.

Americans are spending millions of hours a year trapped in traffic. America's highways—which are how we deliver products to stores, to factories—are increasingly congested, causing increased costs due to delay.

The President's proposal is a bit complicated. It deals with other tax provisions that virtually everybody thinks are a long shot, at best, to be enacted.

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This is part of the pattern the administration has had in the past: offering up things that, in theory, would make a difference but that are unlikely. Usually they are pronounced dead on arrival. Likewise, the proposals of some of my Republican friends for their approaches, wrapping it into their version of tax reform, have been consistently declared not possible.

We have one, simple, commonsense approach that should be taken—it was highlighted again today in an editorial in *The Washington Post*. It has also been written about in *The New York Times*, in the *LA Times*, in *USA Today*, in *Bloomberg View*, in papers large and small across the country—to raise the gas tax. It has not been raised in 22 years, and in that time, it has lost a significant portion of the purchasing power while America's needs grow.

For 60 years, the gas tax has formed the backbone of how we deal with