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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

PRAYER

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

Father of us all, thank You for giving us another day.

In so many ways, the world is exploding with crisis after crisis. We ask Your blessing on the people and city of San Bernardino, but also upon this Nation, which seems plagued by so many problems of violence and resulting death.

We ask Your blessing upon Syria and the Middle East, where the threats and dangers of terrorism are confusing to nations who now find themselves, as traditional foes, vulnerable before a ruthless organization professing a twisted, violent religious fervor.

And we ask Your blessing upon our planet itself, which we all share. No matter the cause, we are well aware of extremes in weather systems which threaten populations in many parts of our world.

All of these are great and complicated problems. As the Members of this assembly consider them, give them the grace to see one another as brothers and sisters, rather than as foes, who must work together for the love of our Nation and our world.

May everything done in this place be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. 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.

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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PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to five requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

HONORING TOM COFFEY

(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 to remember journalist and community leader Tom Coffey.

Last week, Tom Coffey died at the age of 92. He was one of the old-time newspaper guys. He never missed a chance to speak and listen to people he encountered.

Mr. Coffey entered the news business as a copyboy when he graduated from Savannah High School in 1940. With the exception of a short time away to serve his country in World War II, where he was wounded in the Philippines, and a brief stint from 1969 to 1974, when he served as acting city manager of Savannah twice, he was a journalist until he retired as editor of the Savannah Morning News.

More than 20 years ago, when Mr. Coffey retired in 1989, Representative Lindsay Thomas, my predecessor, referred to Tom as one of the most respected journalists in Georgia.

During his life, Tom wrote about national news, including civil rights and desegregation, but he also wrote about the thrill of playing stickball in the

backyards of Savannah and the local bootlegger who bribed local law enforcement.

Tom's extraordinary career as a journalist and his work over the years has made life better for many people. He will truly be missed.

TAX EXTENDERS

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

Mr. SCHRADER. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to state my opposition to the \$800 billion of unpaid tax extenders now being discussed in Congress.

It is incomprehensible to me that Republicans and Democrats would entertain adding \$800 billion to the \$19 trillion debt that we already have, a debt that our children and grandchildren will end up having to pay.

Just as every well-meaning program should be paid for in these tough times, so should every tax incentive. This is especially true when those incentives are being expanded beyond their original purpose and made permanent.

What we really need, colleagues, is having a more comprehensive discussion on tax policy and entitlement reform. We probably have too many tax breaks. We should broaden the tax base, frankly, and reduce our tax load.

We must deal seriously with the long-term debt and deficits. Adding this additional burden to the out-of-control debt we already have is absolutely destructive to our country's future.

As one of the former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, the greatest threat to our Nation is not from abroad, but our national debt.

SUPPORT FOR THE CRADLE ACT

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

Mr. POLIQUIN. Mr. Speaker, sadly, every year in America, more than 20,000 babies are born addicted to drugs. Last year alone, nearly 1,000 of those babies were born in Maine. We can help these babies by passing H.R. 3865, the Cradle Act, of which I am proud to be an original cosponsor.

Eighty percent of addicted infants are covered by Medicaid and treated at local hospitals; however, our hospitals are overwhelmed. They are not equipped to provide the specialized care that these babies desperately need to recover from the drugs in their tiny bodies.

Residential pediatric recovery centers are designed and professionally staffed to provide this critically important early clinical care. These centers depend on Medicaid dollars to stay open, but need clear certification guidelines in order to receive those funds. The Cradle Act does that.

Every baby born into this world deserves our compassion and care. This is an opportunity to help the most vulnerable among us. This bill offers real hope for a healthy, safe, and loving start for thousands of American babies born addicted to drugs.

MASS SHOOTINGS

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

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, another mass shooting, another moment of silence. Actually, we will have to do two in a day or back-to-back because of the shooting in Savannah, Georgia. That did not get the attention because 1 person died and 3 people were injured, not like in California, where 14 died and 17 were injured.

You stood already this week for Colorado. I say “you” because I don’t do it any more. I can’t be hypocritical. You stand up, you sit down, you do nothing.

There have been 355 mass shootings so far this year, not to mention the many who have died alone and get no attention or no moment of silence.

When are we really going to stand up and do something? Just who has to die—your mother? your wife? your son? Or how many? We need to stand up, speak up, and take actions rather than another moment of silence. It is deafening, and it is killing us.

FUNDRAISING EFFORTS FOR PENN STATE THON

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, next February, more than 700 students from Penn State University will come together for the university’s annual dance marathon, otherwise known as THON. This event is the culmination of a huge fundraising effort for the Four Diamonds Fund at Penn State Hershey Children’s Hos-

pital, which is dedicated to fighting pediatric cancer. THON is the largest student-run philanthropy in the world.

Even though much of Pennsylvania’s Fifth Congressional District falls solidly within the territory of Pittsburgh’s sports teams, I want to commend the Philadelphia Flyers and the New Jersey Devils hockey teams. The proceeds from tickets purchased for either the Devils game on December 19 or the Flyers game on January 5 will go to benefit THON. Both games fall within Penn State’s winter break, allowing students to support this effort even when they are away from the university.

I wish all the students involved in THON the best of luck as they continue in this tremendous effort. They should be deeply proud of the role they are playing in striking a blow to pediatric cancer.

NO HARMFUL OMNIBUS POLICY RIDERS

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

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Mr. Speaker, I came to talk about no harmful omnibus policy riders, and I hope to get to that point, but my thoughts and prayers go out to the people of San Bernardino, the victims, and the families who have been affected by this violence. Again, I hope that this violence wakes up the Congress to begin a really serious discussion about violence in America, by Americans, against Americans.

In 8 days, we are going to find ourselves staring at a deadline to keep the Federal Government open. As negotiations are finalized, we need a clean spending bill, not one that is peppered with toxic policy riders.

We do not need more attacks on environmental protections, Planned Parenthood, the Affordable Care Act, and financial regulations. These are unacceptable policy changes in an appropriations bill, and they are being threatened to be included.

Mr. Speaker, in order for all of us to support this bill, I hope you have the courage to bring a clean bill to the floor.

JOE E. EDWARDS’ RETIREMENT

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

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Mr. Speaker, today I want to pay tribute to a true pillar of our community, Pastor Joe E. Edwards.

For the past quarter century, Joe Edwards has served as pastor of the Church of God in Cartersville, Georgia; however, this Sunday, Joe Edwards will deliver his final sermon as senior pastor at The Church At Liberty Square, as he is retiring.

Joe Edwards has been more than just a pastor. He has been a leader who has sought not only to preach the gospel of Christ inside the church, but put his faith into action throughout the community.

While he has made numerous contributions to our community, his vision of unifying local churches to pray for local, State, and national leaders is fundamentally transforming the culture in our entire county. While he will be missed in the pulpit each Sunday, his legacy will live on through the thousands of lives he has touched.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Georgia’s 11th Congressional District and the United States House of Representatives, I commend Pastor Joe E. Edwards for a life of service to God, community, and country, and congratulate him as he moves on to a new chapter in his life.

Godspeed, Pastor Joe.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN AND THE HIGHWAY BILL

(Mrs. BUSTOS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank my colleagues for working across the aisle to prepare to pass the first long-term highway bill in more than a decade.

For too long, Washington has governed from one manufactured crisis to another. This has hurt our economy by creating an environment of uncertainty for great manufacturers like Caterpillar, John Deere, UTC, and Woodward.

American families shouldn’t have to worry when they cross a decrepit bridge on their way to the grocery store or take their kids to school. The men and women of labor who build our roads and bridges deserve this long-overdue, job-creating highway bill. And so do we.

So, Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleagues for working together on this important issue.

FUNDING BILL RIDERS

(Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to end their calls for shutdown and to work in a bipartisan manner to pass a funding measure without riders.

This body has gotten into the habit of using last-minute Hail Mary votes to save us from one manufactured crisis after another, and it is taking our attention away from the list of things we need to get done—things like reforming our criminal justice system, addressing gun violence, or creating jobs.

There is just 1 week left before funding runs out, and it looks like we are heading into yet another crisis. In the midst of growing threats to national