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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. JOLLY).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 8, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DAVID W. JOLLY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
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.

SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF OUR SOLDIERS AND VETERANS

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, late last month President Barack Obama signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015, otherwise known as the NDAA.

Included in the legislation was language directing the United States Department of Defense to study a mental health assessment for all incoming

military recruits. This assessment would then be used as a baseline throughout the service careers of our servicemen and -women.

This was included in the Medical Evaluation Parity for Servicemembers, or MEPS, Act, which I introduced earlier this year. Now, I believe this assessment is essential in addressing the suicide epidemic which has affected our military members and veterans over the past several years.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to suicide within the ranks of our American heroes, commissioned studies have been implemented by the Department of Defense in the past.

We have found that, for over 60 percent of those individuals who attempt or commit suicide while serving in the military, it was not their first attempt. Their first attempt was before they joined the military. This is about pre-existing conditions that have failed to have been recognized.

Mr. Speaker, if you are like me and you assume that it is what people see on the battlefield—I have been to Afghanistan. I have been to Iraq in the past. It is the horrors of war that drive people, largely, to suicide.

But these studies, Mr. Speaker, have found that the large majority of those individuals who attempt or commit suicide while in the military never saw deployment. They were not in combat situations. Again, it speaks to pre-existing conditions that have not been adequately identified and addressed. This is a matter that really has been thoroughly examined in recent years.

So while I am happy that it is in the National Defense Authorization Act, I urge the Pentagon to act quickly to take steps to better assess the mental health of our servicemen and -women at the time of enlistment with this commonsense, baseline evaluation.

These heroes deserve all the information that we can provide in order to make their lives a bit easier.

CONGRATULATING THE PORTLAND, OREGON, TIMBERS ON THEIR MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER CUP VICTORY

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this morning barely able to talk. But not having much of a voice is common in Portland, Oregon, these days, as fans shouted themselves hoarse after the Portland Timbers' stunning victory over the Columbus Crew on Sunday, winning the Major League Soccer Cup.

There is no doubt that my hometown of Portland, Oregon, is Soccer City, USA. Fans continue to prove the point with a huge celebration today.

I want to congratulate the Timbers for an amazing season and for being such a huge part, indeed, of Portland, and all of Oregon.

This season had it all: injuries and bumps along the way that made Sunday's result seem highly unlikely. But under the leadership and direction of Coach Caleb Porter, the Timbers stayed focused and made course corrections that led them to a national championship, finishing with a flourish.

This team has so many heroes that it is impossible, in the time I have, to give them their due recognition. But I want to give special mention to new U.S. citizen Darlington Nagbe; Diego Chara; Rodney Wallace; Jake Gleason; and the old, salty dog, Jack Jewsbury, all of whom have been with the Timbers since our inaugural season.

I also want to highlight the Maestro, Diego Valeri; defenders Liam Ridgewell and Nat Borchers, he of the beard; as well as goalkeeper Adam Kwarasay for their heroic efforts this season.

Merritt Paulson and his management team deserve recognition for their passion for the support and their love for our city.

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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Of course, you can't mention the Portland Timbers without talking about, as the song goes, the greatest football supporters the world has ever seen, the Timbers Army. Your dedication to team, town, and country is an inspiration and very much in evidence in Columbus this weekend.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by reminding all of America and several places in Canada that, in case you didn't get the hint with Timber Joey and his chain saw, there is no pity in the Rose City.

DONALD TRUMP MUST END HIS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. JOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on Donald Trump to withdraw his candidacy for the White House. We face a security test in this Nation, a national security test. It is a real and audible threat.

I have been most critical of the President's foreign policy. It is an area that, respectfully, I have the greatest disagreement with this administration. I have begged him in correspondence, and I have used the word "beg" to do more to defeat the threat of terror.

I believe his Oval Office address Sunday night, frankly, was forgettable. He spent 5 minutes suggesting he was going to do nothing different to defeat ISIS. He spent 5 minutes lecturing Congress, and he spent 5 minutes lecturing the American people.

You see, we do face a security test that I believe the President's policies have underestimated. But we also face a test of our commitment to religious freedom, one of the basic freedoms upon which our Nation was founded. We are either going to defend that religious freedom or we are not.

It should be heartbreaking to every American that we have a frontrunner in the Presidential race that suggests there will be a religious test for anybody who wishes to come to our shores. It is an affront to the very principles upon which our Nation was founded.

We broke from a monarch that suggested all freedom and liberty was vested in the Crown and then the Crown would distribute freedom and liberty to the people. We founded a Nation based on what Jefferson called the natural rights of man, that we were, indeed, endowed by our Creator with very fundamental rights.

Mr. Speaker, I am a born-again Christian. I believe in the saving grace of the Jesus Christ that I call my God. The beautiful thing about this country is I can stand here on the House floor, among my peers and in front of the Nation, and declare that faith without fear of any reprisal.

But if Donald Trump has his way, we may not have the liberty to do that anymore. It is a freedom that has been fought for, from the Founders of our

country, and generation upon generation of men and women who have worn the uniform of the Armed Forces and defended it, for the security of our Nation, and for the freedom of people.

We are a Nation worried about our security, rightfully so. It is why we are calling on the President to do so much more to defeat this terror. It is why we are begging the President for a stronger national security test.

We must always insist on a security test, but we must never require a religious test.

It is time that my side of the aisle has one less candidate in the race for the White House. It is time for Donald Trump to withdraw from the race.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANTS

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

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the gentleman from Florida (Mr. JOLLY) on his statement. I thought that showed some courage. It reflects the values of a lot of people here in this House and in the United States of America. It needed to be said.

Mr. Speaker, some of us on both sides of the aisle have been working hard to reform our marijuana laws to allow more State flexibility in how marijuana is regulated and treated commercially and medically.

What binds us together across a broad ideological spectrum is our strong belief that we must be able to distinguish between marijuana and seriously dangerous and lethal drugs: meth, heroin, crack, cocaine, and prescription drugs as well.

People don't rob corner groceries and liquor stores to get money to supply their habit of marijuana. They do that for meth, crack, cocaine, heroin. It is a different, different drug.

The movement that is occurring here in this Congress and around our country is ongoing and growing rapidly, thanks to open minds, common sense, and some people having the courage to stand up for things they know are true because they, themselves, their friends, their family, and others have smoked marijuana, and they have seen that it is not a great problem.

Sunday night, I and millions of Americans watched a disturbing "60 Minutes" piece on the issue of confidential informants. Lesley Stahl was the host. It focused on how local law enforcement appears to be increasingly using young people as informants without regard to their rights or their safety.

It is being done without distinguishing between marijuana and the dangerous drugs that affect our society and our safety: heroin, meth, crack, cocaine, opiates.

Here is how it works. A young person is cited for violating drug laws, usually possessing a small amount of marijuana and perhaps having sold some to

a friend, which happens regularly in high school and college—not that high school kids should be doing it, but it is a fact, and so are college kids. The police tell them that, unless they agree to wear a wire and implicate a number of their friends, often close friends, they could be sentenced to a long prison term, the maximum permitted by law.

They are cornered, frightened. Any person in that situation would take that deal. Most of them do it under supreme duress, and they do it without the presence of a lawyer or the knowledge that they have a right to a lawyer.

Most of them seem to do it without even telling their parents because the police tell them: Don't tell anybody. This is just between you and me. You need to do this or you are going to prison for a long time.

In the case of Rachel Hoffman and Andrew Sadek, it cost them their lives. Rachel had dealt a small amount of marijuana. They got her into dealing with people that dealt heavy drugs and guns and got her to try to make a big purchase. They didn't do a very good job of covering her. Rachel was murdered.

Mr. Sadek was murdered, also, as a confidential informant, without police protecting him.

The underpinnings for this counterproductive and dangerous behavior by some of our police are the very drug laws that many of us are trying to reform. This is wrong. I hope my colleagues will work with me to help stop it.

President Eisenhower warned us about the military industrial complex and its effect on our country and our budgets.

We need to be warned about the law enforcement-marijuana industrial complex, which is driven by monies that they get from busts and perverts justice and ruins people's lives and takes away their college scholarships, their opportunity to have housing, on occasion, and their opportunities to get jobs and, indeed, their liberty.

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In the meantime, it is time for the Department of Justice to take a close look at how this behavior not only threatens to ruin young lives but, in some cases, to end those lives.

As the Department of Justice, in the aftermath of all too many instances of police overreach and overreaction, works with local communities to educate law enforcement on more just and humane practices, the issue of forcing young people to be confidential informants should be added to its list.

Mr. Speaker, we will be working on legislation. I hope we have people to join us. This is just part of the scourge that has come across this Nation, ruining people's lives because of the misunderstanding of marijuana starting in the 1930s with Harry Anslinger and continuing in the 1970s with Richard