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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. JENKINS of West Virginia).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 12, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable EVAN H. JENKINS 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.

INTRODUCTION OF A MARIJUANA BILL

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, for more than 70 years our government has followed the most spectacular failure in policy since the disastrous 13-year experiment with the prohibition of alcohol.

Forty-three years ago, the National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse released a report, finding that the Federal ban on marijuana is un-

justified and inappropriate. Yet, for most of that time, Federal policy has been frozen in amber.

Countless lives have been ruined for the use of a substance that a majority of Americans think should be legal; untold billions of dollars have been spent on a failed effort at prohibition; and still 25 million adults use it every month.

Despite a finding in Federal law that marijuana is a schedule I controlled substance with no therapeutic value, 213 million Americans live in 34 States and the District of Columbia where medical marijuana is recognized and legal in some form, and over a million people use it as medicine.

In 1996, voters in California marked a significant change in course when they legalized medical marijuana with a vote of the people, and almost three dozen States have followed. In the fall of 2012, voters in the States of Washington and Colorado approved the adult use of marijuana, and it should be noted that the sky didn't fall, big cracks didn't appear in the Earth, and problems with marijuana didn't get worse. In some instances, they became more manageable.

For the Federal Government, the tide continues to turn. Last session of Congress had six successful votes on the floor of the House to rationalize our foolish policies, including reining in Federal enforcement and opening opportunities for legal industrial hemp cultivation. Last fall, voters in my State of Oregon, looking at the evidence and experience like in Colorado, approved adult use by an even larger margin than in the previous States.

The marijuana reform train has left the station, and it is time for the Federal Government to redouble its efforts on developing policies that work. Congressman JARED POLIS and I will reintroduce this week our legislation to establish a Federal framework to end the failed Federal prohibition.

It will pave the way for States to chart their own course to legalize, tax, and regulate marijuana according to what individual States want to do—just like they do with alcohol. We will save tens of billions of dollars on failed enforcement, incarceration, and lost revenue. We will choke off a profit center for drug cartels that has been enriched by our failed policies, and we will make it easier to enforce laws to keep marijuana out of the hands of our children and have money for government services rather than waste money on failed policy, arresting people for something that a majority of Americans now thinks should be legal.

For those of us who have worked in this field for years, it is an exciting time. My legislation will deal with the taxation of marijuana, and we look forward to refining it, to being able to have the tax at a proper level to support government services but also reasonable enough to choke off black market supply.

It is time for us to enter a new era of marijuana policy for research, for protecting our children, for economic development and individual liberties. I strongly urge my colleagues to examine the legislation that we have advanced and be part of this long overdue effort at reform.

STUDENT SUCCESS ACT

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

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, back in December, President Obama gave a major speech regarding the United States policy towards Cuba. The President said:

I do not believe we can continue doing the same thing for five decades and expect a different result.

In other words, the President is saying that, when something isn't working, we need to try a new approach.

□ 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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I wonder if the President and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle agree that we should apply that same standard to our Nation's education policy. As a former member of the Alabama State school board and as the former chancellor of postsecondary education for Alabama, I think it is time for a change.

For the last 50 years, Federal education policy has failed our students, especially our Nation's poor students, who need us the most. Just look at the statistics. Only 38 percent of high school seniors can read at grade level, and just 26 percent are proficient in math. Survey after survey shows that the United States is lagging behind other countries in terms of education.

We clearly need a new approach, and that is why I was proud to support the Student Success Act yesterday in our Committee on Education and the Workforce. For too long, the focus has been on the needs and wishes of Washington special interest groups instead of on the needs of those who matter the most—the students. It is time we change that. Immediately, two glaring flaws come to mind when looking at current policy:

First, our local teachers and administrators are drowning in paperwork and mandates. While only 10 percent of the funding for K–12 education comes from the Federal Government, the Government Accountability Office has found that 41 percent of the paperwork comes from the Federal level. That is unacceptable.

Second, title 1 funds, which are intended to support our Nation's most vulnerable, are picking and choosing winners by forcing money to some schools and by not allowing that money to others. The money should follow the student. We shouldn't allow students to remain stuck in failing schools. Every child deserves a fair chance.

Mr. Speaker, this top-down, heavy-handed Federal approach to education is not working, and, frankly, it is outdated. It is not the 1960s anymore: there are more than three television networks; we aren't all eating Wonder Bread; our phones aren't rotary phones tied to the wall; and our education system shouldn't be stuck in the sixties either. Instead of focusing on special interest groups, let's turn the focus to students, parents, and local leaders.

While the other side is always quick to point out the D.C. special interest groups, which stand by their failed approach, the Student Success Act is supported by the National School Boards Association, which is made up of more than 90,000 local school board members. These are the very people who are actually dealing with Federal education policy and how it actually works on the ground every day, and they want a new approach. Democrats and Republicans and these local school boards want a new approach.

Our teachers need the flexibility to innovate. That is why the Student Suc-

cess Act reforms a patchwork of narrowly scoped grant programs and, instead, creates a Local Academic Flexible Grant, which allows local schools to spark innovation and use teaching methods that work best for their students.

During committee debate yesterday, my colleagues on the other side were so committed to these same old, failed education policies that they even defended the universally disliked highly qualified teacher requirement. While I agree we need the best teachers possible in the classroom, who are Federal bureaucrats in Washington to decide what makes you highly qualified? Teachers in southwest Alabama and all across our country agree that the highly qualified teacher provision is simply not effective. Yet my colleagues on the other side and their special interest buddies refuse to give up power and allow us to move in a different direction.

It is time for the Federal Government to get some humility. Washington bureaucrats don't know how to educate our children, but local superintendents, school boards, teachers, and principals do, so let's empower them. It is time we restored local control over education policy and put power in the hands of those who know our students best. Let's put the focus on the student for once, and that is exactly what this act does.

I think the President may be on to something. We shouldn't continue with the same, failed education policy that has failed us for decades. We should get away from this centralized approach to education, which has failed the students throughout America. Mr. Speaker, the Student Success Act offers that new approach.

I urge the leadership of this House to bring the Student Success Act to the floor for a vote, and let's empower parents and local education leaders. For once, let's put the students first.

LYNCH-JONES RESOLUTION TO DECLASSIFY THE 28 PAGES OF THE 9/11 JOINT CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY

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

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, almost 14 years after the horrific terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the American public does not yet have all of the information available regarding the circumstances surrounding those attacks on our country, particularly 28 pages of the bipartisan Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities Before and After the Terrorist Attacks of September 2001, which remain classified.

Since 2013, my colleagues, Congressman WALTER JONES of North Carolina, Congressman MASSIE of Kentucky, and I have been working together to craft and to garner support for H. Res. 14,

which calls on the President to release the 28 pages of the 9/11 Joint Congressional Inquiry. I sincerely appreciate Congressman JONES' and Congressman MASSIE's willingness to collaborate on this concerted effort on this issue.

Over the past few weeks, calls to declassify the 28 pages have been in the spotlight due to recent allegations by convicted terrorist Zacarias Moussaoui, who conspired to kill American citizens and who will rightly spend the rest of his life in prison. Whatever the motivations for Mr. Moussaoui's recent accusation of complicity by foreign agents in the 9/11 attacks, his testimony does bring to light important questions. Most notably is the fact that, as a nation, we have not yet fully accounted for the sources of funding and logistical support that enabled al Qaeda to undertake those terrorist attacks.

We owe it to the families who lost loved ones on that tragic day to provide a complete accounting of the events and circumstances leading up to the tragedy of 9/11, and it is a grave injustice that 28 pages of the bipartisan, bicameral congressional inquiry remain classified 14 years after September 11. This was not a mere redaction of a few specific words or phrases but the wholesale excising and removal of a full section, 28 pages in length. It may have been a matter of national security to classify these pages back in 2002, but it is now a matter of public interest and good governance to release them in 2015.

I am in firm agreement with former Senator Bob Graham of Florida, who oversaw the inquiry, with my colleague WALTER JONES of North Carolina, with Mr. MASSIE, and with Members of both parties, who, like myself, have read the 28 pages and believe the disclosure will not jeopardize sources or methods used in gathering this information. I firmly believe that declassifying the findings is appropriate for a number of reasons.

As Thomas Jefferson said:

An enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic, and self-government is not possible unless the citizens are educated sufficiently to enable them to exercise oversight.

In other words, there can be no accountability without transparency. We must advocate for the need to make these pages public in order to shine a brighter light on the information contained therein and utilize it in framing our foreign policy going forward.

In addition, I have met with the spouses, children, siblings, parents of the 9/11 victims as well as with representatives from the 9/11 Families United for Justice Against Terrorism. They have provided powerful testimony and heartrending submissions regarding how important it is to seek the truth and to bring all those to account who were responsible for the 9/11 attacks.

□ 1015

Today, at a time when the world continues to face challenges from expanding terrorist organizations such as