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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. WEBSTER of Florida).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 18, 2016.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DANIEL WEBSTER, 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 5, 2016, 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.

VETERANS EQUAL ACCESS AMENDMENT

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, one of the great tragedies of our time is our failure to adequately deal with the needs of our veterans returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan. We sent over 2 million brave men and women to fight under very difficult circumstances, to say the very least. While I was convinced from the beginning that the war was a tremendous

mistake, that is all the more reason that we should work to protect those veterans as they return home with wounds that are both visible and, in some cases, unseen.

It is no secret that these returning veterans have placed quite a strain on our VA facilities, which coincides with a national opioid epidemic. Prescription painkillers steal the lives of 78 Americans every day. Over 20,000 were killed last year, and it often leads to heroin addiction if their supply of opioid pills is interrupted.

As veterans with PTSD, chronic pain, and any number of ailments are looking for relief, lethal opioid overdoses among VA patients are almost twice the national average. We are doing something wrong. This is at a time when the overwhelming number of veterans say to me that marijuana has reduced PTSD symptoms and their dependency on addictive opioids. Yet the VA official policy prevents their doctors who know them best from talking to our veterans about this, even in States where it is legal.

In 24 States, the District of Columbia, and Guam, medical marijuana at the recommendation of a physician is legal. In those States, it is often used as an alternative to the addictive opioids to treat chronic pain. Fourteen States allow for medical marijuana to treat PTSD. Yet, veterans who are seeking relief from something that has proven to make a difference for many of their peers cannot get help from their VA doctor, even in States where medical marijuana is legal.

This is outrageous. It is time for us to acknowledge our debt to those veterans and allow their personal VA physician, the doctor who knows them best, to be able to consult with them about medical marijuana in accordance with State law.

My amendment doesn't authorize the possession or use of marijuana at VA facilities, but it would allow physicians

to treat the whole patient and to give them their best advice. We should not force our veterans to go to another doctor and pay for the service out of their own pocket with somebody who doesn't know them as well as their own doctor.

I would strongly hope that my colleagues would vote in favor of the Veterans Equal Access amendment in the MILCON-VA bill coming forward today. These men and women who have done so much for us and come home seeking help in dealing with health and coping with their return deserve our best. Forcing the VA to turn a blind eye to a potential useful therapy—something that is perfectly legal in their State—is not just shortsighted; I think it is cruel and unfair.

I have listened to the many stories of veterans who have found that medical marijuana has made a huge difference in their return, recovery, and readjustment. Importantly, it doesn't subject them to the danger of being part of the opioid epidemic that has been visited upon our veterans.

We can help stop the tragedy of VA veterans dying of opioid overdoses at nearly twice the rate of the rest of the population by at least allowing their doctors to work with them, considering medical marijuana as an alternative therapy.

COMMENDING THE SERVICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the service of law enforcement officers not only in Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District, but across Pennsylvania and the entire United States. As this week is National Police Week, it is especially important that we recognize

□ 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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the sacrifices of these men and women, especially those who have given their lives in the line of duty.

Over the weekend, as part of National Police Week, communities across the country observed Peace Officers Memorial Day. This observance was created in 1962 by President John F. Kennedy to pay special recognition to those law enforcement officers who have lost their lives while providing for the safety and the protection of others.

Last year, five police officers lost their lives in Pennsylvania: Officer Lloyd Reed in Westmoreland County, Patrolman John Wilding of Scranton, Lieutenant Eric Eslary of Westmoreland County, Detective Paul Koropal of Allegheny County, and Sergeant Robert Wilson III of Philadelphia. I know that I join my fellow members of the Pennsylvania House delegation in saying that their service to our Commonwealth will not be forgotten.

RECOGNIZING THE RETIREMENT OF VENANGO COUNTY CHIEF CLERK/COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR DENISE JONES

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the service of Denise Jones, who is the chief clerk and county administrator for Venango County, located in Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District. After nearly 39 years of work for the county, Denise plans to retire next month.

She started in the 1970s with Venango County, and Denise has served in a number of different capacities. Those include as a human services planner, as an administrative assistant, as an employee relations manager, and then finally moving into the role of chief clerk and county administrator in 1993.

In addition to her service with the county, Denise serves on a number of boards dedicated to her community, including as board chair of the Northwest Hospital Foundation, which is dedicated to providing high-quality health care for the residents of the Venango County area.

Mr. Speaker, I am always proud to talk about the local officials who are making a difference in their communities, dedicating their service to improving the lives of people in their communities. I know that Denise Jones is one of those people, and I wish her the best of luck in her retirement.

THE DUI REPORTING ACT

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

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the DUI Reporting Act, a bill which I filed yesterday with my Judiciary Committee colleague, STEVE CHABOT of Ohio. If enacted, this bill would plug a glaring hole in our Nation's drunk driving laws that enables repeat offenders to be tried as first-time offenders, and repeat offenders are the ones most likely to cause serious accidents and death.

Currently, when police make a driving-under-the-influence arrest, they

don't always have access to information about all of the driver's previous DUI convictions or arrests. The reason is because not all agencies report DUI arrests and/or convictions to the National Crime Information Center, known as the NCIC. That is the national crime database that is made instantly available to police and law enforcement right in their patrol cars.

The consequences of this lack of reporting can prove tragic. Last year, there was an awful, awful accident, a crash in northern Mississippi just outside of my district. Two teenage girls, Maddie Kruse and Rachel Lynch, were headed out of Memphis on the way to a vacation. Their grandmother was driving the car. At about 6:30 in the morning, a man who had registered .17 at 6:30 in the morning hit their vehicle and killed Maddie and Rachel. This man had accrued seven DUI charges since 2008 but had been allowed to plead guilty five times to DUI first. He represented himself and had five first-offense DUI convictions. Mississippi didn't have a system and still doesn't have a system to require those reportages.

This story broke my heart and, I believe, the hearts of everybody in the Midsouth who read about it.

This was a drunk driver who should have been in jail serving time off the road or have received treatment. The reason he wasn't, according to local investigations, is because none of his DUI history had been reported to the NCIC and was not available to the highway patrolman. When that patrolman ran his driving record in the national database, his past DUI convictions never showed up because they weren't reported.

This is shameful in this day and age. This information should be reported so that law enforcement can get access to it and get drunk drivers off the road and save lives like Maddie's and Rachel's. Our bill would make that happen by creating a financial incentive for States to require DUI arrests and convictions to be reported to the NCIC and, therefore, available to law enforcement.

The bill is bipartisan. It has the support of people throughout the country; but in Memphis, Billy Bond, at the Prosecutor's Office, worked on this for a while and tried to get laws like this passed. We have had a good response from MADD.

This bill will save lives. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to pass it quickly.

NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL-INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to a matter of national security. Over the last several months, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, or NGA, has been considering locations for its new Western

headquarters. The agency, which collects and analyzes satellite maps in support of warfighters, has outgrown its current location in St. Louis.

With construction of the new NGA-West facility scheduled to begin next year, the question is: Where? There are two sites under consideration. One is in north St. Louis. The other is in St. Clair County, Illinois, next to Scott Air Force Base.

This site, which I have a chart of, is shovel ready. It is 182 acres of undeveloped land with room to expand. It is free of cost to the American taxpayers, with the county ready to hand over the deed to the NGA.

To help make their decision, the NGA enlisted the help of the Army Corps of Engineers to study the environmental impact. Unfortunately, we have found that the Army Corps of Engineers' Environmental Impact Statement is deeply flawed. The report is filled with errors, omissions, and underestimated risks. It is clear that the Army Corps did not provide an accurate accounting of the facts. The result is that the NGA announced plans last month to relocate to north St. Louis. Before that decision becomes final on June 2, I am here to set the record straight.

To the right of this chart, you will see St. Clair County, Illinois. This is the site under consideration by the NGA. However, the Army Corps of Engineers' report included data related to St. Clair County, Missouri, and St. Clair County, Michigan. One is 263 miles away from the actual site, and the other is 580 miles away from the actual site. The report also highlighted a river that isn't even in southern Illinois.

When alerted to these embarrassing errors, the Army Corps of Engineers failed to correct them. Considering that the NGA is a mapping agency, maybe they could teach the Army Corps of Engineers how to read one.

Now, let's look at the impact on mission security and public safety. Clearly, a DOD mapping agency would be a prime target for those who wish to do harm against this agency. This chart shows evacuation zones if either location were attacked by a car bomb.

□ 1015

You can see that St. Clair County has ample setback to protect local residents and the site itself. The north St. Louis site, obviously, does not.

We now know that security was a top criteria for placement of the new NGA. We know that force protection standards have traditionally led to collocating with existing military installations. So why are the standards being ignored for this facility?

Let's look at the facts. We have already talked about the NGA belongs in St. Clair County. We have already talked about mission security. We talked about public safety, and we saw the difference in the blast zones.

St. Clair County is the right choice for taxpayers. The Army Corps claims