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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. COLLINS of Georgia).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 14, 2016.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DOUG COLLINS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Brian E. Pate, one of his secretaries.

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.

MEMORIALIZING CHELSEY JEAN HOOD RUSSELL

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

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to memorialize the tragic passing of Chelsey Jean Hood Russell of Denver, Colorado.

Throughout her life, Chelsey displayed extraordinary strength. She gave birth to her daughter 3 days before aching the Colorado bar exam. Her lifelong goal was to run a marathon in every State. Last summer, she ran a 100-mile race at elevations of over 9,200 feet near Leadville, Colorado.

Chelsey was a loving mother to her two children. Leading by example, she taught her children a love for outdoor adventures, a commitment to hard work, the importance of family and friendship, and a strong sense of passion, fearlessness, and a love of life.

Chelsey's life was cut short when she displayed the ultimate act of motherly love. At the end of a family vacation on Lake Powell in August, she suffered an acute cardiac event while rescuing her son from drowning.

Chelsey is survived by her mother, Trisha; her brother, Cayman; her children, Hayden and Harvey; and countless friends and family members who loved her dearly.

Mr. Speaker, Chelsey lived fully and died courageously. We can all learn from the passionate example she set in her 35 years.

OSCAR LOPEZ RIVERA

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

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, Oscar Lopez Rivera is the last Puerto Rican political prisoner still held in Federal custody, now for more than 35 years. He never killed anyone and wasn't charged with killing anyone, but he is still in jail.

The man who shot President Reagan, John Hinckley, Jr., is no longer being held. Other high-profile offenders get clemency and have their sentences reduced.

All of us have seen in the past months that the Obama administration commuted the sentences of hundreds of

nonviolent drug offenders. Most of us have applauded that decision, and Oscar Lopez Rivera is still in jail for 35 years—35 years.

No matter what party or faction or class or race or walk of life you are from in Puerto Rico or in the Puerto Rican communities all over the United States, you know about Oscar Lopez Rivera and what he symbolizes for the Puerto Rican people. He is our elder statesman, our Nelson Mandela, our pride, and our sense of nationhood.

We all cheered for Monica Puig at the Olympics and heard our national anthem played for the very first time. Yet there is a piece missing from our national identity, a piece missing from our souls because Oscar Lopez may be forgotten and may die in jail.

It is with deep sadness that I say that it is looking more and more like there is no meaningful review of his case going on at the Justice Department or at the White House or anywhere else.

I met with President Obama on June 8 in his office, and I took the opportunity to ask him about the case of Oscar Lopez Rivera. Lin-Manuel Miranda said that Oscar's case was on the President's desk when they met, and everyone in Puerto Rico relaxed. But the President told me: No, his case is not on my desk. You need to talk to McDonough, my Chief of Staff. I did that at 3 that afternoon. He said: I don't know anything about the case, but the Deputy Attorney General will meet with you and discuss the case.

I tried and tried and tried to get the information from her about where the case stood and how the process of clemency works under the Obama administration. Well, 10 weeks later—yes, 10 weeks later—I heard from the DOJ's assistant to the assistant's assistant in legislative affairs, and he said: I don't know anything about Oscar's case. He went on to say that Deputy Attorney General Yates will not meet with me or anyone else. The reason is they only

□ 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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make contact with outside parties when they initiate it, when they are reaching out for more information on a candidate to make a decision. So they are not making a decision.

Basically, they said, don't call us, we will call you. But no one I know—no one—has received any kind of contact from the DOJ, which makes it pretty clear to me that they are not seriously reviewing the case.

To recap, the President said: It is not on my desk. The Chief of Staff said: I don't know anything about the case, talk to this person at DOJ; and that person, more than 2 months later, told someone to tell me that we will call you if we are seriously reviewing the case. And there has been nothing from the Obama administration.

That is why I continue to call on Puerto Ricans and people of good conscience to come on October 9 to Washington, D.C., as we join together to show our unity and resolve that Oscar Lopez Rivera should be set free to return to Puerto Rico.

Mr. Speaker, I don't mean to be rude, but my message to Puerto Ricans about Oscar Lopez Rivera is so important, I will deliver the rest in Spanish with a translation provided to the House.

(English translation of the statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

I am sad to say that our optimism and confidence that President Obama would finally set Oscar Lopez Rivera free is in jeopardy.

Every indication I am getting from the President and his staff is that the review of Oscar's case is not progressing, so we need to make our voices perfectly clear and work together to send the strongest possible message to the President.

If you need to walk, take a bus, crawl, or swim to get to Washington on October 9, you should do so.

We will be gathering on Sunday, October 9, across the street from the White House in Lafayette Park with celebrities, leaders and Puerto Ricans of all kinds.

We cannot let our brother die in jail.

We cannot let our nation be ignored.

We must stand together as Puerto Ricans—no matter who we are, no matter where we were born, no matter where we live now—and tell the President of the United States and the government here in Washington that 35 years is enough. Enough.

We want our brother, Oscar Lopez Rivera, to walk amongst us and to touch his feet on the warm land of Puerto Rico again.

Show that you care and that you will not be silent. Join us on October 9.

Me da tristeza decir que el optimismo y la confianza que el Presidente Obama liberará a Oscar López Rivera está en grave peligro.

Cada vez que me he comunicado con el personal del Presidente me han indicado que la evaluación del caso de Oscar no está progresando; por eso tenemos que hacer nuestras voces

perfectamente claras y trabajar juntos para mandarle el mensaje más fuerte posible al Presidente.

Si tienen que caminar, tomar un autobús, gatear o nadar para llegar a Washington el 9 de octubre, háganlo.

Estando reunidos con celebridades, líderes, y puertorriqueños de todo tipo el domingo, 9 de octubre al cruzar la calle de la Casa Blanca, en Lafayette Park.

No podemos dejar que nuestro hermano muera encarcelado.

No podemos dejar que nuestra patria sea ignorada.

Debemos seguir unidos como puertorriqueños—sin importar quienes somos, donde nacimos y donde vivimos ahora—y decirle al Presidente de los Estados Unidos y al gobierno aquí en Washington que 35 años es suficiente. Ya basta.

Queremos que nuestro hermano, Oscar López Rivera, camine entre nosotros y que sus pies toquen la tierra cálida de Puerto Rico una vez más.

Demuestren que esto les importa, y que no se quedarán callados. Únete a nosotros el 9 de octubre.

FISCAL CLIFF IS LOOMING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I heard Congressman Mo Brooks from Alabama give a very disturbing speech, but a speech that everyone should hear, and that is: America is headed toward Greece. Financially we are in a bad situation. We are \$19.4 trillion in debt.

In 2000 I was here when President Clinton was leaving office. We had a Republican House, a Republican Senate, and we were headed for a surplus. In fact, the debt in 2000 was \$5.6 trillion. Today that debt is \$19.4 trillion.

The poster I have with me, Mr. Speaker, I used all during August. It is a great political cartoon. It is kind of sad in a way, I guess. The cartoon is this: It has got Uncle Sam in a wheelchair, and Uncle Sam is saying, "I can see Greece from here," and the cliff has got written the words "fiscal cliff." And then who is pushing Uncle Sam but Mr. Obama, and he is saying, "Forward." And who is pushing Mr. Obama? The donkey, representing the Democrats? Who is pushing the donkey? The Republicans, the elephant. What it is saying is both parties are guilty of this debt that is going to strangle this country before very long.

Last week there was an article in Reuters News. The headline was: "U.S. Army Fudged Its Accounts by Trillions of Dollars, Auditor Finds." The auditor said that, in the year 2015, he found that the Army had misappropriated over \$6 trillion. I don't know where the outrage is anymore. I have no idea where it is. Six trillion dollars they cannot account for. And yet I hear very little about it from the Department of

the Army and very little from leadership in the House of Representatives.

In addition to that, I, for months, and maybe even years now, have been talking about the absolute waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan. It is one of the worst failed policies America has ever had. We are not changing anything.

You go back to Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great went to Afghanistan, or what was known as Afghanistan then. He was going to make it a different part of the world. It failed.

Then you had the British. Winston Churchill was a young reporter and was in Afghanistan in 1920. He wrote and said: What is this country? What is this land? It is impossible.

And then you had the Russians. The Russians went there, and they failed and they left. Now America is spending billions and billions of dollars, and it is failing.

There was an article about 3 months ago, and the title of the article was: "12 Ways Your Tax Dollars Were Squandered in Afghanistan." John Sopko is the inspector general for Afghan Reconstruction. What he said was:

Billions have been squandered on projects that were either useless or substandard, or lost to waste, corruption, and systemic abuse, according to SIGAR's reports.

That is John Sopko's group. They are known as SIGAR. Anyone can look it up on the Internet. They will just verify everything I am saying of just how much waste, fraud, and abuse, and how it is worse today than it was 15 years ago.

I do not understand how we in Congress can be complicit.

Well, what do you mean complicit?

Well, when we pass the bill to fund the Department of Defense, if we know a percentage of that money, billions of dollars, is going to Afghanistan waste, fraud, and abuse, aren't we being complicit? I think so. I started voting against the bills because I don't want to be part of that, quite frankly.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to thank Congressman Brooks for coming on this floor yesterday, as I have done many times, to warn not only Congress but the American people that we are going to have a collapse sooner rather than later if we don't change the way that we are spending money here in Washington.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our men and women in uniform, thank the families of our men and women in uniform, and thank the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq.

PEOPLE ARE JUSTIFIABLY CONCERNED ABOUT ZIKA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) for 5 minutes.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, after one of the longest congressional breaks