

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, it has been quite a week: ups and downs and not knowing whether bills would be passed or the government would be funded, whether we would be able to help America with a much-improving economy in the new year by passing the tax cut bill. But we got it done, and it ended up being a good week, and here we are.

This will be the last opportunity to speak before we are out for Christmas, and I heard some good news today about Ukraine. We have the annual Presidential Prayer Breakfast the first Thursday of February each year, except when the first Thursday is on the 1st, and then it is on the 8th, which it will be this February.

We had representatives from the Ukraine Government come to our National Prayer Breakfast here, and they started one there and began to grow. Now, for the first time, Ukraine legislature has passed a bill recognizing a celebration of Christmas, the day of Jesus' birth. We celebrate Jesus' birth on that day, December 25.

Apparently, from what we are told, it emanates from them coming over, being part of our Prayer Breakfast, where the President comes, and then starting one. And then now we are going to be celebrating the birth of Jesus in America—all those who care to—at the same time the Ukrainian Government will do so. So that is a big bit of news there.

I was listening to the Delegate from the District of Columbia and it took me back to when I first got here as a Member of Congress and I saw the license plate saying, "Taxation Without Representation." I know from studying history—never ceasing to study history that that was one of the war cries for the Revolution: Taxation without representation is tyranny.

And as Benjamin Franklin once said: If we do not get to select even one of the people in Parliament, then that Parliament has no right to place any tax on us.

And then upon hearing that, Puerto Rico, Guam, Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands, all of the territories where they have a Delegate or Commissioner but they don't have a full voting member, those are areas that are not required to pay any Federal income tax. In fact, when I found out, the more I looked into it, there is only one place in America where people do not elect a full voting Member of Congress, yet they have to pay Federal income tax, and that is here in the District of Columbia.

For that reason, I filed a bill—because they had tried to get a full voting Member of Congress. But to do that, you have to have a constitutional

amendment. Everybody knew that and agreed to that back in the late 1970s. The proponents of having a full voting Representative got it through the House, got it through the Senate, but they never did get the requisite number of States to sign on, so it failed without ever being ratified by enough States.

I feel sure that would be the case if that were attempted again, but it does require an amendment. And since that doesn't appear it is going to happen anytime soon, then I believe in each of the sessions of Congress I have been, I have filed a bill that would correct that injustice, because it truly is an injustice for the people who live in the District of Columbia, and it is very simple. It just says, basically, that until when and if the District of Columbia has a full voting Representative, they are like any other U.S. territory, they will not have to pay Federal income tax.

I felt like that would certainly make people appreciate that, that they were treated like those in other places that don't elect a full voting Member of the House. So far I haven't been able to get Ms. HOLMES NORTON to sign on as a cosponsor. I am hoping to get her to sign on at some point because it really would help those people who live here in the City of Washington not to have to pay any Federal income tax.

Of course, Puerto Rico pays no Federal income tax, yet they have a higher local income tax than the Federal income tax. You know, a lot of States—I think somebody told me that Californians are paying 10 percent or so. But Puerto Rico, where, I think, over one-third or about one-third or so of the people there work for the government, then the government load is just overwhelming.

Puerto Rico is so beautiful. Even after all the disaster that needs to be cleaned up and fixed, I would hope at some point they become less heavy on the government and more heavy on free-market opportunities. I could see Puerto Rico becoming the Hong Kong of the United States, where that is where people want to go, that is where businesses want to locate because it is such a great place to live. But the taxes have run people out of that area, even though they don't pay Federal income tax. I don't think that would happen here in Washington.

Mr. Speaker, here we are, the last session before Christmas. It has been amazing. The most often cited book in Congress for our country's entire history has been the Bible. There is no book that comes close to the recitations from it that has the Bible.

Throughout our history, we were recognized as a Christian nation. I believe President Obama was right when he said we are not a Christian nation. We were, but we are not anymore. But even the Supreme Court, when it was a much more enlightened Supreme Court well after the Civil War—in fact, 30 years after the Civil War was over—the

Supreme Court looked at all of the evidence and declared in an opinion that the United States was founded as and is a Christian nation.

Not that everybody has to be a Christian here. They absolutely don't. I would humbly submit that the only way any people can truly have freedom of religion is if they have a constitution that is founded on Judeo-Christian principles that recognize that all true rights: life, liberty, pursuit of happiness—you don't have a right to happiness, but a right to pursue it—those come from God, and the Founders recognized that.

It is a shame to hear people deceiving young people in school, teaching them that, no, the real Founders were only deists. They didn't believe in God; Ben Franklin being the leading deist. If they would just teach the children what Ben Franklin said in June of 1787 at the Constitutional Convention. After 5 weeks of nothing but arguing back and forth, 80-year-old Ben Franklin, 2 or 3 years away from meeting his maker, got recognized.

Somebody wrote that President Washington looked so relieved when Dr. Franklin sought recognition. He finally stood up. He had gout and he had terrible arthritis. He was well overweight, but he got up and gave the speech that so many Christians are aware of, where he said what no deist would ever say, despite how many teachers these days say he was a deist. His words were—we know what his words were because he sat down and wrote it down afterwards when he was asked for a copy of what he said.

And he said: "I have lived, Sir, a long time; and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—God governs in the affairs of men. If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that 'except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it.'"

He said: "I firmly believe that."

Mr. Speaker, which means he wasn't a deist.

He said: "I also believe that without His"—without God's—"concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel. We shall be divided by our little partial local interests . . . and we ourselves will become a power down through the ages."

Mr. Speaker, it was at the conclusion of that day's session in the Constitutional Convention that Randolph from here in Virginia, or across the river in Virginia, made a motion that since here we are at the end of June, we are about to celebrate our Nation's birthday, and we all know we have not been able to accomplish anything.

As Franklin said: "We have been going for nearly 5 weeks. We have more noses than eyes on virtually every issue."

And then Franklin went on to say: "How has it happened, Sir, that we

have not . . . thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings?"

□ 1830

So Randolph's motion is, since they haven't been able to accomplish really anything, just yelling back and forth—it was all the big 6-foot-4 Washington could do to keep things under control. And, yes, I know in Chernow's biography, he said he was less than 6 foot 2, because he was standing by a guy 6 foot 2 and he was shorter, but he is just wrong on that. George Washington, 1799, when dead, flat on a slab, was measured as 6 foot 3½. Undeniable, 6 foot 4 in the height of his time, but he couldn't control things.

Randolph's motion passed. His motion was that they recess the Constitutional Convention and reconvene together in one of the local churches they agreed on and worship God together and then come back and try it again. That one passed.

They went to the Reformed Calvinist Church—I was sharing that with my friend DAVE BRAT earlier since he attends a Calvinist church—Reverend William Rogers presiding. You can go online and find at least one of the prayers that he prayed.

I have this little book from Dr. Richard G. Lee, what a great man of God, great little booklet. "In God We Still Trust," it is called. It has some great stories from our history.

He noted that Warren Earl Burger, Chief Justice of the United States from 1969 to 1986, delivered the Supreme Court's opinion in the 1985 case of *Lynch v. Donnelly*, which upheld that the city of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, did not violate the Constitution by displaying a nativity scene. Noting that Presidential orders and proclamations from Congress have designated Christmas as a national holiday in religious terms for two centuries and in the Western world for 20 centuries, he wrote:

"There is an unbroken history of official acknowledgement by all three branches of government of the role of religion in American life. The Constitution does not require a complete separation of church and state."

In fact, I would insert here, those words, "separation of church and state," unlike what many say when asked, they are not in the Constitution, they were not intended to be in the Constitution. The Founders did not want church to be separated from state. They wanted the state to stay the heck out of the church business. That is what they wanted.

But Thomas Jefferson mentioned a separation of church and state, a wall of separation, but it was going to be a one-way wall where the state stayed out of people's religion, but expected religion because it was part of our founding and the Bible was so often mentioned as a source of wisdom as they tried to put together a government.

Chief Justice Burger, talking about the Constitution, said:

"It affirmatively mandates accommodation, not merely tolerance, of all religions, and forbids hostility toward any. . . . Anything less would require the 'callous indifference' we have said was never intended by the Establishment Clause. . . . Indeed, we have observed, such hostility would bring us into 'war with our national tradition as embodied in the First Amendment's guarantee of the free exercise of religion.'"

He goes on on the next page, talking about John Hancock. He said: "To celebrate the victorious conclusion of the Revolutionary War, Governor John Hancock of Massachusetts issued a proclamation for a day of Thanksgiving on December 11, 1783."

Just over a week ago was the anniversary of this proclamation from Governor John Hancock, the president that signed as president of the Continental Congress on the Declaration of Independence.

John Hancock said: "Whereas . . . these United States are not only happily rescued from the danger and calamities to which they have been so long exposed, but their freedom, sovereignty, and independence ultimately acknowledged.

"And whereas . . . the interposition of Divine Providence"—and they capitalized "Divine Providence," another expression meaning God—"in our favor hath been most abundantly and most graciously manifested, and the citizens of these United States have every reason for praise and gratitude to the God of their salvation.

"Impressed therefore with an exalted sense of the blessings by which we are surrounded, and of our entire dependence on that Almighty Being"—"Almighty Being" both capitalized—"from whose goodness and bounty they are derived; I do by and with the advice of the council appoint Thursday the 11th day of December next"—the day recommended by the Congress to all the States—"to be religiously observed as a day of thanksgiving and prayer; that all the people may then assemble to celebrate . . . that He"—"He" is capitalized, meaning God—"hath been pleased to continue to us the light of the blessed Gospel; . . . that we also offer up fervent supplications . . . to cause pure religion and virtue to flourish . . . and to fill the world with His—capital H—glory."

That was John Hancock. As he pointed out, that was directed by the Congress of the United States that that day be recognized, but that was just his proclamation as Governor of Massachusetts.

It seems when I mention God, mention some of our heritage, we often get a lot of calls from people who just become irate, which also testifies probably to the importance and to the genuineness of our founding and our founding reliance on God, because nothing else provokes that kind of

anger and hatred. But some people say that has no place in the Capitol of the United States. And bless them; they just are a bit ignorant.

Just down the hall, the original House Chamber was the largest Christian church in the Washington, D.C., area for most of the 1800s. A guy named Thomas Jefferson, that coined the expression "separation of church and state," "wall of separation," he put in a letter to the Danbury Baptists why we should not have, in essence, an official denomination, that that is not the government's role. Jefferson saw no problem in having Christian worship services down the hall because it was nondenominational. Every Sunday that he was in Washington during his 8 years as President, he would come.

Normally, he would ride a horse, according to the Congressional Research Service. You don't have to rely on my historical interpretation. The bipartisan, objective Congressional Research Service said he usually came riding a single horse.

Unlike Jefferson, Madison, who is given credit for writing much of the Constitution, when he was President for those 8 years, he normally came in a horse-drawn carriage with multiple horses drawing his carriage. Jefferson, on the other hand, came to church here in the Capitol normally on a horse by himself, before the days, obviously, of the Secret Service.

Jefferson, in fact, since it was a nondenominational Christian service, saw no problem with inviting the Marine Band to come do the accompaniment many Sundays for the hymns that were to be sung.

The first woman to officially address a group in the U.S. Capitol occurred in the early 1800s, a Christian evangelist, who gave the sermon just down the hall in what was then the House of Representatives Chamber.

I have a book, "Miracles in American History." Susie Federer did this, adapted from William J. Federer's "American Minute." This is a typical story from our history and our Founders, who knew how valuable God's assistance was in getting this little bubble in time and space where, for the first time in history, Christians were not persecuted for being Christians. For the first time since Jesus came over 2,000 years ago, this America, this United States was a place where you weren't persecuted for being a Christian.

Obviously, that is changing, and now we have governmental entities that are afraid of Christians as potentially a big hate group; although, anyone who professes that Christian groups need to be violent in order to accomplish our purposes can't truly be Christian and based on the Bible unless they are enacting government in so doing and acting under Romans 13. But, otherwise, they miss the whole point of Jesus' preaching.

In this book from the Federers, the Battle of Cowpens was January 17, 1781.

Also, January 17 happens to be my father's birthday. I won't tell the age, but he is over 90.

"The Battle of Cowpens, January 17, 1781, depicted in the movie 'The Patriot,' involved American General Daniel Morgan having a line of militia fire into the British General Cornwallis' and Colonel Banastre Tarleton's dragoons, regulars, Highlanders, and loyalists.

"When the Americans hastily retreated, British Colonel Tarleton, known as 'The Butcher,' gave in to the temptation to pursue, only to be surprised by American Continentals waiting over the hill, firing at point-blank range.

"In the confusion, the Americans killed 110 British and captured 830.

"The Battle of Cowpens is widely considered the tactical masterpiece and turning point of the war."

This is talking about the Revolutionary War, of course.

"General Daniel Morgan met up with American General Nathanael Greene, and they made a hasty retreat north toward Virginia.

"Cornwallis regrouped and chased the Americans as fast as he could, burning extra equipment and supplies along the way in order to travel faster.

"Cornwallis arrived at the Catalpa River just 2 hours after the Americans had crossed, but a storm made the river impassable, delaying the British pursuit.

"Cornwallis nearly overtook them as they were getting out of the Yadkin River, but rain flooded the river.

"Now it was a race to the Dan River, but General Nathanael Greene again made it across before the British arrived.

"British Commander Henry Clinton wrote:

"Here the royal army was again stopped by a sudden rise of the waters, which had only just fallen, almost miraculously, to let the enemy over . . ."

"In March 1781, General George Washington wrote to William Gordon:

"We have . . . abundant reasons to thank Providence"—with a capital P; he often referred to God as Providence—to thank Providence for its many favorable interpositions in our behalf. It has at times been my only dependence, for all other resources seemed to have failed us."

"British General Henry Clinton then ordered General Cornwallis to move 8,000 troops to a defensive position where the York River entered the Chesapeake Bay.

□ 1845

By this time, Ben Franklin and Marquis de Lafayette, which is the gentleman depicted in this painting right over here—it is the only full-length portrait of a foreigner in our U.S. Capitol—were finally successful in their efforts to persuade French King Louis XVI to send ships and troops to meet the Americans.

French Admiral de Grasse left off fighting the British in the West Indies;

sailed 24 ships to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay where, in the Battle of the Capes, he drove off 19 British ships which were trying to evacuate Cornwallis' men.

De Grasse's 3,000 French troops, and General Rochambeau's 6,000 French troops, hurriedly joined General Lafayette's division as they marched to help Washington trap Cornwallis against the sea. They joined the troops of General Benjamin Lincoln, Baron von Steuben, Mordecai Gist, Henry Knox, and John Peter Muhlenberg. All together, 17,000 French and American troops surrounded Cornwallis, and, on October 19, 1781, he surrendered.

Yale President Ezra Stiles wrote on May 8, 1783: "Who but God"—and by the way, this Yale University president, for those who are shocked that Yale had such a strident Christian leader, but actually, originally, Harvard and Yale, you couldn't even get in unless you swore that Jesus was your Lord and Savior in very stark terms.

But Yale University President Ezra Stiles, in 1783, says:

"Who but God could have ordained the critical arrival of the Gallic or French fleet so as to assist in the siege of Yorktown? Should we not ascribe to a Supreme energy the wise generalship displayed by General Greene, leaving the roving Cornwallis to pursue his helter-skelter, ill-fated march into Virginia. It is God who had raised up for us a powerful ally, a chosen army, an enabled force, who sent us a Rochambeau to fight side-by-side with Washington in the Battle of Yorktown."

"To diffuse the general joy through every breast, the general orders"—I am sorry. This is from George Washington. George Washington wrote this. This was one of his orders.

"To diffuse the general joy through every breast, the general orders"—these are his orders. I am quoting from Washington. "Divine service is to be performed tomorrow in the several brigades. The Commander-in-Chief earnestly recommends troops not on duty should universally attend with that gratitude of heart which the recognition of such astonishing interposition of Providence demands."

And then the next year, on October 11, this is what the Congress passed. Congress said: "It being the indispensable duty of all nations to offer up their supplications to Almighty God the United States in Congress assembled do hereby recommend it to the inhabitants of these States in general to observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of solemn thanksgiving to God for his mercies."

September 3, 1783, the Revolutionary War was officially ended with the Treaty of Paris, signed by Ben Franklin, John Adams, John Jay, and David Hartley. And I was surprised, I was going through the State Department with my wife and my pastor, David Dykes, and his wife, Cindy, and we were going through, and there was a copy, an original copy of the Treaty of Paris.

I looked at the big letters that started it, and I was shocked. I said: "Did you know it started that way?" Because David is quite a historian himself. He has written a lot of great books. But he didn't know. We didn't know how it started.

But then it made sense. If you are going to get the British to sign a document swearing that the United States has the right to be free and independent of the most powerful country in the world, the most powerful army, the most powerful navy, which I agree with Washington, it was the grace of God, we were able to defeat. Without the grace of God, there is no defeat. We are not an independent country.

So what do you start that with to make the British swear under that would be something they would not want to break the oath to?

This is how it starts. These were the big letters, huge print, "In the name of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity," then smaller letters for the rest of the document, "It having pleased the Divine Providence" or God "to dispose the hearts of the most serene and most potent Prince George III, by the grace of God, King of Great Britain . . . and of the United States of America, to forget all past misunderstandings and differences."

Anyway, it was signed: "Done at Paris, this third day of September, in the year of our Lord, 1783."

And, of course, our Constitution is dated the same way, in the year of our Lord, 1787.

But those were Founders. Those were things that got us started.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARRINGTON).

CELEBRATING THE BORDEN COUNTY COYOTES DIVISION 1, 1A SIX-MAN FOOTBALL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT), my new friend, great colleague, and mentor as I have made my transition into this great body. He tells me that all freshman Members come in and have big wins like tax reform and these big, tremendous wins, not for the Republican Party, but for the American people. I am so proud to have been a part of that. I am proud to call Mr. GOHMERT my friend.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the Borden County Coyotes' hard-fought victory over Jonesboro in the Division 1, 1A Six-Man Football State Championship. This was the Coyotes' seventh State championship appearance, fifth State championship win, and the second year in a row these two teams faced off in the six-man State championship game.

Going into the championship game, only six opposing teams had scored against the Coyotes all year long. They boast the best six-man defense in the State, have been named the best six-man team in the Nation, and are ranked number 1 in the class 1-A division rankings.

With the discipline and determination they showed all season long, this team turned a two-point lead at half-time into a 60-22 win in the State championship.

I want to commend both teams on their tremendous success and sportsmanship and congratulate, especially, Coach Richey on preparing our Coyotes to achieve a perfect season.

I would be remiss if I did not thank the parents and the teachers and the administrators and the fans who were always there throughout this season to ensure the Coyotes always gave their Borden County best.

There is nothing like high school football in west Texas. Go Coyotes, and go west Texas.

HAPPY 80TH BIRTHDAY TO DR. BILL DEAN

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to wish a happy birthday, 80 years, to a dear friend, a Lubbock native, and a legend at Texas Tech, Dr. Bill Dean.

Dr. Dean has always been a leader and has always had a servant heart when it comes to serving his community and the campus community at Texas Tech. I don't know anyone who loves Texas Tech University and the students at Texas Tech like Bill Dean.

He was elected to the student body presidency when he was a student at Tech. He got 3 degrees and became a professor, an associate dean, and, ultimately, in his current role, serves as CEO of the Texas Tech University Alumni Association.

He was named the best teacher nine times by his students.

Dr. Dean, you are the very best, and you represent the very best of west Texas and Red Raider Nation. I want to say, blessings to you, and I hope you have many, many more years on that college campus because you have had an amazing impact on thousands of the lives of young people who come through that university, like me.

Thank you for your commitment. Thank you for your service and your leadership, and God bless you and Peggy. "Guns Up."

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I am always happy to share time with my friend from west Texas. We are on opposite sides of the State but same sides of the heart caring for this country.

We have got a lot to be thankful for in this country, and I am thankful that we are going to have 11 months for people to realize that all the gloom and doom that was preached in this room about what the tax bill was going to do. The tax cuts, the reforms, it wasn't made as simple as I would hope, just a flat tax across the board. But there will be more people who don't pay tax, and most everybody should pay less tax.

It is just amazing the things that have been said. One person even said this is the worst bill ever, the tax bill, when—wow, I would have thought those bills that were really punishing slaves and allowing the continuance of slavery, those might have been, well, in my opinion, just nowhere near the

same category. But according to at least one source here across the aisle, this tax bill was worse than all of those, the worst bill ever.

But people are going to have 11 months to see that, even though the stock market was doing better, people weren't really doing better. Incomes had been pretty well flat-lined.

I think there is going to be a great deal to be grateful for. Now it is not just going to be the stock market going up, it is going to be Americans having more money in their own pockets. There are going to be more jobs. There are going to be people making more than they have in the past.

There will be a chance for many in the upcoming generation to experience what many of us did coming out of school, but most of them haven't, and that is having multiple firms, companies, employers, wanting them. It is just going to be a new experience for so many. And I hope when it happens, they will do as our Founders did and know where to give the proper credit.

John Adams, in the fall of 1798, to the officers of the First Brigade—he was President at the time, having succeeded Washington. President Adams said: "We have no government armed with power, capable of contending with human passions, unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, gallantry would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people."

□ 1900

It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.

John Adams, on December 25, 1813, what we call Christmas Day, wrote to his new friend. They had been friends, then when Jefferson had been greatly unfair in the election, defeated Adams, they had nothing to do with each other for many years. Then at Benjamin Rush's recommendation, Adams wrote Thomas Jefferson, and they rekindled a great friendship.

December 25 of 1813, former President John Adams wrote to former President Thomas Jefferson, and said:

"I have examined all religions as well as my narrow sphere, my straightened means, and my busy life would allow; and the result is that the Bible is the best Book in the world. It contains more philosophy than all the libraries I have seen."

Thomas Jefferson. This is inscribed in his monument.

Mr. Speaker, I share this as we leave session the last time before Christmas, because I find that so many people get upset when we mention God or mention the Bible here in Congress, when actually that is the most oft-cited thing in our whole history of Congress.

People have been mis-educated, and this is the one chance to thank God, Mr. Speaker, and help people realize how we came to be as we are.

Thomas Jefferson said:

"God who gave us life gave us liberty."

"And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated, but with His wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that His justice cannot sleep forever."

Mr. Speaker, this was a time when people had turned from God, and it was scaring Jefferson because he knew, as Adams did, if we were not a religious and moral people, the Constitution would cease to serve the needed purpose.

Madison has such great pronouncements. As Madison himself said in 1815:

"No people ought to feel greater obligations to celebrate the goodness of the Great Disposer of events and of the Destiny of nations than the people of the United States. To the same divine author of every good and perfect gift, we are indebted for all those privileges and advantages, religious as well as civil, which are so richly enjoyed in this favored land."

He also referred to our Heavenly Benefactor.

Monroe, same type of messages.

John Quincy Adams, he wrote his son, 1811:

"... so great is my veneration for the Bible, and so strong my belief, that when duly read and meditated on, it is of all books in the world, that which contributes most to make men wise and happy—that the earlier my children begin to read it, the more steadily they pursue the practice of reading it throughout their lives, the more lively and confident will be my hopes that they will prove useful citizens to their country, respectable members of society...."

Abraham Lincoln said this, and it was official. This was his proclamation. Those that think it is inappropriate for government to say these things, this was Abraham Lincoln, who knew wherein our hopes lie.

Lincoln said in his official proclamation:

"... it is the duty of nations, as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope, that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations are only blessed whose God is the Lord."

In his second inaugural, just 45 days before he was struck down by an assassin's bullet, Abraham Lincoln was trying to make sense of such a bloody, horrific war between the North and South, and it is inscribed on the inside wall of the Lincoln Memorial on the north side. Thank God, literally, thank God no one has required that those beautiful words be removed.

But he was trying to reconcile how there could be something so bloody and

awful if there were a good and just God. Obviously, he had done a lot of theological wrestling with that issue, and in talking about the North and South, Abraham Lincoln said:

"Both"—North and South—"read the same Bible and pray to the same God."

"The prayers of both could not be answered. The prayers of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has his own purpose."

But then he quotes Scripture: "Whosoever is lifted up in the world because of offenses."

Lincoln continues on:

"Yet, if God will that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with a sword, as was said 3,000 years ago, so it must be said."

And again quoting the Bible: "The judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

All Presidents have had these types of proclamations.

I like the proclamation Grover Cleveland had in November 1885. Official U.S. Government proclamation. He said:

"The American people have always abundant cause to be thankful to Almighty God, whose watchful care and guiding hand have been manifested in every stage of their national life, guarding and protecting them in time of peril and safely leading them in the hour of darkness and of danger.

"It is fitting and proper that a nation thus favored should on one day every year, for that purpose especially appointed, publicly acknowledge the goodness of God and return thanks to Him for all His gracious gifts."

Moving to Franklin Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt delivered this Christmas Eve message just weeks after we were attacked at Pearl Harbor.

Franklin Roosevelt said:

"Sincere and faithful men and women are asking themselves this Christmas: How can we light our trees? How can we give our gifts? How can we meet and worship with love and with uplifted spirit and heart in a world at war, a world of fighting and suffering and death? How can we pause, even for a day, even for Christmas Day, in our urgent labor of arming a decent humanity against the enemies which beset it? How can we put the world aside, as men and women put the world aside in peaceful years, to rejoice in the birth of Christ?"

Franklin Roosevelt went on to say:

"Looking into the days to come, I have set aside a day of prayer, and in that proclamation, I have said: The year 1941 has brought upon our Nation a war of aggression by powers dominated by arrogant rulers whose selfish purpose is to destroy free institutions. They would thereby take from the freedom-loving peoples of the Earth the hard-won liberties gained over many centuries. The new year of 1942 calls for the courage. Our strength, as the

strength of all men everywhere, is of greater avail as God upholds us.

"Therefore, I"—this is Franklin Roosevelt—"do hereby appoint the first day of the year 1942 as a day of prayer, of asking forgiveness for our shortcomings of the past, of consecration to the task of the present, of asking God's help in days to come. We need His guidance that this people may be humbled in spirit, but strong in the conviction of the right. Steadfast to endure sacrifice, and brave to achieve a victory of liberty and peace. Our strongest weapon in this war is that conviction of the dignity and brotherhood of man, which Christmas Day signifies. Against enemies who preach the principles of hate and practice them, we set our faith in human love and in God's care for us and all men everywhere."

He had so many beautiful, beautiful messages.

One ended like this:

"It is significant that tomorrow, Christmas Day, our plants and factories will be stilled. That is not true of the other holidays we have long been accustomed to celebrate. On all other holidays, work goes on, gladly, for the winning of the war. So Christmas becomes the only holiday in all the year. I like to think this is because Christmas is a holy day. May all it stands for live and grow throughout the years."

Harry Truman, who succeeded him after his death, finished one of his Christmas proclamations this way:

"Our thoughts and aspirations and the hopes of future years turn to a little town in the hills of Judea where, on a winter's night 2,000 years ago, the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled.

"Shepherds keeping the watch by night over their flock heard the glad tidings of great joy from the angels of the Lord singing: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth, peace, good will toward men.'"

It is not just from the Bible. This is the President of the United States' official proclamation, government proclamation.

Truman said:

"The message of Bethlehem best sums up our hopes tonight. If we as a nation, and the other nations of the world, will accept it, the star of faith will guide us into the place of peace as it did the shepherds on that day of Christ's birth long ago.

"We shall find strength and courage at this Christmastime because so brave a beginning has been made. So with faith and courage we shall work to hasten the day when the sword is replaced by the plowshare and nations do not 'learn war anymore.'

"Selfishness and greed, individual or national, cause most of our troubles."

□ 1915

"He whose birth we celebrate tonight was the world's greatest teacher. He said: 'Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men would do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.' Through all the cen-

turies since He spoke, history has vindicated His teaching.

"In this great country of ours has been demonstrated the fundamental unity of Christianity and democracy. Under our heritage of freedom for everyone on equal terms, we also share the responsibilities of government. Our support of individual freedom—free speech, free schools, free press, and a free conscience—transcends all our differences. Although we may not hope for a New Heaven and a New Earth in our day and generation; we may strive with undaunted faith and courage to achieve in the present some measure of that unity with which the Nation's sons and the sons of our allies went forth to win the war.

"We have this glorious land not because of a particular religious faith, not because our ancestors sailed from a particular foreign port. We have our unique national heritage because of a common aspiration to be free and because of our purpose to achieve for ourselves and for our children the good things of life which the Christ declared He came to give to all mankind.

"We have made a good start toward peace in the world. Ahead of us lies the larger task of making the peace secure. The progress we made gives hope that in the coming year we shall reach our goal. May 1947 entitle us to the benediction of the Master."

"Master" is capitalized. He is talking about Jesus.

He quotes Jesus saying: "'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.' Because of what we have achieved for peace, because of all the promise our future holds, I say to all my countrymen: Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas, and may God bless you all."

I just want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, with this best message, Ronald Reagan's 1988 official Christmas message. He said: "The themes of Christmas and of coming home for the holidays have long been intertwined in song and story. There is a profound irony and a lesson in this because Christmas celebrates the coming of a Savior who was born without a home.

"There was no room at the inn for the Holy Family. Weary of travel, a young Mary, close to childbirth, and her carpenter husband, Joseph, found but the rude shelter of a stable. There born the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace—an event on which all history would turn.

"Jesus would again be without home, and more than once; on the flight to Egypt and during His public ministry when He said: 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay his head.'

"From His very infancy, on, our Redeemer was reminding us that, from then on we would never lack a home in Him. Like the shepherds to whom the angel of the Lord appeared on the first Christmas Day, we could always say: 'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem

and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.’

“As we come home with gladness to family and friends this Christmas, let us also remember our neighbors who cannot go home themselves. Our compassion and concern this Christmas and all year long will mean much to the hospitalized, the homeless, the convalescent, the orphaned—and will surely lead us on our way to the joy and peace of Bethlehem and the Christ Child who bids us come. For it is only in finding and living the eternal meaning of the Nativity that we can be truly happy, truly at peace, truly home.

“Merry Christmas, and God bless you.”

Official proclamation of the United States Government by the President of the United States, words well to remember.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

SENATE BILLS REFERRED

Bills of the Senate of the following titles were taken from the Speaker’s table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 117. An act to designate a mountain peak in the State of Montana as “Alex Diekmann Peak”; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

S. 501. An act to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain segments of East Rosebud Creek in Carbon County, Montana, as components of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 1. An act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to titles II and V of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2018.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The Speaker announced his signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following title:

S. 1536. An act to designate a human trafficking prevention coordinator and to expand the scope of activities authorized under the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s outreach and education program to include human trafficking prevention activities, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 7 o’clock and 19 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, December 22, 2017, at 2 p.m.

EXPENDITURE REPORTS CONCERNING OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL

Reports concerning the foreign currencies and U.S. dollars utilized for Official Foreign Travel during the fourth quarter of 2017, pursuant to Public Law 95-384, are as follows:

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, ROBERT REEVES, EXPENDED BETWEEN NOV. 21 AND NOV. 25, 2017											
Name of Member or employee	Date		Country	Per diem ¹		Transportation		Other purposes		Total	
	Arrival	Departure		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²
Robert Reeves	11/22	11/25	Switzerland .....	.....	1,642.86	.....	2,104.56	.....	.....	.....	3,747.42
Scott Kim	11/22	11/25	Switzerland .....	.....	1,642.86	.....	2,104.56	.....	.....	.....	3,747.42
Committee total .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	3,285.72	.....	4,209.12	.....	.....	.....	7,494.84

¹ Per diem constitutes lodging and meals.

² If foreign currency is used, enter U.S. dollar equivalent; if U.S. currency is used, enter amount expended.

ROBERT F. REEVES, December 5, 2017.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker’s table and referred as follows:

3502. A letter from the Acting Director, PDRA, Rural Utilities Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department’s final rule — Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program (RIN: 0572-AC37) received December 11, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

3503. A letter from the Under Secretary (Comptroller), Department of Defense, transmitting a letter providing a status report on the account balance in the Defense Cooperation Account, as of September 30, 2017, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2608(e); Public Law 101-403, Sec. 202(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 112-81, Sec. 1064(7)); (125 Stat. 1587); to the Committee on Armed Services.

3504. A letter from the Alternate OSD FRLO, Office of the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department’s final rule — Military Commissions [Docket No.: DOD-2017-OS-0062] (RIN: 0790-AJ58) received December 13, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Armed Services.

3505. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense, Special Operations/

Low Intensity Conflict, Department of Defense, transmitting the FY 2017 annual Regional Defense Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program Report to Congress, pursuant to title 10, U.S.C. 345; to the Committee on Armed Services.

3506. A letter from the Assistant to the Board, Board Of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting the Board’s Major final rule — Regulatory Capital Rules: Retention of Certain Existing Transition Provisions for Banking Organizations That Are Not Subject to the Advanced Approaches Capital Rules [Regulation Q; Docket No.: R-1571] (RIN: 7100-AE 83) received December 15, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Financial Services.

3507. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency’s final rule — Confidentiality Determinations for Hazardous Waste Export and Import Documents [EPA-HQ-OLEM-2016-0492; FRL-9971-49-OLEM] (RIN: 2050-AG90) received December 14, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3508. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency’s final rule — Air Plan Approval; Rhode Island; Infrastructure Requirement for the 2010 Sulfur Dioxide and 2010 Nitrogen Dioxide

National Ambient Air Quality Standards [EPA-R01-OAR-2017-0151; FRL-9972-23-Region 1] received December 14, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3509. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency’s final rule — Approval of Arizona Air Plan Revision; San Manuel, Arizona; Second 10-Year Sulfur Dioxide Maintenance Plan [EPA-R09-2017-0377; FRL-9972-03-Region 9] received December 14, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3510. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency’s final rule — Approval of California Air Plan Revisions, Placer County and Ventura County Air Pollution Control Districts [EPA-R09-OAR-2017-0332; FRL-9971-76-Region 9] received December 14, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3511. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency’s final rule — Arizona: Authorization of State Hazardous Waste Management Program Revisions [EPA-R09-RCRA-2017-0523; FRL-9972-09-Region 9] received December 14,