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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,

March 8, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN 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 3, 2017, 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.

THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. JONES. Madam Speaker, for the past few years, I have been on the floor from time to time railing on the loss of life and waste of money in Afghanistan. I believe we have too many in Congress who are not listening to our men and women in uniform and are actually not even listening to the taxpayers who are paying the bill to be in Afghanistan.

From articles written about paying for ghost soldiers—that means that

they don't exist—to the Department of Defense spending \$6 million to buy nine goats, the stories just go on and on and on.

There are so many examples of waste, fraud, and abuse, it is time that we in Congress realize that it is not in our best interest to stay there for 16 more years. We have already been there 16 years. And, you know, you get to a point that you just wonder. And so many of our young men and women who have fought for our country in Iraq and Afghanistan are special heroes to all of us, and we know that. This is about the policy of the Congress, not the military policy.

Recently, I read an article that the former President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, has actually been meeting with the Russians and asking the Russians to come back to Afghanistan, and he, Hamid Karzai, will set up meetings with the Taliban. But sometimes you just wonder who in the world is watching this absolutely wild crazy world of Afghanistan.

Then this past week, there was another article, and I will read the title of the article, Madam Speaker: "Chinese Troops Appear to Be Operating in Afghanistan and the Pentagon is Okay With It."

Again, I repeat myself: after 16 years of war in Afghanistan, hasn't the American soldier done enough? Hasn't the American taxpayer paid enough for goats and paying ghost soldiers? 200,000 Afghans who don't even exist are getting paid, so that means that the money ends up in the hands of the Taliban or the village leaders.

You know, if the Chinese want to spend 16 years in Afghanistan, so be it. Let them have it.

Think about the history of Afghanistan, Madam Speaker. Alexander the Great was the first, and then we had the Brits that went in. In fact, Winston Churchill was a young reporter when they were in Afghanistan and he was

very disillusioned with that world. Then the Russians went in for 10 years and then they left, and now we have been there 16 years. Afghanistan is a graveyard of empires.

It is time for us to start looking at the sensibility of what we are doing there and does it make any sense, which is a better way of saying it.

I think that at some time, Afghanistan being the graveyard of empires, there is probably a headstone that says "Russia." After 16 years, maybe there will be a headstone that says "USA." And who knows? If the Chinese go and stay 16 years, there might be another headstone that says "China." At that time, maybe the ghost soldiers can take the \$6 million goats out to the graveyard and let them eat the grass or something.

I don't know, Madam Speaker. It gets a little bit crazy. It really does. It is time for this Congress to debate whether our policy is to stay in Afghanistan or to come home from Afghanistan.

I close with this. These two little girls from my district are Eden and Stephanie Balduf. Their daddy, Kevin Balduf, was a sergeant from Camp Lejeune, which is in my district. He and Colonel Palmer, from Cherry Point Marine Air Station, which also is in my district, were sent to Afghanistan to train Afghans to be policemen.

These two little girls are at the funeral of their daddy. Their daddy, Sergeant Kevin Balduf, emailed his wife the day before he was shot and killed, along with Colonel Palmer, and said: I don't trust them. I don't trust them. I don't trust any of them.

So I say to these two little girls, your United States Congress needs to debate whether we need to stay in Afghanistan longer than the 16 years we have been there, or is it time to say we have done our job and it is time to come home.

□ 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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DAY WITHOUT A WOMAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BARRAGÁN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Madam Speaker, today I rise to stand in solidarity on a Day Without a Woman. You will see women in red today and men with red ties in honor of today.

It is 2017 and we still need a Day Without a Woman to remind this administration and Republicans in Congress that women deserve equal pay and access to affordable health care.

Just yesterday, the assault on women continued with the GOP's plan to pay more for less in healthcare legislation that will restrict a woman's right to comprehensive healthcare coverage.

The Republican bill also defunds Planned Parenthood. Women with nowhere else to turn will lose access to essential preventative care and affordable contraception.

This is very personal for me. When I was growing up, we were poor. I had a sister that got pregnant at 15 and another one that got pregnant at 16. I, myself, had a condition that required me to get on a contraceptive to deal with pain that I had. I had nowhere to turn. I, myself, had to go to a clinic that saw me on a sliding scale; otherwise, I would have had nowhere to go.

The fact that we are facing the threat of losing this today for women and preventive care is beyond incomprehensible to me and scary.

On this day today, without a woman, I also think about women, women like Rosa Parks, the mothers, the daughters and grandchildren that took part in the Women's March on January 21, women at the forefront of every fight for equality.

I stand today with women like my mother, Teresa, an immigrant from Mexico, who raised a large family and who took care of my father when he was sick and continues to support me today.

I stand today to fight for equal pay for equal work because women—and Latinas in particular—are paid only 54 cents for every \$1 paid to White men.

I fight in Congress for American families so that they have economic stability and can make ends meet and set their kids off to a brighter future. I will continue to fight with my sisters in Congress for health care, for immigration, and for human rights. All of these are women's rights.

SUPPORTING THE 2017 MONKEY MADNESS 5K RUN AND WALK

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JONES). The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage everyone in south Florida to come out to Zoo Miami this Sunday, March 12, for the Families for Fragile X Monkey Madness 5K Run/Walk.

Fragile X syndrome is the most common cause of inherited intellectual disability, which results in a wide range of mental and physical impairments. It is also the most common known genetic cause of autism.

Through events like the upcoming 5K run/walk, organizations like the National Fragile X Foundation and the Families for Fragile X are working to raise awareness and advance groundbreaking research. These events also bring together those impacted by fragile X in our community and provide them with essential support and encouragement so that no one family has to go through this journey alone.

I ask everyone in south Florida to join Michele and her son Matthew, as well as hundreds of other patients, caregivers, and friends whose lives have been impacted by fragile X, this Sunday for the Monkey Madness 5K Run/Walk. You can register at familiesforfragilex.com.

RECOGNIZING THE FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE OF MIAMI

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Friendship Circle of Miami, a program provided by the Chabad of Kendall & Pinecrest that offers much-needed acceptance to children and young individuals with special needs by providing them with the skills to become our future leaders.

Since its inception, the Friendship Circle has provided these vulnerable members of our society the opportunity to participate in many programs like organized sports or visual and performing arts, all while building lasting friendships.

The Friendship Circle has grown from a small organization that started in Detroit to now having chapters all across our Nation and, indeed, around the world. I would like to offer a special congratulations to our Miami chapter, as it recently held its annual Walk for Friendship, raising awareness and support for the programs and services offered to our youth.

Mr. Speaker, it is organizations like Friendship Circle that serve as the pillar of equality and celebrate each person's individual qualities that make them great. I ask south Florida to join members of our community like the Pardo family—Angel, Rosie, and Andrew—in bringing a smile to the faces of some very special children in our community.

CELEBRATING THE 56TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PEACE CORPS

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, March 1 marked the 56th anniversary of the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps' talented volunteers have accomplished a lot over the years, serving in over 140 countries across the globe. They have changed millions of lives, provided immeasurable technical assistance to communities in need, and helped create a better understanding between Americans and peoples abroad.

In 2011, I was proud to author a bill that helped protect Peace Corps volunteers. The Senate companion to that bill became law as the Kate Puzey Act,

establishing policies that improved volunteer safety and ensured that they would have the resources necessary to contend with emergencies.

Peace Corps volunteers exemplify the extraordinary compassion and leadership of our great Nation, and their security is paramount as they carry out their missions abroad. I congratulate the Peace Corps on its 56th anniversary, and I wish it even greater success in the years ahead.

CONGRATULATING JONATHAN AGUIAR AND THE KNOW MORE CAMPAIGN

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Jonathan Aguiar, a wonderful student at Christopher Columbus High School, whom I recently met, for his efforts that are known as KNOW MORE. He started this organization KNOW MORE, and it is an organization founded to raise awareness about sexual assault on high school campuses in south Florida.

Anyone, regardless of age, can become a victim of sexual assault. Unfortunately, it is a crime that often goes unreported due to the detrimental scars felt by some victims. By joining together to create KNOW MORE, Jonathan and his friends have undertaken a noble effort to support victims, protect others from harm, and prepare high school students to make informed decisions.

I thank Jonathan and Christopher Columbus High School for their work and advocacy to combat this issue that affects so many in our community and across the Nation.

MARINES UNITED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, 4 years ago, I stood on this same floor and condemned the online bullying of U.S. Marine Corps servicewomen on a public Facebook page. Today I stand before you again, incredulous, angry, and sad, to say that absolutely nothing has changed.

This weekend, news broke that the Department of Defense is investigating scores of enlisted marines for compiling thousands of naked photos of other marines—servicewomen—often surreptitiously, and distributing them through Facebook and Google Drive. The site in question is called "Marines United," claiming a membership of over 30,000 people.

The photos are being tightly held due to the ongoing investigation, but all indications are they are just as repulsive as what we saw 4 years ago.

□ 1015

The report contains samples of the comments posted about female marines, which are too obscene to read on the House floor. Online commentators also reportedly called for the rape of some of the marines portrayed in the photos, which is terrifying, given many of the women are identified by name and base.