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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. NEWHOUSE).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 20, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DAN NEWHOUSE 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 1:50 p.m.

WHAT CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE SAYS ABOUT AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, after 7 years of railing against the Affordable Care Act, a little less than 2 weeks ago we finally got an opportunity to see what the Republican repeal-and-replace plan actually looks like.

President Trump described it on March 7, again, a little less than 2 weeks ago, as our wonderful new healthcare bill.

The new Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tom Price, solemnly promised that no one will be worse off financially as part of this bill known as the American Health Care Act.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as President John Adams once said a long time ago, facts are stubborn things; and over the last 2 weeks, we have had an opportunity to see what the Congressional Budget Office says about the American Health Care Act. Again, this is the neutral body that advises the Congress and the Nation with budgetary analysis both in terms of taxes and spending and also in terms of healthcare coverage.

What it has told us is that 24 million Americans will lose their health coverage between now and 2024. In fact, it will go up by 14 million just in the first couple of years under this bill, which, again, after 7 years, we never got a chance to see it, but now we are finally getting that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes it is a little sort of too much to talk about these large numbers and top-line numbers. What I want to share with you and my colleagues and also anyone watching this speech is that the Kaiser Family Foundation, which is, again, one of the most respected healthcare, nonprofit, educational institutions in our country, has produced an interactive website which basically gives any American the opportunity to scroll across a map of America, find the county where you live, punch in what their income level and age is, and then compare the existing law with the American Health Care Act. Again, that website is kff.org/interactive/tax-credits. Again, kff.org.

I had an opportunity to use that website for my district in eastern Connecticut, a district I proudly represent, the home of the UConn Women Huskies and the home of the Groton submarine base, the oldest submarine base in America. What it showed is that, for people living in New London County, in

Windham County, in Tolland County, in Middlesex County, if you are 60 years old and you are making \$50,000 a year, you lose \$3,230—in terms of premium tax credits compared to existing law—in the proposal which, again, was finally unveiled 2 weeks ago.

If you make only \$30,000 a year and you are 60 years old, you lose \$5,850, a 59 percent reduction in terms of your income assistance to buy health coverage. Again, the prior number was 45 percent.

Unlike what Mr. Price said, this, in fact, is much worse off financially for people in those age groups and where they live. It is far worse off financially in terms of where they stand. In fact, it makes it impossible for people to afford health insurance.

That is why the Congressional Budget Office, looking at that kind of data, has made the conclusion that, if we pass this bill—and the vote is scheduled on Thursday—we will see, again, millions of Americans who will basically be priced out of the opportunity to buy health insurance.

And when you are 60 years old—as someone who is 63, I can tell you—that is not a good place to be in terms of your health status and the risk that you carry when you get older in life in terms of the need to be able to access healthcare coverage.

Mr. Speaker, it is that reason why, when you look at what the stakeholders that deliver health care in America—the American Nurses Association, the American Hospital Association, the AARP, and, finally, the American Medical Association—who have looked at this bill over the last 2 weeks, they have universally pleaded with Congress to block this measure, to slow down the rush to judgment which is going to deprive people of one of the most elemental, basic needs that all of us share.

We are not immortal. We are not immune to getting illness and disease. It

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is something that affects every single American.

To pass a bill which will wreak that kind of havoc, again, is irresponsible and takes this country in the absolute wrong direction.

So, again, I would plead with Members and I would ask anybody watching this speech, go to the Kaiser Foundation website, find where you live, think about your uncle or your children or people that you know in your neighborhood, and really plug in that data and information and think about what, in fact, we are being told is, in fact, a wonderful healthcare bill and something that won't hurt people and won't make them worse off financially. Again, the opposite is true. CBO is telling us this, the doctors are telling us this, the nurses are telling us this, the hospitals are telling us this, those who advocate for older Americans are telling us this.

Again, it is not too late. This vote is coming up on Thursday. It is time to listen to the people who are closest to the system and stop this rush to harming millions of Americans.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY

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

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, in recognition of National Agriculture Day, I rise to honor and thank the men and women who feed our Nation.

Agriculture is one of the most important sectors in our economy. It is cultivated and maintained by our Nation's farmers who rise before the sun every day and work long hours 7 days a week so that Americans can have safe, quality food to feed their families. It is not an easy job, but it is certainly an important one.

In order to fully honor and appreciate our farmers and their devotion to the agriculture industry, we must do more than recognize their hard work 1 day a year. We must also invest in and work to better the agriculture industry every day of the year. That is why, for as long as I serve in Congress, I will continue to meet with, work for, and advocate on behalf of our farmers.

Happy National Agriculture Day, and a huge thank-you to every American farmer.

CELEBRATING JEFF AMACHER'S 20 YEARS OF SERVICE WITH THE CENTENNIAL FIRE DISTRICT

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Jeff Amacher of Circle Pines, Minnesota, for more than 20 years of service with the Centennial Fire District.

Fighting fires and protecting Minnesotans is not an easy job, but it is one that is absolutely crucial to our community and the safety of our citizens. It takes a special kind of person to rush into a burning building and to put themselves in harm's way to save the life of another.

I commend Jeff for exuding such bravery over the past 20 years. I not

only would like to thank Jeff for his commitment to our community, but I want to congratulate him for being recognized for his brave work by the Circle Pines City Council.

Jeff, we wish you a happy and peaceful retirement spent with your family and friends. After a life of service, you deserve it.

RECOGNIZING U.S. BANCORP

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate U.S. Bancorp on being recently named the World's Most Admired Superregional Bank by Fortune Magazine. This is the seventh consecutive year they have received this honor, which is no small feat by any means.

U.S. Bancorp has also been recognized by Fortune Magazine for ranking among the top ten companies spanning across all industries for upholding four of Fortune's nine key characteristics of reputation. The characteristics that U.S. Bancorp has maintained include: quality of management, long-term investment value, use of corporate assets, and financial soundness.

Minnesotans can be proud of a Minnesota-based company that ranks as one of the world's best performers. This honor is undoubtedly due to the excellent work of the employees, as well as the extraordinary vision and leadership of those who run this fine company.

Congratulations on your incredible accomplishment.

RECOGNIZING THRIVENT FINANCIAL FOR HELPING MINNESOTANS ACQUIRE HOMES

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Thrivent Financial for this amazing organization's work to help Minnesota families acquire a home.

Thrivent Financial is a longtime partner of Habitat for Humanity. During the partnership, they have given more than \$2 million in grants to build quality low-income housing so that 24 families in our community could afford to buy a home. This year, Thrivent has given another \$66,000, which will be used to build the 25th home, this time for a family right here in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

As a result of their service to Minnesota families, Thrivent has been inducted into the Habitat for Humanity's Business Partner Hall of Fame.

I want to commend both Habitat for Humanity and Thrivent Financial on this excellent partnership, and thank them for their generous service to the residents of Minnesota.

RECOGNIZING RAY YOUNG AND CHARLES "BUCK" VANDERSTEEN

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

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two of my constituents, Ray Young of Wisner and Charles "Buck" Vandersteen of Alexandria, for their recent induction into the Louisiana Agriculture Hall of Distinction.

Since growing up on his family farm, Ray Young has dedicated his life and career to farming. After earning a degree in agriculture from Louisiana Tech and a master's in entomology from LSU, Ray went on to pioneer the stale seedbed conservation tillage system, known today as no-till, used across the South to enhance crop production.

In 1989, Ray presented to Congress an application to charter the Federal Land Bank of North Louisiana. He has served on the board of directors for the Federal Land Bank, as a board chairman of the Louisiana Land Bank, and as a leader of numerous State and Federal agricultural organizations.

Ray and his family still farm cotton, soybeans, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, corn, vegetables, cattle, hay, wheat, and pine trees.

He is a tremendous example of a Louisiana farmer making his life and a living off his land. His insight is always valuable to me when I am working on agricultural policy for our Nation.

Buck Vandersteen has spent 34 years presiding over the 4,000-plus members of the Louisiana Forestry Association, is a past president of the Southern Forest Heritage Museum and a past president of the National Council of Forestry executives.

During that time, Buck has helped pass the Forest Productivity Program to get part of the State's severance taxes distributed to forest landowners as cost share for replanting. It is recognized as one of the top programs in the Nation. He has been instrumental in advocating forestry education at the technical school and university levels so that we can have sustainable and productive working forests.

Buck continues to serve the forest industry today, and I look forward to working with him in my role on the Working Forest Caucus on behalf of foresters across the country.

Mr. Speaker, Louisiana is one of the top agricultural States in the Nation, and I am proud to serve on the Agriculture Committee here in Washington to represent our State's farmers, foresters, and ranchers.

But the real contributions to our State agricultural prowess can be traced back to folks like Ray Young and Buck Vandersteen, men who have spent their lives enhancing the industry that is so vital to Louisiana. Congratulations once again for being inducted into the Louisiana Agricultural Hall of Distinction. It is an honor that is well deserved.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 14 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.