



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2017

No. 53

House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 27, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JEFF DENHAM 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 would now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

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 1 minute p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SMITH of Nebraska) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Gracious God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

□ 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.



Printed on recycled paper.

In this moment of prayer, please grant to the Members of this people's House Your grace. Endow them with the gifts of wisdom and discernment, that in their words and actions they will do justice, love with mercy, and walk humbly with You.

In so many places in our world, there are people living with unrest and uncertainty, most especially in Syria and South Sudan. In our own country, there is great concern about the future of health care among our citizens. Bring comfort to all who live in fear of their lives and welfare into the future, and empower those who have the access and ability to be of meaningful assistance.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. MESSER) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. MESSER led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR THREAT

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the bizarre totalitarian re-

gime in North Korea continues to threaten American families and our South Korean allies by testing nuclear capabilities and intermediate- to long-range missiles. I am grateful that, this week, the House Foreign Affairs Committee will consider H. Res. 92, a resolution I introduced in February, condemning North Korea for their recent missile testing and calling for additional sanctions.

The committee will also consider H.R. 479, designating North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism, and H.R. 1644, to enhance sanctions with respect to companies and individuals doing business and enabling the regime in North Korea.

I appreciate the leadership of Chairman ED ROYCE and Ranking Member ELIOT ENGEL of the House Foreign Affairs Committee as we address the threat posed by North Korea, where its dictatorship has reduced its citizens to starvation.

Additionally, congratulations to the University of South Carolina men's basketball team and Head Coach Frank Martin on their victory at the Elite Eight last night in New York. I look forward to joining the rest of Gamecock Nation and cheering the Gamecocks in their first-ever Final Four participation on Saturday.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

OBAMACARE IS NOT OKAY

(Mr. MESSER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, Hoosiers don't like ObamaCare, and they have worked hard for 6 years to stop it: electing a Republican House majority, a Republican Senate majority, and, eventually, President Trump, all on the promise to repeal and replace this failed law.

That is what has made last week's failure to vote in the House so disheartening. It is inside baseball, politics as usual, and it is not okay.

It is not okay to the millions of families facing soaring premiums and worse health care under ObamaCare, and it shouldn't be okay to any of us. We cannot walk away now without even a vote with so much at stake.

This debate has gotten really complicated, but to me, it is really simple. We need to do what we said we would do: keep our promise to the American people, and repeal this failed law with something better.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 5 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 5 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1701

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee) at 5 o'clock and 1 minute p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

REQUIRING THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY TO SUBMIT A REPORT REGARDING EMERGENCY OR DISASTER ASSISTANCE APPLICANTS AND GRANTEES

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1117) to require the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to submit a report regarding certain plans regarding assistance to applicants and grantees during the response to an emergency or disaster, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1117

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. ACTION PLAN TO IMPROVE FIELD TRANSITION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) shall report to the Committee

on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate regarding the plans the agency will undertake to provide the following:

(1) Consistent guidance to applicants on FEMA disaster funding procedures during the response to an emergency or disaster.

(2) Appropriate record maintenance and transfer of documents to new teams during staff transitions.

(3) Accurate assistance to applicants and grantees to ease the administrative burden throughout the process of obtaining and monitoring assistance.

(b) MAINTAINING RECORDS.—The report shall also include a plan for implementing operating procedures and document retention requirements to ensure the maintenance of appropriate records throughout the lifecycle of the emergency or disaster.

(c) NEW TECHNOLOGIES.—Finally, the report shall identify new technologies that further aid the disaster workforce in partnering with State, local, and tribal governments and private non-profits in the wake of a disaster or emergency to educate, assist, and inform applicants on the status of their emergency or disaster assistance applications and projects.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA) and the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1117, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen firsthand in my district how disasters devastate communities and their citizens. In the aftermath of these disasters, while facing the devastation and the daunting task of recovery, many communities encounter even more challenges caused by FEMA, which has been sent there to help.

I continue to hear from my colleagues in Congress about conflicting guidance received from FEMA officials, who constantly change on the ground. I have heard stories of lost documents, lengthy delays, and huge administrative burdens placed on communities doing their best to recover from disasters. And in the worst cases, the guidance provided by FEMA results in the community losing disaster assistance.

Unfortunately, in Missouri, they have faced many of these challenges following floods in August 2013. Congresswoman HARTZLER has taken the lead to push FEMA to fix these issues by introducing this bill. I am proud that we are moving H.R. 1117.

One of my focuses as chair of the subcommittee is how we can make disaster assistance programs more effective and efficient and ensure the wise investment of taxpayer dollars. H.R. 1117 will certainly help us do that.

This legislation helps communities struggling to recover from disasters by improving transparency, consistency, and communication with FEMA. It also requires FEMA to leverage technologies to ease the administrative burden on local governments for maintaining documents, applying for assistance, and providing information to FEMA to speed recovery. The House adopted similar language last year when it passed the FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act.

Again, I commend the gentlewoman from Missouri for introducing this bill to ensure that those impacted by disasters are receiving accurate, up-to-date information about their assistance and the status of recovery.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1117 to require the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to submit a report on how it will improve field staff transition.

As the gentleman from Pennsylvania has explained, there has been a good deal of confusion with high turnover, repetitive and lost paperwork, and inconsistent guidance.

FEMA has implemented several new technologies to manage its full-time employees, but they have not made similar efforts for field and temporary disaster response personnel. It is time for FEMA to do so.

This bill requires FEMA to submit a report on how it plans to address the disaster workforce issues, their continuing inconsistent guidance, and keeping appropriate records.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER).

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask all of my colleagues for their support of H.R. 1117, the FEMA Relief Improvement Act, which will require the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, to refocus their efforts on the core of their mission, which is helping people recover from grave loss in the aftermath of a natural disaster.

In August of 2013, as the chairman and the ranking member mentioned, the southern portion of my district experienced a major disaster involving heavy flooding which devastated infrastructure, and it caused significant hardship for many of my constituents.

Unfortunately, the Federal recovery efforts to this devastated region added insult to injury. Local officials dealt with multiple uncoordinated teams conducting duplicative site visits due to lost paperwork, inconsistent messages between various survey and evaluation teams, and unnecessarily long