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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. WOODALL).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 28, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable Rob WOODALL 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.

SUPPORTING RECLAIM ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. JENKINS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, coal communities in my district and across America and across Appalachia are struggling. The war on coal has decimated many small towns and left thousands of hardworking coal miners without jobs.

Help is on the way—the RECLAIM Act, introduced by Congressman HAL ROGERS. I am proud to be a sponsor with him.

The RECLAIM Act will send \$1 billion in Federal funds to Appalachia to revitalize and diversify coal communities and to create new jobs. For West Virginia, that means nearly \$200 million over 5 years to invest in our coalfields. This money will allow us to redevelop abandoned mine lands, bring new companies and industries to West Virginia, and provide more jobs for our people.

Now, the RECLAIM Act doesn't mean we are giving up on coal. Far from it. Coal is our heritage and must play an important part in our State's future. But while we are bringing back our coal jobs, we must also look at how we can redevelop these former mine sites.

Many of these sites are currently sitting vacant, and our towns and counties just don't have the funds to redevelop these sites so that their job-creating potential can be unleashed. The RECLAIM Act will prioritize hard hit States like West Virginia and help employ hundreds of laid-off West Virginians to prepare these sites for new developments and new industries.

In addition, once these sites are open for business, new employers will create hundreds, if not thousands, of good-paying jobs. The RECLAIM Act can be and should be part of the solution to revitalize our coal fields.

I want to say thank you to Leader McCONNELL and Senator CAPITO in the Senate for their leadership on this measure as well.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues in both the House and the Senate to join us in supporting this important legislation and helping Appalachia.

SNAP-ED HELPS LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to highlight a pro-

gram that helps low-income families lead healthier lives through education.

SNAP-Ed works to help individuals who benefit from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP. It aims to help people make healthy choices within a limited budget and choose active lifestyles consistent with the current dietary guidelines for Americans.

As chairman of the Agriculture Committee's Nutrition Subcommittee, we have been examining SNAP and how we can improve it in the next farm bill. SNAP-Ed is an important part of this, and the results show that it works.

In my home State of Pennsylvania, 17 percent of people are living below the poverty line; 1.8 million Pennsylvanians are eligible for SNAP; 85 percent of Pennsylvania adults do not eat the recommended daily amounts of fruits and vegetables; and 14 percent of Pennsylvanians are food insecure, meaning they lack reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

Mr. Speaker, SNAP-Ed helps low-income families stretch tight budgets and bring home healthy foods from the grocery store. It teaches low-income families how to prepare nutritious meals.

SNAP-Ed is a \$400 million program awarded through Federal grants to State agencies. SNAP-Ed has the flexibility to work in schools, grocery stores, parks, even public gyms. SNAP-Ed offers many different forms of direct education and takes community input into consideration when developing education programs.

Another food education program authorized through the farm bill is the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. This program is an approximately \$68 million initiative operated through the Cooperative Extension Service of land grant universities. It delivers direct education via peer educators in a series of interactive hands-on lessons to improve four core

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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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areas: diet quality and physical activity, food resource management, food safety, and food security.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program tends to be less flexible in how it delivers services than SNAP-Ed, but it has the capacity to reach more people than SNAP-Ed because it operates in more areas, both urban and rural, across this country.

Mr. Speaker, both of these educational programs are helping low-income families lead healthier lives and make better choices when it comes to nutritious food. Through education we can help ensure that American families—especially children—learn about the importance of a balanced diet as part of a healthy lifestyle and the joy of preparing their own meals.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to strengthening these programs in the next farm bill so that we can continue to educate and serve American families.

CONCERN BREWING ABOUT NUCLEAR POWER PLANT CONSTRUCTION

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address concerns brewing in Lithuania and other Baltic States about the construction of a nuclear power plant. This plant is 12½ miles from the Lithuanian border and in sight of Vilnius, Lithuania's capital and largest city.

I speak here not only as a friend of the Baltic people and as a descendant of Lithuanian immigrants, but also as co-chair of the Baltic Caucus and chairman of the Subcommittee on Environment.

Like all my colleagues here, I am concerned about ensuring the security, integrity, and safety of nuclear projects in Europe and around the world. Here is the capital of Lithuania, Vilnius, and that is where the power plant is being built.

This site was first chosen during the era of the Soviet Union but was halted after the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, which contaminated a quarter of Belarus. Now, in 2019, Belarus is supposed to house a different Moscow-run nuclear power plant, this one run by the Russian state-owned company Rosatom.

This project is very environmentally sensitive. Both Lithuania and Belarus are signatories to the Espoo Convention. The Espoo Convention calls for member states to consult with bordering countries about such projects, to allow experts to review information about the projects, and to share information with bordering countries about safety and security of these projects.

Building a nuclear power plant is hard, especially when it is a country's first. That is why the International Atomic Energy Agency has recommended a six-step review process meant to prevent disasters like

Chernobyl's and the more recent one in Fukushima, Japan. But Belarus has chosen to skip four of the six steps, including crucial steps, and ignore the people in the land of Lithuania.

There is a real concern that the main purpose behind the project is to grow Russian influence and power, especially over energy, in the European Union. The President of Belarus said that the Astravets plant and another Russian plant are a fishbone in the throat of the European Union and the Baltic States.

Nuclear power plants in sensitive areas should be discussed within the Espoo Convention. Nearly all of Lithuania is within 186 miles of the plant, which means that, if a disaster were to strike, the land of Lithuania could be affected. The country's drinking water could also be affected since the plant is supposed to draw water from the Neris River that supplies drinking water to Lithuania.

But incidents are occurring that cast doubt on Belarus' commitment to working with neighbors and ensuring the plant is safe. In 2016, four accidents occurred, and Belarus has failed to be upfront with Lithuania about any of them.

A 330-ton nuclear reactor shell was allegedly dropped from about 13 feet last summer. Belarus did not reveal anything about the incident until independent media reported it, and then downplayed it.

Building a nuclear power plant requires care in construction according to the most stringent standards with the utmost transparency, and for the best reasons. This plant fails on all four counts. It is in the wrong location. It has been irresponsibly handled.

Instead of transparency, we have seen stonewalling and obfuscation. Instead of making the most economic sense, this plant seems to make good geopolitical sense—and for Russia, not for Belarus.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. No one here objects to the safe, secure design, construction, and running of a nuclear power plant. But the people of Lithuania are firmly opposed to irresponsible attitudes toward nuclear power, particularly so close to their most populous city.

This concern makes sense. As chairman of the House Subcommittee on Environment and long-time observer of Eastern Europe, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the people of the United States have no better friend than the people of Lithuania.

Lithuanians have the right and the responsibility to ensure their and their children's environmental security. They should not be expected to accept inadequate or misleading information about a serious, environmentally sensitive project right on their borders. The Government of Belarus should respect the commitments it has made, including with its neighbors.

Until these issues are resolved, Mr. Speaker, I cannot fault the Lithuanian

people for their concerns about the Astravets nuclear power plant. I share their concerns. I hope Belarus will calm their fears by allowing in international experts and representatives.

Belarus should also comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency's recommendations for the design, construction, and running of safe nuclear power plants.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 12 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. POE of Texas) at noon.

PRAYER

Rabbi Sanford D. Akselrad, Congregation Ner Tamid, Henderson, Nevada, offered the following prayer:

O source of wisdom, gathered before this august body, I ask Your blessings upon us.

Decisions impacting the fate of our country weigh heavily upon our leaders. They stand here with backs bowed, eyes turned downward, shoulders formed into an amorphous shrug.

I pray, therefore, that You will grant our leaders strength to stand tall.

With eyes raised skyward, seeing today, tomorrow, and the next, let them govern our country with compassion, courage, and insight.

Let them stand tall to give voice to those who feel unheard and presence to those too long ignored.

Let the pursuit of justice and mercy lift them with heavenly wings, closer still to Heaven than before.

Let them stand tall.
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 New York (Mr. HIGGINS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. HIGGINS of New York 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.