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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. COMER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 13, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JAMES COMER 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. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

AMERICAN SOLDIERS KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, sadly, I come to the floor to remind the Members of the House, as well as the American people, that three Americans were killed last week in Afghanistan: Corporal Dillon Baldridge, Sergeant William Bays, Sergeant Eric Houck. They were killed by the Afghans they were training.

Afghanistan is the biggest waste of life and money I have ever seen in my life. I have beside me two little girls who, at the time, lived in my district: Eden Baldridge and Stephanie Baldridge. Their daddy, Kevin, was sent from Camp Lejeune, which is in my district, along with Colonel Benjamin Palmer, who serves at Cherry Point, which is also in my district. They were sent to Afghanistan 3 years ago to train Afghanistans how to be policemen.

Well, the tragedy of this story is that Corporal Baldridge emailed his wife, Amy, and said: “Amy, I don’t trust them. I don’t trust any of them.” And the very next day, he was shot, along with Colonel Palmer, and killed.

Yet we in the Congress have never had a debate since 2001 on the future of America’s involvement in Afghanistan. That is why JOHN GARAMENDI and some on my side and his side—he is a Democrat—have put in a bill, H.R. 1668. All we are asking is that we have a debate. You can be for the bill that Mr. GARAMENDI and I have put in or you can be against it, but give us a chance to have a debate.

In 16 years, we have spent over \$850 billion, over 2,000 Americans have been killed and 20,000 severely wounded, yet it seems like the leadership in Congress does not understand that we have a constitutional responsibility, and that responsibility is to debate, especially when we are asking our young men and women to go overseas and give their life for this country.

Yet again, we have not had a debate since 2001. There are 300 members of Congress sitting on the floor today from both parties who were not here in 2001 and who have never been part of a debate on Afghanistan. I don’t know what else we can do. We have written the Speaker of the House individually, myself included, and as a group, Republican and Democrat, asking the Speaker to permit a new AUMF to get to the

floor of the House to have that kind of debate on Afghanistan.

Again, it is almost like it doesn’t exist, but it does exist when we bring bills to the floor to continue to spend billions of dollars over there. And John Sopko, the inspector general for Afghan reconstruction, has testified that waste, fraud, and abuse is worse in Afghanistan today than it was 16 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to say to the families of the three servicemen who I read their names—I will one more time—Corporal Dillon Baldridge, Sergeant William Bays, Sergeant Erick Houck: God be with you. We in the House of Representatives, both parties, send to you our sincere condolences.

I thank the good Lord that they were willing to give their life for this country. It is just a matter of why in the world do we continue to be in a country known as the empire of graveyards, since so many countries have been there and failed? And that is all we are doing, is failing, too, by wasting life and money.

THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HAS OVERSIGHT OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

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

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, the saga continues, and there seems to be no end in sight for the Trump administration’s growing legal and ethical problems. Every day another shoe drops, or at least another foot is inserted into the administration’s mouth.

The testimony of James Comey before the Senate Intelligence Committee last week showed us that this is no longer just a matter of foreign intelligence and the Russian meddling in American elections. While that is very important and we need to address the

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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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foreign intelligence and security aspects of that matter, the very important question of how we keep Russia from hacking our elections in the future, what is clear is that the investigations into the Trump administration are now matters for the Judiciary Committee.

The gentlewoman from California, Senator FEINSTEIN, and I were on CNN this weekend, and we made the point that the Judiciary Committee has the oversight responsibility for the Justice Department, therefore, it is time for the committee to do its job.

That was the theme of my speech here last week, and nothing has happened. It is also the reason I wrote to Judiciary Chairman BOB GOODLATTE last week to request that he take action, hold hearings, begin preparations for the hearings that will come—and they will come—because the silence of the Judiciary Committee has been deafening so far.

As soon as President Trump said on Friday he was willing to testify under oath 100 percent, I wrote Judiciary Chairman GOODLATTE to say the committee should schedule a hearing and take the President at his word.

Now, I don't think the chairman will invite the President, a man he campaigned for, because the role of the House Judiciary Committee right now is to protect the President at all costs, shielding the President from tough questions instead of representing the people's interest.

In doing so, Judiciary Republicans and House Republicans in general are getting deeper and deeper into bed with this President. You see, they have a whole agenda, and they are counting on this President to help them cut taxes for people with trust funds while cutting healthcare, education, child care, civil rights and voting rights for people who work for a living.

Mr. Speaker, the House Judiciary Committee ought to be in the middle of congressional examinations of the Trump administration, and so far they have been on the sidelines.

Is it no longer the practice of the House of Representatives to hold oversight hearings? Is it no longer the practice of this body to hold the executive branch and the White House accountable?

I have never seen an administration more in need of congressional oversight than this one, yet the Congress does not dare do anything that might cause the President to call someone out in one of his dawn Twitter rants.

We know that the administration has a policy now—this administration—of not cooperating with congressional oversight, instructing agencies not to comply with inquiries from members of Congress unless they are a committee chairman, all of whom happen to be Republican.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but the President and his administration are accountable to over 320 million Americans, all 435 Members of this body and

100 Senators as well, regardless of their party affiliation.

At least one senior senator called this policy opposing congressional oversight nonsense. To his credit, the Republican chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the Senate, Mr. GRASSLEY of Iowa, is not impacted by the Trump administration policy because he is a chairman, but he spoke out forcefully against the Presidential obstruction. See, my friends, that is how you do it, the way Mr. GRASSLEY did it. Follow his example.

And then there is our old friend, the former Speaker and an adviser to the President, Mr. Gingrich, who is now advising the President to terminate Mr. Mueller, the former FBI Director investigating the President and his subordinates, including the family members of the President. Mr. Gingrich said Mueller was a superb choice with an impeccable reputation for fairness just a couple of weeks ago, but now he says there is no way Mueller can be fair. He wants the President to fire Mueller and he wants a political fight against the very idea of special prosecutors.

Now, Mr. Gingrich has been joined in this chorus by a Trump confidante and golf buddy, the president of Newsmax, who says the President is contemplating firing Mueller.

Mr. Speaker, if you want to see the President on a fast track to impeachment, then he should take this advice and fire Mueller. If you want to see this President in the express lane to impeachment, no ifs, ands, or buts, then go for it. We dare you.

Even the Judiciary Committee, which has shown no interest in doing anything other than rubber stamping this administration's agenda, would be forced to take action.

VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT

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

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment and recognize an important piece of legislation that is scheduled for a vote on the House floor today, the Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act.

This bipartisan legislation will reform the VA by allowing the Secretary to fire underperforming employees, ensure appropriate protections for whistleblowers, and authorize the Secretary to directly appoint folks to critically important positions that need filled quickly. This legislation has already passed the Senate, and I look forward to its passage in the House, and to send it to the President for his signature this week.

Those that serve our Nation are honored heroes. Unfortunately, the VA bureaucracy hasn't always provided the care, respect, and honor they deserve. I look forward to this vote and to bring-

ing our valued veterans one step closer to the care they deserve.

KINSLEY, KANSAS, SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, last weekend I was honored to join the Kinsley, Kansas, Summer Food Service Program at the Kinsley-Offerle Junior-Senior High School. It always makes my day when I walk into a room filled with children I delivered in the past decade and their moms.

Like those programs in communities in my district and around the country, these folks serve free breakfast and lunch, and the program is sponsored by the school district. It is great to see this local partnership, this community coalition coming together to help their children.

We live in the most prosperous country in the world, where we have annually produced a tremendous abundance of food, yet it continues to amaze me that we have the level of hunger that we do, especially among our own children.

Good nutrition is too important for the development of these young minds not to ensure, through the communities and programs like these, that they are well fed. Whether you are in the largest ag-producing district in the country, like mine in Kansas, or a city on the coast, we have no excuses.

I thank programs like these for their role in raising a healthy generation.

NATIONAL TEACHERS HALL OF FAME

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, in the last 2½ centuries, 119 of our Nation's educators have tragically lost their lives while serving both their students and their communities, a terrible sacrifice they didn't expect when they followed their calling to help our young people.

The National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia State University, in my district, built a memorial honoring those who have lost their lives while pursuing their educational calling. Founded in 2014, the memorial was built to honor those who had taught students, ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade, and has now been expanded to honor fallen educators at all academic levels.

While the National Teachers Hall of Fame is regionally recognized, our country still lacks a national memorial for those that have lost their lives while serving our students. By recognizing this memorial, we don't have to spend a dime of Federal funding, but we have a place to remember these men and women.

I have introduced a bill, H.R. 2711, that will do just that. I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, the President tweeted the