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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. CARTER of Georgia).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 22, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable EARL L. CARTER 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.

HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, which will be considered on the floor this afternoon.

I proudly championed this bill, because I truly believe that passing it

will be a win for the American worker and for American families.

Mr. Speaker, America is ready for a win.

First, I would like to thank the House Education and Workforce Committee Chairwoman VIRGINIA FOXX and Ranking Member BOBBY SCOTT for their support in bringing this bill to the floor. I want to thank the Democratic lead, Representative RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHY; and my colleague and CTE Caucus co-chair, JIM LANGEVIN.

I also want to thank House leadership, including Conference Chairwoman CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS, Leader KEVIN MCCARTHY, Speaker PAUL RYAN, and Majority Whip STEVE SCALISE, who remains in all of our prayers for a full recovery.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation aims to restore rungs on the ladder of opportunity, because all Americans deserve a good-paying, family-sustaining job.

One of the biggest challenges facing career and technical education is the stigma, or the bias, associated with it.

Through the years, we have seen wrong-headed claims that students involved in the trades lacked ambition. These misplaced assumptions are slowly subsiding, but not soon enough. We have also seen students pushed down the college-for-all pathway that just doesn't work for some students.

CTE, or skills-based education, has established itself as a path that many high-achieving students choose in pursuit of industry certifications and hands-on skills they can use right out of high school in skills-based education programs or in college.

By modernizing the Federal investment in CTE programs, we will be able to connect more educators with industry stakeholders and close the skills gap that exists in this country. There are good jobs out there, but people need to be qualified and trained to be able to get them.

Mr. Speaker, we have all met young people who haven't been inspired in a

traditional classroom setting. We all know people who have lost jobs or are underemployed and are looking for good-paying, family-sustaining jobs. We all know people who are aspiring for a promotion, but keep falling short year after year. We all know people who are living in poverty. Maybe their families have been living in poverty for generations, for so long, they can't remember what put them there in the first place. This bill is for every one of these people.

We have heard the voices of those struggling to find the opportunities that they need to get ahead, the voices of those struggling to make ends meet. We have seen their frustration. Many are stuck in a job market that transformed quickly due to advancements in technology, and they have been left behind.

This bill will change that. It puts emphasis on advancing policies that promote good-paying jobs, and I look forward to the House passing it this afternoon. I urge my colleagues to support the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act so everyone from all walks of life can have the opportunity to succeed. It is the American way.

THE HYPE OF STATEHOOD FOR PUERTO RICO

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

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, so the ruling party in Puerto Rico staged an election, and they are very proud of the results. They say 97 percent of Puerto Ricans support statehood and that the United States should grant statehood right away because of it.

Yeah, they got 97 percent of the vote. That is pretty impressive; the kind of numbers that would make Putin jealous and Saddam Hussein green with envy if he weren't dead already.

□ 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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The reason why the statehooders got 97 percent of the vote was pretty much the same reason those two guys get 97 percent of the vote: only one political party participated.

All the other parties thought the election was so rigged and so predetermined for the outcome the sponsors wanted that they didn't even think it was worth participating.

The vast majority of Puerto Ricans agree. Only 23 percent of the people voted. Seventy-seven percent boycotted the election because they didn't think it was worth their time; and they were absolutely right, but I guess in the era of alternative facts and made-up statistics about how many people attend your inauguration, you can try to make a one-party vote of 23 percent of the people look like a mandate for statehood. But I am here to warn my fellow Democrats not to believe the hype for one second.

Those who are peddling the fantasy of statehood sometimes call themselves Democrats, but we should be aware of an elephant in donkey's clothing.

Let's look at leaders of the statehood party here in Washington. Our colleague, the Resident Commissioner who ran on the statehood ticket, is a Republican who caucuses with the Republicans here in the House. She is a proud supporter of Donald Trump and pals around with STEVE KING and other Members who we might say aren't too friendly to Latinos and Latino causes, much less the Democratic Party line.

The Governor's Washington, D.C., office is headed by a Republican, Carlos Mercader, who was appointed to the position by Governor Rossello after serving as executive director of the right-wing political organization called Latino Partnership for Conservative Principles, infamous for its constant bashing, yes, of President Obama.

That is who is pushing statehood in D.C., which makes me wonder why any Democrat would be embracing them, especially the chairman of the DNC, unless, of course, as the media reports, it is a payback for votes for DNC chairmanship.

And as for Governor Ricardo Rossello, leader of the statehood party, the "Democrat," his conservative record speaks for itself, even though he has only been in office for less than a year.

As a candidate, he sided with the bondholders and vulture capital funds and opposed any debt restructuring for Puerto Rico, saying that Puerto Rico should pay its debt in full to Wall Street speculators, in spite of massive cuts that that would entail for police, fire, health, pensions, roads, and schools.

He hosted, yes, a Democrat, the GOP Presidential candidate, Ben Carson; and the Governor opposes LGBT rights, including same-sex marriage, and opposes the teaching of gender equality in the schools.

Townhall, the uber conservative website, sees a kindred spirit in Gov-

ernor Rossello, the Democrat, praising him for his conservative approach to helping bondholders over schoolchildren. And the Governor has withheld his criticism of President Trump, which few Democrats are able to resist, and for Latino Democrats is darn near impossible unless you are just playing the Democratic role to get ahead.

When confronted with the obvious, that Trump has denigrated Mexicans as rapists and murderers, promised to build a wall to keep Latinos out, and sneered at Puerto Rico's desire for what Donald Trump called a bailout, Rossello responded, saying of the President: "My view is I don't know that he is anti-Latino. Obviously, I have heard some derogatory remarks, but I don't know him personally, and it doesn't deter me."

So instead of spending money to help children whose schools are closing, to fix roads that are falling apart, or to pay doctors enough to prevent them from leaving Puerto Rico and going to Florida, it seems the entire Puerto Rican government is now dedicated to pursuing the unlikely chance of statehood.

It is certainly useful as a distraction from what the Governor and his D.C. operatives are actually doing.

Mr. Speaker, I have said this before: I hope to be buried one day on that beautiful island of Puerto Rico. But when I am buried, I hope it happens in a free, sovereign nation that has thrown off the yoke of colonialism and dependence on an overseas master, just as this country did, the United States of America, the country in which I was born.

I look forward to celebrating the Fourth of July. In the meantime, I think it is important to warn my fellow Democrats that they should get no more in bed with the statehooders than with any other group of rightwing conservatives with an agenda.

THE HOUSE SHOULD DEBATE THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I am again on the floor to talk about a waste of life, a waste of money in Afghanistan. We have been there 16 years, and nothing has changed. Many of my colleagues agree with me that it is time to debate our country's longest war.

In response, I, along with JOHN GARAMENDI from California, have introduced H.R. 1666 in hopes of forcing that discussion. I am not asking for Members or leadership to agree with the bill itself or even vote for it, but I am asking that we be able to bring to the floor of the House the bill for the purpose of a debate.

We have not debated our role in Afghanistan since 2001. Members can either vote for or against the bill; just give the House a debate after 16 years.

Afghanistan is a failed policy. I would like to share a few sentences of an email I received this week from a great American, my friend and unofficial adviser, the 31st Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, General Chuck Krulak, regarding his thoughts on Afghanistan:

"Sixteen years we have been involved in Afghanistan . . . 16 years fighting in a country that has really never seen peace. Sixteen years with fluctuating troop strength—100,000 to 5,000—with no definition to who we are fighting—al-Qaida, Taliban or ISIS . . . you pick 'em—with no strategy, no strong reason for entering the fray, no real measure of effectiveness, no use of the five elements of national power, no support from the people themselves, a weak government, and no exit strategy, and fighting a war that is unwinnable in any real sense of the word."

Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing when the President, the Commander in Chief, abdicates the responsibility of increasing the number of troops in Afghanistan to the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Mattis.

There is more reason today than ever before to have a debate on the future of Afghanistan. That is the reason why Speaker RYAN should instruct committees in the House to come forward with a new Authorization for Use of Military Force.

Where is the Congress? Don't we have a congressional responsibility to debate war if we are going to send a parent's young man or woman to die for this country?

I think we do have that responsibility.

In closing, I am going to share another quote from General Krulak, the former Commandant of the Marine Corps:

"I go back to what I have always said . . . back years ago. Afghanistan cannot be viewed through the lens of a true nation-state or as a true country. It is fragmented . . . tribal . . . controlled by war lords, economically a basket case, no real government outside of Kabul, and that is questionable, a poorly organized and led Army who will shoot at Americans as well as the 'enemy,' and no sense of what the country wants to be. No one has ever conquered Afghanistan . . . and many have tried. We will join the list of nations that have tried and failed. Afghanistan is the origin of 'whack a mole,' whether it is al-Qaida, ISIS, or the Taliban. You can't beat them in a geographic area . . . they will just pop up someplace else."

Mr. Speaker, that is why many of us in this Congress, in both parties, feel that we have an obligation to our young men and women in uniform.

I have beside me a photo of a flag-draped coffin being taken off a plane at Dover. My question is this: How many more flag-draped coffins are we going to see when we increase the number of troops in Afghanistan without one word from Congress—not one word?