



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JULY 27, 2017

No. 127

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. GAETZ).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 27, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MATT GAETZ 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.

THE PLIGHT OF THE OROMO PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the plight of the Oromo people of Ethiopia. The Oromo are Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, with a population of more than 25 million, or 35 percent of Ethiopia's total population.

I speak here on behalf of one of my constituents, Ms. Seenaa Jimjimo, who is of Oromo descent. Ms. Jimjimo is the

president of the Coalition for Oromo Human Rights and Democracy. The coalition is dedicated to bringing the suffering of the Oromo people and other Ethiopians to the attention of Americans and the world.

She impressed me with her passion for defending the rights of her people, and that is why I bring this issue to the floor. Human rights in Ethiopia have been subject to deteriorating conditions for over a decade, with a sharp decline since 2014, making an already difficult situation even worse.

The Ethiopian Government has adopted laws restricting freedom of expression, association, and assembly, including rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Ethiopian constitution. These violations have been widely decried by numerous international bodies and nongovernmental organizations. Our own State Department has said the following about Ethiopia: "The most significant human rights problems included harassment and intimidation of opposition members and supporters and journalists; alleged torture, beating, abuse, mistreatment of detainees by security forces and politically motivated trials."

Free expression is curtailed by laws permitting the government to punish speech it disagrees with up to 5 years in prison.

In just 2016, security forces killed at least 1,000 and held more than 28,000 newly arrested persons in detention centers.

In the midst of the difficult situation for all Ethiopians, the situation for the Oromo people is particularly dire. The Ethiopian Government released the Addis Ababa Master Plan, which sought to expand the capital into the Oromia region. The plan would displace millions of farmers, carve Oromia into two regions, changing the livelihood of 36 Oromia towns and 17 districts by hurting the livelihoods and lives of the Oromo without consulting the Oromo.

The Oromo protests erupted in November 2015 in response. The Ethiopian Government admitted the use of excessive force. A Human Rights Watch report described interviews of hundreds of people who survived gruesome and inhumane acts by security forces. Even so, no one has been brought to justice.

According to the State Department report, the government also recently won what appears to have been a rigged election. The deaths of thousands of Oromos and other Ethiopians cannot bring a lasting solution to the country's mounting problems, yet the Ethiopian Government continues to receive money for its role in the Somalia and Sudan peacekeeping missions.

We must ask how long the United States should keep financing a regime that has received \$30 billion in foreign assistance since it came into power in 1991, and reportedly has stolen virtually all of it.

In honor of thousands of Oromo people who have been savagely murdered, injured, arrested, and have been victims of enforced disappearance, I now join my colleagues in cosponsoring House Resolution 128, which calls for supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia. This resolution sends a clear and strong message to the Ethiopian movement and government by letting them know that we keep a vigilant eye on the suffering that some minorities have been going through in recent years and the offenses that caused these sufferings.

Many Ethiopians who dare to speak up against the current government are being treated badly all across Ethiopia. Oromos are being singled out.

Consider the case of Bekele Gerba. He was arrested upon his return from the United States, where he spoke to several Members of Congress. Now he stands charged with terrorism, although after a year and a half, the government has been unable to produce a

□ 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.

H6469

single document to back up their accusation.

Even as the Ethiopian Government has admitted to arresting 28,000 people, there is reason to believe the number is closer to 80,000.

We must condemn violence against peaceful protestors, unlawful arrests, inhumane treatment, and the withholding of key human rights.

The Government of Ethiopia has an obligation to care for all its people, including the Oromo. As the United States, we should stand with the people of Ethiopia and help the Ethiopian Government return to the path of peace and democracy.

MAX PAGE SAYS CHILDREN'S HEALTHCARE NEEDS A BIPARTISAN SOLUTION

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

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, with all the political rhetoric, the finger-pointing, and the many versions of TrumpCare, hyperpartisan politicians often forget what this debate is all about.

It is about people, about relieving a person's pain and suffering, about giving a person a chance to live a healthy and happy life. It is about Max Page. Maybe you will remember him. Max was the mini Darth Vader from a Super Bowl commercial in 2011 who captured our hearts.

Max was born with tetralogy of Fallot, a rare and deadly congenital heart defect. Throughout his 12 years, Max has had more than 10 heart surgeries under the loving care at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. He lives every day with a pacemaker and an artificial pulmonary valve. Open heart surgeries are complex and very serious surgeries. They are tough on patients, with often a long recovery, and grueling for the family.

Max stopped by my office a few days ago to talk about his experience, and he told me: "I am going to have my condition all my life. I am going to have surgery as a constant commotion on my life. I just want to be covered. I don't want to have to worry about insurance and how I am going to pay these bills. I just want to focus on keeping myself healthy and not having to sacrifice everything for a surgery."

Max wants to play baseball. He loves Harry Potter, and he dreams of being an actor. Earlier this year, Max was in the hospital for treatments for an entire month. His mom, Jennifer, described how they were feeling bummed one day after such a long and arduous hospital stay. They decided to take a walk, and on their walk they met a boy Max's age named Will. Will is still in the hospital today. He has been there 9 months waiting desperately for a heart transplant.

Max told me how Will has spent every holiday and even his birthday in the hospital this year. Max wanted to do something for Will, so they had

these bracelets made. He named them "Will Power." They have Max's favorite verse on them. Max and Will connected. They developed a bond bound by compassion. Their hope for a normal life gave them strength and friendship, and Max promised Will he would bring the bracelets to Congress when they came.

Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Max and Will, that is my favorite verse, too.

Max is fighting to protect other kids like him and Will, people with a pre-existing illness, from losing coverage and having to pay more from facing a lifetime path on coverage.

He came to tell the stories of so many other children he knows from his many hospital visits. His message is simple: "Children's healthcare needs a bipartisan solution."

Max and Will and all the friends they have made in the hospital aren't rooting for Democrats or Republicans. They are fighting for their life and rooting for each other. They are children who want to get healthy, who want to stay healthy and care for one another.

We can all learn from Max's and Will's selfless courage to help others. Stop the hyperpartisan fight to score political points and start fostering a bond through compassion.

Let's find a way to protect healthcare for Max and Will. In the midst of this healthcare fight, we should take a moment to pause and remember that goal. Let's be like Max and think of others as we come together to find a bipartisan solution to address what isn't working, and remember Max's message: Children's healthcare, all healthcare, must and should be a bipartisan issue.

A TRIBUTE IN MEMORY OF PAMELA TODD MAY

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

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of a dear friend and advocate for eastern Kentuckians, Pamela Todd May.

Although her life tragically ended too soon, she lived with endless compassion for those in need, and abounding devotion to our region, the Pikeville Medical Center, the University of Kentucky, her husband, Walter May, her children, and all her family and friends.

Pam May lived with consummate elegance, always joyous in service, and loyal in deed. She faithfully dedicated more than three decades of service to the Pikeville Medical Center as a steadfast advocate for expanded access to quality healthcare in Kentucky's rural Appalachian region.

As founder of one of the most respected law firms in Kentucky, Pam was as trustworthy defender for the

people of eastern Kentucky and a voice for those who otherwise may not be heard.

One of the most recent examples of her endless and selfless service was her prompt action to help hundreds of individuals obtain medical records for Social Security hearings and honorable representation in the wake of emergency redetermination hearings by the Social Security Administration. She partnered with local attorneys and orchestrated hope for hundreds of families desperate for assistance while navigating through Federal hearings. Pam was a thoughtful leader you could rely on to stay steps ahead of everyone else.

My wife, Cynthia, and I mourn the loss of our treasured friend, yet we rejoice in the legacy of justice and compassion that she leaves behind.

Those of us who were blessed to know Pam must carry on her banner of hope and love for the people of our region. Mr. Speaker, eastern Kentucky is a better place because Pam May lived. If we could replicate her passion and drive, our future would undoubtedly be much brighter in the hills of Appalachia.

Mr. Speaker, Cynthia and I extend our deepest heartfelt condolences to our friend and confidant, Walter May, as well as Pam's mother, children, and extended family and friends who were honored to know and love her.

THE GOP'S FAILURE TO GOVERN

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, it is now 7 months since the start of the 115th Congress, and 6 months since Republicans have controlled all the levers of power of our government, and all we have seen are broken promises.

Donald Trump and our Republican colleagues in Congress ran on a platform that included healthcare for everyone, massive investments in infrastructure, tax reform, and a dramatic increase in jobs.

On all four of these, there has been zero progress, zero legislation sent to the President, and zero effort to work with Democrats to achieve any of those objectives.

Donald Trump promised voters that he would be "the greatest job President that God ever created."

□ 1015

Yet neither he nor the Republican congressional leadership have put forward a comprehensive jobs bill. Instead, he and his Republican allies in the Congress have proposed budgets that would slash investments in education, infrastructure, and research, all areas that directly help our economy create jobs.

In fact, jobs that the President claimed to have saved are going overseas. Forecasters are now predicting slower economic growth, and manufacturing average weekly earnings have