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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. BOST).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,

February 2, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MIKE BOST 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.

DON'T ROB VICTIMS OF CRIME

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, before I came to Congress, I spent my other life in the criminal justice system, first as a prosecutor in Texas, and then as a criminal court judge for over 22 years. I heard about 20,000 to 25,000 felony cases during that time, everything from stealing to killing. I saw a lot of people come to the courthouse, and most of those individuals did not want to be there. That included defendants, but it also included victims of crime.

Victims were people from all types of backgrounds. Mr. Speaker, they all had something in common. They were a silent group of people who were preyed on by criminals. After the crime was over, many suffered for years.

Finally, Congress came up with a novel idea, a law that established the Crime Victims Fund to support victims of crime. But instead of using taxpayer money for the fund, Congress had a different idea. Why not force the criminals, the traffickers, the abusers, and other folks to pay for restitution for the victims of crime. They inflicted pain and suffering on innocent people. They should be the ones to pay for that.

So in 1984, when President Ronald Reagan was President, he signed the Victims of Crime Act, otherwise known to us as VOCA. Because of this new law, convicted felons in Federal Court are assessed fees and fines and must pay into the Crime Victims Fund. The money in this fund is to be used for a wide range of victim services:

It establishes and takes care of domestic violence shelters, where spouses can hide from their abusers.

It establishes rape crisis coalition centers.

It promotes and sends money to victim advocates throughout the United States who go to court with victims of crime, especially violent crime.

It gives victims restitution and pays for critical medical and counseling programs.

It also goes to train police officers. It does a lot of good things and is wisely spent by the Angels of Compassion in victim services that help restore victims.

Over the years, because our Federal judges have continued to fine and assess greater penalties to criminals, the VOCA fund, as of today, holds approximately \$12 billion. That is a lot of money, even for Washington, D.C. What a wonderful idea.

And let me make it clear once again: This is not taxpayer funded money. Criminals paid for this. Criminals are paying the rent on the courthouse and they are paying for the system that they have created.

So what is the problem?

Well, the problem is, Mr. Speaker, only a fraction of that money is spent each year for victims, depriving them of needed services and that money. More money continues to go in the fund every year because less and less of a percentage of it is spent, thus, the \$12 billion.

Mr. Speaker, the fund, every year, is robbed, literally, by Congress to offset the costs of totally unrelated things, literally stealing money from the victims and sending that money to the abyss of the Federal Treasury to offset special pet projects. That money does not belong to Congress to spend on anything other than victims of crime. It belongs to the victims who have endured suffering and abuse.

Victims do not have a high-priced, high-dollar lobbyist to come up here to Washington and advocate on their behalf to get the money that they are entitled to. That is our responsibility, Congress' responsibility. They expect us to be their voice.

JIM COSTA from California and I are co-chairs of the Victims' Rights Caucus, and we believe the first responsibility of government is to protect the innocent, especially those robbed, pillaged, and sexually assaulted by crime.

Congress needs to quit stealing the money from victims and giving it to other projects. We must stop this robbing by bureaucrats, taking money out of the crime fund, so that we can ensure victims have access to the resources that they need to become survivors of crime.

To achieve this goal, Representative JIM COSTA and I have reintroduced the Crime Victims Fund Preservation Act. This bill creates a "lockbox" to ensure

□ 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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that money in the fund cannot be used for anything other than victims' programs authorized under the law of the VOCA statute in 1984.

Victims must be rescued and taken care of. The bill ensures the money that victims are entitled to is in a safe place from pilfering hands. Give the victims a fighting chance, and do not continue to victimize them more by taking restitution money from them. It is just wrong to play this financial ledger mumbo-jumbo that Congress plays every year to take money away from victims and give it to other projects.

Don't touch victims' money. It is just wrong, Mr. Speaker.

And that is just the way it is.

END HUNGER NOW

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, a recent USDA report on "Foods Typically Purchased by SNAP Households" has sparked conversation in the press and on Capitol Hill about ways to promote healthy eating among those who rely on SNAP benefits. Quite frankly, I am troubled by the way the report has been characterized and by some of the responses.

Flashy headlines and convenient sound bites selectively highlighting findings that tell only half the story are damaging to what should be our shared goal of ensuring that our most vulnerable neighbors have the support they need for their families. In fact, one of the key findings in the report is that the spending habits by SNAP households and non-SNAP households are very similar.

I think it is safe to say that all of us could be making healthier choices when it comes to the food that we eat. But if we want to talk about promoting healthy eating among those who rely on SNAP, we need to start by enhancing and making further investments in nutrition education programs, increasing access to healthy foods in underserved communities, and expanding pilots that have proven effective in increasing fruit and vegetable consumption. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we need to increase SNAP benefits so low-income families have the ability to purchase healthier foods.

Last Congress, the House Agriculture Committee completed a thorough review of SNAP—17 hearings. As ranking member of the Nutrition Subcommittee, I participated in each of these hearings, and we heard time and time and time again that the current SNAP benefit, which averages \$1.40 per person per meal, is inadequate. It is hard to buy a cup of coffee these days for \$1.40.

This meager benefit is often too low for families to stave off hunger during the month, and certainly does not provide enough support to allow families

to maintain healthy diets on a consistent basis. Without additional benefits, we know that people are making very difficult choices. They have to choose between food or medicine, between food for their families or stable housing.

Research from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has found that increasing SNAP benefits by a mere \$30 per month would lower food insecurity, decrease fast-food consumption, and increase vegetable consumption.

Similarly, USDA's Healthy Incentives Pilot provided SNAP recipients in Hampden County, Massachusetts, with additional benefits if they purchased targeted fruits and vegetables, and it was highly successful. The result was an increase in healthy food consumption. Participants in this pilot consumed 26 percent more targeted fruits and vegetables per day and spent more of their SNAP benefits on these items than did nonparticipants.

We know that low-income families who rely on SNAP have to make difficult choices in trying to stretch their meal budgets and often select cheaper foods that contain refined grains and added sugars and fats. This research from the Center on Budget and the results of projects such as the one in Massachusetts confirm what we know to be true: providing additional resources for food to families living in poverty will enable them to make healthier choices for themselves and their families.

We should not be demonizing the poor by policing their shopping carts, Mr. Speaker. It is far too easy and has become far too commonplace for those of us with steady incomes and paychecks that provide us with access to the healthiest foods to second-guess the choices of these families struggling to make ends meet. It is insulting and it is mean-spirited and more than a little hypocritical to suggest that we meal plan for those living in poverty while we continue feeding our families the same foods that some of us suggest we should limit in our antihunger programs.

Eating more nutritious foods should be a goal for all of us, Mr. Speaker. It will lead to better health, reduced medical costs, more engaged kids who are able to learn better, and also more productive adults.

But if we are going to promote healthier eating and work to end hunger now, we must start by increasing the current SNAP benefits. And I would say to any of my colleagues who dealt this: You try living on a SNAP budget. You try living on \$1.40 per person per meal. You will find it not only difficult to put food on the table, but especially challenging to make nutritious and healthy choices.

As we consider the next farm bill, let us enhance the SNAP benefit. It is the right thing to do.

MUSLIM BAN

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

Mr. GARRETT. Mr. Speaker, in 1947, Senator Arthur Vandenberg famously stated that politics stop at the water's edge. What that meant was that partisan fighting and attacks should cease when they compromise America's role in missions abroad and, indeed, when they compromise the safety and security of Americans abroad as well.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I sat in the Homeland Security Committee and heard over two dozen references from my esteemed colleagues across the aisle to a Muslim ban. When President Obama expanded its own screening for refugees for majority Muslim nations, he said it was because of "the growing threat from foreign terrorist fighters," and nary a peep was heard.

Our colleagues across the aisle said this Muslim ban will endanger Americans and serve as a recruiting tool to ISIS. Mr. Speaker, I agree, except there is no Muslim ban.

Talk of a Muslim ban makes Americans less safe at home, true; it makes Americans less safe abroad, true; and if politics stop at the water's edge and there is no Muslim ban, then why use partisan politics to perpetrate falsehoods that do just those very things.

Let's look at the facts:

Of the 2.3 billion Muslims on the planet Earth, 11 percent live in the countries named in Mr. Trump's executive order. Nine-tenths of 1 percent live in Syria, a single nation pulled out for heightened scrutiny.

The duration of the heightened scrutiny held to the Syrian refugee population is one-half that of the same action taken by Mr. Trump's predecessor, President Obama, as it related to Iraqis in 2011 when nary a peep was heard because politics are supposed to stop at the water's edge.

We hear questions: Does the President have a constitutional right to do this? I say, no, he has a constitutional duty to do this.

We look at Article II and see the clear and present danger clause. We hear the language of the Obama administration speaking of growing terrorist threats from abroad. We see in Article II and in the oath that the President takes that it is his duty to protect Americans from all threats, all enemies, foreign and domestic.

So what we know is that the executive order affects a scant 7 of well over 50 majority-Muslim nations. There is no religious test because it also affects millions of Christians living in these nations. It affects about 11 percent of the global Muslim population. There are exceptions granted.

We know that ISIS is using the refugee system to infiltrate Western nations. We know that first- or second-generation radical Islamists have killed over 70 Americans since Boston and wounded over 300 on U.S. soil.