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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. MIMI WALTERS of California).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
April 10, 2018.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MIMI WALTERS 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 8, 2018, 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 1:50 p.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

HIGHLIGHTING THE LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD YOUTH CHALLENGE PROGRAM

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

Mr. ABRAHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to highlight the Louisiana National Guard Youth Challenge Program, a wonderful program that is changing young people's lives and making Louisiana a better place.

Youth Challenge accepts high-risk students 16 to 18 years of age, and of-

fers them the education, training, and emotional support they need to finish their high school equivalency requirements, and gives them the life skills that they need to be productive adults.

These students face challenges completing their education in traditional classroom settings. Some come from troubled homes, some are victims of severe bullying, some have their own discipline and anger issues, some have fallen so far behind in the coursework that they feel they cannot finish, and some have already dropped out of high school. Youth Challenge offers them the second chance that they need to get back on the path to success.

The Youth Challenge Program lasts 17 months, 5 months of which are at residential sites. We have three camps in Louisiana: Camp Minden near Shreveport, Camp Beauregard in central Louisiana, and the Gillis Long Center near Baton Rouge.

While there, students learn from the structure and discipline offered by the military. They drill early in the morning and pursue coursework and job training in the afternoon. They also learn life skills and hear from motivational speakers and anti-substance abuse experts.

I recently had the privilege of speaking at a graduation ceremony in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and there are fewer things that are more inspiring than seeing the faces of these young people who have worked hard to turn their lives around and successfully complete the program.

Youth Challenge students also give back to the community. They complete at least 40 hours of community service that usually is focused on helping veterans, working with children, and volunteering with Special Olympics.

While Youth Challenge Programs exist in States across the Nation, none has been more successful than in Louisiana. According to the Louisiana National Guard, more than 1,400 students

graduate per year, which is more than any other State, and 83 percent of these pass the GED, which is the highest rate in the Nation.

After completing the program, graduates can continue their education, join the military, or get full-time employment. Many businesses in Louisiana recognize the value of these hardworking students and actively seek to employ them.

The Youth Challenge Program relies largely on Federal support, and it is an endeavor we in Congress should all support.

Youth Challenge is also asking Congress to consider pilot programs aimed specifically at job training and apprenticeship programs. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I look forward to discussing this request with my colleagues as we consider the fiscal year 2019 Defense Appropriations bill.

In conclusion, I want to thank the Louisiana National Guard instructors who give so much of themselves to this program and make it a wonderful success. It is because of their dedication that these students do have a second chance to succeed and become thriving, productive adult members of our society.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to seeing where the future of this program goes and the lives it has yet to change.

RECOGNIZING KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY'S KANSAS WHEAT INNOVATION CENTER

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

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to highlight my alma mater, Kansas State University, and the Kansas Wheat Innovation Center, which I had the honor and the pleasure of touring over this Easter work period. This

□ 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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center works to strengthen the productivity of farmers both in Kansas and around the world.

The Wheat Innovation Center is the result of a public-private partnership. It was built in 2011 by the Kansas Wheat Commission, a grower-funded organization that promotes Kansas wheat through increased international trade and research.

The innovation center now encompasses 15,000 square feet of advanced plant breeding space and 20,000 square feet of greenhouse space dedicated to advancing wheat genetics.

In addition to the innovative center, Kansas State is also home to four Feed the Future labs, the most of any university in the country.

Feed the Future labs are funded by USAID and are focused on supporting research and land-grant universities to grow the agricultural production of target countries. Much of that research is tasked with improving the resilience and adaption of crops in arid climates, a climate not unlike that of Kansas.

As the global population rises to 8 billion people by 2030, the technology developed by partnerships like the one in the Kansas Wheat Innovation Center will only become more essential. We must continue to be proactive in the fight to end global hunger by pooling resources to strengthen agriculture for developing countries abroad and our own Kansas farmers at home.

The collaboration and leadership shown by Kansas Wheat, Kansas State University, and the Feed the Future innovation labs is a blueprint for finding solutions to feeding our growing world and improving the global food system.

INVESTING IN OUR COUNTRY AND OUR INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVES

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam Speaker, rural America is poised to reignite into an economic powerhouse, but its low population density and wide-open spaces have proven difficult for some businesses to operate, given its often outdated infrastructure.

Without Federal incentives to help bridge the financial gap, many rural American businesses struggle to access the same services as their urban counterparts at comparable prices.

This Congress recently made a more than \$21 billion downpayment to improving our country's aging infrastructure.

While back in Kansas, I had the opportunity to sit down with a number of industry and community leaders from across the State to discuss how these investments will benefit our schools, businesses, and farmers.

From broadband deployment to highway and railway maintenance, community leaders could not stress enough the importance that this funding will have for economic development. Improving our infrastructure, highways, and railways will allow easier movement of Kansas agriculture and aeronautical products to ports for export.

With broadband expansion, our rural students will have the resources they

need to compete with students across the country when they apply to the college of their choice. It will allow farmers and ranchers to better monitor equipment and utilize new technologies for precision agriculture and provide businesses access to new markets for their products.

All in all, I cannot stress enough how encouraged my constituents are because of our latest promise to invest in our country and our infrastructure initiatives. This funding will truly help rural America thrive, and I look forward to continued discussions on this here in D.C., as well as back home.

WELCOMING THE NATIONAL GROCERS ASSOCIATION TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to welcome the National Grocers Association to Washington, D.C., this week for their annual fly-in.

Our grocers have a tremendous impact on our communities throughout the country. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania alone, food retailers provide more than 220,000 jobs, have an output of \$15 billion, and a total economic impact of \$39 billion.

As the House Agriculture Committee continues to move forward with the farm bill, it will be important to our grocers, who provide food to American families.

Over the past 3 years, the Agriculture Committee has hosted 21 hearings on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, and has heard from more than 80 witnesses.

SNAP and other Federal nutrition programs are vital to ensuring that all Americans have healthy foods within reach, whether low income populations, the elderly, or those living in areas with strained access to nutritious food.

We will continue to identify ways to work alongside State and local organizations to help provide safe and nutritious food for those who need it most.

One of my primary goals with SNAP is to ensure that those who truly need the assistance when falling on hard times continue to have access to this critical program.

Limited access to supermarkets and grocery stores with nutritious fresh foods can be a challenge in both rural and urban communities. We know them as food deserts.

According to USDA, to qualify as a low-access community, at least 500 people and/or at least 33 percent of the population must reside more than 1 mile from a supermarket or large grocery store. For rural areas, the distance is more than 10 miles.

I know from personal experience the value of Federal assistance, particularly WIC, when times do get tough. I

have also seen the value of obtaining an education and ultimately finding a career path.

Unfortunately, too many Americans at the poverty level are caught in a cycle. We want to change that cycle by providing a workforce solution and necessary supports, walking with individuals on their pathway to self-reliance and success.

The House farm bill makes a significant, even historical, investment in SNAP employment and training to equip States with resources to arm participants with the soft skills, the job search skills, certifications, and education needed to succeed in today's economy.

But to ensure this investment yields results, we are also making these work requirements mandatory. We have a unique opportunity to expand funding for these life-changing programs by closing loopholes only utilized by certain States, and improving opportunities for individuals who have been marginalized by a lack of employment, education, or life circumstances.

For nearly 80 percent of the SNAP recipients—children, seniors, and the disabled—these requirements won't change anything. For those who rely on SNAP and will continue to do so, we want to ensure that they have access to the array of foods that benefit their health and their well-being.

Our bill allows retailers to expand the purchasing power of recipients via incentive programs, and we are also expanding or enhancing current incentive and nutrition education programs to improve diet quality and awareness.

We want to emphasize the importance of consumer choice and the impact SNAP has on our communities and families.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate having our Nation's grocers in town today, and I look forward to continuing the Agriculture Committee's good work on the next farm bill. After all, farmers feed and nutrition matters.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

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

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

Reverend Sam Smucker, Worship Center, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, offered the following prayer:

Our Heavenly Father, thank You for Your goodness to our Nation, giving us