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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. BACON).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,

April 11, 2018.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DON BACON 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 11:50 a.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

MY COMMITMENT TO DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION AND THE RULE OF LAW AS A CITIZEN OF THIS NATION

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

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, the President said to reporters at the White House on Monday: "And it's a disgrace. It's, frankly, a real disgrace. It's an attack on our country, in a true sense. It's an attack on what we all stand for."

While I agree that there has been a disgraceful attack on our country, I

don't think it is the investigation that is closing in on the President, but rather his disgraceful reaction to it.

We now know, without any doubt, that the special counsel's investigation is closing in on the President and those very, very close to him. I don't think lawful warrants legally executed against the homes, office, and hotel rooms of the President's chief fixer and fellow grifter are the problem.

Rather, it is the constant threats to further obstruct justice by a sitting President, to thwart those lawful investigations from reaching their logical conclusions. That is what I and a lot of patriotic Americans are worried about.

What we find disgraceful is the President's attitude toward law enforcement and the circumstances that have led us to this moment, including the apparent dealings with the Kremlin, the campaign finance violations, the hush money payoffs to silence witnesses, and using one's elected office to influence and even try to end an investigation in which you are the target.

When he is the target, it is called disgraceful.

Before we left for the Easter break, Democrats on the Judiciary Committee made a commitment that we would be on the first plane back to Washington to initiate hearings if the President took action to further obstruct justice, including firing the Attorney General for recusing himself or the deputy attorney general or the special counsel.

The President reiterated his threats to subvert justice by firing key Justice officials this week. So I feel obligated to reiterate my commitment to defend the Constitution and the rule of law as a citizen of this Nation.

Let's be clear. Republicans have no intention of investigating, holding hearings, or taking seriously their constitutional mandate, no matter how far this President goes.

When athletes kneel during the national anthem or the former President

wears a tan suit or salutes a marine while holding a cup of coffee, that is a constitutional crisis. But when the President threatens to fire the special counsel, well, you know.

We cannot rely on Republicans to defend democracy and our system of government as long as they find political and personal advantage in walking lockstep with the President, or they tremble in fear of what would be in a tweet if they stepped out of line.

And we as Democrats, well, we are in the minority, so we are almost powerless unless some of our fellow colleagues put country ahead of party.

But human beings are very resourceful and fight fiercely for their own freedom. When we are united in great numbers, we can accomplish any goal.

In Selma and elsewhere, Dr. King and others showed us that beatings, lynchings, and State-sanctioned discrimination could not withstand the power of the people fighting for justice and equality.

In turn, they inspired, in part, the resistance known as the Prague Spring in Central Europe, when people stood up to tanks and repression, and eventually the wall came down.

In Africa, the Americas, Asia, and across the Arab world, people are still fighting to secure their freedom.

And in China, the image of a lone man standing up to tanks to defend his country moved the world.

One man standing up will not be enough, but many American women and men are already heeding the call. Young people from Parkland, Florida, called us to Washington by the millions, despite viscous attacks.

Women led the way by the millions in Washington and around the world.

And when our Muslim brothers and sisters called us to the airports to oppose Trump's religious ban, we came in numbers.

We have to be ready to come to Washington quickly, massively, energetically, in huge number when the

□ 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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shoe drops. We have to answer the call to defend the country we all love, and we must be unified as Americans.

My fellow Americans, we must be ready to stand up again and again and answer the call when our Nation is under attack and threatened by a tyrant. Together, the American people can fight petty disregard for law and order, the data-driven divisiveness, and media manipulation to defend the country we love.

To do so, we must be ready and we must be together.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

RECOGNIZING THE PATRIOTISM AND GENEROSITY OF AL KATZENBERGER, JR.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the patriotism and generosity of Al Katzenberger, Jr., a true friend to southern Illinois and its veterans.

After Memorial Day last year, a thunderstorm blew through Mound City National Cemetery in Pulaski County.

The 50 cotton flags that make up the Avenue of Flags of the cemetery were no match for the 70-mile-per-hour winds. Every flagpole was destroyed at this center of pride for our local community.

Upon hearing the news, Alfred, who served in the U.S. Navy for over 40 years, decided to take action. He donated 50 new flagpoles worth over \$12,000.

It is selfless acts like this that help make our community stronger.

To Alfred, we say: Thank you for your decades of service to our Nation and your continued dedication to honoring our Nation's veterans.

REJECT SNAP CUTS IN THE FARM BILL

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, the farm bill should be about helping our farmers and strengthening our food and nutrition programs. It shouldn't be about beating up on poor people.

As the House Agriculture Committee prepares to mark up the 2018 farm bill, I rise to express my deep concern and my outrage with reports that Republicans on the committee are considering drastic cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program known as SNAP.

Press reports indicate that the majority intends to dismantle the core function of SNAP to pay for a huge, new, untested bureaucracy, while cutting and even eliminating benefits for

millions of the most vulnerable Americans, including seniors, older workers, individuals with disabilities, working families with children, and other struggling adults.

We are still awaiting the full details on the plan, which was crafted behind closed doors without any input from Democrats on the committee—I am not even sure any input from Republicans on the committee. But this is what we have learned: that the Republicans intend to focus their cuts in three areas.

First, we are hearing Chairman CONAWAY's bill will eliminate broad-based categorical eligibility, an important State option that helps working families with kids and seniors qualify for benefits when times are tough.

More than 40 States currently implement this option, which allows them to raise income cutoffs and ease asset limits.

Broad-based categorical eligibility also mitigates any cliff effect, albeit small, that exists in SNAP, and eliminating it would penalize families from accruing modest savings to help lift themselves out of poverty.

Estimates suggest that at least 400,000 eligible households will lose their SNAP benefits if broad-based categorical eligibility is eliminated, and 265,000 students will lose access to free lunches at school.

I mean, really?

Mr. Speaker, this is shameful.

We are also reading that the Republicans are looking to cut benefits for households with out-of-pocket utility expenses by disconnecting the link between SNAP and the Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program known as LIHEAP. Doing so will require those with utility expenses to produce the actual bills for each expense rather than receiving a standard allowance. It will force the elderly, it will force people who are disabled and working families to make another trip to the SNAP office and cut benefits for those who are unable to produce the receipts.

Mr. Speaker, we expect that this proposal will cut benefits by at least \$6.6 billion.

Lastly, we have heard the Republicans intend to focus much of their damaging proposal on harsher work requirements that target vulnerable groups of adults who do not have children or other dependents, known as ABAWDs.

We are reading that the Republican majority is proposing to develop a massive new bureaucracy and subject 3 to 5 million vulnerable Americans to new mandatory work requirements.

I want to remind my colleagues that the ABAWD population is diverse. Many have limited access to education, with more than 80 percent having no more than a high school education or a GED. Some have mental health issues, difficult histories of substance abuse, or are ex-offenders with nowhere else to turn. And as many as 60,000 of them are veterans who have served our country.

These childless adults on SNAP are often extremely poor and sometimes experience chronic homelessness. They turn to SNAP as a safety net when they lose their jobs, their hours at work are cut, or their wages are so low that they are unable to make ends meet.

Under current law, ABAWDs are already subjected to severe time limits on the program. They are only provided access to benefits for 3 months out of a 3-year period and are completely cut off from assistance after that time if they have not been able to find work.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress should be committed to helping people who are living in poverty and working to help make their lives easier, not cutting them off from assistance when they most need it.

Estimates suggest that as many as 1 million people will lose assistance if these incredibly damaging work proposals advance.

The House Agriculture Committee held 23 hearings on SNAP over the past several years. I attended every single one. We heard testimony from dozens of witnesses, Republicans and Democrats alike; and not one witness, not one, Mr. Speaker, suggested that we make the drastic changes to the program that will cut off those most in need of assistance, let alone the ones whom the Republican majority are advancing.

Quite frankly, I don't know where these ideas are coming from, maybe some rightwing think tank, but they are certainly not coming from the Agriculture Committee.

Let's be clear about what is happening. Speaker RYAN made clear a few weeks ago that he views the farm bill as a key piece of his misguided welfare reform agenda. And just yesterday, President Trump issued a new executive order aimed at forcing SNAP recipients off of assistance.

The Republican farm bill isn't about trying to help people. It is about politics and it is about appeasing the rightwing of the Republican party. It relies on negative stereotypes to advance the goal of undermining our safety net programs and cutting people off of help who need it most. It is disgusting.

Mr. Speaker, I plead with you, I plead with Chairman CONAWAY and Republicans in this Congress to stop this attack on those who are living in poverty. SNAP is an important program. It is about providing people food, and I urge my colleagues on both sides to reject any and all proposals that will undermine this important program.

Mr. Speaker, the war against the poor must stop.

CELEBRATING NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK

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