

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

REPEAL MEDICAL DEVICE TAX

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

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the burdensome medical device tax. Originally passed as part of the Affordable Care Act, this ill-conceived tax places a 2.3 percent sales tax on manufacturers of medical devices.

Although Congress successfully suspended the tax, it, unfortunately, went back into effect on January 1, 2018, and is beginning to derail much of the progress we have made to foster job growth and innovation.

The medical device industry has a significant impact in my State's economy. It employs more than 4,000 individuals. Merit Medical Systems, Inc., a local Utah company, believes this tax could cost them over \$7 million, having a devastating impact on their ability to expand jobs and continue medical research.

The current situation is a lose-lose for everybody. Not only does it increase medical healthcare costs, the tax is stifling job growth of our best medical technology innovators and slowing the cutting-edge research that leads to breakthroughs in patient care and treatment.

Surely, we can do better for the American people. I call upon my colleagues to join me and, together again, repeal this tax once and for all.

MEDICAL DEVICE TAX BURDENS HOOSIERS

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

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, after a 2-year delay, one of the worst parts of ObamaCare went back into effect at the first of this year. The medical device tax prevents Indiana companies from innovating, expanding, and hiring. This tax was created when ObamaCare was created, and that result has been a burden for the tens of thousands of Hoosier workers all over the State, including those in Warsaw, Bloomington, Mishawaka, and Indianapolis. It must be repealed.

This tax is bad for patients because it drives up the cost of much-needed medical devices, and it is bad for workers because it makes America's medical device industry less competitive around the globe.

Fortunately, this week, some relief may soon be on the way. After weeks of debate and a lot of work, the government funding bill we are voting on this week would provide immediate relief by repealing the medical device tax for another 2 years.

This result will be good for Hoosier workers and good for Indiana's econ-

omy. In the long run, repealing the medical device tax will provide certainty in the marketplace and help keep good-paying jobs in Indiana.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the 2-year repeal of the medical device tax in the bill this week, and then continue working to find a long-term solution by permanently repealing the medical device tax.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE ELECTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, the Western Hemisphere is set to see many key Presidential, parliamentary, and municipal elections this year, and those will have far-reaching implications.

Sadly, one place where we know we won't see elections is in my native country of Cuba. The Cuban people continue to be denied the right to choose their own leaders. The system in Cuba is a farce. The President of Cuba—using that term loosely—is selected by the National Assembly, and the National Assembly is selected by the regime in what can only be described as a circle of corruption.

Raul Castro claims that he will step down and allow for a transition of power in April. The reality is, even if there is a so-called transition, the balance of power will remain with Raul Castro and the Cuban people will continue to suffer.

The U.S. must not give Castro any concessions until we see the regime meet the basic conditions laid out in our laws, U.S. law. We want to help the people of Cuba work toward freedom of expression; freedom of assembly; and free, fair, and transparent elections.

Then there is Castro's protege in Venezuela: Maduro. Venezuela is set to hold elections this year, but with Maduro in power, there is little that we can expect. Even if elections are held, Mr. Speaker, we know that it will be a fraudulent process, just as the municipal elections were last year.

Maduro's grip on the supreme court and the supreme electoral tribunal make it impossible for the voice of the people to be heard. The administration has, thankfully, taken action against Maduro regime officials, but there is so much more that we can do, Mr. Speaker. There is a severe food and medicine shortage in Venezuela as a result of Maduro's failed and oppressive socialist policies.

That is why ELIOT ENGEL and I introduced and the House passed last month the Venezuelan Humanitarian Assistance and Defense of Democratic Governance Act. Our bill mandates a strategy from the USAID to provide humanitarian aid to the people of Venezuela. The bill also aims to fight widespread corruption among Venezuelan govern-

mental officials. I hope that our colleagues in the Senate will take action and pass this measure so we can get help to these individuals rapidly.

Mr. Speaker, Brazil is another country that has important Presidential elections this year. With public opinion at an all-time low, increasing public debt, and high-profile corruption allegations reaching the highest levels in Brazil, the country is at a crossroads.

In December 2016, the Department of Justice reached a plea agreement with Brazilian conglomerate, Odebrecht, for at least \$3.5 billion in global penalties to resolve charges of bribery and what has amounted to be the largest case of its kind in history.

Last January I wrote a letter to then-Attorney General Lynch urging the DOJ to disclose the names of the officials referenced in the Odebrecht case. I again followed up this month, but, unfortunately, the Department of Justice will not disclose the names of officials in Latin America that it knows to have been involved in these corruption schemes. It is very troubling because many of these officials could very well be standing for elections in the region this year.

Mr. Speaker, we worked so hard over the years to help root out corruption in these countries, and it would be a shame to set progress back if these corrupt officials are allowed to continue to act with impunity.

We will also see critical Presidential elections in Colombia this year. Colombia is still at a pivotal point in the aftermath of the failed agreements between the government and the terror group, FARC. Colombia still has a way to go in bringing justice to the victims of the FARC. With members of the FARC, a terror group, aspiring to government positions, I worry that FARC terrorists will soon be elected officials. Their so-called peace deal allows these terrorists to run for public office.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, this year will be a crucial year. It is crucial for the United States to be engaged and for election observation missions to monitor the electoral process closely to ensure that they are indeed free, that they are fair, and that they are transparent.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 42 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Lord God, architect of the universe and advocate for us all, thank You for giving us another day.

When we rise from sleep, activities of the day stir the mind. Having a job to fulfill sets us into routine as a people with purpose.

Daily work, O Lord, invites us to demonstrate responsibility and manifests our participation in Your creative power. Mind and body together become engaged in productivity, sustenance, or service beyond ourselves.

Because human work bestows a special dignity upon a person and is a way to achieve a just society, we know how important it is for us to pray for the unemployed and those who work but still struggle to make ends meet.

Bless the work of Congress today. May this chosen labor be creative, prove responsible, and have lasting results to the benefit of our Nation. And may all that is done be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Oregon (Ms. BONAMICI) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. BONAMICI led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Gabrielle Cuccia, one of his secretaries.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

THE MARCH FOR LIFE

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this very Nation was founded upon the belief that all men are entitled to the most precious right to life. It is a right that I fought to defend in the United States Air Force, and it is a right I continue to defend in this United States Congress. That is why, this week, I will proudly vote in support of the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act.

It is my hope folks across the country are brought together with the uplifting message that life is a blessing.

RESCINDING THE COLE MEMO

(Ms. BONAMICI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, I am deeply disappointed that the Department of Justice is ignoring States' rights and encouraging the prosecution of small cannabis businesses, many of which are in Oregon.

Earlier this month, the Department of Justice rescinded the Cole memo, which had provided Federal guidance to discourage prosecutors from charging individuals and businesses with Federal marijuana-related crimes in States where marijuana is legal. Oregon is one of those States.

Today, more than 700 small cannabis businesses operate across the State, where, like with alcohol, marijuana businesses are licensed, regulated, and taxed. These small businesses follow State law, create jobs in their communities, and pay taxes, yet now their livelihood is threatened because this administration wants to revive the futile war on weed.

This is absurd, especially when the Department of Justice should be putting its efforts and its resources into the extremely dangerous and addictive heroin and fentanyl.

Our small cannabis businesses should not be jeopardized by this misguided Federal policy. The voters have spoken. Their will must be respected.

PEMBROKE, NORTH CAROLINA, 2017 SMALL TOWN OF THE YEAR

(Mr. PITTENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTENGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Pembroke, North Carolina, named 2017 Small Town of the Year by the North Carolina Rural Assembly.

Pembroke, population 3,000, is home to the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, as well as the Lumbee Indian Tribe, two wonderful organizations with whom I am actively involved.

Much of southeastern North Carolina has been decimated by poorly negotiated international trade deals and the loss of traditional industries. Pembroke is fighting back by participating in a first-in-the-Nation innovation and entrepreneurship program and is working to build its economy by focusing on healthcare, construction, and agribusiness.

Congratulations to Mayor Charles Gregory Cummings, Council Members Locklear, Jones, Sampson, and McNeill, Town Manager Tyler Thomas, UNC Pembroke Chancellor Robin Cummings, Lumbee Tribal Chairman Harvey Godwin, and the entire Pembroke community on this outstanding achievement.

WE MUST FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, in 2017 alone, there were 16 extreme weather and climate events that devastated the United States and its territories, including Hurricane Harvey, which ravaged my great State of Texas and brought Houston's third 500-year flood in 3 years. Since 2006, the contiguous U.S. has experienced five of the warmest years on record. Year after year, new temperature and weather severity records are broken.

As researchers attempt to answer why this is occurring, it has become clear that there is a link between the severity of these events and human-caused climate change. Last year, in a study published by Nature magazine, scientists concluded that the frequency of extreme weather events in the Northern Hemisphere were amplified by anthropogenic climate change.

It is time to face the fact that climate change is real and admit that we are directly contributing to it. We must continue to find innovative ways to address this challenge before it is too late.

I will continue to speak out in support of all research that furthers our understanding of our planet's climate and helps identify ways of reducing the harmful impacts on it.

RECOGNIZING DR. TIMOTHY M. BLOCK

(Mr. FITZPATRICK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my constituent Dr. Timothy M. Block, president of the Hepatitis B Foundation, Baruch S. Blumberg Institute, and the Pennsylvania Biotechnology Center in my district in Doylestown, Pennsylvania.