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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. ESTES of Kansas).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 18, 2018.

I hereby appoint the Honorable RON ESTES 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.

FUND OUR TROOPS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, here we are again, having to vote on a continuing resolution instead of a full-year appropriations deal because of political reasons.

Mr. Speaker, I am appalled that much-needed defense dollars are once again being held hostage for political reasons. We have heard time and again from military leaders about the devastating readiness crisis plaguing every

corner of the military. We have planes that cannot fly, troops that cannot deploy, and we are literally running out of bombs.

It is irresponsible and morally wrong to send our troops into harm's way without adequate resources and training. Last year alone, there were 80 deaths related to readiness and training accidents. It is clear that insufficient and unreliable funding is wearing our military to the bone and costing precious lives.

As Members of Congress, we have the power of the purse. We can relieve the military from this deadly cycle. I call on my colleagues to end the political games. Support the men and women in uniform who risk their lives every day to defend this country. Support a budget agreement that provides our servicemembers with the funding they so desperately need.

SYRIA: ENOUGH ALREADY

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to condemn in the strongest possible terms the ongoing, unrelenting attacks against civilians in Syria committed by the barbaric, lawless regime of Bashir al-Assad, with Russian backing.

We have all heard the statistics over and over again like a broken record: as many as half a million people killed since the armed conflict began in March 2011, tens of thousands of them civilians; tens of thousands more detained, disappeared, and perhaps, or even likely, dead, directly at the hands of the regime; more than 11 million people displaced once and again, inside and outside of Syria's borders, the largest single refugee crisis the world has seen since 1945. More than half of those displaced are children and youth.

Last summer, much was made of the cease-fire agreement that the Trump

administration reached with the Russian Government to establish "deescalation zones" to stabilize Syria, while keeping the Assad regime in power.

We were told the agreement would save lives. Trump said: ". . . all of a sudden, you are going to have no bullets being fired in Syria. . . ."

Well, that has turned out not to be true. The deescalation zones are not deescalating.

As of late December, more than 400,000 people remain trapped, besieged by regime forces in eastern Ghouta, one of the deescalation zones, only half an hour's drive from Damascus.

As U.N. Special Adviser on Syria Jan Egeland said last December: "There is no deescalation zone, there is only escalation in this deescalation zone."

Idlib, another "deescalation area," suffered a dramatic increase in air attacks last September against armed groups not covered by the cease-fire agreement. In late December, airstrikes and shelling against a hospital, a medical warehouse, and a vegetable market killed, injured, and displaced scores of people.

The U.S. Government heralded the military defeat of ISIS in Syria in November. But the defeat of ISIS has not and will not end the Syrian conflict; and Russia has not succeeded in pressuring Assad to end the conflict, nor in restraining Assad's attacks on civilians as he has gone after rebel forces.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in Syria deteriorates each and every day. World Vision estimates that 5.6 million people are in need of acute humanitarian assistance. The U.N. says a total of 13.1 million people need some form of assistance. That is 3 million more than at the end of 2016. The situation is worse today, after months of deescalation, than it was a year ago.

Of those 13 million, 3 million are trapped in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. That is 4½ times the population of Boston or Washington, D.C.

☐ 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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Humanitarian access to those areas is not guaranteed by the regime, nor by its backers; international law and obligations be damned.

Some of the most heartbreaking news out of Syria has to do with the crisis in healthcare. The “weaponization” of healthcare in Syria is not new, but the depravity of it all still shocks me. According to a recent report by researchers at the American University in Beirut, “Syria has become the most dangerous place on earth for healthcare providers.”

According to the International Rescue Committee, in 2011, there was one doctor per 600 people in Syria. But now, in east Ghouta, there is only one doctor per 3,600 people.

Medical supplies are not allowed into besieged areas and terribly ill patients are not allowed out.

What military or political purpose is served by denying medical evacuation to women and children suffering from heart disease, cancer, kidney failure, and blood diseases?

Mr. Speaker, current policy is not working to end the crisis in Syria. It is time to change course, not by sending more Special Forces troops there without any authorization, nor by promising to keep them there indefinitely to fight against the next iteration of ISIS.

What we need is to reassert American diplomatic leadership and exert real pressure to end the war. We need a plan to transition Assad out of power. We need to pass H. Res. 632, condemning the senseless attacks on hospitals and medical personnel in Syria.

We need to shame Russia for its failure to ensure humanitarian access. We need to increase our contributions to humanitarian assistance for Syria and make full use of the option of cross-border assistance.

We need to open our hearts to the Syrian refugees and welcome more of them to our country. We need to do everything in our power to lay the groundwork to ensure accountability for Assad’s victims. That includes funding the international, impartial, and independent mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of war crimes.

The Syrian conflict has gone on far too long. The horror of it all can be mind-numbing, but we must not lose our outrage. Now is the time to reenergize our efforts and find a way to end the suffering.

STANDING FOR THE UNBORN

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this Friday, more than 100,000 Americans will travel from across the country to take part in the world’s largest pro-life event right here in the Nation’s Capital.

The theme for the 45th annual March for Life is “Love Saves Lives.” This

embodies the true spirit and mission of the pro-life movement by enlisting the power of love to empower others to choose life.

Since the Supreme Court issued a decision in *Roe v. Wade*, tens of millions of abortion procedures have been performed throughout the United States. Although consistent attempts to overturn this decision have fallen short over the past 4 decades, support for Federal pro-life policies has remained strong.

We will witness this strength Friday when Americans from all corners of the country will march on Washington to highlight the progress of the pro-life movement and encourage strong support moving forward.

President Trump will address the marchers from the Rose Garden and show his commitment to protecting the unborn. He is the first sitting U.S. President to address the event via satellite from the White House in the event’s 45-year history.

President Trump has remained steadfast in his commitment to advance pro-life policy. One of his first actions in 2017 was an executive order reinstating the Mexico City policy, which bars international nongovernmental organizations that perform or promote abortions from receiving funding from the U.S. Government. This action, first instated by President Reagan in 1984, helps ensure that taxpayer dollars are not used to fund abortions overseas.

Members of this House also passed H.R. 7, the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion and Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Act of 2017, just 1 day after President Trump reinstated the Mexico City policy. This bill made permanent some longstanding policies that prohibit the use of taxpayer dollars to fund abortion, such as the Hyde amendment.

H.R. 7 also helps to ensure that health insurance companies remain accountable to consumers by requiring them to fully disclose whether or not their healthcare plans cover abortion services.

Another pro-life victory that passed the House in October was H.R. 36, the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act. This bill outlaws abortions performed after the 20-week postfertilization period.

I have consistently voted to prohibit late-term abortions and to protect the unborn, and I will continue to do so as long as I am serving in the House. We must always demonstrate a strong commitment to protecting the lives of the defenseless.

The House will continue the fight this week. On Friday, we will vote on the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act. This means that, in the case of a child born alive during an attempted abortion, that child must be immediately transported and admitted to a hospital. If a baby born alive is left to die, the penalty can be up to 5 years in jail. I will certainly vote in support of this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, abortion is a tragedy not just because an innocent child died, but because of the lasting impact the abortion itself had on the mothers of those children.

We continue to see efforts by the pro-life movement making an impact. Data shows that the annual number of abortions performed in this country is in decline, including my State of Pennsylvania. There are legislative efforts across the country to protect unborn children and provide assistance and hope to their mothers. These efforts are one of the keys to ending abortion in the U.S.

Pro-life education is having an impact on our culture and in the lives of women facing unexpected pregnancies, but there is much still to be done. That is why I look forward to participating in the 45th annual March for Life, where we will redouble our commitment to protecting the sanctity of human life in all phases and conditions. Attendees will hear stories of love, courage, and victory through God’s mercy and grace.

Mr. Speaker, human life is sacred and, through education, love can protect the most vulnerable. The pro-life movement is a voice for the voiceless, and I am incredibly proud and honored to be a part of it.

GENERAL KELLY’S DEFINITION OF BIPARTISANSHIP

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

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I had an interesting meeting yesterday with General Kelly. Twenty-five Members of Congress, almost all of whom are descendants of immigrants who came here with nothing, whose parents came here with nothing, sat down with the Chief of Staff of the President of the United States. He said, basically, that we are the wrong kind of people in America, and that people like our parents who came here to this country really are bringing the country down. Because when he says he is for a merit-based system, he is saying he is not for my mom and my dad being able to come to this country.

But interestingly enough, all of us who came to this country because of a family-based immigration system wound up as being Members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

But he was saying: You know, I am meeting with a group of Congressmen, and you really shouldn’t be here because your parents really are tearing the country apart and bringing it down.

That is what he means when he says: I want to replace the system with a merit-based system.

And that was very telling in the meeting yesterday.

But, you know, we want a system that is family-based. That is the system the Democrats want because we believe that businesses are created by