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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MITCHELL).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 27, 2018.

I hereby appoint the Honorable PAUL MITCHELL 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.

IN CELEBRATION OF REAL CHRISTMAS TREES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor this year's National Christmas Tree Contest winner who hails from my home county of Avery in North Carolina's Fifth District, Mr. Larry Smith.

This year, Mr. Smith won the national tree contest hosted by the National Christmas Tree Association, whose members have presented the of-

ficial White House Christmas tree for display in the Blue Room since 1966.

Growers must first win their local competitions in order to qualify for the association's national contest. At the national competition, growers, industry experts, and consumers vote to choose the real Christmas tree grower who will provide the official White House Christmas tree.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent this year's winner and was delighted to join Mr. Smith, his family and friends in presenting the First Family with its Fraser fir Christmas tree last week.

As a former Christmas tree grower myself, I can attest to the importance of recognizing this often overlooked, yet highly significant, farming industry. Christmas trees have held a historic place in American family tradition since 1850. Long before artificial trees were around, real trees brought Christmas spirit into homes with their evergreen and fragrant branches during the season.

Just as importantly, Christmas trees play a vital role in the North Carolina high country's economy by providing jobs and livelihoods for thousands of North Carolinians. The Fifth District is one of the largest producers of live-cut Christmas trees in the country, producing over 20 percent of the real Christmas trees in the United States.

Representing over 95 percent of all species grown in the State, the North Carolina Fraser fir Christmas tree is the most popular Christmas tree in North America. It is shipped to every State in the U.S., as well as the Caribbean islands, Mexico, Canada, Bermuda, Japan, and other points all over the world.

Congratulations once again to Mr. Smith, and thanks to Christmas tree growers across the country for contributing to our economy and providing the joy of having a real Christmas tree to families worldwide.

ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share some good news with the House. Over a year and a half ago, we passed the Small Business Health Fairness Act.

Small businesses were hit hard by flawed mandates, soaring costs, and limited choices under ObamaCare. The Education and the Workforce Committee worked hard to produce the Small Business Health Fairness Act, which expanded healthcare options and lowered costs for working families by encouraging small businesses to come together through association health plans and negotiate for lower costs on behalf of their employees.

In October of last year, President Trump issued an executive order that built on the solutions in that bill, directing the Department of Labor to remove barriers and make association health plans a viable option for businesses and their employees.

Well, it is working. In my home State of North Carolina, individuals in the hospitality industry will soon have access to a new association health plan that provides affordable, comprehensive coverage. Nearly half a million workers in North Carolina alone will have options they didn't have before thanks to association health plans.

In Oklahoma, chambers of commerce at the State and local level are working with some of the smallest businesses around to form association health plans and allow these talented individuals to keep doing what they really want to do, innovating and creating jobs only they will be able to create.

Even farmers in Minnesota and Nebraska are finding ways to come together for better bargaining power that puts people and their healthcare choices first.

Association health plans put people in charge. They empower small businesses to offer the same benefits that

□ 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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large companies can provide, and they allow employees to choose coverage options that work best for them.

At the Education and the Workforce Committee, we have been proud to do our part to bring about this sustainable healthcare solution for millions of Americans. I welcome the news.

RECOGNIZING PREMATURITY AWARENESS MONTH

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

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, November is Prematurity Awareness Month, and as the number of preterm births continues to rise in the United States, it is important to acknowledge this serious issue.

In my own experience as an obstetrician having delivered over 5,000 babies, I have seen firsthand the seriousness of early birth. Premature birth is still the number one cause of infant mortality in the United States and around the world. Advancements in detection and care for infants born early have not made the same strides that other areas of the medical field have.

The premature birth rate in Kansas is right below the national average of 9.93, meaning that approximately 1 in every 10 babies is born premature. In the coming weeks, Congress has the opportunity to act and pass the PREEMIE Reauthorization Act of 2018 and help those who cannot yet help themselves.

RECOGNIZING KANSAS GUARDSMEN OVERSEAS

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, this past holiday weekend, I had the pleasure, the opportunity, to travel to the Middle East and to the Horn of Africa. Specifically, I got to visit with some 700 Kansas National Guardsmen from the 2nd 137th Combined Arms Battalion and Battery C, 161st Field Artillery. These guardsmen have been deployed since April in support of Operation Enduring Freedom Spartan Shield.

I am often asked what was the purpose of my trip. Why do Congressmen do these trips?

First of all, I think it is important that, as a Congressman, I bring these troops a message of hope and thanks and let them know personally that we do care and are grateful for their service and the sacrifices they are making for this country.

Next, my goal was to check on the mental and physical well-being of our troops. Despite talking to hundreds of our soldiers, I cannot get one of them to register one complaint. Specifically, I thought their mental health was outstanding, that they were all in good spirits and, indeed, had great hope. Physically, their nutrition appeared to be well attended to. Their medical and dental needs were well attended to as well.

My one concern, perhaps, would be the housing. And though no soldier complained about housing, when you are there for a year at a time, I do

think we could supply our soldiers with better housing.

Today, we are reminded of the dangers of serving in our military as we lost three soldiers to a roadside bomb in Afghanistan. Certainly, my sympathy goes out to the families. I know the words that I can express will never be enough, but I would say this: Today we are also reminded once again that freedom is not free.

HONORING THE LIFE OF MAJOR BRENT RUSSELL TAYLOR

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, Major Brent Russell Taylor is one of six brothers to each wear the uniform of the United States Army.

While training Afghan security forces in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Major Taylor was killed by an apparent insider attack on November 3 in Kabul province while in the final months of his deployment. He is survived by his wife, Jennie, and seven children: Megan, Lincoln, Alex, Jacob, Ellie, Jonathan, and Caroline. In Utah, we mourn with the family of Major Taylor and grieve his loss and honor his sacrifice.

As Major Taylor and his brothers passed through Basic Combat Training, they learned the seven Army values in great detail. Those values are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage, and Major Brent Taylor lived these values.

First, loyalty: Major Taylor swore to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of the United States and support and defend our Nation's guiding documents against all enemies. He demonstrated his loyalty to this oath time and time again.

Duty: Major Taylor earned a Bronze Star for his outstanding dedication to duty during combat operations in Iraq. The Army says doing your duty means more than carrying out your assigned tasks. Major Taylor's military service record shows he employed this guidance to the fullest.

So, too, does his life outside the military, because Major Taylor was not only Major Taylor, he was also Mayor Taylor. His community and neighbors so entrusted him to lead and provide that they elected him the mayor of North Ogden City in Utah.

In that role, he did much more than carry out his assigned tasks. He worked to beautify and improve the city and to create a community that was welcoming to newcomers; and in the predawn morning of his last Christmas on Earth, Mayor Taylor ventured out into the cold to oversee the snowplows and salt trucks as they cleared the roads and made his city safe.

Respect: Major Taylor not only enjoyed the respect of his family, community, and fellow servicemembers, but his praises came from across the globe. In a letter from Afghanistan to

Mrs. Taylor following her husband's death, an Afghan aviator said: "Your husband taught me to . . . treat my children as treasured gifts, to be a better father, to be a better husband, and to be a better man."

A man does not receive that level of praise without first showing his own grand measure of respect.

Selfless service: As a high school senior in Chandler, Arizona, Brent delivered the honor speech at graduation, and his instruction to the audience was: "Go out. Be happy. Find peace and make a positive difference in the world."

Major Taylor left his family and American soil on four deployments to serve and "make a positive difference in the world." In that same honor speech, he gave the order to "stick with it to the end." He, himself, did just that.

Honor: Major Taylor honored his faith, his family, his community, and his country throughout his short life. Brent's social media postings are replete with photos of his children and family. They show images of love and service and patriotism, qualities of a man, a husband, and a father who honors his family and country.

In his last Facebook post, Brent implored that we all remember: "We have far more as Americans that unites us than divides us." And he ended the post with the words, "God Bless America."

Integrity: The Army says that integrity is a quality you develop by adhering to moral principles, and the more choices you make based on integrity, the more this highly prized value will affect your relationships with family and friends.

The days since the sad passing of Major Taylor have been filled with an outpouring of love and grief expressed by those who knew Brent. His integrity left an impression, and his integrity affected his relationships.

Finally, personal courage: In September of 2007, Major Taylor was commanding a convoy in Iraq when he was hit by an insurgent IED. His vehicle was struck by shrapnel, asphalt, and concrete debris. For the wounds received in action, Major Taylor was awarded the Purple Heart, and he would go on to deploy twice more.

Brent Taylor stood as an example of personal courage. He lived the Army Values.

In April of this year, the Department of Veterans Affairs opened a facility in North Ogden City. It is a place where veterans and their families can go to receive counseling and support. It is a place located in the heart of Brent Taylor's hometown.

As a small gesture to his service and his sacrifice, I have introduced a bill to name that VA facility the "Major Brent Taylor Vet Center Outstation."

The naming of a building will never repay the debt our Nation owes Major Taylor or his family, but it can stand as a humble reminder of the citizen soldier who lost his life in the service of others.