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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. CUELLAR).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 30, 2019.

I hereby appoint the Honorable HENRY CUELLAR to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of House of January 3, 2019, 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.

DETERIORATING CONDITIONS AT THE MEXICAN BORDER

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

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, last Friday, many of us attended the funeral for our colleague, Elijah Cummings. His story and the service were inspirational. On that same day, this article concerning the deteriorating conditions of the Mexican border appeared in The Texas Tribune about the consequences of the Trump administration's Migrant Protection Protocols, or MPP.

The article describes America's inhumanity unfolding in Matamoros, Mexico, a border town in which I, as a child, spent much of my time and in which my ancestors are buried. It is a story about America's cruelty, for which the President of the United States is directly responsible.

As I thought about what I could do about this situation, I couldn't help but ask myself: What would Elijah do?

By creating obstacle after obstacle, the Trump administration does everything within its power to prevent asylum claimants from having their rightful day in court, whether they are entitled to stay or not.

Its latest obstruction is the Migrant Protection Protocols, which are anything but protection. The MPP forces asylum claimants to wait in dangerous Mexican border towns as their claims are processed, and they have proven to be nothing more than a weapon used to destroy America's longstanding reputation as the world's greatest melting pot. It is a blatant violation of the due process clause of the U.S. Constitution.

Our Nation's asylum laws guarantee the right to live in the United States while claims are adjudicated. Over 1,500 people now live in squalor in Matamoros, Mexico. They have no running water and a marginal number of toilets for all of them. They are housed in tents and forced to bathe naked out in the Rio Grande River. Their daily subsistence depends on the goodness of the volunteers from the Rio Grande Valley and across this Nation who cross into Mexico every day to provide a simple meal. The conditions are worse than those that I have seen in Syrian refugee camps.

This is not the way America is supposed to work.

The administration claims that by creating secret, sham, tent courts along the border that it is processing asylum claims. This is nothing more than a glaring effort to obliterate due

process. In these so-called courts constitutional protections vanish, and civil liberties disappear.

The administration's policy is severely restricting and imposing barriers on the very fundamental bedrock of our legal system—the attorney-client relationship. Lawyers representing these asylum claimants are reporting that the MPP policy is making something as simple as the opportunity to meet with their client an impossibility. As of this August, less than 2 percent of those in MPP court even had lawyers representing them. The forcible removal of claimants to another country while they await adjudication is a judicial charade, represents a total abdication of the principles of fairness that are the foundations of our justice system, and makes a mockery of our Constitution.

Not only are asylum claimants being denied their rights, the public and the press are consistently denied access to these proceedings.

What is there to hide?

The presence of attorneys, advocates, the press, and the public at these hearings preserves our democracy. The president of the National Association of Immigration Judges states as follows:

Normal immigration court is open to the public. In civil proceedings in America, one of the fundamental tenets of our justice system is that there has to be accountability to the public. We do not do stuff behind closed doors. That is not what America is about. And yet, with each immigration policy decision the last 3 years, we are moving closer and closer to a model that does not resemble anything in the American judicial system; it is more like what you might see in China or Russia.

In our system of criminal jurisprudence, a person may be guilty, or they may not be. But with regard to jurisprudence, a party may be culpable or not culpable. But one thing everyone gets is the opportunity to be heard.

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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So we have a choice. We can turn a blind eye to the horror that is this administration's asylum policy, or we can answer our colleague, Elijah's, call to create a system that stands for justice. Let's tear down the Migrant Protection Protocols. Let's hire the judges so that we can efficiently and fairly adjudicate asylum claims. Let the asylum claimant live in dignity and give them back their right to be in this country while they wait for their cases to be heard.

If asylum is denied after a fair and just adjudication, let the claimant leave this country knowing that the United States system of government gave them a fair shake.

If, on the other hand, a claimant is given refugee status, let's rally behind them. Let's show them what America is really like. Let's help them achieve the American dream. I think that is what Elijah Cummings would do.

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD STAR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. KEVIN HERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KEVIN HERN of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, Oklahoma native, Christopher Horton, is one of the namesakes of H. Res. 107 which passed the House yesterday.

Army Specialist Christopher Horton served in the Oklahoma National Guard's 1st Battalion, 279th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Brigade.

Horton grew up in Collinsville, Oklahoma, and was an exceptional sharpshooter. Horton was killed in action on September 9, 2011, in Afghanistan while serving in Operation Enduring Freedom. His bravery and patriotism are remembered today as his legacy is enshrined 8 years later.

Family members of fallen heroes hold a special place in our society. The program started with this legislation will give family members of our fallen heroes the unique opportunity to experience our government up close with a 12-month fellowship in Congress. A front-row seat to the legislative process is a valuable asset to a person deciding where they want to go in their career. These yearlong fellowships will allow the family members of our fallen veterans to become a part of the same democracy that their loved ones fought to defend.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the passage of this bill and the bipartisan work of my colleagues, TRENT KELLY and MIKIE SHERRILL, as well as the tenacious perseverance of both families of the fallen soldiers.

HONORING VANESSA WHITING OF CLEVELAND, OHIO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor Vanessa Whiting of Cleve-

land, Ohio, the recipient of the 2019 Black Professional of the Year Award.

Ms. Whiting will become the 39th individual to receive this distinguished award given by the Black Professionals Association Charitable Foundation at their annual scholarship and awards gala. Each year the organization honors an African American professional for their career accomplishments, community engagement, and civic contributions.

Through her considerable achievements as an attorney, entrepreneur, and civic leader, Ms. Whiting is most deserving of this long overdue recognition. She embodies the mission of the Black Professionals Association Charitable Foundation, which is to create opportunities for African American professionals by providing scholarship, leadership, and career development.

As president of AES Management and a Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen franchisee, Ms. Whiting has made hiring people from her community a priority, creating employment opportunities where there are few options.

Ms. Whiting has more than 30 years of experience as an attorney. Throughout her law career, she focused her work on revitalizing struggling neighborhoods and helping small and minority-owned businesses succeed.

Ms. Whiting has committed her time and talents to address affordable housing, the need for community centers, and other projects in our area designed to uplift the community and empower its residents.

Ms. Whiting was recently elected chair of the MetroHealth Hospital Board of Trustees where she continues her work promoting diversity and inclusion throughout Cuyahoga County's public health system. She has served in many key board positions in the Cleveland community, including the NAACP Cleveland Branch, the Tri-C Foundation, Karamu House, and the Cleveland Housing Network Board of Trustees.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Ms. Whiting for her outstanding contributions to Ohio's 11th Congressional District. My sincere congratulations go to Ms. Whiting on this distinguished accomplishment, and I thank her for her leadership and her service.

CLINCH MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

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

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Clinch Memorial Hospital for being named the Hometown Health Hospital of the Year for 2019.

I am proud of the work that Clinch Memorial Hospital is doing to provide high-quality care to our rural communities in the First Congressional District of Georgia. With unique challenges facing rural healthcare systems across the Nation, Clinch Memorial Hospital has met these challenges head-on and is using groundbreaking

programs to better the care for individuals in the surrounding rural communities.

Over the last 2 years, the hospital's CEO, Ms. Angela Ammons, has added new programs to help people with substance abuse issues, a swing-bed system to more efficiently use their resources, and a new wound care unit. But most importantly, she has nearly miraculously turned around the hospital's financials, maintaining the community's access to healthcare and keeping the local economy churning.

Clinch Memorial Hospital is more than deserving of the Hospital of the Year Award.

Congratulations, and keep up the good work.

NATIONAL PHARMACIST MONTH 2019

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize October as being National Pharmacist Month 2019.

According to Census data, there are over 200,000 pharmacists across the U.S., with another 25,000 pharmacy aides. Every day these pharmacists are providing vaccines for a number of illnesses and carefully counseling patients on prescriptions to help heal sickness and reduce pain. Through this work, pharmacists are considered one of the top three most-trusted professions in America.

Mr. Speaker, this month, as well as through the rest of the year, I encourage everyone to visit your pharmacist, ask questions about your prescriptions, and get to know the people who provide your medicine and work to keep you healthy.

As the only pharmacist currently serving in Congress, I am proud to recognize the work these individuals are doing every day to serve their local communities around the country.

Keep up the good work.

FORTY-DAY PRO LIFE VIGIL

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize all those participating in the 40 Days for Life Vigil happening September 25 through November 3.

For the past 40 days, individuals in cities across the world have been fasting, praying, campaigning, and holding a vigil in order to end abortion. In the First Congressional District of Georgia, Savannahians have been contributing to the cause through their own vigil and luncheon. The organization has helped save 16,000 lives, close 104 abortion centers, and 191 abortion workers to quit their jobs.

As a medical professional, father, and grandfather, I believe that every life is sacred. I cannot thank these individuals enough for their important work. After the 40 Days for Life Vigil is over, I hope you will join me in continuing the fight to save the lives of our children.

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RECOGNIZING SHEILA McNEILL

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