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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. GOMEZ).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 23, 2021.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JIMMY GOMEZ 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 the House of January 4, 2021, 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, with time equally allocated between the parties and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

THE NEED FOR WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

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

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of a much-needed investment in our Nation's infrastructure, specifically our water infrastructure.

Let me be very clear: Our crumbling and outdated water infrastructure is in a state of emergency. It is leaving our most vulnerable Americans struggling

with water access and unaffordable rates, including my hometown of Detroit, Michigan.

I want to commend President Biden and my colleagues for promoting the American Jobs Plan, a comprehensive Federal investment to repair and strengthen our infrastructure.

This could not be more timely, as Federal investment in public water infrastructure projects have fallen from 63 percent of our overall investment in 1977 to just 9 percent in 2014.

The American Jobs Plan will deliver the investments we need and eliminate all lead pipes and service lines in our drinking water systems.

It is unacceptable that in the United States of America, schools are forced to put plastic bags over their drinking fountains because it is not safe for our children to drink water because there are elevated levels of lead.

Too much of our existing infrastructure is jeopardized because of lead pipes. My home State of Michigan knows about this issue all too well. The Flint water crisis brought national attention to the dangers of elevated levels of lead in our drinking water.

Unfortunately, what happened in Flint is happening all across this country. In my district, the same problem exists in the city of Detroit. About 1,500 children under the age of 6 test positive for elevated levels of lead every year, and of those tested, about 7 percent are diagnosed with lead poisoning.

Congress cannot stand by and watch as Americans get sick and poisoned from their own drinking water.

I always like to emphasize: Water is not a luxury. A pothole is an inconvenience, but water is a necessity to life.

We have the opportunity to address this issue right now by passing the American Jobs Plan. It is a once-in-a-generation investment in our communities and families. It also includes provisions similar to my legislation,

the WATER Act. My bill would fully fund the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds, provide funding for public schools to test and replace drinking water infrastructure, provide grants to replace lead service lines leading to our households, and much more to fix and strengthen our water infrastructure.

Earlier this Congress, I submitted Community Project Funding requests to support water system improvements for two of my communities: Pontiac and Royal Oak Township. These communities are not alone. Similar water system improvement projects are needed across the country. With the American Jobs Plan, we can make that a reality.

I look forward to continuing to fight for access to clean, safe, and affordable drinking water for every American.

THE NEED FOR BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this April, the House Agriculture Committee hosted an important hearing on one of America's most pressing issues, broadband connectivity.

For years, the digital divide has left many Americans unable to access reliable high-speed internet service, resulting in lost opportunities to expand businesses, learn new skills, or even participate in daily activities.

I see this cost and frustration every day. I am fortunate to live in the service territory of a rural electric cooperative which offers quality internet services to my home. But, just a few miles away, my neighbors are on the wrong side of the digital divide.

I represent 14 counties in rural Pennsylvania, and I can tell you, it is like

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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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this all across my district, with digital haves and have-nots just down the road from one another. It is a checkerboard of connectivity.

In the height of the pandemic, I heard one too many home-schooling horror stories that were a result of not having reliable access to the internet. A number of families were driving to the nearest local library, sitting in the parking lot, and connecting to the public WiFi in hopes of completing assignments.

COVID-19 laid bare the urgency of rural broadband, but the connectivity struggles in rural communities predate this pandemic, and they will not ease as we return to normal. As more of American life is being put online, more of it is being put out of reach of Americans without high-speed internet access, and those without are falling further behind.

Despite years of efforts and billions of dollars spent, too many communities are being left behind.

Broadband is not just needed for our homes; it is desperately needed on our farms as well. The demands of a 21st century farm economy depends on reliable connectivity.

The Agriculture Committee has done tremendous work on a bipartisan basis to address the digital divide, most recently with the broadband provisions in the 2018 farm bill. Those changes reflected 2 years of work to develop policies and design programs which meet the unique challenges of rural communities. That farm bill became law with broad bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate.

Unfortunately, those policies and programs are languishing. Changes and improvements championed by Members of both parties regarding eligible areas, long-term network viability, assistance for our most rural communities, program integrity, and more, remain unfunded and unimplemented more than 2 years after they were signed into law.

This is unacceptable. That is why I recently introduced the Broadband for Rural America Act. This bill is the responsible path forward to bridging the digital divide. It prioritizes the needs of rural communities and is a step in the right direction as we begin to rebound into a resurgent post-COVID economy. I urge my colleagues to join me on this critical piece of legislation.

The one issue that unites rural Members on both sides of the aisle is the need to address the digital divide. This critical infrastructure void has been exacerbated by the challenges faced by rural families and businesses during the pandemic.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to tell the story of the 2018 farm bill and the improvements we made and continue to fight for broadband investments so desperately needed in our rural communities.

RECOGNIZING PRIDE MONTH

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

Mrs. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to stand in support of the LGBTQ community and to recognize this Pride Month.

This month is one of reflection: reflection on the strides our country has made toward acceptance and inclusion and on the struggles that still exist today.

From Stonewall, to the AIDS epidemic, to attacks on transgender youth across our country today, the struggle for equality continues.

This month is one of recognition for the trailblazers of decades past and the advocates on the ground today who make this country welcoming for everyone.

But most of all, this month is one of celebration. I am here to say loudly and clearly to all of my LGBTQ constituents in Nevada's Third District, you are respected and loved, and I have your back here in Washington.

While we mark 6 years of marriage equality this week and have continued to reach milestones in the time since, we have more work to do.

I am proud to have voted to pass the Equality Act out of the House, and it is time for the Senate to join us.

I hope you all take time this month to celebrate who you are. And from the bottom of my heart, Happy Pride Month.

HONORING CHRIS OBERHEIM

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

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Champaign Police Officer Chris Oberheim of Monticello, Illinois, who tragically lost his life in the line of duty on May 19 of this year.

Officer Oberheim was a 21-year veteran of law enforcement. He joined the Champaign Police Department in 2013 after beginning his career with the Decatur Police Department in 2000. During his career, he received two medals of valor for selfless acts of bravery.

In his time off duty, Chris enjoyed coaching softball and spending time with his family. He was a loving husband, father, son, coach, and trusted friend. His four daughters were his inspiration. Those who knew Chris remember him most for his commitment to loving his family and serving his community.

My prayers are with his wife, Amber, and daughters Hannah, Avery, Addison, and Aubree, as well as the rest of his family, friends, and fellow officers. Chris was nothing short of a hero.

In closing, I would like to share a Bible verse that Chris' family says he lived by: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

HONORING GRACE HERSCHELMAN

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Grace Herschelmann of Hillsboro, Illinois, who passed away on May 19 at the age of 9 after a lifelong battle with infantile neuroaxonal dystrophy, INAD.

When Grace was 3 years old, she was diagnosed with INAD, a neurodegenerative disease that results in a loss of muscle strength, movement, and the ability to speak. Grace did not let this stop her from enjoying many trips to the Saint Louis Zoo; rooting on her favorite soccer, softball, and basketball teams; and having a blast with her sister and best friend, Charlotte.

Grace and her family also had a huge impact on awareness and fundraising for INAD research. Since Grace was diagnosed in 2014, the Herschelmann family has raised about \$200,000 for the INAD Cure Foundation, with donors from all 50 States.

Grace was an inspiration to all who met her, never failing to light up any room with her smile.

My prayers go out to her parents, Kyle and Mary, her sister, Charlotte, and the rest of her family.

Grace, may you rest in peace.

CONGRATULATING MARK BUTCHER

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mark Butcher on his retirement after 30 years of teaching math and science in the Rochester school district, Lincoln Christian University, and Lincoln Land Community College.

After working in the private sector for many years, Mark decided to go back to school to get his teaching certificate in 1991. Ever since then, he has taught at Rochester and also part-time at night at Lincoln Land where he would frequent my family's McDonald's in Taylorville for a quick dinner.

Over the past 30 years, Mark has taught, mentored, and given valuable career advice to thousands of students. Mark is known for his Einstein-like appearance and science experiments, which were highly educational but sometimes caused heartburn among the administration and school board members. He was instrumental in developing the dual credit program at Rochester, which has allowed hundreds of students to receive college credit for courses while still in high school.

Mark received numerous awards throughout his career, including the Rochester Teacher of the Year, the Golden Apple Excellence in Leadership award, Lincoln Land's Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Award, and being named the State Journal Register's Top Teacher of the Year.

Congratulations on your retirement, Mark. Enjoy your time with your wife, Brenda, four children, and your six grandchildren.