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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. CARL).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 23, 2023.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JERRY L. CARL to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 9, 2023, 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.

BANKING AND FINANCIAL SECTOR CHALLENGES

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight major challenges plaguing our banking and financial sector to the detriment of everyday Americans. Specifically, I refer to banking deregulation, lax oversight, and major consolidation.

Albert Einstein said that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

Well, the most recent financial market tremors follow the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank in California and Signature Bank in New York. These events remind us that our economy is still digging out of the 2008 massive market collapse.

The key question is: Do U.S. banking laws still allow too much speculative financial activity and excessive risk-taking?

Just three trillion-dollar megabanks now control one-third of U.S. banking assets. This chart tells the story. That is too much power by too few.

The financial crash of 2008 was a harsh reminder that, throughout U.S. history, speculators have squeezed through every regulatory keyhole to bring their much higher-risk, reckless, speculative ventures inside the confines of what should be prudent banking.

Regulators must provide firm separation between speculation and prudent banking. Regulators must provide firm separation. Do they hear me?

SVB was investing in speculative Chinese tech startups. How about that? Signature was intertwined with Swiss Bank's operations and cryptocurrency. Well, both banks collapsed.

History has taught us that speculation, derivatives, and venture capital are not normal banking activities. They are much higher risk, and their complexity and uncertainty can threaten the assets of other depositors like me and my constituents who choose not to highly leverage their assets. We should protect American depositors from rampant speculation.

The Biden administration is working to stem the bleeding. Management of both failed banks was shown the door, and the Federal Reserve, for the moment, put in place programs for banks or credit unions to meet their depositors' withdrawal requests.

After these collapses of SVB and Signature, both high-risk mega coastal

banks, I might add, where all of our major financial problems have started over my term of service, which is long, we are all enduring a truly troubling trend of massive bank consolidation that has been happening since the 1980s.

The pandemic pushed even more consolidation into overdrive. Another 9 percent of all branch locations in the U.S. closed between 2017 and 2021, a loss of 7,500 more brick-and-mortar locations in places where the American people live and work.

The empty buildings pockmark every community across our country. The branch closure rate doubled again during the pandemic, and more than 4,000 more branches have closed since March 2020.

People, pay attention. The money is walking away from your community to the very institutions that are causing the problem.

The rate doubled for bank closures from 99 per month during the 10 years prior to the pandemic to now 201 closings per month. The big fish are eating the smaller fish.

Those of us who have fought against the megabank culture that squashes prudent banking need look no further than the severe diminishment of market share held by local and regional banks over the last 40 years.

Step one is to reinstate Glass-Steagall's separation of prudent banking and speculation. The second is to develop a decoupled financial system that strengthens regional banks to manage an increasing share of local housing finance and commercial loans.

Soon, I will reintroduce in this Congress the Return to Prudent Banking Act, and I invite all of my colleagues on a bipartisan basis to join me. This bill would put America back on a path to fixing reckless speculation inside our banking and financial sector. As a result, no single company could be both an investment and a commercial bank.

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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This structure worked for decades. It proved to be a sound way of creating local economic growth and limiting the systemic risks posed by hiding reckless speculation and venture capital inside our financial institutions.

They have a right to exist but put them elsewhere in the system. Depositors' safety, not speculation, must be our objective.

We must strengthen regional and community banks. In the wake of SVB and Signature Bank, the time is now. Congress must implement real reforms to protect depositors and the American economy.

Congress must demonstrate we stand with the American people and their communities, not just for the coastal scions of massive wealth who use the safety of our deposits for their reckless, speculative gambles. Prudent banking should be rewarded, not reckless behavior.

SUPPORTING THE FARM BILL

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

Mr. MANN. Mr. Speaker, as Congress works to reauthorize the farm bill, I rise today to deliver the 17th installment of my farm bill impact series, where I am highlighting various aspects of the legislation that deserve Congress' awareness and support.

The farm bill won't ever be effective, though, if the stepped-up basis is eliminated and if producers get saddled with unjust capital gains taxes.

Sadly, that is exactly what President Biden's budget proposal does. It works to eliminate the stepped-up basis and impose capital gains taxes on assets that have been held in family trust or ownership for over 90 years. This is the farm killer tax.

Here is why the stepped-up basis is so important. Let's say you are a young person working on your family farm, and you are slowly taking on responsibility and risk. You work for your parents until the time comes for you to take over the land, equipment, and livestock. When that happens, the Federal Government should not jump in and impose taxes on the unrealized gains of these inherited assets.

This principle is called the stepped-up basis and has a long precedent in the tax code with tons of bipartisan support.

The President's budget, however, works to eliminate this, which would destroy family farms overnight. The day-to-day trials of operating a successful farm, ranch, or small business are challenging enough without worrying about paying devastating capital gains taxes, and now the Biden administration wants to impose new taxes on these people.

Unbelievably, it gets even worse when dismantling the stepped-up basis. President Biden's budget proposal also includes the farm killer tax. In President Biden's budget proposal, there is a

plan to impose capital gains taxes on farms that have been in the family for over 90 years.

Think about that. In 1940, the average cost of Kansas farmland was \$50 an acre. Now, irrigated land is as much as \$4,000 per acre.

Imagine the capital gains tax implications on that history of ownership. This proposal would propose hundreds of thousands of dollars in new capital gains taxes on agriculture producers, destroying their livelihoods.

Mr. Speaker, 98 percent of all American farms and 90 percent of all American small businesses are family owned and operated. A budget proposal that eliminates the stepped-up basis and imposes the farm killer tax is not a game changer for American family businesses. It is a game ender.

Agriculture is a multigenerational calling. This is National Ag Week when we celebrate the tireless efforts of farmers, ranchers, and producers who have earned our support. President Biden's budget proposal is the opposite of support. It is a gut punch to the people who feed, fuel, and clothe us all.

This week, I introduced a bipartisan resolution with more than 60 of my colleagues who support the preservation of the stepped-up basis, oppose any efforts to impose new taxes on family farms and small businesses, and recognize the importance of generational transfers of farm and small business operations. I encourage all of my colleagues in this body to support it.

If we want to invest in the future of our country, we need to invest in the future leaders of American agriculture. Congress must preserve the stepped-up basis and oppose the farm killer tax.

I will be back on the floor soon to deliver another installment of my farm bill impact series and highlight more programs and titles within the bill that I believe Congress must understand and support to ensure that agriculture thrives in America. The people who feed, fuel, and clothe us all deserve our unwavering support.

BUILDING ON LIFE-CHANGING SUCCESS OF ACA

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

Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, when President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act, he told those gathered at the White House: "I am signing this reform bill into law on behalf of my mother, who argued with insurance companies even as she battled cancer in her final days."

In the 13 years since, the ACA has transformed healthcare in America, safeguarding the dignity of the sick, the security of families, and the health of us all.

Perhaps nobody has benefited more from the ACA than women. Before the ACA, being a woman was a preexisting condition. Insurance companies were

free to deny coverage for no reason other than being pregnant. Today, that kind of discrimination is a relic of the past. Today, women no longer have to pay more than men for insurance.

Mr. Speaker, 13 years ago, 90 percent of market plans offered no maternity benefits. Today, they are offered by every single market plan in this country.

Thanks to the ACA, every insurance plan empowers women to take control of their health: birth control, annual well-women exams, breast and cervical cancer screenings, breastfeeding support, maternal depression, and much more.

What did Republicans have to say about this victory? One called it "the most dangerous piece of legislation ever passed in Congress." Another called it "downright evil."

They voted more than 50 times to repeal the ACA. They did everything in their power to put politics over the health of the American people. Thankfully, they failed every single time.

For 13 years, Democrats have proudly defended the ACA. Under President Biden, we haven't just held our ground. We have expanded access to quality, affordable health coverage.

With our American Rescue Plan and with our Inflation Reduction Act, we built on the life-changing, lifesaving success of the ACA. Now, a record 16.3 million Americans are using the ACA marketplace to gain the security and peace of mind that comes with quality health insurance.

As we celebrate all that has been achieved, I am grateful to those who made it possible. I am thankful for the leadership of President Obama and President Biden. I am thankful for the strength and unity of the House Democratic Caucus. I am thankful for the millions of Americans who have made their voices heard—voting, writing, calling, and marching to defend the Affordable Care Act.

Our job is to lift up those voices, to put people over politics. I invite our Republican colleagues to reflect on the progress of the last 13 years and to work with us to defend that progress and strengthen and secure it for the next generation.

SUPPORTING HIGHEST QUALITY EDUCATION EVERYWHERE IN AMERICA

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

Ms. GARCIA of Texas. Mr. Speaker, MAGA Republicans continue to use political stunts to try to distract the American people with unnecessary legislation.

This week, House Republicans are advancing the Politics Over Parents Act. This legislation is part of a harmful and nationwide extreme MAGA Republican crusade toward censorship and book bans.