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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. C. SCOTT FRANKLIN of Florida).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 11, 2023.

I hereby appoint the Honorable C. SCOTT FRANKLIN 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 10:50 a.m.

CRISIS AT THE SOUTHERN BORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. MALLIOTAKIS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MALLIOTAKIS. Mr. Speaker, my parents came to this country as immigrants. Many of my constituents came to this country as immigrants. I think fundamentally Republicans and Democrats agree that we are a Nation of immigrants. Yet, what we are seeing currently at our southern border is a trav-

esty. It is not helpful to the migrants, it is not helpful to our Nation, and it has certainly created so many problems that we are facing right now.

We have seen over 5 million illegal crossings at the southern border, another 1.3 million got-aways. CBP has seized 14,000 pounds of fentanyl at our southern border, enough to kill over 3.1 billion people.

In 2021, more than 71,000 individuals died from synthetic opioid overdoses, and this is roughly 200 people every day. In my city of New York, we have seen overdoses skyrocket since Joe Biden put in place his open border policy, 2,700 in his first year alone. That is the highest in decades. We are seeing fatal overdoses in New York City, on average, every 3 hours. A couple weeks ago, we saw a 16-month-old baby in my district overdose from fentanyl, as well.

The only people that are truly benefiting from this policy are the cartels that are making \$13 billion a year from human and drug smuggling.

We also need to be concerned about who is attempting and is entering our country. In the first 6 months of fiscal year 2023, 80 people on the terrorist watch list were stopped attempting to cross the southern border on top of 98 last year. That is more than the previous 5 years combined.

We can say that we want to support immigration, but it must be legal immigration.

This is completely unsustainable, it is dangerous, and that is why I stand before you to ask in a bipartisan manner that we get behind H.R. 2 and vote to pass it today and that Senator SCHUMER brings it for a vote in the Senate.

In New York City, Immigration and Customs Enforcement is now saying that they are fully booked through October 2023 because two-thirds, at least, of the individuals crossing into our country claiming asylum do not qualify, and they are clogging up the sys-

tem for those who truly are eligible for asylum.

We have seen 60,000-plus migrants come to New York City since last spring. Remember, they have crossed and they entered our country not by the proper channels but by crossing our southern border, and Joe Biden has allowed them to do it.

Our mayor is spending billions of dollars to house these individuals in city hotels. At the same time, he is saying we are going to cut city services by a billion dollars every year for the next 4 years, and we are going to cut everything from libraries to programs for our children, fire, sanitation, parks, and homeless services. We have homeless New Yorkers, and the mayor is saying that he has to put citizens of other countries in shelters instead of our own. It is just completely backward and unsustainable.

As I walked here today, I just got notice that the mayor decided to halt this ridiculous policy. He was basing all of this, by the way, on a right-to-shelter law under Mayor Ed Koch that was meant for homeless New Yorkers. He has abused that, and that is what we are seeing take place today.

We can work to address this issue. Let's protect the taxpayers. Let's protect our Nation's security. Let's put forward the border security plan that is before us today, and then let's also work to make sure that we know who is entering in and out of our country through proper visas, employer visas, family-sponsored visas. I am willing to work with everybody on that, as well. We must stem the flow. Let's stop putting the drug cartels before American citizens, and let's move forward today and pass this bill.

HONORING JOHNSON C. SMITH UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT CLAY ARMBRISTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from

□ 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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North Carolina (Ms. ADAMS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ADAMS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the president of Johnson C. Smith University, Clay Armbrister.

JCSU is Charlotte's own HBCU and the only accredited historically Black college or university in the 12th Congressional District.

The Golden Bulls have a rich legacy in the Biddleville neighborhood in Charlotte that extends all the way back to 1867. President Armbrister has helped preserve and extend that legacy during his tenure.

I have been so very proud to work with President Armbrister to grow Johnson C. Smith University. For 5 years, President Armbrister has been a transformative leader, not only for JCSU but for the West End and the entire Charlotte community.

Under Clay's leadership, JCSU has modernized its campus, overcome a pandemic, and led a historic fundraising drive to raise \$80 million to support the university's academic and career-ready programs.

He courageously excused student loan debt for hundreds of students.

Last year, I said President Armbrister is one of the true heroes behind America's progress during the pandemic, and he has continued to earn that compliment with his leadership in our community.

I am so very proud to call him a friend. I wish him and his incredible wife, Denise, the very best in their future endeavors, and I congratulate him on his retirement. May God bless him.

STOP MASK MANDATES AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS CLINICS

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

Mr. ROSENDALE. Mr. Speaker, after 3 years of government overreach, which was blamed on COVID-19, we can all agree that the pandemic is over. The fact is, this very body passed H.R. 382 to end the national public health emergency, the Senate agreed, and the President signed it into law.

The Biden administration is going so far as to allow title 42 to end at midnight tonight, removing the ability of our Border Patrol agents to turn immigrants away due to public health concerns.

Yet, every week, I receive calls from veterans who are being denied care at VA health clinics across Montana over mask mandates. Let me repeat that. The pandemic is over, yet veterans are being denied medical care over mask mandates.

Denying anyone, particularly a veteran, medical care over a personal decision is outrageous and violates the Hippocratic Oath.

In March, I had the opportunity to question the individuals from the VA

and sent them multiple letters over their mask mandates. They responded by allowing each clinic to set its own guidelines.

Unfortunately, instead of eliminating masks, the Montana VA healthcare system doubled down and has dictated that every clinic in the State requires masks.

In Billings, Iraq war veteran Travis Norby has consistently been denied care every time he walks into the local VA clinic. Is this the respect that we show our veterans after they have put their life on the line to protect our freedoms?

First and foremost, we have a duty to ensure that our veterans have access to the medical care they need. It is not just a matter of obligation; it is a matter of respect and gratitude for the sacrifices that they have made. Denying veterans access to medical care over mask mandates is a betrayal of our Nation's core values.

If we can agree that the pandemic is over, to the extent that the Biden administration is allowing title 42 to expire, then we must stop turning our back on our Nation's heroes and stop mask mandates at the VA health clinics.

CONGRESS NEEDS TO ACT ON IMMIGRATION REFORM

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

Ms. GARCIA of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2, the Secure the Border Act of 2023, scheduled for a vote on the House floor today.

This bill is extreme and wrong. This bill in no way secures the border. In fact, it would only make security worse.

It is an assault on asylum seekers and those who flee poverty, hunger, and violence, including unaccompanied minors and families with children. It exploits challenges on our border for political points. It adds to the human suffering of those who come to our country seeking safety and a better life. It is also about putting politics over people.

We all expect our government to effectively manage our borders and thoroughly vet those who seek to enter as refugees, to join their family already in the country, or to work. We all agree on that.

Instead, what we see is children are in danger, families are separated or detained, and people are dying.

We need reform and we need it now. The last time Congress passed immigration reform was in 1996, 27 years ago. This Republican-led bill eliminates several legal immigration pathways, essentially making fewer people eligible for legal status while making more people deportable.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is extreme and wrong. Again, session after session, we talk about reform but nothing ever passes, not a single immigration law update, again, since 1996.

Time and time again, Republicans block meaningful legislation for safe and legal immigration from moving beyond this floor. Our job as public officials is to serve and protect our constituents, but we have been failing them for 27 years.

House Republicans focus solely on immigration as a border issue, providing billions of dollars in so-called border security, building walls, increasing personnel, and rapid expulsion policies. That hasn't worked, has it?

The promised security involves a militarized border, wasting the taxpayers' money, and increased violence for those seeking asylum.

Since 1988, at least 8,000 undocumented immigrants have died attempting to cross the border from Mexico to the United States. People are dying every day while we wait on Republicans to budge.

While rightwing media and extreme MAGA Republicans call immigrants "illegals," seeking asylum is a legal right. It is in our immigration law. They are following the law. This law and this right would be denied to thousands under this bill.

The administration and Congress must act. Again, this bill is simply extreme and wrong and does nothing to secure our border.

Meanwhile, we continue to see the violence at the border and violence in my home State of Texas. I was born and raised in South Texas. I am not from Long Island or Boston or somewhere else talking about the border. I am from South Texas. I am talking about our South Texas border.

□ 1015

Over the weekend, it was heart-breaking to see that 8 people were killed and 10 injured when a vehicle was driven into a group of people waiting in line at a migrant shelter in south Texas.

We all know that there will be a surge of migrants coming in as of tonight, and cities like Brownsville, where this occurred, are preparing. We are preparing in Houston because we know we will get some of the impact, too.

We must keep in mind that since migrants will no longer have the protections they have been afforded in the past—this bill will eliminate all that. People are losing their lives as they wait, even at this shelter. People are losing their lives on their way over.

Now more than ever, safe and legal immigration reform is necessary. We must protect all God's children. We must always put people over politics and rhetoric.

Now more than ever, we need safe and legal immigration reform. Now more than ever, we cannot wait another moment.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose this bill and ask my colleagues to do the same.