



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 169

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2023

No. 206

House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. VALADAO).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 14, 2023.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DAVID G. VALADAO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

MIKE JOHNSON,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Margaret Grun Kibben, offered the following prayer:

God of grace and truth, dwell among us today in all Your glory. In Your gracious arms, receive all of us, sinners though we are, and show us Your compassion. Welcome us into Your steadfast loving-kindness, though we are all undeserving of such divine mercy.

But isn't that the truth You have been trying to tell us all along? You have created us to be the agents of Your love, the hands of Your compassion, the mouth of Your message of righteousness and justice. But too often we fall short of Your will in our service to You.

Yet with unmerited favor, in Your fullness we have received grace upon grace. You have forgiven our faithlessness, redeemed our waywardness, and offered us the promise of Your salvation.

In this holy season, may our lives reflect the light You have shone in our darkness, the blessings You have bestowed on us. And may we find countless opportunities to share the joy we have found in You, that all may know of the depth of Your love.

By Your grace in the truth of Your name we pray.
Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House the approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1 of rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. COLLINS led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to five requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

FINISHING APPROPRIATIONS LEGISLATION

(Mr. COLLINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the importance of the House taking up the remaining appropriations legislation as soon as we get back in the new year.

The past 12 months have certainly been trying, but our Conference has shown that we can pass strong conservative policy that puts America first.

To my colleagues, enjoy your time with your family. Come January, let's

be prepared to finish what the American people expect us to do, and that is to get these remaining appropriations bills across the finish line.

COMBATING RISE IN BOOK BANS

(Ms. PRESSLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PRESSLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the Books Save Lives Act, legislation to combat the rise in book bans.

This past school year had more than 3,000 instances of books banned across 33 States, and in my home State of Massachusetts, libraries saw challenges to books quadruple.

Let me make it plain: Book bans are discriminatory and harmful, and Congress must unite against them. As a child who endured sexual abuse, when I read Maya Angelou's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," it was the first time in my life I knew I was not alone, and it helped me move forward. When I say that books save lives, I mean that.

My bill would recognize this by ensuring libraries offer diverse books and treat discriminatory bans as violations of Federal civil rights law.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation for all the people who are saved by books each and every day.

BOLSTERING MILK CONSUMPTION

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, last night, in a bipartisan manner, the House passed my legislation, Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act. This bill addresses the importance of providing whole milk in school cafeterias.

□ 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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It is proven that milk is the number one provider of 13 essential nutrients, as well as a great deal of long-term health benefits, including better bone health, lower blood pressure, and reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. These benefits are crucial for the healthy development of our Nation's youth.

Over the years, milk has been unfairly demonized, leading to the loss of nearly an entire generation of milk drinkers. This bill will give children a wide variety of milk options and bolster milk consumption, a win-win for growing children and America's dairy farmers.

Mr. Speaker, farmers feed, nutrition matters, and whole milk heals. It is time to follow the science and allow whole milk back into school cafeterias. I call on my Senate colleagues to bring this bill to the floor and pass this critical legislation.

WATER IS LIFE

(Ms. TLAI B asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. TLAI B. Mr. Speaker, we know that oil and water don't mix. Right now, there is a dirty pipeline called Line 5 running through the most critical part of the Great Lakes. It is operated by a company called Enbridge, which has a disturbing history of faulty infrastructure and environmental destruction.

A Line 5 spill would be devastating for the Great Lakes region and the entire country. The Great Lakes hold 21 percent of the world's fresh surface water and are home to precious ecosystems and wildlife. Tens of millions of people rely on them for water, jobs, and recreation.

We cannot allow the water we rely on to live, the water that helps make Michigan such a special place for so many, to be sacrificed for corporate greed.

The good news is that President Biden could end this threat today by revoking Line 5's Presidential permit and committing to the truth that water is life.

Mr. Speaker, I call upon the Biden administration to stand with the people of the Great Lakes and shut down Line 5 once and for all.

CONGRATULATING LIBERTY CHRISTIAN ACADEMY FOOTBALL TEAM

(Mr. GOOD of Virginia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOOD of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Liberty Christian Academy Bulldogs for their monumental victory in the VHSL 3A State championship football game.

On December 9, the Lynchburg-based LCA Bulldogs defeated the Lafayette Rams 28-14 to finish their season with a perfect 14-0 record and earn their first VHSL State football title.

This was a history-making moment, coming 9 years after LCA filed an anti-trust complaint against the VHSL, seeking to permit themselves and other private schools to join the league. The VHSL ultimately settled and agreed to allow any private school to apply for membership, providing a major victory for all student athletes in private schools across the Commonwealth.

Now, just 8 years after they began competing in the predominantly public school league, LCA reached the pinnacle with their State championship.

The LCA Bulldogs and Coach Frank Rocco have made their school, the Lynchburg community, and Virginia's Fifth District exceptionally proud.

I am honored to represent such a phenomenal group of student athletes in Congress, and I congratulate them on this incredible achievement.

EXECUTION OF AUKUS AGREEMENT

(Mr. COURTNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, in a few minutes, the House is going to vote on the National Defense Authorization Act, which I strongly support.

It is the product of bipartisan, bicameral compromise, which is exactly what the American people crave, and I congratulate Chairman ROGERS and Ranking Member SMITH for their outstanding work.

Among its many positive provisions, this bill in particular will execute the new AUKUS agreement between the U.S., U.K., and Australia. For the first time since 1958, the U.S. will share nuclear propulsion technology with another nation, our great ally, Australia. It also allows for the first time ever the sale to Australia of U.S.-built nuclear submarines—three, to be exact.

This effort will rebalance the strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific in favor of free, democratic nations that today are being constantly pressurized by the aggressive actions of the world's largest navy, namely, the Chinese PLAN.

To be clear, the intent of AUKUS is to guarantee deterrence, peace, and freedom of navigation that has prevailed across the globe for the last 78 years.

Mr. Speaker, this year's NDAA will be long remembered for this effort, and I strongly urge all of my colleagues to vote "yes" for this bill.

CONGRATULATING CLEMSON MEN'S SOCCER TEAM

(Mr. DUNCAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I get to say once again from the House floor, "Go Tigers," as I rise to celebrate the 2023 NCAA men's soccer national champions, the Clemson Tigers.

On Monday night, the Clemson men's soccer team took to the pitch to beat Notre Dame and close out the season. This is Clemson's fourth national championship in soccer. They claimed victory in 1984, 1987, 2021, and 2023. With this victory, the soccer program has surpassed football with the most national championships. I am proud to say that Clemson is one of just seven schools with four or more men's soccer national championships.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Head Coach Mike Noonan and each of the players on the team for representing my alma mater and the State of South Carolina so well.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent the 2023 NCAA men's soccer national champions, and I congratulate President Clements on the success of this team and the program there at Clemson.

Merry Christmas to all. May God bless America.

And once again, go Tigers.

AMERICA'S COMMITMENT TO THE MILITARY

(Mr. KIM of New Jersey asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KIM of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this effort to pass the National Defense Authorization Act. It is a strong bipartisan, bicameral compromise to address many of the quality-of-life needs of our servicemembers and their families.

The conference report that I signed reiterates America's commitment to supporting a diverse force that reflects our Nation and protects the reproductive rights of servicemembers by keeping DoD's travel policy for noncovered medical care intact.

The bill includes a well-deserved pay raise for our servicemembers and expands eligibility for the basic needs allowance program so our military families can have more money in their pockets. These and several other provisions, like improvements to barracks and housing facilities and other issues, will address recruitment and retention of our military, which is vital.

Our servicemembers and their families make incredible sacrifices for us. By passing this bill, we are reinforcing our commitment to them.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues in both parties to support and pass this important piece of legislation.

WHOLE MILK IS A GOOD THING

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, the Biden administration's proposal to federally limit milk options to the unpopular fat-free and low-fat types and prohibit students from drinking flavored milk only starts our children off on the wrong foot.