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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. LESKO).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 12, 2024.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DEBBIE LESKO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

MIKE JOHNSON,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 9, 2024, 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.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO MAYOR JAMES "SLIM" WHITLOCK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. VASQUEZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. VASQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable leader and cherished member of my district and the community from the Village of Hatch, the chili capital of the world, Mayor James "Slim" Whitlock.

Last year, I had the privilege of meeting Mayor Whitlock. In our dis-

cussions, it became evident that Slim wasn't just a mayor, he was a family man, a community member, and dedicated public servant of the people.

His passion for Hatch and its residents radiated through every word, and his genuine commitment to the well-being of his constituents was truly commendable.

Slim's impact reached far beyond the duties of his office. He was a pillar of strength during celebrations, a comforting presence in times of need, and a beacon of positivity with a smile that could light up a room.

The phrase "doing extra good" embodied his values, reflecting a man who consistently went above and beyond for his community.

As we mourn the loss of Mayor Slim Whitlock, let us remember him not only as a leader but as a symbol of selflessness and devotion.

The love he had for his community was reciprocated manifold, creating a bond that will forever endure in the hearts of the people that he served.

May his legacy inspire us to continue the work he started and embrace the service and community he exemplified.

Mayor, you will be missed.

BOLSTERING OUR RURAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Mr. VASQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to emphasize the critical importance of federally qualified health centers, especially in rural communities like mine.

I had the privilege of visiting La Clinica de Familia in my district and also recently visited Rio Grande High School's school-based health center and the Socorro Mental Health Clinic.

These centers are lifelines for countless New Mexicans who would otherwise lack access to essential healthcare services.

Federally qualified health centers not only provide primary care but also offer mental health services, dental care, and preventative care. They address the holistic needs of our communities.

However, health centers face significant challenges, particularly in rural areas where one in five rural New Mexicans face serious issues accessing healthcare.

That is why I proudly stand as a cosponsor of H.R. 834, the Rural Physician Workforce Production Act.

This legislation aims to bolster our rural healthcare system by incentivizing the training and placement of physicians in underserved areas.

By investing in health centers and supporting initiatives like the Rural Physician Workforce Production Act, we can ensure that all New Mexicans, regardless of their ZIP Code, have access to the quality healthcare that they deserve.

We must prioritize the health and well-being of our rural communities by adequately funding these vital centers.

DISCONNECTED STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

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

Mr. ARRINGTON. Madam Speaker, last week, the President stood in this Chamber and declared the state of the Union is good and that our lives are better.

For the sake of our country, I wish that were so, but, unfortunately, we know it couldn't be further from the truth.

After 3 years of one self-inflicted disaster after another—border, crime spree, cost-of-living crisis, a more destabilized and dangerous world because of the weakness, the weak posture, the feckless foreign policies—we are supposed to believe somehow that life is better in America.

President Biden wasn't able to suspend reality even in a State of the Union speech. Why? Because the American people know better. They know

□ 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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that under the reckless spending and failed policies of this President, their country has become weaker and more vulnerable, both at home and abroad.

Madam Speaker, if you think that the State of the Union speech was disconnected from reality and the needs of the American people, read his budget. He just introduced it yesterday.

In the midst of record spending-induced inflation, interest rates, and the cost of living that is crushing working families, and a fragile and uncertain economic future for the American people, and the slide toward socialism, the slide toward a sovereign debt crisis, here is his answer:

Double down on the borrowing and the spending and the taxing.

In fact, his budget proposes the highest sustained levels of spending, borrowing, and taxing in the history of the United States of America.

Adding \$16 trillion to the debt over 10 years, \$5 trillion from hardworking tax-paying Americans to attempt to pay for it, taxes on energy and agriculture producers, taxes on working families, taxes on our job creators who are competing not just here at home but in the international marketplace.

Then he expands mandatory spending. Understand that we have 75 percent of our budget on auto-spend. That is the driver of the debt. If we don't rein in mandatory spending and grow this economy, we will never get out of this dangerous and unsustainable fiscal path that will end with irreparable harm to this country, that will end with our children being robbed of their freedom and their opportunities.

It will upend the Republic and our leadership in the world. The whole world order will change, and China won't have to fire a single shot. Madam Speaker, he expands mandatory spending because he wants more climate subsidies and clean energy, green energy tax giveaways to corporations. It is more cradle-to-grave welfare without work, trapping more people in dependence on government and generations in poverty.

This is his vision for America.

One thing that is not in there is any consideration for this current fragile economy or our children's future.

Madam Speaker, I am concerned as the budget chairman of the United States House Budget Committee. I am concerned as a family man with three children, who are hoping to have the American experience that we have had.

Madam Speaker, the Republicans put forward their budget, their blueprint, that would put this Nation on a path to balance. Instead of adding the \$16 trillion in debt over 10 years, we take that debt away. We reduce trillions of dollars in debt, we reduce our debt-to-GDP which, by the way, is the highest indebtedness in the history of our country, surpassing World War II when we were fighting Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany. We are in relative peace and prosperity, and we have higher indebtedness than we did in World War II, and it is going to get exponentially worse.

Today, our debt is 25 percent higher than the total economic output of the greatest and biggest and most robust economy in the world. It will be twice that in 30 years—\$120 trillion on top of the \$34 trillion debt that we are in now.

Now, if you can look at those CBO projections, if you can look at the unfunded liabilities 30 years in the future and not shudder to your core for the future of your country, then you are not reading from the same documents I am reading from.

Madam Speaker, look at the contrast between Biden's budget and the Republican budget. He says, show me your budget, I will show you your priorities. Look at his priorities and look at ours. I think you will understand that we choose economic freedom and fiscal responsibility and a bright future for our children.

God bless America and go west Texas.

MOURNING THE LOSS OF ITAY CHEN

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

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I rise today in sorrow, one that sears me not only as a Member of Congress, not only as a supporter of the State of Israel and its people, not only as an American, but as a parent.

Since October 7, I have become close with Ruby and Hagit Chen. They are the parents of Itay Chen, a brave American who was serving in the IDF when he was taken hostage by Hamas on October 7.

When last I saw Ruby and the other families of the American hostages held in Gaza less than a week ago, I repeated the refrain: "Send not to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

Sadly, Madam Speaker, we know that bell tolls for Itay.

Just this morning, intelligence emerged indicating that shortly after Hamas took Itay hostage on October 7, they executed him; an unarmed, defenseless hostage. It was an act of supreme cowardice, terror, murder.

Theirs was a crime that violates every international law, every rule of war, every moral ideal, and every principle of basic human decency.

His murder satisfied only one tenet, the one Hamas laid out in its own charter, which states their terrorist organization was put on the Earth to "fight Jews and kill them," and to eliminate Israel.

These terrorists robbed Itay of his future. He was only 19 years of age. They robbed Roy and Alon of their brother. They robbed our Nation of a great American, a young American, an idealistic American, an American who loved his country, the United States of America, and loved his family's homeland, Israel. Crucially, they robbed our world of a generous soul.

Madam Speaker, there is no sequence of words, no order of syllables that

exist in any language that can dull the pain that Itay's family feels this hour, but they ought to know that our commitment to secure their son's return is unbreakable.

We will not yield until we have recovered his remains, for his family cannot put him to rest and sit shiva until his body is returned. We will not relent, Madam Speaker, until we get every last hostage returned home.

Madam Speaker, I wish Itay's family strength as they grieve this terrible loss—the same strength that they have shown throughout this grueling ordeal. Many of you have met him, and Hagit, his mother, and maybe his aunt.

Indeed, the bell tolls for them and their son today, but it tolls for all of us, all of us who are vulnerable to the acts of terrorists and murderers and those without conscience.

May the Chens take comfort in knowing that bell's peal resonates in the hearts of every person who cherishes the human decency, courage, and generosity that Itay displayed.

May Itay's memory be a blessing.

□ 1015

AMERICANS CANNOT AFFORD PRESIDENT BIDEN

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

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, during President Biden's State of the Union Address, we saw a desperate attempt to jump-start a failing Presidency.

After 3 years of weak and ineffective leadership, the American people continue to suffer under soaring inflation, increased crime, and a wide-open southern border.

Now is not the time for more empty promises from a President who is unable to deliver. It is time to address these challenges head-on by cutting back on spending, giving law enforcement the tools they need, and returning to border policies that keep our Nation safe.

Pennsylvanians cannot afford a President who cannot rise to meet these challenges, and Americans cannot afford a President who continues to rely on the far-left policies of his radical base.

CONSISTENT INFLATION

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, just this morning, it was reported that consumer prices rose by more than 3.2 percent in the month of February alone.

This consistent inflation is continuing to force American families to make difficult decisions about what they can afford and what they cannot afford.

Right now, a gallon of gas in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, costs \$3.66. Instead of addressing these rising prices, President Biden has continued to attack American energy producers, stifling new development and making it more difficult to open new refineries.