



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 170

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2024

No. 141

House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 11, 2024.

I hereby appoint the Honorable RALPH NORMAN 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.

MEDICAL DEBT

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

Ms. TLAIB. Mr. Speaker, no one should go bankrupt because they get sick.

I was proud to be able to join Director Chopra of the CFPB along with Congresswoman DEBBIE DINGELL in hosting a roundtable on the impact of medical debt on our families.

We talked about the groundbreaking proposal by the Biden administration that would change the lives of millions

of people where we would ban and prohibit medical debt from appearing on people's credit reports.

I know this step is long overdue, having introduced legislation like the Restoring Unfairly Impaired Credit and Protecting Consumers Act which would prohibit outright the reporting of medical debt on consumer reports.

Today, 15 million Americans have \$49 billion in medical debt on their credit reports. In Wayne County, which is the largest county in Michigan, nearly one in six residents have medical debt.

Behind these numbers are real people. They are our families, whose lives are being impacted by this crushing burden all because they got sick.

We heard this firsthand from one of my residents, Livonia resident Erika Price, who was devastated by our broken healthcare system while watching her husband's body deteriorate.

For many, medical debt means sleepless nights worrying about making ends meet. Some families go bankrupt. Others lose their homes.

This is wrong, and, again, no one chooses to be sick.

The burden of medical debt can also haunt families by lowering their credit score, preventing them from getting a job, being able to rent a home, or even be able to get a car or a small business loan.

To address this crisis, I joined Senator BERNIE SANDERS and Congressman RO KHANNA in introducing the Medical Debt Cancellation Act to eliminate medical debt completely.

We know that we have sick care in our country, not healthcare. We know that this is also an economic and social justice issue and that many of our low-income families, our most vulnerable, some of my seniors even with insurance, are starting to see medical debt rise. We also know many of our Black and Latino neighbors are more likely to be impacted.

We know that without Medicare for All, millions of people will lack coverage while expenses continue to rise.

We all deserve so much better than a broken healthcare system that profits off of sickness and leaves more than 20 million people without health insurance.

No one should lose their home or have to declare bankruptcy because they got sick. Medical debt should never haunt someone financially. This body must take action to relieve this burden for many of our residents.

MICHIGAN NEEDS PUBLIC POWER

Ms. TLAIB. Mr. Speaker, I am sick and tired of DTE Energy's corporate greed, while many residents suffer the consequences and go days without power in Michigan.

Our families can't afford more power outages that spoil their groceries. And guess what? They only get \$25, sometimes \$35 in reimbursement. It ruins their medicine that is in the refrigerator. It leaves our neighbors without access to critical medical devices, all because DTE would rather pay out their executives—look it up—and their shareholders rather than ensure reliability.

They defer maintenance and would rather pay their shareholders instead of making sure the grid is strong and reliable.

Last month, with record-breaking heat waves, temperatures reached 95 degrees in southeast Michigan while over 200,000 residents went without power due to DTE Energy's failure to invest in their infrastructure upgrades while continuing to raise rates on our families.

The company made \$1.4 billion in profits last year alone. Their CEO, Jerry Norcia, makes \$10 million a year, but they are begging the Michigan Public Service Commission to approve more rate hikes—I think it is the third

□ 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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or fourth already—and asking our residents to pick up the tab for their executives to travel on corporate jets. It is shameful.

The Michigan Public Service Commission should reject these outrageous rate increases. They are not reasonable. They are not fair. We need utilities that serve the people, not shareholders.

We need public power. DTE and other for-profit utilities should be turned into publicly owned and operated services. We see it over and over again by DTE's actions that we cannot allow these corporations to continue because they are always going to put profit before our people.

FALLING SHORT

Ms. TLAIB. Mr. Speaker, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, is often hailed as landmark civil rights law or the most important civil rights laws in our country offering a promise of equal education for all of our children with disabilities.

We continue to fall short though in this promise.

The 50-year-old law is underfunded to this day. We passed it in 1975, and we promised to pay 40 percent of the cost of the Federal mandate on our school districts, and we are only reaching about 14 to sometimes 17 percent.

We are not doing enough.

Paraprofessionals alone in Detroit are working without a contract right now. Our Federal Government needs to cover 40 percent of the extra costs of special education.

CHINA IS A SIGNIFICANT THREAT

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

Mr. ALFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the most pressing national security threat to our Nation right now: the Chinese Communist Party.

The CCP is engaged in a full-scale influence and espionage operation right here in the United States of America.

From Confucius Institutes to TikTok, and from spy balloons to intellectual property theft, the CCP's mission is quite clear: to collect our data, to infiltrate our country from within, and to become the world's sole superpower.

Mr. Speaker, plain and simple, we need to make a change.

We must recognize the significant threat that Communist China poses. We must decouple ourselves from our dependence on China. We must restore strong American leadership around the globe. We must ban our adversaries like China from buying U.S. farmland. We must put an end to their data collection schemes.

Mr. Speaker, we must stand behind our ally Taiwan. The path forward is clear: peace through strength and a resolute leader in the White House.

GOLD STAR CEREMONY

Mr. ALFORD. Mr. Speaker, I want to speak from my heart right now on a

subject matter that we dealt with yesterday in the rotunda not too many feet from this House floor.

I was honored to be at the ceremony yesterday for the 13 Gold Star families, the 13 servicemembers who bravely gave their lives 3 years ago on the wall at Abbey Gate due to a decision made by a failed administration to get all American troops out of Afghanistan, to leave them there—our allies—clinging to the wheels of aircraft as they tried to escape the grip of the Taliban. It was a flawed decision.

This administration never apologized to those 13 families for that critical mistake in our world history. Yesterday, someone finally had the guts to apologize to those families: our Speaker, MIKE JOHNSON. I applaud him for that.

The highest honor that Congress can bestow, the Congressional Gold Medal, was given posthumously to those 13 brave individuals, including Lance Corporal Jared Schmitz from Missouri.

I realize that that apology and that acknowledgment and those Congressional Gold Medals will never completely heal those families, but I do think it was a step in the right direction.

I was honored to have dinner with some of those families last night along with DARRELL ISSA, KEN CALVERT, and BRIAN MAST, sitting down with those families and just hearing their stories and how much it meant to be in that rotunda yesterday, and for our Nation to finally acknowledge that it was a mistake. This administration has never done that, and I think they will have to live with that.

I am glad that our Speaker awarded those Gold Star medals, and I am glad we came together. It was bipartisan yesterday in that rotunda, make no mistake. I think we all felt the pain of those family members.

I just left the rotunda and came back over here. I love going to the rotunda every morning when I can and seeing people come in for the very first time. They look up, and they see the pictures painted by people, like Trumbull and others, who have painted representations of our heroes. To have those 13 heroes with their pictures in that rotunda yesterday was very fitting.

Mr. Speaker, I just want those families to know that we stand with them. We will never forget them. We have their backs. I hope someday we can regain their respect.

Life is precious, but those willing to give the ultimate sacrifice to our Nation deserve our complete respect. I thank the families and their servicemembers for giving it all for our great Nation.

A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Mr. ALFORD. Mr. Speaker, lastly, I want to reflect on today, 9/11, as a day of remembrance. This is now the 23rd anniversary of the fateful date in U.S. history when Islamic terrorists on planes loaded with people crashed into the World Trade Center.

Let's keep that memory alive.

PARTISAN CHAOS

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

Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, here we are once again. My Republican colleagues have decided to end the 118th Congress the same way they started it; not with a serious budget but with partisan chaos.

Let's look at the last 2 years. First, the GOP manufactured a debt ceiling crisis and took our economy hostage. Despite that, we came together as Democrats and negotiated in good faith. We struck a bipartisan deal, and we signed it into law, but the Republicans tore it up. They have ignored it ever since.

They have driven us to the edge of a government shutdown four times, all to take money out of the pockets of hardworking families and stuff the pockets of billionaires.

It is the same plan every single time: manufacture a crisis then make working people pay the price, cut their healthcare, delay their retirement, lay off the teachers.

Well, this week, they have decided to run this same play for a fifth time. They have brought another extreme partisan bill to the floor.

Speaker JOHNSON said yesterday: "... it's the right thing to do." The right thing to do?

Today is 9/11, the 23rd commemoration of the horrors that were befallen upon us on that day, and I, too, was at the ceremony honoring those heroes that we lost in Afghanistan.

□ 1015

So coming up \$12 billion short for our veterans' healthcare and endangering their disability checks, that is the right thing to do?

Compromising our national security, cutting Social Security's ability to meet the needs of our seniors, and even defunding election security?

That is the right thing to do?

Come on. They know this is the wrong thing to do.

So why are we doing it?

Why this reckless 6-month CR?

It is for one reason: Donald Trump's Project 2025.

The GOP wants to delay this fight past the election into next year all in the hopes that they have a better chance at enacting Trump's extreme agenda.

What is that agenda?

Ending Social Security and Medicare as we know them, auctioning off the VA to for-profit corporations, cutting our school budgets in half, eliminating the Department of Education, eliminating Head Start, raising the cost of childcare, imposing a national sales tax, rationing healthcare for working families, and enacting a nationwide abortion ban.