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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 20, 2024.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CELESTE MALOY 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:

Lord, if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.

Would that we show the maturity of faith that our lives would reflect our belief in You and that in You, we would believe all things are possible. Lord, we believe. Help our unbelief.

For you, O God, rule all things in wisdom and righteousness. You have called each one of us to serve You and be obedient to Your will. In Your providence, You lay before us the ability to trust in our present and hope for our future. Lord, we hope. Help our uncertainty.

You, O God, who are love, and in love created each one of us, and in love still cherish every person where they are and just as they are, call us to share that love with our colleagues, our family and friends, and even our enemies. Lord, we love You. Help us in our inability to love our neighbor.

In our belief, may we find the patience to hope. And in hoping may we become more loving. And in hoping and loving, may we grow stronger in our faith and closer in our walk with You.

In the name of the one who showed us how to love, 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 Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. QUIGLEY 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.

SYRIA LIBERATED

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, the murderous Assad regime in Syria, backed by war criminal Putin, and the Tehran terrorist regime and its Hezbollah puppet, caused the worst refugee crisis since World War II. With 12 million citizens, over one-half of Syria has been displaced. Now murderous Assad escapes to Moscow while one million citizens will be returning in the next 6 months.

Helping Syrians return home should be a priority. This can best promote reconstruction. American policies should reduce sanctions on Syria to help Syrians stay in their homes or return home. It would be positive to see the building of a new Trump Tower in Damascus.

Success for democracy in Moldova and Romania this month, with courageous Ukrainian resistance, and Syria expelling Putin, is an inspiration for patriots in Georgia defeating war criminal Putin puppets.

In conclusion, God bless our troops as the global war on terrorism continues. Open borders for dictators put all Americans at risk of more 9/11 attacks imminent as warned by the FBI. Trump will reinstitute existing laws to protect American families with peace through strength.

Wishing Chaplain Margaret Kibben a merry Christmas.

ATTACKS ON TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Madam Speaker, today, as in every day, we open the House with the Pledge of Allegiance and the words "with liberty and justice for all."

However, some of our Nation's greatest ills have come from moments when we have chosen to make exceptions to "all." Right now there are those who, once again, make exceptions, this time by carving out the transgender community by targeting them for discriminatory policies.

To those crafting these policies, every economic challenge, shift in culture, and electoral loss can be blamed on one small, minority population or another. To them, every problem is someone else's fault, and if only that

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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group didn't exist or if they were more like the majority, then perhaps our country's challenges would be solved.

Let us remind ourselves that never have our Nation's problems been solved by creating a scapegoat. In light of Supreme Court cases and derogatory posts, we need to remind ourselves that these are real people whom we are talking about. Just because you may not understand someone's experience, Madam Speaker, does not make them any less valid.

A lack of understanding does not give anyone the liberty to attack someone's existence. Let us lead with empathy and strive to learn from our neighbors.

CELEBRATING THE RETIREMENT OF MIKE VESTA

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

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the retirement of the chief information officer of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, FLETC, Mike Vesta.

Mr. Vesta was appointed as the assistant director and chief information officer of FLETC in August of 2016, and he will retire on December 31.

Mr. Vesta has an extensive background in providing training resources to State, local, campus, Tribal, and international law enforcement. He held a crucial role in Federal law enforcement training, as FLETC serves as a law enforcement training agency for over 90 Federal agencies and other partner organizations.

Mr. Vesta began his career in the Federal Government in 1986 where he spent 4 years enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. He also held many roles within the National Weather Service beginning in 1991.

In 2002, Mr. Vesta became the CIO of the Overton Brooks VA Medical Center where he influenced change with information technology in the healthcare world before joining FLETC in 2006.

I celebrate Mr. Vesta's impressive knowledge and impactful career that has supported the U.S. Air Force and advancements in information technology and Federal law enforcement training.

I congratulate Mr. Vesta on his retirement.

BIPARTISAN SPENDING AGREEMENT

(Mrs. LEE CARTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. LEE CARTER. Madam Speaker, I did not expect to be here today. We had a bipartisan agreement, and we were set to vote on Wednesday. It was bipartisan and bicameral, yet, at the eleventh hour it was pulled, doing injustice to the American people.

I call for that same agreement to come to the floor so that we can regain

the trust of the American people, keep our government open, and do what they have asked us to do, which is fund disaster relief and provide vast, important services across our Nation.

I also rise because this may be my last time in the well. It has been my honor to be a voice for the 18th Congressional District and bring an important vote back to this House in memory of my mother, the Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee, fighting for justice, freedom, access to healthcare, women's rights, human rights, and economic opportunity for all.

She always fought for it to be a more perfect union and for America to live up to her promise. I think that we should do well to remember that when we have these discussions today.

May her legacy live on in this body and live on in this Nation forever. It has been a true honor to be with my colleagues, but I ask that we do what is right in this season of giving for the American people and bring the bipartisan agreement back to the floor for a vote.

RECOGNIZING SLOAN McPHERSON

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

Mr. ROSENDALE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Montana Grizzly defensive end Sloan McPherson from Glendive, Montana. While Sloan is a fantastic football player, I recognize him today for his lifesaving efforts off the gridiron.

Every spring, the Montana Griz football team walks the campus encouraging people to participate in the National Marrow Be the Match Program. Along with encouraging others to join the registry, many players selflessly add their own names to the list.

This past summer, Sloan got a call saying that his stem cells matched a patient with life-threatening leukemia and sickle cell anemia. Sloan made the decision to potentially pass up the opportunity to begin the season with his team and instead flew to Boise, Idaho, to donate his stem cells.

This selfless act resulted in a saved life. When Sloan is asked about his donation, he humbly says: When there is someone in need and you can help them, you have to do it. I have known Sloan since he was born. He lives next door to me. Like his parents, Craig and April, I am proud of the young man that he has grown to be.

The world can use more men like Sloan McPherson.

CELEBRATING THOMAS EYE GROUP'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. CLYDE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 50th anniversary

of Thomas Eye Group. For one-half century, Thomas Eye Group has provided exceptional eye care for folks throughout the north Georgia region, becoming a cornerstone of Georgia's healthcare community.

Whether it is through pediatric care, advanced surgeries, or the everyday gift of clearer sight, Thomas Eye Group has embodied what it means to serve with purpose. Their skilled doctors and staff have not only improved their patients' vision but transformed lives, restoring hope and clarity to countless Georgians.

I applaud their unwavering commitment to their patients, their integrity in practice, and their drive to embrace innovation while never losing sight of their mission.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate Thomas Eye Group on this incredible milestone. As we look ahead to the next 50 years, I am confident their top-notch team will continue leading the way in delivering exceptional eye care.

Wishes for a merry Christmas.

OUR COUNTRY'S BEST

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the efforts of our chairman, G.T. THOMPSON, of the Ag Committee and many of our colleagues in making sure that this year-end agreement we have is going to also include the importance of agriculture.

Agriculture is in big trouble with the commodity prices and disasters they face around the country. Many of these amazing crops you see right here on this poster board, Madam Speaker, would not exist, and, without this aid that we have in this package here, they will be in big trouble and maybe not get the finances here.

Some of the finest quality crops anywhere come from California and the U.S.

Also, some of the finest quality staff we have, our Ella, a staff member who works on this floor, will be leaving us pretty soon and heading over to a different building to work in a new Member's office. We will still miss her and her high-quality work and her thumbs-up like an empress up there in front.

Madam Speaker, I wish Ella best wishes and good luck. God bless Ella.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 12 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

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AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro