



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 170

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2024

No. 37

House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 29, 2024.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DALE W. STRONG 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.

RESTORING FISCAL ORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, as our Nation faces a myriad of catastrophes, one of which is an open southern border and the mass migration of illegal aliens, Washington's fiscal house sits in utter disrepair.

That is the reality we face. If we don't grasp the reins soon and stamp out wasteful spending, our Nation will suffer serious consequences that will continue to compound.

Not a penny of taxpayer money should be directed to frivolous spending binges overseas while the southern border is sitting wide open. We should take care of our country's needs first.

American families and hardworking taxpayers across the Nation demand that action be taken to cut spending, restore fiscal sanity, and get our country moving in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly agree with them, and I have taken action to restore fiscal order in Washington.

To cut wasteful spending and protect taxpayer dollars from rampant abuse, I have supported commonsense amendments to the ongoing fiscal year 2024 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Operations appropriations package. These amendments slash funding for the United States Agency for International Development by half, transfer millions of dollars from the Peace Corps budget to the spending reduction account, eliminate millions in funding for the Global Environment Facility fund, and prohibit funds from being used to implement the Paris climate agreement.

Our children, grandchildren, and future generations of proud Americans to come deserve fiscal order in Washington and our country's needs being put first. Anything less is entirely unacceptable.

In addition to my continuing efforts to uphold fiscal order and put the needs of our country first, I have also cosponsored H.R. 2445, the Special Inspector General for Ukraine Assistance Act, legislation which would establish an office for an inspector general for Ukraine assistance to oversee all funding made available in support of Ukraine.

Specifically, this legislation requires the President's nominee to serve as the Special Inspector General for Ukraine Assistance to be confirmed by the Senate; directs the Special Inspector General for Ukraine Assistance to submit

quarterly reports to Congress on obligations and expenditures of U.S. funds and the provision of military equipment; requires a report on the Ukrainian Government's compliance with anticorruption measures and comparisons of America's contribution to Ukraine to those from our NATO allies.

Mr. Speaker, oversight of taxpayer dollars and resources should never be cast aside or abandoned. We can stamp out wasteful spending, put our country's needs first, and ensure effective oversight of taxpayer dollars all at the same time.

My record on cutting wasteful spending is clear, and I will always fight to ensure that the dollars of hardworking taxpayers are not only respected but also protected.

UKRAINE FUNDING IS IMPORTANT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. NICKEL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. NICKEL. Mr. Speaker, on February 24, 2022, the world watched with alarm as Russia invaded Ukraine. Since the start of the invasion, over 100,000 Ukrainians have died fighting to defend Ukraine's sovereignty and the broader principles of freedom and democracy.

Now, it has been 2 years since Putin's unprovoked assault on Ukraine. We can't abandon them in their fight for freedom; not today, not tomorrow, never.

With Ukraine running out of bullets and Russia advancing in Ukraine, the eyes of the world are on the United States Congress. Authoritarian regimes around the world like Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea are looking closely to see if we will honor our commitments and stand with our democratic ally or if we will hand over Ukraine to Vladimir Putin. If Ukraine falls, Putin will not stop until all of Eastern Europe is within his grasp.

☐ 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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If Congress fails to act, it will go down as one of the greatest foreign policy failures in our Nation's history.

Let's be clear about where history will place the blame. If Congress fails to act, history won't be kind in the judgment that House Republicans surrendered Ukraine to Russia.

In the past, House Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. Congress have united and come together in opposition to Vladimir Putin's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. We have just seen 22 Republicans in the Senate willing to vote country over party on this issue. I believe there are Republicans in the House willing to do the same.

As we look ahead, House Republicans have a choice. Are they prodemocracy or are they pro-Putin?

House Republicans can choose country over party or Russia over the United States.

House Republicans can stand with our allies, or they can stand with Donald Trump and the pro-Putin wing of the Republican Conference.

House Republicans can either stand with democratic nations like Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan, or they can bend the knee to authoritarian regimes like Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea.

The longer we delay sending aid to Ukraine, the more powerful Putin and other authoritarian regimes become. We can't abandon them in their fight for freedom.

That is why I am calling on the Speaker of the House, MIKE JOHNSON, to bring the bipartisan, Senate-passed security package to the floor of the House for an immediate vote.

Now, many of my constituents rightly question the high cost of this aid package. Support for Ukraine and our allies is in our national interest. It is a national security issue for the American people. While the costs are high, we will spend a hundred times more money containing an aggressive Russia around the globe if we do nothing. We must stand with our allies. This will be a vote where Members will be forced to choose between democracy and authoritarianism.

As I have voted now for Speaker of the House 19 times, I have learned how incredibly fragile our democracy is. We must act now to pass a supplemental aid package and stand with Ukraine.

We can either stand with democracies like Israel and Ukraine, or we can bend the knee to Putin and other authoritarian regimes around the globe. Democracy should never be taken for granted. We must be vigilant and proactive to protect it here and around the world.

History is watching what happens next. Let's come together, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans, and stand with our ally Ukraine.

STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS SCHEME

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

Mr. ROSE. Mr. Speaker, we recently learned that the Department of Education would be shifting another \$1.2 billion in student loan debt from borrowers to the taxpayers of this country. This is yet another example of President Biden's administration abusing whatever regulatory lever they can find, every executive action he can think up to usurp Congress and continue this unjust bailout scheme.

Unfortunately, the scheme is working. In recent months, tens of billions of dollars in borrowed money are no longer due for repayment. Let's be clear. Student loan debt can't be forgiven. It is simply being transferred to hardworking American taxpayers, most of whom never went to college or took out student loans.

These tactics come despite what happened last summer when the Supreme Court of the United States overturned the Biden administration's previous student loan handout plan totaling more than \$400 billion. The High Court found, in laymen's terms, that a President cannot spend hundreds of billions of dollars with the stroke of a pen.

This is one of the most regressive ideas that I have seen in my time in Congress. It does nothing to solve the ballooning cost of a college education in this country. It simply adds to our national debt, which already, of course, sits at more than \$34.2 trillion.

We know that 43 million out of 255 million adults in the United States have some kind of student loan debt. We also know that \$1.7 trillion in outstanding college debt is disproportionately held by those earning the highest incomes in this country. It makes no sense for a blue-collar worker in Tennessee to be forced to pay off the college debt of a Harvard-educated doctor or lawyer.

We have the freedom to choose whether to pursue higher education in this country. You can choose to forgo a 4-year degree, as millions of successful Americans have done, but this administration would have you pay for the 4-year degrees of others regardless of your choice.

More than 100 million Americans have built a life without taking on debt. In fact, I represent thousands of Tennesseans who earn a good living without having borrowed money to do so. Why should they foot the bill for those who chose to go to college? This sends a terrible message to an entire generation of undergraduates and soon-to-be undergraduates. Perhaps more importantly, this unjust and wrong-headed action on the part of President Biden incentivizes universities to continue raising tuition with impunity because students can now borrow the money to pay these outrageous tuitions without having to pay it back.

Furthermore, possibly the worst aspect of all of this is that every college graduate and every parent of a college graduate who did the honorable thing by paying off their student loans, often at great sacrifice, is now being harshly

punished for having done so. It is also an ugly affront to the families across this country struggling to stay afloat amid record-high consumer prices as a result of Bidenflation.

There are already programs on the books to help those struggling to repay their student loans, like income-driven repayment plans, in which roughly 40 percent of borrowers are already enrolled. I urge the White House to end this cycle of adding billions to our debt with the stroke of a pen. Just as the Supreme Court determined last June, this kind of policy must be approved by Congress before it can be implemented.

WE MUST NOT ABANDON OUR ALLIES

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, for more than 2 years, the world has watched as Ukraine defends freedom and democracy and international law.

Disgracefully, this House has failed to pass additional supplemental aid to that effort for 427 days, more than half the length of this war.

Our inaction is an abandonment not only of our allies but of our values of liberty, democracy, and international law. We are the leaders of the free world, not by choice, but by necessity. We ought to be ashamed. We ought to be disgusted. Indeed, most of us are.

As our Congress sleeps, the enemies of freedom rain hell down upon the defenders of democracy. They do so with greater fury, thinking that this Congress will do nothing to stop them.

Recently, we watched Russian forces take back the city of Avdiivka. Putin's regime killed Russian opposition leader Navalny, silencing a heroic, principled voice against Putin and his criminal invasion of Ukraine. Yet Speaker JOHNSON brings no bill to this floor.

Ukrainian soldiers now face a 10-1 disadvantage in artillery. They report watching Russian forces approach and having to decide in the moment how many grenades they can afford to launch, how many shells can they afford to fire, and how many bullets can they afford to shoot.

□ 1015

That calculation ought to be self-evident—as many as it takes—but it is not. The world is watching what is happening in the trenches of eastern Ukraine.

The people of Ukraine are watching what is happening on the floor of the United States House of Representatives. How can we rationalize that, that we stand silent without action?

The first question Ukrainian troops ask journalists who visit the front line is: What is happening in Washington? What is happening in the House? What is happening when the Speaker does not bring to the floor a bill to respond to the threats to us, to democracy, to freedom?