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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 26, 2025.

I hereby appoint the Honorable BRAD KNOTT 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 3, 2025, 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.

AMERICA MUST NOT BE IDLE WHILE ADVERSARIES ADVANCE CAPABILITIES

(Mr. SELF of Texas was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. SELF. Mr. Speaker, America and our European Union allies find ourselves at an inflection point. We have an amazing opportunity, and the actions we take today will shape the outcome for generations to come.

The world is significantly more dangerous because of the Biden administration projecting American weakness to the world. Under the previous ad-

ministration, America turned away from policies that had our adversaries quaking in their boots and instead bent a knee to the axis of evil. Make no mistake, China, Russia, and Iran are exerting influence across the globe that is causing harm and posing major threats to both the United States and our allies.

It is vitally important that the United States and our European Union allies work together to find solutions that both combat these adversities and ensure that we stay ahead of them in the process. All three are trying to impose their will physically, psychologically, and diplomatically on Europe, and we must be fully prepared for whatever approach they take.

As the chairman of the Europe Subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee, I will continue to lead both reauthorization of the State Department and regional efforts under the leadership of Chairman MAST.

A significant part of our focus is achieving the policies that put America's interests first while building our relations with allies abroad against our common adversaries.

We have taken major steps in the right direction under President Trump and his administration, but there is still more work to be done. Our NATO partners must step up to the plate and give 5 percent of their GDP for the protection of Europe as America shifts its focus to the Indo-Pacific region. The CCP has made significant advances in warfare, and we must remain vigilant while also building up our defense industrial base in order to be prepared for any scenario.

America must not remain idle while our adversaries are advancing their capabilities. The Europe Subcommittee will do our part.

CONGRATULATING OTIS T. BARKER, SR.

(Mr. KENNEDY of New York was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. KENNEDY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the incredible career of a consummate public servant and my friend, Otis T. Barker, Sr., or as his friends call him, OTB.

For nearly three decades, Otis has been at the heart and soul of Buffalo's community services, dedicating his life to uplifting our city's children and families. From his trailblazing career in business to his tireless work in public service, Otis has always led with integrity, passion, and an unwavering commitment to the people of Buffalo.

Otis' public service journey began in 1996 when deputy speaker of the New York State Assembly Arthur O. Eve hired him as his chief of staff. From 1996 to 2002, Otis was at the center of State and community affairs, gaining a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities that shape our neighborhoods.

In 2006, Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown tapped him to serve as director of the Division of Youth. His leadership continued to grow, serving as deputy commissioner in 2011 and, ultimately, commissioner of community services and recreational programming in 2017, where he oversaw critical programs for our youth, our seniors, our workforce, and our recreational spaces.

As commissioner, Otis Barker helped over 30,000 young people find opportunities through the mayor's summer youth internship program, giving Buffalo's next generation a path forward.

Otis' service didn't stop with government. He spent his time coaching Little League baseball, leading the North Buffalo Little League Football Organization, and coaching high school basketball, instilling values of discipline, teamwork, and perseverance in young athletes across our city.

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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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At his retirement earlier this month, Buffalo's mayor surprised Otis with the renaming of the basketball courts in Martin Luther King, Jr. Park as the Otis T. Barker Sr. Basketball Courts, a fitting tribute to someone who has helped make athletics more accessible for our young people.

Otis' impact extends into Buffalo's faith and music communities, where he directs and assists choirs at St. John's Baptist Church and the Var-Son Community Choir. His voice, both in leadership and in song, has lifted up so many in our community.

Buffalo will miss him in city hall, but I am confident that his mentorship, leadership, and boundless generosity will continue throughout his retirement, and I have no doubt he will continue his commitment to our city as he also enjoys more time with his wonderful family and friends.

Mr. Speaker, I thank OTB for making our community a better place to live, work, and raise a family. I wish my friend a well-earned and rewarding retirement. We love him. Congratulations and Godspeed.

HONORING NORTH CAROLINA STATE SENATOR MARSHALL A. RAUCH

(Mr. MOORE of North Carolina was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. MOORE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor North Carolina State Senator Marshall Arthur Rauch, who recently passed away at the age of 102, leaving behind a legacy of service, leadership, and generosity that will be remembered for generations.

As the longest serving Jewish State senator in North Carolina history, Senator Rauch was a trailblazer and a man of deep principle.

Senator Rauch dedicated much of his life to public service, serving on the Gastonia City Council, chairing the North Carolina Senate Finance Committee while he was a member of the senate, and championing racial harmony, education, and fiscal responsibility. He was also a World War II veteran and a successful businessman who ran, at one time, the world's largest Christmas ornament company.

Senator Rauch's work to integrate schools peacefully in Gaston County, support higher education, and help folks achieve self-sufficiency left an impact that will continue for generations.

Senator Rauch was known for his kindness, his wit, and his unwavering belief in the power of public service to make people's lives better.

I was someone who was very lucky to get to know him. As a young person, I was a senate page and had the opportunity to serve there. I got to know Senator Rauch all those years ago, and I stayed in contact with him over the years. He stayed very active pretty much till the end.

One of his favorite things to do, Mr. Speaker, was periodically he would

have a hot dog roast during the week and invite folks over for hot dogs. He invited folks from all backgrounds, from all political parties, with an opportunity to sit down and fellowship, have a meal together, and just get to know folks. That is the kind of generous man that Marshall Rauch was.

Mr. Speaker, Marshall Rauch is going to be deeply missed, and I join the people of Gaston County and the people of North Carolina in honoring his extraordinary legacy.

DON'T TOUCH SOCIAL SECURITY

(Mr. COURTNEY of Connecticut was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, last year, candidate Trump, President-elect Trump, and now-President Trump repeatedly told the American people that he won't touch Social Security. We are now 2 months into his administration, and we are finding that the opposite is true.

A headline yesterday in The Washington Post read: "Long waits, waves of calls, website crashes: Social Security is breaking down."

Next to me is a poster board from The Wall Street Journal. Some people may say that The Washington Post is always critical of President Trump, but this is The Wall Street Journal, an impeccable, center-right newspaper whose headline states: "Dealing With Social Security Is Heading From Bad to Worse."

The agency that administers benefits is cutting staff and restricting benefits as part of the Department of Government Efficiency review, or DOGE, the Trump initiative.

Let's be more specific. What are some of those intentional policies that are being put into place? We know that there was a wave of those fork-in-the-road retirements that hit Social Security and reduced staff. We know that Social Security has already announced that the workforce is going to be reduced from 57,000 all across America to 50,000.

Some may say: What is wrong with that? We should sort of downsize our workforce, make them more efficient.

The fact of the matter is, if you look at how many people are beneficiaries today, with the baby boomer retirements that are swelling the ranks of Social Security beneficiaries, it is 73 million Americans now who are receiving Social Security benefits. These are people with retirement benefits, children who have lost a parent, and people on disability.

We now have a bigger-than-ever population of people collecting Social Security benefits and a reduced staff.

To put this in perspective, in 2010, not that long ago, the size of the Social Security workforce was 68,000, 18,000 more than what the Trump administration is targeting for today, and the number of beneficiaries in 2010 was 54 million Americans as opposed to 73

million Americans today. We have more people who need help with the Social Security system and fewer staff to help them navigate it.

In just 1 week from today, they are pretty much going to shut off phone service for Social Security beneficiaries who are trying to sign up with their bank information to get on Social Security. This is something that has been normal practice, using very precise identifiers to make sure that waste, fraud, and abuse do not occur.

By the way, Social Security's accuracy is 99.7 percent. That has been verified by outside audits and by the Social Security trustees. Yet, despite that track record, what they are going to tell Social Security beneficiaries, who sometimes struggle with online enrollment in other areas of their lives, is that they are not going to have the opportunity to use a phone service, which, again, has been in practice in the past for decades.

They are also closing 47 Social Security offices across the country. Again, at a time when the number of people who need to interact and interface with the Social Security system is bigger than ever, they are shutting down offices, laying off staff, and shutting off phone service.

The wait times, in terms of people trying to get appointments in person, are going to get longer. Just in the Northeast, we have already been told that the White Plains office in New York is going to be closed, and they are telling people to go to New Haven, Connecticut, my State. That is about a 2-hour drive for people if they want to have an in-person appointment who are now going to basically have a shuttered building in a very densely populated area outside of New York.

The notion that the Social Security system, by this administration, is not being trusted, the opposite is true. DOGE is behind this, as The Wall Street Journal reported. Elon Musk, in an interview with FOX News, made it crystal clear his goal is to eliminate Social Security and get \$800 billion to \$900 billion of savings out of the Social Security system, which we know today is probably one of the most efficient agencies in the Federal Government in terms of the accuracy of their payouts.

The pathway ahead of us is very crystal clear. Congress has to stand up as a coequal branch of government that enacted Social Security in 1935 and for 90 years—we are celebrating the 90th anniversary of Social Security—has been a pillar of middle-class retirement security and helping children who have lost a parent.

Mr. Speaker, it is not an entitlement. It is not welfare. It is an earned benefit that people pay into. They should get that benefit when it is their turn to get the help from Social Security that we promised as Congress.

Defend Social Security. Stand up for Social Security. Don't touch Social Security.