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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BOST).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 13, 2025.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MIKE BOST 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 1:50 p.m.

HONORING THE LARGEST EXPANSION IN VETERANS' HEALTHCARE BENEFITS

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, today, January 13 in Washington, we are in a little bit of a hiatus waiting for a new administration and a new Congress to begin the process of bringing forward new policy proposals and a budget.

In the meantime, in the last 13 days, we have seen, I think, groundbreaking, exciting developments for the people of

this country as a result of legislation that was passed in 2022 and 2023 and implemented by the Biden administration.

The first is the PACT Act. In 2022, after 5 years of hard-fought advocacy by veterans' groups all across the country, this measure opened the door for veterans of the Vietnam war era and also the Middle East era, who suffered horrible cancers, heart disease, and life-threatening conditions, to make sure that they could connect to the VA healthcare system to get the help they need.

Basically, what it did in 2022 was allow veterans who served in those parts of the world in those conflicts who suffered from 23 different illnesses—we are talking about cancers, heart disease, and life-threatening illnesses—to be able to avoid the gymnastics of having to prove to the VA where they were on such and such a date and how they were exposed to a burn pit or to Agent Orange.

As a result of that, we have seen over 1.4 million veterans nationwide have their PACT Act claims approved and over 384,000 Vietnam, Gulf war, and post-9/11 veterans get newly enrolled in the healthcare system. Six million toxic exposure tests were done as a result of this law.

Last week, on January 8, Secretary McDonough of the VA announced that another five illnesses are going to be added to the presumptive eligibility structure of the PACT Act claim system. Again, we are talking about very serious illnesses in terms of additional cancers and myelomas which today don't get the benefit of that fast-track process of getting their claims approved and getting the help that they need.

This is making a big difference in my district, the Second Congressional District of Connecticut, which is home to the oldest submarine base in our Nation's history, with about 9,000 sailors

and many retirees serving in the area there. Over 4,025 veterans in the district have filed PACT Act claims. That is more than double the rest of the congressional districts in the State of Connecticut.

This has made a meaningful difference in the lives of people who wore the uniform of this country and, because of their service, incurred service-connected injuries that for many years had long been denied health coverage.

I congratulate Secretary McDonough as he leaves his post for the swift implementation of the 2022 law.

CAP ON OUT-OF-POCKET COPAYMENTS IN MEDICARE PART D

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, on January 1, the Department of Health and Human Services announced that a \$2,000 out-of-pocket cap is going to be initiated for seniors on the Medicare part D program.

Fifty-three million seniors across the country use part D and because of the copayment structure, many of them pay in excess of \$2,000 out of pocket.

Starting on January 1, because of the Inflation Reduction Act and the prescription drug reforms that took place as a result of that, there will be a hard cap that no one will have to pay more than \$2,000 during a calendar year for prescription drug coverage for people who suffer from chronic illnesses, such as MS and other cancers.

This is a life-changing transformation in terms of both their healthcare coverage and delivery but also their financial circumstance, which for many years, despite part D being enacted back in 2002, they were incurring costs far in excess of \$2,000. The numbers are in the hundreds of thousands and possibly millions of people who are going to benefit because of that new cap.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Secretary Becerra for the swift implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act, which unfortunately was a very tough

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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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vote that took place in 2023, but it is paying off in real-life benefits for 53 million elderly and people on disability who rely on the Medicare system to get their lifesaving medication and drugs.

This is real change that means something in real life for people. Hopefully, with this new Congress, we are going to follow up with this. We can extend that prescription drug benefit by passing the Lowering Drug Costs for American Families Act, which would extend these Medicare cost controls for prescription drugs to working-age families, to people's employment-based plans.

Why not? Why should they have to pay more than their fellow Americans for healthcare and people all across the globe? Let's pass that law. Let's help the Americans in this country in this next Congress.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION FORCING OUT-OF-TOUCH MANDATES ON THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, even as his time in office is coming to an end, President Biden and his administration are still forcing out-of-touch mandates on the American people.

To confront President Biden's Green New Deal agenda, I am proud to reintroduce the Preserving Choice in Vehicle Purchases Act, which passed this House in a bipartisan manner in the last Congress. This legislation would ensure that California is unable to move forward with a ban on the sale of gasoline-powered vehicles.

This dramatic change would alter the way that vehicles across our Nation are sold at a time when our electric grid is not prepared to meet the demands of a fully electric fleet. It is time to put a stop to the Biden administration's far-left agenda. It is time to allow American drivers to be able to choose the vehicle that they want to drive.

AMERICAN PEOPLE WANT SAFE STREETS AND SECURE BORDERS

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the election in this past November was a loud and clear signal from the American public that they want a secure border and safe streets. That is why my Republican colleagues and I are quickly moving legislation to secure our border and ensure that violent criminals are removed from our communities.

The Preventing Violence Against Women by Illegal Aliens Act would make any sexual offense committed by illegal immigrants a deportable offense and would ensure that they are banned from these United States. This commonsense legislation is just one step toward creating safer streets and communities for Pennsylvania families and for all Americans.

PROTECTING OUR NATIONAL ENERGY SECURITY

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, as President Trump prepares to begin his second term in office, the Biden administration is trying to limit his ability to ensure that our Nation is energy dominant once again, this time by banning drilling from certain Federal lands.

Like President Trump, I know that energy independence moves us away from relying on foreign actors for our energy resources while also helping our allies remove their dependence on adversarial nations, as well.

As vice chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee, I look forward to working with President Trump and his administration to unleash our Nation's energy production. Together, we as Americans can lower prices at the pump and protect our national energy security.

PROTECTING OUR KIDS IS NOT A PARTISAN ISSUE

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

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I will start by welcoming all of our new Members to the 119th Congress and to this esteemed Chamber. I look forward to finding a way that we can work together to better our country.

I am introducing myself as one of the proud co-chairs of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth. I am here to tell you that protecting our kids is not a partisan issue.

I am inviting you to join us in protecting our most valuable asset in this country, our future workforce, our children.

In any given year, there are 390,000 children and youth who experience foster care in the United States. Foster care impacts every congressional district across the country, regardless of whether it is red or blue or urban or rural.

Our Members come from all over the country and have vastly different backgrounds and experiences. However, we all share one thing in common, and that is the commitment to finding solutions that aim to improve the lives of children in care.

Last Congress, we made great strides in child welfare policy by working across the aisle to deliver real results for children and families. In July last year, the Supporting America's Children and Families Act passed unanimously through the Ways and Means Committee. In September, it passed this House by a vote of 405-10.

This bill provided the first major increase in child welfare funding in almost 20 years and reauthorized title IV-B funding for another 5 years. It also included provisions to prevent States from separating families solely on the basis of poverty; strengthen the Indian Child Welfare Act; recover overdue child support by intercepting Federal tax funds; expand evidence-based

services to prevent abuse and neglect; and support foster youth transitioning out of care, among other important provisions.

I am so proud to say that the Supporting America's Children and Families Act was signed into law by President Biden on January 4, 2025.

This feat was made possible by bipartisan efforts from members of the Ways and Means Committee and the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth. This bill is proof that we have one theme uniting us regardless of party: Our children and youth deserve loving, stable, and safe homes.

As a member of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth, your fresh ideas and new perspectives will help address the ever-changing challenges that foster youth in our country face. You will hear directly from advocates, child welfare professionals, and even children and families with lived experience on how we as policymakers can better the foster care system.

The caucus' largest event is shadow day where our members spend the day with a former foster youth. This allows us to learn about issues facing children involved in the child welfare system directly from people with lived experience. Our goal is to turn their feedback into action.

If you care about the well-being of our most vulnerable children and families, like I know all of you do, please join us as a member of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth. We will be having our welcome back event on Tuesday, February 11, from 10 a.m. to noon, and it is open to Members and staff willing to learn about issues related to foster youth. I hope to see you there.

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SOLVING FIRE CRISIS IN THE WEST

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, well, it is everywhere. You can't avoid it in the news, and it shouldn't be avoided. It is so horrible. The fires we have now in southern California are devastating so much there, so much value, so much loss, and up to 24 lives lost now. It is an incredibly unnecessary happening that has been raging in L.A. It happens every year with the Santa Ana winds.

Up in the northern California area that I represent, we have had that devastation already many times: The town of Paradise, town of Greenville, town of Canyon Dam, and others were completely obliterated.

Our Governor Gavin Newsom has been up there to see those fires, especially the Paradise one when President Trump came to Paradise and visited to see the devastation. At the time, President Trump asked him and others: What are you doing to clear the land in