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No. 25

House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 4, 2026.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TRACEY MANN 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 6, 2026, 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.

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

(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 condemn Islamophobia in the United States, an alarming and dangerous trend that goes against the most basic values of our country. Hatred and religious discrimination don't make us safer, stronger, or more united. They do just the opposite.

When fear and division are used by people in power, families in our com-

munities are the ones who pay the price. When national leaders single out and demonize an entire faith or culture, it tells people that intolerance is acceptable, that cruelty is strength. Too often, the loudest voices of hate hear that signal clearly.

Across our country, Muslim Americans are feeling that impact. Mosques have been threatened. Families have been profiled. Children have been made to feel like they don't belong in the only country they have ever known. It is wrong, it is unjust, and it is profoundly un-American.

As Members of Congress, we have a responsibility to stand up for fairness, freedom, and basic decency because Islamophobia has real consequences. Families are afraid to report crimes, workers lose opportunities, students feel isolated, and American citizens are treated differently because of how they pray, how they dress, or where their parents were born.

In western New York, from Buffalo to Niagara Falls to the city of Lackawanna, and everywhere in between, we know what it means to face discrimination, hate, and division, and we know the power of standing together united.

My district is home to one of the largest Arab American communities in the country. Families came here for the same promises as generations before them, to build a better future for themselves and their children. They believe in the American Dream. Neighbors in the city of Lackawanna came together in an act of love for the community and created ACCESS of Western New York. ACCESS helps families in crisis, supports young people, and gives immigrants and nonimmigrants alike the tools they need to get on their feet. They bring people together instead of pushing them apart.

That is what America looks like at its best. At a time when division feels constant, western New York shows there is another way forward, one root-

ed in respect, compassion, and shared humanity.

We all have a choice. We can allow hate to grow, or we can stand up and say it has no place here. I choose to stand against Islamophobia, and I urge my colleagues and all Americans to do the same.

RECOGNIZING CHRISTINE LEE

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

Mr. LUTTRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor an extraordinary public servant, a trusted leader, and dear friend, my chief of staff, Ms. Christine Lee, who is actually retiring after a distinguished career in public service.

In this Chamber, we often speak about policy, votes, and headlines, but behind every office, behind every Member, there are people whose work rarely show up in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, people who make the institution function, who keep the mission on course, and who serve quietly with excellence every single day.

For years, she has been a steady hand guiding our office. She brought clarity when things were complicated, calm when things were chaotic, and purpose when the days were long. She understood that public service isn't about credit. It is about responsibility. She carried that responsibility with integrity, discipline, and grace.

As chief of staff, she did far more than manage schedules and operations. She shaped culture. She built a team that worked hard, treated people with respect, and never lost sight of why we are here: to serve the American people, especially the veterans and families who depend on us.

She has an uncommon ability to see both the big picture and the smallest details. She could navigate complex legislative strategy while never forgetting the constituent on the other end

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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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of the phone who just needed help. That balance—the human side of governance, paired with professional excellence—is rare. That is what made her indispensable.

In moments of pressure, she was unflappable. In moments of disagreement, she brought thoughtfulness. In moments of decision, she was always guided by principle.

I have relied on her judgment more times than I can count. When I needed honest counsel, she gave it, even when it wasn't easy. When the office needed leadership, she stepped forward without hesitation. When the mission demanded long hours and personal sacrifice, she never asked for recognition. She simply got the job done.

That kind of leadership doesn't happen by accident. It comes with character, from experience, and from a deep belief in service before self.

Her impact extends well beyond my office. She has mentored young staffers who will go on to serve in Congress, the executive branch, and communities across the country. Her legacy lives on in the people she has trained, the standards she has set, and the example she modeled every day.

Public service is often described as thankless. Too often the people who give the most receive the least public recognition, and today we correct that.

Ms. Lee has helped shape legislation, supported veterans, solved real problems for real people, and strengthened this institution. She has done so with professionalism, humility, and unwavering commitment.

On behalf of the constituents of the Eighth Congressional District of Texas, on behalf of my staff, and on behalf of a Member of Congress, I want to thank her.

Her service has mattered, her leadership has made a difference, and her example will continue to guide us long after she steps away from this role. As she begins the next chapter of her life, she leaves with our deepest respect, our sincere gratitude, and our very best wishes.

HONORING THE LIFE OF RICK GARCÍA

(Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Rick García, a giant in the fight for equality in Illinois.

I met Rick in the 1980s when being out, visible, and unapologetic came with real risk. We used to call each other primos or cousins because we shared the same last name.

Rick believed that change didn't happen by accident and worked across political, religious, and community lines to build unlikely coalitions. He helped pass Illinois' landmark ban on discrimination based on sexual orientation.

As a cofounder of Equality Illinois, Rick fought to ensure that love and

identity are never grounds for discrimination.

Rick's legacy lives on in the movement he helped build and the laws he helped pass, which are now as important as ever.

May we honor his legacy in action. May Rick rest in power.

LOSING BENEFITS

Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, the price of groceries keeps going up. Starting this week, 4 million people per month will be pushed off their food stamps. In Illinois alone, 360,000 people will lose those benefits. All due to cuts from the big, ugly bill.

Americans are being forced to go hungry so the President can pay for his terror campaign in our cities. Children, people with disabilities, and veterans will lose their ability to put food on the table.

Food pantries are already seeing longer lines for services. Local grocers warn that this will impact them, too, as people will be unable to shop for food. SNAP benefits are not just a safety net. They also foster economic activity and community stability.

The President has made his priorities clear by cutting food assistance for millions of Americans to fund his agenda, while families are pushed closer to hunger.

They can lie, tell us to ignore what we see and experience, but the American people will not forget.

SUPPORTING SAFETY NET SERVICES

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

Mr. ARRINGTON. Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, my Democratic colleagues—maybe not all of them, but what I just heard—gave a complete mischaracterization of the program integrity measures that Republicans put in the big, beautiful bill. While the fraud, waste, and abuse is on display for all Americans, not only in Minnesota, but all across this country, we find it unacceptable. We believe that one of our first responsibilities here in the people's House is to steward the people's sacred treasure.

We put financial controls, anti-fraud measures, and, again, program integrity reforms so that people who need these safety net programs can avail themselves. They will not be drained anymore by people who are illegally in this country, ineligible, or who are able-bodied adults who just simply refuse to work. That is all. I mean, I think that is, as we say, an 80-20 issue in this country.

No, people aren't starving and being thrown into the streets with no support who need it. We are protecting and preserving not only the tax dollar, but these important critical safety net services for the American people who are eligible.

I am grateful for that leadership from the President and from my Re-

publican colleagues. I can't imagine that most Democrats throughout this country actually support us protecting their tax dollars, too.

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HONORING J.L. STEVENS ON HIS 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a true west Texas giant and American hero, Mr. J.L. Stevens of Big Spring, USA, a World War II veteran who just turned 100 years old this past week. He is a living monument to the grit, courage, quiet humility, and service that define both west Texas and America's Greatest Generation.

In 1943, at just 17 years old, Mr. Speaker, this gentleman enlisted in the United States Navy, serving as a gunner's mate aboard the USS *Hambleton*, where he directly engaged the enemy on D-day while supporting the Allied invasion of Normandy. Despite suffering combat injuries in Europe, Mr. Stevens continued his service, which concluded in 1945 in the Pacific theater, where he personally witnessed the signing of the Japanese Instrument of Surrender in Tokyo Harbor, bringing World War II to its official end.

After the war, Mr. Stevens returned to his home in west Texas, where he worked as a carpenter, helping to build the firehouse there in Big Spring and the city's original VA hospital.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. J.L. Stevens represents the very best of west Texas in his heroic service to our country and a lifetime of hard work, faith, and devotion to his family, his community, and this great country of ours. I ask my colleagues to join me in wishing him a happy 100th birthday and thanking him for a legacy of service that will long endure.

Mr. Stevens, here is to many more. God bless you, and God bless America.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH: HONORING HILLARD POUNCY

(Mrs. MCBATH of Georgia was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mrs. MCBATH. Mr. Speaker, this week began Black History Month. As second vice chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, I am proud to rise and put proper emphasis on this important annual recognition. All month long, I will be working to amplify the stories of notable Black Americans from Georgia's Sixth Congressional District.

Today, I am particularly honored to kick off my constituent recognition by sharing the story of a truly exceptional American. Dr. Hillard Pouncy, Jr., was a student, research scientist, and beloved father and grandfather. Perhaps most notably, he was one of the original Tuskegee Airmen during World War II.

Dr. Pouncy's accomplishments in life seem almost too extraordinary to be true. Born in Prichard, Alabama, Hillard lived with his grandparents to