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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 23, 2026.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DAVID J. TAYLOR 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 1:50 p.m.

OPENING OF KONGSBERG DEFENSE EXPANSION

(Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight a development in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, with positive impacts not just for the community but for our entire Nation.

Last week, I had the privilege of participating in the opening of the expansion of the Kongsberg Defense in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The ex-

panded Johnstown production site represents millions of dollars in investment in 20 new high-quality jobs for the area.

For more than two decades, this facility has produced critical remote weapon systems that support the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Army. Since its opening, this Johnstown site has produced over 20,000 remote weapon stations and remote turrets, providing high-skilled employment opportunities in Pennsylvania's 13th Congressional District.

This expansion signifies a strong commitment to domestic manufacturing, while also bolstering our military readiness and capabilities. In a world of growing tensions with foreign adversaries, investments like this are essential to our national security. They are essential for maintaining that peace through strength that President Trump has promised.

RESTORING FAIRNESS IN PRESCRIPTION DRUG MARKET

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the meaningful and long-overdue step toward restoring fairness and transparency in our prescription drug market by passing the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2026, now signed into law by President Trump.

For years, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce has ultimately led the fight to crack down on pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs, whose hidden practices too often fail patients and, rather, enrich the health insurance companies in America.

These historic reforms take important first steps to hold PBMs accountable by delinking PBM compensation from the price of the drug. This legislation replaces hidden incentives with a flat-fee model.

By requiring full transparency into how PBMs operate, this will give employers and everyday Americans visibility into hidden costs and rebates be-

fore they purchase a health insurance plan.

These changes promote several things. They promote accountability. They promote protecting patient choice. They promote ensuring that hidden fees are not in the price of the patient's medicine.

This is a pro-patient reform that will ultimately lower costs at the pharmacy counter and deliver a more affordable healthcare system for all of America.

RECOGNIZING REBECCA CONNER-MILLER

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Rebecca Conner-Miller on her selection for the 2026 Dr. Laura Hummell Technology Innovator of the Year Award, which is one of Pennsylvania's most prestigious honors in educational technology.

Presented annually by the Pennsylvania Educational Technology Expo and Conference, this award honors educators who elevate technology into a tool that is used for exploration and opportunity.

Rebecca is a teacher at Mifflin County High School. Through her teaching, students explore engineering design, digital fabrication, robotics, and manufacturing challenges that mirror real-world industry. Rebecca's colleagues praise her for her leadership and creativity.

Mr. Speaker, I extend congratulations to Ms. Conner-Miller on her selection for the Dr. Laura Hummell Technology Innovator of the Year Award. She is providing students the blueprint for a successful future.

RECOGNIZING MICHAEL CLARK

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Michael Clark for being selected as the Outstanding Agriculture Education Teacher of the Year. This is one of the highest honors for his profession.

Michael is an agriculture teacher at the Greenwood High School in Perry County, Pennsylvania.

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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The national award that Michael received recognizes teachers who demonstrate innovation and program development, a commitment to lifelong learning, and dedication to shaping the next generation of agricultural leaders.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of everyone in Pennsylvania's 13th Congressional District, I congratulate Michael on his selection for the national Outstanding Agriculture Education Teacher of the Year Award and express gratitude for his passionate commitment to the academic achievement of his students.

HONORING ROBERT DUVAL

(Mr. SUBRAMANYAM of Virginia was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and career of the great Robert Duvall, who passed away on February 15 at the age of 95.

Many know Mr. Duvall as one of the most iconic actors and filmmakers of his generation. He is known worldwide for his unparalleled range and for bringing to life some of the greatest stories ever told, such as his haunting debut as Boo Radley in "To Kill a Mockingbird" and powerful portrayal of Tom Hagen in "The Godfather."

In our community, we know him as just a great guy and great human being, an Army veteran who served our country, and a man of quiet integrity, who preferred his Virginia farm to the glitz of Hollywood.

Robert lived by a simple rule: listen, really listen. He did that as a resident of Fauquier County, where he was known as a great neighbor and environmentalist, who supported so many causes in our community.

In Winchester, he supported a children's home, often visiting the kids with gifts, like gingerbread houses during the holidays.

As Robert once said: "Yesterday is gone, and we can't get it back." While we cannot get him back, we are left with an incredible legacy that he leaves behind in our community and around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I extend my condolences to all of his family. May he rest in peace, and may his legacy in Hollywood and in our community continue to inspire.

HONORING THE LIFE OF WITOLD "VIC" BRICK

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the incredible life of Witold "Vic" Brick, a local veteran in Loudoun County who fought with the Allies in World War II.

Vic passed away last week at the age of 103. He was born in Warsaw in 1923, and he graduated from school in 1943.

After experiencing the worsening conditions under German occupation, Vic joined the Polish underground movement, the AK.

The AK was the primary Polish resistance to the Germans in World War II, tasked with sabotaging German military efforts. He was part of an uprising that lasted 63 days until it was

captured. Vic was amazingly able to survive this and was liberated by General Patton.

Vic didn't stop his service there. After being rescued, he joined the Polish 2nd Corps, part of the British Eighth under the command of General Alexander, who served bravely until the end of the war.

It was Congress that allowed Vic and 10,000 other Polish servicemen living in England to immigrate to the United States.

Vic considered himself lucky in an unlucky situation and remained forever grateful for the opportunities he was given as an American citizen.

Vic was a valued part of our community in Loudoun County. We were proud to have him and lucky to hear his stories about all the years that he served, as well as the years after that.

Vic is survived by his children, George, Kay, and Michelle, and his nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

May Witold "Vic" Brick rest in peace and his bravery inspire others to do the right thing, even when the odds are against you.

VA DISABILITY BENEFITS DETERMINATIONS

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in response to the recent interim rule from the Department of Veterans Affairs that would change how disability benefits are determined for our veterans.

Under this rule, disability ratings would be based not on the underlying condition, but on how a veteran presents after medication.

If you have severe PTSD and take medication for it, your benefits will be evaluated not based on your underlying PTSD but based on your condition after taking the medication at the time you are being evaluated.

Remember, these medications wear off. Maybe you seem fine right now after taking your medication during your evaluation, but then the medication doesn't work later on or loses its effectiveness over time. You are still judged based on the time you were evaluated.

We are creating a system here that is destined to fail our veterans. We are even incentivizing them not to take their medication if they want to receive full benefits.

Thankfully, because of public backlash, the VA has said that it will not enforce this rule right now. However, the rule is still in place, and it can be enforced at any time.

Veterans relying on these lifesaving medications every day are still left in limbo, not only for their mental health but for their chronic pain, traumatic brain injuries, seizures, heart disease, diabetes, and all the other ailments that they have suffered as a result of their service.

These medications do not cure disabilities. They help veterans function despite them.

It makes no sense, and it is wrong for a veteran's benefits to be dependent on

how well their medication is working during the time of evaluation. We must eliminate this rule once and for all.

HONORING LANCE CORPORAL CHUKWUEMEKA OFORAH

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

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to memorialize Lance Corporal Chukwuemeka Oforah, a marine stationed at Camp Lejeune who tragically lost his life in a recent boating accident.

While conducting operations in the Caribbean on February 7, Oforah fell overboard while on the USS *Iwo Jima*, prompting an extensive multibranch, 72-hour search-and-rescue effort by the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force.

Despite these efforts, Oforah was later declared deceased. Despite the bravery and dedication of all those looking for him, sadly enough, his body was not found.

Oforah, an infantry rifleman, enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2023, graduated from Parris Island in February 2024, and completed the School of Infantry at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. He was later assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment.

We mourn the loss of his life. May God give peace to his family in their time of profound grief.

At the time of his passing, he was deployed with Battalion Landing Team 3/6 and the 22nd MEU aboard the *Iwo Jima*.

We pray that the family feels the gratitude of a nation that will never forget their son's sacrifice.

Our servicemembers sacrifice so much in the line of duty and risk their lives to keep our country safe and free.

As the Representative of Camp Lejeune, as well as Cherry Point and New River Air Stations, I remain steadfast in my commitment to supporting our heroes in uniform and their families who stand behind them.

May we honor Lance Corporal Oforah not only with our words but with our unwavering support for those who continue to serve.

HONORING JOE LEEPER

(Mr. BEAN of Florida was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. BEAN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if you want to understand the strength of a community, look at the men and women who quietly built it, not for recognition or reward, but because it was the right thing to do.

Today, I rise to honor one of those men, Joe Leeper of Fernandina Beach, Florida, who passed away at 97 after an amazing life of service.

Born in 1928, Joe was part of a generation of Americans who answered the call to serve, worked hard, raised strong families, and built communities.

In 1946, he enlisted in the United States Navy, serving honorably during