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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,

April 1, 2009.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ELLEN O. TAUSCHER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: Lord God of all goodness and life, the Holy Scripture teaches the human family that human progress, though it is a blessing, brings also a great temptation.

When there is an imbalance with others on the scale of values, tensions are raised.

When evil becomes mixed with what is good, both individuals and nations can be worried only about their own interests.

In our own day of economic difficulty and uncertainty and world markets, protect us, Lord, and free us from becoming narrow-minded or so frightened that self-interest devours any sense of compassion or concern about others.

May insecurity never rob us of thanksgiving or sharing our blessings.

Before You, all is transparent and accountable, both now and forever.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BRIGHT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BRIGHT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

HONORING NOWRUZ

(Mr. HONDA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HONDA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Nowruz, a holiday which marks the traditional Iranian new year.

Over 1 million Iranian Americans and the people of Iran celebrated Nowruz on Friday, March 20, and I introduced a resolution which recognizes the cultural and historical significance of Nowruz. It expresses also appreciation to Iranian Americans for their contributions to society and wishes Iranian Americans and the people of Iran a prosperous new year.

I'm proud to represent a civically engaged Iranian American community, and I'd like to commend the initiative and instrumental support given by the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans and the National Iranian Council, who I have had the pleasure of working with on this resolution.

Once again, Madam Speaker, I rise to honor and celebrate Nowruz.

AUTO PLAN

(Mrs. MILLER of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Madam Speaker, I rise today to let my colleagues know that there is no challenge that we in Michigan cannot handle. So when the administration's auto plan came out this week, and it was announced that some decisions have been made that might mean even tougher times ahead, I knew that we would just do what we have always done: roll up our sleeves and get to work. And that's exactly what we are doing.

Recently, a bipartisan group of us in Congress introduced the CARS Act, which would offer vouchers to Americans to purchase new fuel-efficient cars made in North America, while trading in their old gas guzzlers. I was encouraged to hear the President say this week that he is in favor of such an incentive program.

This "cash for clunkers" program is a win-win plan. It gives our auto industry a much-needed boost, it cleans up our environment at the same time, and it does what those in Michigan and this great country have always done. It creates an innovative solution to answer the call of a challenge.

Let's support this plan and continue to work together to create solutions. That is the Michigan way. That is the American way.

CONGRATULATING HARRY N. MIXON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ON RECEIVING THE ACCELERATED READER RENAISSANCE MASTER SCHOOL AWARD

(Mr. BRIGHT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

□ 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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Mr. BRIGHT. Madam Speaker, this past Friday I had the privilege of attending the Accelerated Reader Renaissance Master School Award ceremony at an elementary school in my district, Harry N. Mixon Elementary School in Ozark, Alabama.

To achieve this award, 90 percent of Mixon Elementary School students had to read and comprehend 90 percent of what they read. On average, students read 92 books each during the school year, and that means the student body read 50,526 books through the course of this year. There are only six other schools in Alabama to win this award, and nationwide only 127 schools achieved this goal out of over 60,000 schools.

It is quite an achievement for the students, Ms. Donna Stark who is the principal, and Mike Lenhart, the superintendent, and the faculty and parents at Mixon elementary, and it was an honor to be part of the ceremony.

By achieving such a high reading level at a young age, the students at Mixon are preparing themselves for future success and setting an example for all young people nationwide.

I would like my congressional colleagues to join me in congratulating the students of Harry N. Mixon Elementary School on this outstanding achievement.

ALL-ABOARD

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, when most people think about taking a cruise, they imagine dream destinations, sunny days, and boatloads of fun. What people don't imagine is that these so-called fun ships are not free from crime. Sometimes American passengers disappear on the high seas or become victims of sexual or physical assault.

You see, American passengers board these ships in U.S. ports and do not realize the ship is likely registered in a foreign country. That means these luxury ships are not required to report crimes to our government unless the crime occurs within U.S. territorial waters. This creates a serious problem for protecting the rights of Americans.

As founder of the Victims Rights Caucus and a former judge, it seems to me Americans should be concerned by the absence of law enforcement on cruise ships, concerned by the lack of duty to report crime and concerned with the sometimes careless way that crime scenes are handled or not handled at all.

Americans should be protected on U.S. soil or on the high seas. Representative MATSUI's Cruise Vessel Safety and Security Act will help protect Americans on cruise ships. It's high time we take back the high seas.

And that's just the way it is.

BUDGET AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

(Mr. WALZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to say a few words about our new budget that we'll be debating and voting on this week, and on fiscal responsibility.

This country is in the midst of an economic crisis the likes of which we have ever seen. The Recovery Act this House passed in February was the first major step in our response to that crisis. It cannot be the last. We must not go back on the progress we have begun.

The budget we will consider will address the crisis. It will begin the transformation of our economy so that it emerges stronger than ever, and we will do it in a way that gets us on the path toward fiscal balance. This is an incredibly difficult challenge.

No one likes deficit spending. I come from southern Minnesota, a fiscally conservative place, and it's no accident that we have preserved ourselves from some of the worst excesses of this economy.

But this plan and this budget before us have just the right mix. It invests in key priorities like health care, education, and energy independence to get our economy moving, and it cuts the deficit by two-thirds by 2013. What is not fiscally responsible is to support the same policies that got us into this mess in the first place. That I will not support.

If the alternative to this budget is basically the same plan, tax cuts to the super-rich and no efforts to address health care that we know does not work, that's not fiscal responsibility. That's the height of fiscal irresponsibility.

On the other hand, if this budget will help create the vital economic growth that we have lost, I will support it.

OUR BUDGET MAKES TOUGH, RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, sadly, one of the ways Democrats may choose to trim President Obama's massive borrow-and-spend budget is to sunset middle-class tax cuts. So, after looking over the budget that already borrows too much, spends too much, and taxes too much, they've decided that they will save money by taking tax breaks away from American families.

Republicans believe we should help American families and small businesses keep more of their own money so they can create jobs. We do not balance our budgets on the backs of the American taxpayer. We are promoting the ideals of limited government, being threatened by the massive growth of big government.

Our budget will address national challenges like affordable health care, uncertainty in our dollar and Social Security, as well as high gas and electricity costs. It is a budget that reflects the spirit of responsibility we are seeing from families all across America.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th and the global war on terrorism.

INTRODUCTION OF CRUISE VESSEL SECURITY AND SAFETY ACT OF 2009

(Ms. MATSUI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. MATSUI. Madam Speaker, members of the International Cruise Victims are on Capitol Hill this week to raise awareness of cruise safety issues.

Over 13 million Americans will take a cruise this year. However, few passengers are fully aware of the potential for a crime to occur, and those who are victimized often do not know their legal rights and whom to contact for help.

Those who have come to Capitol Hill this week have lost daughters, parents, aunts and husbands, and some were victims of sexual assault or other crimes on the high seas.

Due to the absence of law enforcement officials on ocean voyages, it can be difficult or impossible to properly resolve many of these crimes.

That is why I have introduced the Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act of 2009 with Senator KERRY. This bill has been informed by three congressional hearings and the stories of the individuals who bravely came forward.

I want to thank Ken Carver, Laurie Dishman and the many others who have come here to bring awareness to this issue.

BUDGET DEBATE 3

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. FOXX. Today, the House will consider whether we put our fiscal house in order or whether we continue the same failed policies of wasteful spending and skyrocketing debt.

We will decide whether we continue the great American tradition of leaving our children a Nation stronger and more prosperous than the one our parents left for us.

The President and Democrats in Washington have proposed a budget that takes this country in the wrong direction. The President proposes many of the same failed policies that caused our economic crisis, a budget that spends too much, taxes too much, and borrows too much.

Our children and grandchildren deserve better. It's time to get our fiscal house in order and make the tough decisions needed to set this country back