

Mr. SCHOCK 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 10 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

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

Mrs. DAHLKEMPER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Worldwide Marriage Encounter.

For over 40 years, Worldwide Marriage Encounter has strengthened countless marriages through a weekend workshop to improve a couple's communication. Worldwide Marriage Encounter is totally self-supporting, and no couple is turned away because they do not have the ability to pay. In 2009, over 10,000 couples attended the Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekends in the United States alone.

Marriage is a vital institution in the life of our society. Couples in good marriages live longer and happier lives. Worldwide Marriage Encounter is undertaking a project to recognize the longest married couple from every State, with special recognition to the longest married couple in the United States. As nearly 50 percent of marriages end in divorce, it is truly an inspiration to see how many couples have remained together for so long.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in congratulating Worldwide Marriage Encounter and all the volunteers and clergy for their efforts to strengthen marriages throughout our country.

OMNIBUS SPENDING

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

Mr. BUCHANAN. Mr. Speaker, despite \$14 trillion in debt, Congress continues to waste taxpayers' money.

The Senate is now debating the Senate bill, loaded with more than 6,000 earmarks, including research for maple syrup in Vermont. This barrel of pork totals \$8.3 billion.

America's message last month was very clear—stop the reckless spending.

This continued borrowing and spending is putting our country on the road to bankruptcy. Forty-nine out of 50 States have to balance their budgets. Yet, in the last 50 years, we have only managed to balance the Federal budget five times. This has to change.

We need to pass a constitutional balanced budget amendment, and we need to pass it today.

REBUILDING OUR OWN NATION

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

Mr. HIMES. Mr. Speaker, I make a point every day to look in *The Times* at that black box, usually on page 7 or 8, that lists the names of those young men and women who have given their lives in Afghanistan.

Yesterday, it struck me, as we go into Christmas, that there were seven names on that list—six of them under the age of 25. Two of them, Ken Necococha and Derek Simonetta, were only 21 years old. I wonder if they'd ever bought a drink in a bar or in the country in which they were serving. On the front page of *The New York Times*: U.S. Intelligence Offers Dim View of Afghan War.

I say all this because this time last year I was in Afghanistan, watching the good work that these young men and women are doing—building roads, building markets, building a nation—and reflecting on the fact that this is a nation that, for 1,000 years, has spit out foreigners as sport.

As we go into Christmas and I think about the kids in my city of Bridgeport, whose schools have leaking roofs, whose highways are crumbling, whose rails are coming apart, I wonder, Mr. Speaker: Is it not time that we start rebuilding this Nation, not one that seems to not want us there?

ANOTHER HOUSING BUBBLE

(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. Mr. Speaker, American Enterprise Institute fellows Peter Wallison and Edward Pinto have warned, "It is hard to believe, but it looks like the government will soon use the taxpayers' checkbook again to create a vast market for mortgages with low or no down payments and for overstretched borrowers with blemished credit. As in the period leading to the 2008 financial crisis, these loans will again contribute to a housing bubble."

They go on to state, "The goal of Congress and regulators should be to foster the residential mortgage market's return to the standards that used to prevail in 1990, before the affordable housing requirements were imposed on Fannie and Freddie."

We should fix the current problem. For starters, the Dodd-Frank Act needs to be amended so that quality standards are applied to FHA and other government agencies. This should not impair credit availability for the important home-building and real estate industries.

As a former real estate attorney, I know the government should not overwhelm homeowners with mortgages they cannot afford. This destroys neighborhoods and families.

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

TAX CUTS THROUGH BIPARTISAN COMPROMISE

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, as we work to close out this session of Congress, Members of this House today will vote on a major piece of legislation to extend tax cuts for every American. While this bill is expected to help provide a boost to our economy, perhaps equally important is the way that we arrived at this stage in the legislative process—through bipartisan compromise.

This bill is a result of negotiation between Republicans and Democrats, between the President and the Congress, between the House and the Senate. That's right. This bill which we are going to pass today and send to the President is a result of the type of give-and-take negotiation that is supposed to be part of the legislative process but that, unfortunately, has long been lacking in Congress.

Hopefully, passage of this bill today will be but a sign of things to come. I hope the new Republican leadership in Congress taking office on January 5 will incorporate all points of view—of Republicans and Democrats alike—and will continue working in a bipartisan way to put the American people ahead of partisan politics.

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INTERNATIONAL PREVENTING CHILD MARRIAGE ACT

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

Mr. SCHOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the International Preventing Child Marriage Act.

I had the opportunity to travel earlier this year in September with the well-respected nonprofit CARE to the country of Ethiopia. During that time, we visited the Hamlin Fistula Hospital and saw firsthand the atrocities and the realities of the situation with so many of these young girls who are forced into early marriages beyond their wishes, marriages that rob their potential to grow and mature both physically as well as mentally, for them to be able to establish their own life and their own goals and hopes and dreams for them to pursue.

As a leader here in our country and around the world in preventing world poverty and spreading goodwill, there can be nothing better that we can do as a country than to join with our international partners in trying to prevent child marriage, both in Ethiopia as well as other countries around the world, and give these young women the