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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 27, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ERIK PAULSEN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, 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 each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

RUSSIA AND THE JACKSON-VANIK AMENDMENT

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of issues with which we have to contend around here. Obviously there are dramatic increases in gasoline prices. We are going to be dealing with the budget this week. FCC reform is on the agenda for today. But one issue that hasn't gotten a great deal of attention that we are going to be addressing in the coming weeks and months is whether or not we deal with the issue of so-called ''Jackson-Vanik legislation'' and allow us to proceed with extending permanent normal trade relations for us to be able to trade with Russia.

Mr. Speaker, as we look at this issue, there are a number of factors that need to be addressed: first and foremost, what impact is this going to have on our Nation's job creators, those who are trying to grow our economy; and equally, if not more, important is the impact on human rights, the development of the rule of law, and the building of democratic institutions in Russia.

Now, we all heard the statement that was made by the President just yesterday in his off-microphone discussion with President Medvedev about how things are going to go and the flexibility he'll have in his second term. Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that one thing that is very important for us to recognize is, there is action that we can take today that will allow us to deal not only with the notion of our creating jobs here in the United States of America but also tackling the very important human rights issue.

Let's also realize that Russia is going to be a member of the World Trade Organization. All that's necessary now is for the Duma, the Russian Parliament, to ratify their accession. The question is, will U.S. workers have access to the Russian market? And that's very important. But also, as we look at the challenges of getting our economy growing, we recognize that that is a priority. But as I said, Mr. Speaker, it's also very, very, very critical for us to do everything that we can to ensure the development of those democratic institutions in Russia, the development of the rule of law, which we all know has been lacking based on what we've seen in the last election, and also to ensure the kinds of human rights and women's rights that have been ignored.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with my colleagues a little bit of a letter that was just put forward by a half-dozen of the lead human rights activists in Russia. These are not my words. These are the words of these human rights activists. They say:

> Those who defend the argument that Jackson-Vanik provisions should still apply to Russia in order to punish Putin's antidemocratic regime only darken Russia's political future, hamper its economic development, and frustrate its democratic aspirations.

They go on to say:

> Jackson-Vanik is also a very useful tool for Mr. Putin's anti-American propaganda machine. It helps him to depict the United States as hostile to Russia, using outdated Cold War tools to undermine Russia's international competitiveness. We, leading figures of the Russian political opposition, strongly stand behind efforts to remove Russia from the provisions of the Jackson-Vanik amendment. Jackson-Vanik is not helpful in any way, neither for the promotion of human rights and democracy in Russia nor for the economic interests of its people.

Mr. Speaker, it's high time that we tackle this issue to ensure that we can promote human rights, the rule of law, and the development of democratic institutions in Russia and ensure that we, for the American worker, can create job opportunities right here in the United States.

HONORING ARA PARSEGHIAN

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

Mr. DONNELLY of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an American hero, Ara Parseghian, who has led a life dedicated to coaching and teaching others, serving others, and a life that has given hope to families all across the world. Many Americans know about Ara Parseghian through his legendary football career. Before that, though, he proudly served our Nation in the United States Navy during World War II. He went to college at Miami of Ohio and was lucky enough to marry Kathy Davis.

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He was a leader and role model as the head football coach at Miami of Ohio, Northwestern, and the University of Notre Dame, which is located in the congressional district that I'm honored to represent. Mr. Parseghian's impressive record at Notre Dame included two consensus national championships and three bowl victories, accomplishments that resulted in his induction into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1980 as a recognition of his tremendous achievements. More important, though, was his personal leadership and example, and the character he instilled in the players that he coached. To Ara Parseghian, it was a lot more important that his players be good citizens than good football players, although he made sure they were very good football players as well.

What many Americans may not know is that Mr. Parseghian's most important work began after his football career, when he devoted his life to finding a cure for Niemann-Pick type C disease and multiple sclerosis. In 1994, the Parseghian family learned that three of Ara and Katie's youngest grandchildren were diagnosed with Niemann-Pick type C. This tragic disease is a degenerative neurological disorder afflicting thousands of children and is ultimately fatal.

Rather than be overwhelmed by their grief, Mr. Parseghian and his family began a fight to find a cure for this disease. Together, they founded the Ara Parseghian Medical Research Foundation in 1994. It was devoted to funding research and finding a cure for Niemann-Pick type C. In 1997, scientists funded by the Parseghian Foundation were able to isolate the gene responsible for causing Niemann-Pick type C and have since made tremendous strides towards finding a cure.

The Parseghian family lost Michael, Christa, and Maria to this terrible disease, but the family and Katie and Ara have never lost hope. Their efforts will end Niemann-Pick type C and help families all across the world.

Mr. Parseghian's commitment to medical research did not stop with the disease that took the lives of his grandchildren. Ara, whose sister, brother-in-law, and daughter have been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, has fought nonstop against the scourge of MS, which took away his beloved daughter Karen just last month.

While Ara Parseghian has accomplished much as a coach on the football field, his devotion to others will truly define the era of Ara. When I talk to my son about what it means to be a man and what it means to live a good life, I tell him about Coach Parseghian. He and Katie have epitomized devotion to family, faith, and country. May God bless Ara Parseghian, and may He keep the entire Parseghian family in the palm of His hand.

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EVE OF THE BUDGET DEBATE

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

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. The House is about to consider a budget in a dangerous hour in the life of our country. Last year, we barreled past several urgent warning signals—the loss of our Nation's AAA credit rating; the size of the national debt surpassing our entire economy; and a record third straight year of trillion-dollar-plus annual deficits. I believe this is one of the last opportunities to avert a financial crisis unprecedented in our Nation's experience and on a magnitude far greater than that which is now destroying Greece.

The blueprint passed by the House Budget Committee last week is a disappointment to those who believe that the budget can and should be balanced much sooner, and I certainly don't entirely disassociate myself from those sentiments. But the immediate issue before us, as Lincoln put it, ''is not 'can any of us imagine better?' but, 'can we all do better?' ''

The approaching financial crisis demands first and foremost that we turn this country away from the fiscal precipice and place it back on a course to solvency. This budget does so. Indeed, it improves upon last year's House budget that died in the Senate, which, according to Standard & Poor's, would have preserved the AAA credit rating of the United States Government. This budget, I believe, will restore it.

It is, of course, a long road back, balancing by the late 2030s and ultimately paying off the entire debt by the mid 2050s. But even relying on the static scoring of the CBO which presents a worst-case scenario, it still means that my children, who are now in college, will be able to retire into a prosperous and entirely debt-free America.

True, there's a great deal in it for conservatives not to like, but that is not the issue. The issue is will this Congress and, ultimately, this government change its fiscal trajectory enough to avert the sovereign debt crisis that fiscal experts across the spectrum warn us is just a few years dead ahead.

This is not some moonless night on the Atlantic. We can see this danger right ahead of us, and we can see that it is big enough to sink this great ship of state. We have precious little time remaining to avert it. This budget will turn us just enough to avoid that calamity—and I fear we won't have many more opportunities to do so.

The alternative is unthinkable. The President's budget would subject our Nation to one of the biggest tax increases in its history, striking especially hard at the small businesses that we're depending upon to create two-thirds of the new jobs that Americans desperately need. And even so, by its own numbers, it never balances and, thus, courts the fiscal collapse of our Nation.

Hemmingway asked, ''How do you go bankrupt?''

''Two ways,'' he said. ''Gradually, then suddenly.''

For the last decade, this Nation has been going bankrupt gradually. History warns us that if we don't change course very soon, we will cease going bankrupt gradually and start going bankrupt quite suddenly. It may happen through a chain reaction set off by a seemingly minor international incident. It may happen one day when a routine bond auction sours. Interest rates will start rising rapidly. Financial panics will begin. The government will have to respond by increasingly frantic efforts to maintain a stream of capital, either through massive policy dislocations or catastrophic inflation.

The approach of great cataclysms that are so obvious to historians in retrospect are often unheeded by contemporaries at the time. Just 30 days before the outbreak of World War II, Neville Chamberlain recessed Parliament to go on extended holiday. Let that not be how history remembers this Congress. This budget is not perfect, but it is adequate to spare our country from the convulsions of Greece.

I wholeheartedly support this budget for that reason, and I expect that we'll have the overwhelming support of this House. I can only hope that the Senate this time will put aside its own differences and heed Lincoln's plea that:

> The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise—with the occasion. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we will save our country.

CYCLING: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO TRANSPORTATION

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Often, here on Capitol Hill, issues large and small get sort of lost in the fog, but it was a pleasure last week to watch some moments of clarity as hundreds of bicycle advocates flooded Capitol Hill delivering a simple, concise, powerful message that makes a difference in terms of how people live in their communities large and small. They were delivering a message that Congress ought to deal meaningfully, in a comprehensive fashion, with the transportation legislation that has been stalled. They were delivering a message of: Don't attack cycling. Embrace it as part of a comprehensive approach to transportation. It is, after all, the most efficient form of urban transportation ever designed.

Burning calories instead of fossil fuel doesn't just save you money and make you feel better, it's good for our communities. It's the cheapest, fastest way to reduce congestion and air pollution. A very simple illustration is you can