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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 19, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable STEVE WOMACK 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 1:50 p.m.

END THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, for several years now I have come to the floor of the House and called for an end to the war in Afghanistan, the longest war in the history of the United States. I have been joined by others—some Democrats, some Republicans, some liberals, some conservatives—who have consistently raised their voices in opposition to the war.

Today, once again, I stand here in the aftermath of more senseless

killings of Americans, not only by Taliban forces, but by forces associated with the Afghan Government—a government we support and are told to trust.

It is hard to believe that in the midst of a Presidential campaign so little is being said about the war. During the Republican National Convention, nominee Mitt Romney never once mentioned the war or the troops in his acceptance speech—not even a sentence, not a phrase, nothing. As one who has been to Afghanistan twice, met with our troops, talked to returning veterans and been to visit them in the hospital, I find that silence shocking and offensive.

I also find offensive the fact that this House of Representatives has refused to even debate this issue. When the Department of Defense authorization bill came to the floor earlier this year, the Republican leadership of this House refused to allow a bipartisan amendment that I and WALTER JONES of North Carolina offered. That amendment called for an accelerated withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan. The chairman of the Rules Committee at the time said there were a lot of other important issues to be debated on the defense bill. My question is: What in the world is more important than this war?

The Afghan Government is one of the most corrupt in the world. Our troops have already accomplished their mission, not only ridding Afghanistan of al Qaeda, but killing Osama bin Laden. By the way, they got him in Pakistan, not Afghanistan. So why are we still there?

There is a culture in Washington that engulfs both Republicans and Democrats; it is a culture that makes it easy to go to war but impossible to get out.

There is no question that ending the war in Afghanistan will be messy; there is no nice, neat way to do it.

There will be no signing of a peace treaty, no grand parade.

The President tells us that we will turn over control of security operations to the Afghans by 2014, but it is unclear how many U.S. forces will remain or what their role will be.

And Mitt Romney says nothing.

Mr. Speaker, there ought to be a major portion of this Presidential campaign dedicated to the issue of Afghanistan. Vague deadlines or generalities no longer suffice. Too many brave American service men and women have paid with their lives. And while candidates talk about the debt our government carries, no one points out that we borrow the billions to pay for this war. We don't even pay for it; it goes on the credit card. And we've been doing this for over a decade in this Congress. We can't spend one additional penny to feed hungry children or create a single job or build a single bridge without finding an offset; yet when it comes to war, there are no offsets, no new revenue, just another blank check. Something is terribly wrong with this picture.

Finally, I would remind my colleagues here in the House that we are all responsible for this war, and we are complicit in the silence, lack of debate, and lack of oversight. That is wrong. We owe our service men and women so much better. We owe this country better.

End the war and bring our troops home now.

CONGRATULATING NATIONAL HISPANA LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE ON THE CELEBRATION OF 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Hispanic Heritage

□ 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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