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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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Month, I rise to pay tribute to the National Hispana Leadership Institute. Later this year, NHLI alumnae will gather in Washington, D.C., to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of this nationally recognized leadership development institute.

A national Latina organization based in Washington, D.C., NHLI was founded in 1987 in response to the U.S. Department of Labor's Glass Ceiling Initiative. This seminal study found that while minorities and women were making substantial gains in entering the workforce, they were not equally represented at mid and senior level management positions in government or corporate sectors. The study also found that Latinas were significantly underrepresented on corporate boards and in nonprofit and political arenas.

Over the past 25 years, NHLI has become a vital resource for Latinas and a key player in cultivating Latina leaders serving America today. In partnership with Harvard University and the Center for Creative Leadership, NHLI graduates have become a formidable cadre of well-educated, highly skilled, and committed Latina leaders. They are a veritable "who's who" in many communities and disciplines, and the impact of their collective leadership is felt throughout the country.

Through various mentoring initiatives and community service projects, NHLI alumnae have directly impacted thousands of Latinas in every State and in Puerto Rico. Its network and leadership projects have helped create new nonprofit organizations and influenced various others, including: The National Latino Children's Institute, Voto Latino, Powerful Latinas, Las Comadres, Positive Directions, Latina Giving Circle, and Poder PAC, to name a few.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention the founders of this great organization. This prestigious group includes Maria Elena Torano, the Honorable Maria Antonietta Berriozabal, the Honorable Ramona Martinez, Gloria Rodrigues, the Honorable Raul Yzaguirre, and former Governor Bill Richardson. Through their vision and leadership, NHLI's programs have become the model for Latina empowerment in this country.

Again, my sincere congratulations to the National Hispana Leadership Institute on the celebration of their 25th anniversary.

VOTER SUPPRESSION

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

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to try to lend a little bit of perspective on a strategy that we have seen evolving across our country, and that strategy I think threatens to undermine one of the most basic rights and principles that we have as United States citizens, and that is the right to vote.

Unfortunately, in many States—my State included, in Texas—there's a strategy to pass what is called a voter identification law, seeking to solve a problem that apparently across the country does not exist, and that is people voting that don't have that right, and trying to give the impression that this problem is prevalent throughout our country.

As we look back at our history, I think we should all be proud of the significant strides in increasing and strengthening the electoral process for all. Let's not forget that originally, under our Constitution, only white males over the age of 21 were eligible to vote. It took several amendments to our Constitution to fully extend this right to all minorities—women and young people ages 18 and older.

□ 1210

But it took us even longer, it appears, given the current situation, to live up to these ideals.

As a child growing up in El Paso on a farm, I can remember my father talking to us about that sacred right to participate and to vote.

Here is a poll tax that was charged for that right back in 1955, made out to my dad. Back then it was \$1.75. Today, under the current strategy, that, the equivalent of this poll tax, could be as much as \$20, \$25, or \$30 for an identification card.

So who does that hurt? Who does that impact the most? It's the elderly, it's the young people, and it's minorities.

And while some people may think, well, \$1.75, that wasn't much to pay for the right to vote or, today, \$20, \$25, \$30 isn't that much to exercise the privilege of voting, the fundamental issue here is that that is an inherent right guaranteed by our Constitution.

But even if we wanted to look at it from an economic standpoint, in 2012 dollars, here is what that \$1.75 poll tax bought back in 1955. A gallon of milk was 88 cents; bread, 15 cents; chicken, 44 cents a pound; cheese, 45 cents, and so on so that for a man and his spouse, paying two poll taxes, it would be \$3.50. This is what they would have spent that money on, and often did, rather than paying a poll tax of \$1.75.

Today, the milk is \$1.99; bread is \$1.99; chicken, 99 cents a pound; cheese, \$2.50, to the point to where, for paying one poll tax or one identification card, you could get these comparative amounts of groceries.

So the fundamental question we must ask ourselves when people talk about taking our country back, when people talk about the right to vote, these are the kinds of issues that impact us. These are the kinds of things that throughout our history many of us have fought to protect the rights of all citizens to participate in the electoral process, fundamentally guaranteed under our Constitution.

While I understand the intent of these laws, it is designed to supposedly

prevent voter fraud and impersonation, the result affects individual participation in the inherent right to vote: requiring an ID, and considering the difficulties that citizens face in the process of acquiring those State-issued identification cards, which ultimately undermines the right to vote.

This is a serious issue. All of us who teach our children and our grandchildren that the most fundamental right to participate is protected by our Constitution have to remind them. I know I have talked to my children and have shown them this poll tax to remind them that freedom is not free, that people must understand their obligations as citizens.

THE DO-NOTHING CONGRESS

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, one of the great football coaches in American history was Vince Lombardi, from Green Bay, Wisconsin, who, again, was very famous for his inspiring speeches to his players and to his staff. And one of his most famous quotes was:

Winners never quit and quitters never win.

I wish, Mr. Speaker, that the Republican leadership in the House would go back and read Mr. Lombardi's words when they made the decision this past Friday to basically quit on the American people and say that we are going to recess this week after conclusion of business on Friday for the next 7 weeks.

This is at a time when not only the eyes of the country are on this Chamber to get much needed critical decisions made; but, frankly, the eyes of the world are watching this Congress to see whether or not, again, financial markets will have any horizon in terms of tax policy, in terms of budget policy, and in terms of a whole host of basic fundamental issues like the farm bill, like the post office functioning that, when on Friday, this place clears out after Mr. BOEHNER's decision to recess, are going to be left hanging for the next 7 weeks.

Again, this is not a problem for the House in terms of inaction by the Senate. The Senate passed a farm bill. They passed a bipartisan farm bill last June; and today we stand here with farmers who are getting up in the morning and going out and milking cows or picking crops, and they have programs which literally are expiring every minute. The Dairy Price Support programs expired on August 30, so dairy farmers up in eastern Connecticut, where I come from, whose feed costs are out of sight and whose fuel costs are out of sight, again, have absolutely no structure and no basic understanding of how they are going to continue to survive, because this place won't move forward on a farm bill with the dairy support structure, the Dairy