

The sun grows dim and the daylight is measured. In the darkness, phantoms loom. The eye cannot discern as the distance fades. Be a light for us.

Help the Members of this people's House make clear judgments that will propel us into a future filled with hope. Remove all clouds of darkness that they might follow the patterns of light that come from Your gifts of wisdom and understanding.

O Lord of the ages, ever faithful to Your promises, be with Your people now and forever.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WALDEN 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.

POSTPONING CALL OF PRIVATE CALENDAR

The SPEAKER. This is the day for the call of the Private Calendar.

Without objection, the Private Calendar will be called after 1-minute speeches today.

There was no objection.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

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

OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS ARE WITH NEWTOWN

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to ad-

dress the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last Friday's massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, was heart-breaking. Americans are devastated as reports emerge detailing how a deranged individual murdered 20 innocent children, six heroic faculty members, and his mother before turning the gun on himself.

As a husband to a former school teacher, a father, a grandfather, and an American, my thoughts and prayers are with the teachers, families, children, and first responders involved in last Friday's school shooting. Our hearts go out to the Newtown community as we mourn.

This kind of senseless, horrific violence has no place in American society. As elected officials, it's our responsibility to make sure work is done to prevent these types of devastating events from ever happening again.

I appreciate the Rotary Club of Newtown for its efforts to assist the victims of the Sandy Hook school tragedy, their families, and those in the Newtown community who have been affected.

SANDY HOOK TRAGEDY

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

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Speaker, today we mourn as a nation with Newtown, Connecticut, and the Sandy Hook Elementary community. My thoughts and prayers go out to the victims of this horrendous tragedy and their families.

On Friday, 27 people, including children, had their futures stolen from them as a result of another senseless act of violence. My heart breaks for their loved ones and the community of Newtown.

Unfortunately, this is the fourth mass shooting that our Nation has endured in as many years. This tragedy in particular hits home for the millions of parents across America because the victims were elementary school kids—children who expected to be in a safe and secure environment.

We must begin to have a meaningful discussion not only on gun control, but about the security of our schools, as well as the access to mental health care services. While one bill won't end all evil actions, Congress must begin to work together to improve the safety of our citizens.

I'd like to conclude with honoring our Nation's teachers, those individuals who day in and day out provide for and nurture our children, and in this circumstance, gave their lives.

DUE PROCESS FOR OREGON'S FARMERS

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

Mr. WALDEN. Mr. Speaker, over 2 weeks ago, I came to this floor to ask for answers from the Department of Labor on behalf of Oregon farmers. Well, yesterday, I did get a letter from the Secretary, which I appreciated, but it was not answering our questions from the delegation. It was congratulating me on my reelection.

122 days ago, nearly every member of the Oregon delegation, Republicans and Democrats, wrote the Labor Secretary after hearing reports of so-called "hot goods" enforcement tactics that stopped shipments of highly perishable berries with little opportunity for appeal.

One farmer was told verbally that a shipment was on hold because the inspector determined it was impossible for an individual picker to pick as much as records showed. But to lift the hold, the farm was directed to pay an undetermined amount in fines and back wages and sign a consent judgment requiring the farm to "waive further findings of fact"—without even getting an explanation of alleged violations.

The farm was left with the choice of paying the fine and signing the consent judgment or allowing a few hundred thousand dollars of perishable produce to spoil. In the end, the farm felt it had little choice but to pay the \$170,000 and sign the consent judgment so that the fruit could be shipped.

In light of these and other complaints, our delegation asked the Department for detail on its policies and procedures for making these decisions; 122 days later, we've yet to get an answer. That's not right.

CUTS TO SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I just don't get this discussion about the fiscal cliff.

Republicans are saying that in order to raise taxes on the very wealthiest Americans—and actually, by a historically small amount—that the price that has to be paid is to ask the poorest adult Americans to pay more, that is, to reduce Social Security and Medicare benefits.

I don't get the equivalency that is being asked for: the richest to pay a bit more, and the price to be that the poor, the poorest, have to pay more. Seniors in this country have a median income of just \$22,000 a year. That means half of all seniors are below that. They also spend an average, right now, of \$4,500 a year on health care costs out of their own pockets.

So I think that we have to change the debate here. There is a parable in the Bible that makes this point. When you ask a person with one coat to give up that coat, it's not the same as asking someone with 10 coats to donate one to the cause.