

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The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.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.

U.S. MARINE JON HAMMAR

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to call attention to the plight of the United States Marine veteran, Jon Hammar, who has been unjustly jailed in a Mexican prison since August. Jon is an American hero and a patriot.

After tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan, including time in Fallujah, Jon began to suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome. In order to help cope with PTSD, Jon and a friend embarked upon a surfing trip to Costa Rica. However, when they got to Mexico, Jon was arrested after receiving inaccurate information from our own Customs and Border Patrol agents. Since then, Jon has been languishing in his own personal hell. He was beaten by other inmates, his parents were being extorted, and he has been chained to his bed.

I'm asking my fellow Members of Congress to join me and over 50 of our colleagues to urge our State Department and the Mexican authorities to resolve this matter immediately and bring Jon Hammar home for Christmas. Please call our congressional office to sign these important letters.

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ENACT A BIPARTISAN SOLUTION

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, as both parties continue to negotiate over the looming fiscal cliff, Congress is presented with a real opportunity to pass long-term, comprehensive deficit reduction plans. We cannot let this opportunity pass us by.

Of course, this is not the first time that Congress has tried to solve this challenge, but it is vital that we learn from our past failures. We have to check our partisan talking points at the door and put everything on the negotiating table.

This time, let's work from the middle out to build a bipartisan consensus, instead of searching for solutions at the ideological extremes. This time, let's listen to the vast majority of Americans who occupy the middle ground and who want Congress to enact a bipartisan solution, a bipartisan solution that would help restore the public's confidence in Congress while reassuring the nervous financial markets. And most importantly, it would secure a lasting economic future for our country. The American people deserve nothing less.

RESTORE THE AMERICAN DREAM

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

Mr. YODER. Mr. Speaker, we must remember America is exceptional, and

the entrepreneurial spirit and innovative drive of our small businessowners is what makes the American engine hum.

Two-thirds of all new jobs created in America are by these men and women who risk capital, give their time and effort, and take risks to grow their business. We call this the American Dream. When we place too many obstacles on small businesses, it stifles their ability to grow, hinders their ability to hire new employees, and slows our economic recovery.

As we discuss and debate the fiscal cliff deadline that is quickly approaching, we must keep in mind this American Dream. Our policies should focus on how our Nation creates jobs and the economy grows. It's the drive and determination of the American people that makes the United States the most prosperous Nation the world has ever seen. Now is our time to unite around sound pro-growth, pro-job creation policies.

Mr. Speaker, let's create long-term certainty when it comes to taxes and regulations. Let's reduce spending and rein in the national debt. Let's help our Nation restore the American Dream.

WE MUST FIND CONSENSUS

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

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, our constituents across this great Nation are looking to Congress for leadership.

Here we are, back in Washington this week, still in negotiations to find a compromise to avert this so-called "fiscal cliff." The yearend is fast approaching. Before last Friday, almost every conversation I had with my neighbors back in Oregon centered on this question: What will happen after January 1? How much will taxes increase if Congress, as is too often the case, is too paralyzed by gridlock to act?

My constituents found common ground in expressing this simple view: that the middle class families and those who are struggling have done enough to bear the brunt of the country's economic difficulties and should not be asked to pay more. To see people coming together to ask their legislators to do what is right, what is balanced, and what is responsible encouraged me that we might reach some solution.

So I'm here today, Mr. Speaker, to ask that we all join together to do what my constituents and your constituents and all of our constituents have asked us to do. We must find consensus and allow tax rates on most Americans to remain as they are so our communities and businesses can move forward with certainty and faith in their government to work together and do what's right for our constituents.

KEEP CRUSHABLE PILLS OFF THE MARKET

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

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, while the impending fiscal cliff is on our minds, I rise to alert my colleagues to another end-of-the-year deadline with potentially deadly consequences. If the FDA fails to act, on January 1 our streets could be flooded with cheap, crushable prescription painkillers ripe for abuse and misuse.

After OxyContin came on the market 15 years ago, a wave of overdose deaths devastated entire towns in my region of Appalachian Kentucky before spreading like wildfire to the big cities and suburban communities across the country. By crushing these 12-hour-delay pain pills, abusers can experience a euphoric, and sometimes deadly, high.

But today, the FDA has an opportunity to keep these crushable pills out of our children's reach. A number of prescription medicines already on the market use tamper-resistant technologies that can cut back on abuse. No generic pill should come to market without these live-saving features.

The FDA must take the necessary steps to keep us from careening off this pain-pill cliff.

REINSTATE THE ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN

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

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, we've been to this place before. Before the gut-churning horror and sadness of the killings at the elementary school in Newtown, there was a movie theater in Aurora, a college campus in Virginia, a high school in Columbine.

On Friday, I couldn't stop thinking about my own grandson, Josiah, who is 6 and a first-grader at a school in Colorado. How much grief is enough? I think this grief is enough.

We need to reinstate the assault weapons ban. We need to ban high-capacity clips. We need more thorough background checks. And we need to offer more mental health services. But a life taken with a handgun is no less of a tragedy. A mother does not suffer less knowing that her child's life was extinguished with a gun that did not have a 30-round clip. Guns kill people. They need to be a lot harder to buy. We need to do a lot more to get them off our streets.

This is our time, colleagues. This is our time. We need to pass bold, necessary, overdue gun control legislation. If we do not, this will happen again.

IN MEMORY OF TOMMY DECKER OF COLD SPRING

(Mrs. BACHMANN asked and was given permission to address the House