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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. WEBSTER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 24, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DANIEL WEBSTER, 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 3, 2013, 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.

THE SEVENTH UNANSWERED QUESTION

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

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, today I've come to the floor to raise the seventh in a series of critical but unanswered questions about the terrorist attacks on the U.S. consulate and annex in Benghazi last September 11.

Despite a year of investigation in a number of committees, the American people still do not know the answers to these questions, nor do they know if they have even been asked.

With only 5 legislative days remaining before the Congress departs for August recess, I'm increasingly concerned that none of these questions will be answered by the one-year anniversary of the Benghazi attack.

According to a recent excerpt in the forthcoming book, "Under Fire: The Untold Story of the Attack in Benghazi," which was published in this month's Vanity Fair magazine, Ambassador Stevens made several calls for help after reaching what he believed was a safe room on the consulate compound.

As we well know now, one call was placed to his Deputy Chief of Mission, Gregory Hicks, who was at the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli. In May, Hicks provided powerful testimony about that final conversation with Stevens.

He also called "local militia and public-security commanders in Benghazi, pleading for help."

What I found interesting in the Vanity Fair excerpt is that Stevens also made calls to "nearby consulates" on the BlackBerry of someone on his security detail. Assuming the authors are correct, the government must have the phone records from Stevens' calls to the militia and foreign consulates that night.

This raises the important question of what foreign consulates did he call, and how did these consulates respond?

If Stevens was calling foreign consulates, it also begs the question, did U.S. officials in Tripoli or Washington call any allies with assets in Libya to help respond to the attack?

Furthermore, did the Pentagon connect any NATO allies with military assets in the region that could have provided assistance that night?

Given how close many of the European allies are to the Mediterranean, wouldn't they have planes or response teams stationed in locations in or near by the region that could have mobilized upon a request from Washington?

After speaking of force posture, what have we done to ensure that if another incident were to happen this September 11 that we're prepared to respond?

We're less than 2 months away from the 9/11 anniversary, but the American people don't know whether we're any more capable of responding to an incident in North Africa or the Middle East.

The American people have lost confidence in this investigation. We can help restore it with a bipartisan select committee.

EFFECTS OF THE SEQUESTER

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I've come to this floor nearly every week since the sequester took effect in March to highlight its dangerous consequences to our national security, its harmful impact on our economy, and the pain it is causing the most vulnerable people in our country.

Now, with the sequester in its 21st week, this Congress has still not achieved the big, balanced and bipartisan solution to deficits that we need to replace the sequester and put America back on a sound fiscal path.

Only such an agreement, Mr. Speaker, can provide a viable alternative to the irrational cuts this sequestration has imposed. Those cuts are already exacerbating the many challenges we face as a Nation.

Later this week, I will be delivering meals to seniors in my district with the Meals on Wheels program, which could be delivering 4 million fewer meals nationwide as a result of the sequester.

One small business owner from my district recently reached out to my staff to say that he was personally impacted by Meals on Wheels when the

□ 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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grandmother who raised him was diagnosed with cancer and came to rely on Meals on Wheels during the final part of her life.

He couldn't believe that after all the good work the Prince George's County Meals on Wheels office had done, that they were being forced to reduce their operations significantly as a result of the sequester.

Surely, Mr. Speaker, the richest country on the face of the Earth does not need to leave people, particularly seniors who can't get out, hungry.

Other harmful effects on the most vulnerable Americans include an 11 percent cut to emergency unemployment insurance payments and 125,000 fewer rental assistance vouchers.

Mr. Speaker, as many as 70,000 children could be kicked out of Head Start—they're only going to be 4 once—including approximately 800 children in my own State.

I read on Monday in The Washington Post about the Whitney Young Head Start Center in Yonkers, New York, Mr. Speaker, which has served primarily Hispanic families for more than 12 years, teaching kids English and providing them medical services and meals. It closed down on Friday, a victim of sequestration.

And on Monday, an article in the Huffington Post drew attention to an effect of the sequester that represents a dangerous undermining of justice, and that is the cut to public defenders who represent defendants in the Federal court system who cannot afford their own attorneys. This fulfills the Constitutional requirement that everyone is entitled to legal representation. It can't be waived.

That report in The Washington Post says, "The Public Defender system hasn't just been stripped bare by sequestration, its bones have been chiseled away as well."

Mr. Speaker, can we risk delaying justice for victims and their families because our country can't afford public defenders?

Do we want cases dismissed against people who have done wrong because the Constitution says they have to have a defense that we can't afford, apparently?

I met yesterday with Maryland District Court judges, about eight of them, and they raised this issue as one of critical importance. And one of the judges, a Reagan appointee, was obviously very animated at how we were undermining the very essence of the judicial system. Surely no one on this floor intends to do that.

At the Defense Department, 650,000 civilian workers are already being furloughed 2 days a month. That's an effective cut in pay of 20 percent for hardworking people on whom we rely to maintain the national security of our country.

On July 2, I visited with civilian defense workers from Pax River Naval Air Station in St. Mary's County, and I heard from my constituents there

who are being forced to stay home from work without pay. They were certainly concerned about their families' finances.

But Mr. Speaker, these hardworking and patriotic public servants were far more worried about furloughs' effect on our military readiness and support for our troops in the field on those Fridays when many are forced to stay home, and not at their post. Legally, they can't even come to work and volunteer their time.

The sequester is hurting morale and putting our security at risk, Mr. Speaker, at a moment when our troops are still in harm's way every single day, Fridays, otherwise known as furlough days, included.

I'll be going to another installation in Maryland's Fifth District on Friday, Mr. Speaker, the Naval Surface Warfare Center at Indian Head, to meet with civilian employees there. I will tell them that Congress has the ability to end the furloughs they are experiencing now.

We have the ability to keep those kids from losing Head Start, and our seniors from losing meals. We have that ability now. We can do so by coming together in a bipartisan way to replace the sequester with a balanced alternative that includes spending cuts and, yes, revenues.

This is what Budget Committee Ranking Member CHRIS VAN HOLLEN has put forward seven times, Mr. Speaker, only to see it prevented by the majority from receiving a vote.

The Speaker says, let the House work its will. Well, perhaps this is the will of the House. I hope not.

I urge my colleagues to work together across the aisle so we can end the sequester and restore fiscal discipline in a way that does not harm our security, our economy, the most vulnerable in our country, or America itself.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded not to traffic in the well while another Member is under recognition.

FEAR OF MAN IS A SNARE

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

Mr. RIGELL. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this morning to call for a change in the House calendar.

Mr. Speaker, leaders set priorities. They identify the challenges and opportunities that face their organization, then they assess them and put them in the right order, and then they align their organization's calendar to make sure that those top priorities get addressed. That's what the American people rightfully expect of each of us.

Overall, our calendar and the priorities of the House are right on track.

I'm so proud of the legislation that we've passed that would move America to energy independence and create hundreds of thousands of jobs.

But in one very critical area we're seriously off track. Our calendar does not reflect the challenges and the top priorities of our country. Specifically, we're not on track to pass all 12 appropriations bills that fund the Federal Government for 2014.

The fact is, we're not even close to passing those bills. And with our current congressional calendar, I cannot possibly see a way that we can pass those bills by September 30, which is the end of the current fiscal year.

This is not without consequence. It damages our economy, job creation. It damages our military in a very real way. And ultimately, it hurts hardworking American families.

Now, let's look at the status of the 12 bills, and then look at the time that remains on the congressional calendar to debate and pass those bills in time to avoid what's referred to as a continuing resolution.

And make no mistake here. A continuing resolution is wholly inadequate as a financial vehicle to fund this government. It has serious adverse consequences, and that's why this topic merits the careful attention of this body, and that's why it merits a change in our congressional calendar.

Well, here are the 12 bills that must be passed. We've passed four of them. Well, that leaves eight. My math's pretty good—there are 12 bills, 4 have been completed.

Now, they're not past due right now, but they surely will be, at least some of them.

As I mentioned, this has serious repercussions. I've spent a tremendous amount of time in our district listening to the hardworking men and women who keep our country safe and those who support them.

Every time we pass a continuing resolution, our military reels with uncertainty. We have a deep obligation to the young men and women around the world who are keeping this country safe to use every dollar wisely to ensure that we get the very best equipment and support to each of them.

That's why I feel so strongly about this issue, and it burdens me when we fail the American people in this respect.

Well, let's look on at the calendar and see what we've got to work with here.

□ 1015

Mr. Speaker, we have 15 calendar days. They're indicated right here in the teal green color. These areas here represent constituent work periods. I work really hard in our constituent work periods. I know that every Member here does. It's important that we're in our districts. There's value to that—to listen and to be accountable to the good folks who sent us here.