

when the President comes to Congress to give a report on the state of the Union from time to time, as the Constitution says.

Sitting right here in this Chamber and hearing President Obama speak about the state of our Union would be exciting in any year, in any circumstance, but it was especially this year because, for the first time in 6 years—after the deepest and darkest recession in almost a century—we have turned the page. After 6 rather difficult years of digging our way out of a ditch, we now can build a foundation to move forward. With that, there were two areas specifically that the President focused on.

One was a universal college education. As the first of my family to go to college, I know I wouldn't have had the opportunities that I have had in life without having a higher education. I needed a combination of scholarships and student loans and every sort of work-study job imaginable to get there, as well as help from parents and even grandparents. That is a story similar to so many working and middle class Americans, but for too many Americans today the cost of a higher education is simply unaffordable.

The question is: Do you go without it at all even though two-thirds of the jobs by the end of this decade will require some form of a higher education? Do you just forgo a higher education altogether, or do you take on tens of thousands in student loans and then be burdened with paying back that debt upon graduation? Either scenario is far from ideal.

What the President said—and I completely agree—is let's make 2 years of community college universal and free in this country. Now, that may be unthinkable today. 100 years ago, it was unthinkable that a free, fully funded high school education would be universal. Yet, for us, that is the reality today. It would be unthinkable for Americans of my age and even of an older age to imagine a time in which high school was not universal. Let's get there with 2 years of a college education.

The second area the President focused on was the child care tax credit. For so many working families and young families, affording child care is simply unaffordable. We have an opportunity through this budget to change that, to build on the successes of the last 6 years and to finally prepare to make this century the second American Century. Ensuring that we have good, high-quality, affordable child care is vital to this middle class.

The reason the last century was the American Century was that we had the largest and most productive middle class in the world. Access to higher education and access to child care are two necessary ingredients in making sure we have a strong and vibrant middle class in the 21st century.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 28 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Dean Curry, Life Center Church, Tacoma, Washington, offered the following prayer:

Father, what an honor it is to be in Your presence here today. We celebrate this morning what You have done through the United States of America.

We acknowledge the hand of providence in our history and the force of inspiration for our future.

Be with us here now most significantly in our present that we could see what others do not see, that we could do what others fear to do, so that we could change what others are afraid to change.

We are reminded that we are so small and You are so big. Our problems are daunting, and our responsibilities are many. But we look to You today, to Your principles and to Your goodness, that we could be everything You designed for us to be, that we could do everything You planned for us to do, that others may be free.

Today, may every decision made, every plan contemplated, be sprinkled with Your grace and be inspired from Heaven. Change us; change our minds and our hearts that we may change our destiny and the destiny of others both here and around the world.

I pray all of this with respect to all faiths in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

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.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Indiana (Mrs. WALORSKI) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. WALORSKI 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.

WELCOMING REVEREND DEAN CURRY

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. KILMER) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor today's guest chaplain, Reverend Dean Curry, from Tacoma, Washington.

We are blessed to have such a remarkable pastor with us today who is a leading figure in the region that I represent. Reverend Curry's Life Center Church in Tacoma is a vibrant place where folks young and old come for worship.

He knows what it means to give back to your community. Each month, he brings together civic and elected leaders in Tacoma for a faith breakfast, and volunteers from his church are always helping out those going through hard times.

The motto of his church sums up his work pretty remarkably: "It's all about the people." That is why it is fitting to have Reverend Curry here today. Like the United States House of Representatives, his mission is to serve the people.

Reverend Curry is an example of how we should do more to listen, respect, and understand one another better so we can leave a place for future generations where opportunities are available for everyone.

Reverend Curry has also led humanitarian missions to troubled regions like Iraq and Afghanistan to offer assistance and hope to those suffering through tragedies. He is someone who "walks the walk" when it comes to fighting for equality, religious freedom, and social justice both in his community and around the world.

Whether he is listening to stories in refugee settlements or helping out with a national prayer breakfast, his passion for others shines through, and it is an honor to welcome him today.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLEISCHMANN) laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 4, 2015.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on February 4, 2015 at 9:22 a.m.:

Appointment:

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki).

United States Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control.