



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2015

No. 174

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. PALAZZO).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 2, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable STEVEN M. PALAZZO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, 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, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

PERU AND ILLEGAL LOGGING

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I have long championed the concept that trade done right requires strong environmental protections as well as enforcement of those commitments.

Many of our most serious environmental challenges, from climate change to deforestation to protecting the oceans from being strip-mined with industrial fishing practices, can only succeed in the context of enforceable international agreements.

Democrats reached an accord with the Bush administration through the May 10 Agreement, which is one tool. The 2008 Lacey Act amendments are another. There are now a host of trade-related tools to fight some of the most egregious environmental challenges.

In the Peru Free Trade Agreement, we were able to include an entire Forest Annex that requires Peru to sustainably manage its forest resources and protect their forests, under penalty of law. The impact of those tools, however, is dependent on our willingness to use things like the Peru Free Trade Agreement.

Recent events present a chance to put those tools to work to fight against illegal logging in Peru, a country where 60 percent of its land is in the Amazon rainforest, and estimates on the rate of illegal logging in that area are as high as 80 percent.

Last week, over 70 shipping containers of what is suspected to be illegally harvested timber from Peru was stopped at the Port of Houston. This action was taken after we received compelling information from OSINFOR, Peru's independent body tasked with oversight of their forests and wildlife resources.

Troublingly, this shipment is linked to a company whose logging practices are already suspect, having been one of 10 companies whose export documents were found fraudulent during Operation Amazonas 2014, an operation carried out in coordination with INTERPOL to investigate illegal logging in Peru.

While it appears as though the timber is under American control, the same bad actor is once again conveying illegally harvested timber out of Peru's Amazon rainforest and to its borders for export.

Thanks to the courageous action of a handful of individuals at OSINFOR—again, Peru's independent agency tasked with overseeing that their tim-

ber laws are followed—a shipment of timber likely of illegal origin has been stopped at the border in Peru. As a result, unfortunately, these brave people are being threatened with bodily damage or death.

Given the savage history of these criminals, no doubt lives are in jeopardy. One only has to look last fall at how serious these threats were when Edwin Chota, an environmental activist trying to end the practice of illegal logging, was murdered by criminals that lead such illegal activity. Just 3 days ago, OSINFOR's office was firebombed. Thugs are threatening to storm government offices if OSINFOR does not ease up and go quietly into the night.

Mr. Speaker, this morning, I urge my colleagues to insist that the administration stand up to these criminals, these murderers, and that we will not turn our back on the courageous individuals, but support them in their efforts. We have the tools to do exactly that, thanks to the Peru Free Trade Agreement, as well as the Lacey Act.

The shipment held in Houston should be thoroughly investigated and, if evidence permits, we should bring to bear the full weight of the 2008 Lacey Act amendments by pursuing civil fines, forfeiture of timber and equipment, and criminal penalties, if supported by the evidence. And, frankly, also pushing back on Peru. The shipment held in Peru must also be investigated and the bad actors brought to justice. The Peruvian Government should immediately make clear they stand behind OSINFOR as an independent oversight agency.

At a time when we will be considering the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which has promising protections, it is more important than ever that the administration make sure that they are not merely protections on paper, but protections backed by action. It is time to step up with robust enforcement.

□ 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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