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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. JODY B. HICE of Georgia).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 14, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JODY B. HICE 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 3, 2017, 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. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

GOP TAX BILL

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I was here when Democrats and Republicans came together to enact bipartisan tax reform in 1986. We paid for our tax overhaul and never once asked future generations to foot the bill.

President Trump said in July that tax reform is, and I quote, "going to be easy." I will admit that, to someone like him who is new to government and who may not understand fully how

Congress works, what we achieved in 1986 may, in hindsight, appear to have been easy. It wasn't.

It was difficult because it required compromise; it was difficult because it required trust; and it was difficult because it required both parties to make tough choices and share the burden of taking responsibility, along with the benefit of claiming victory.

Somewhere along the way, Mr. Speaker, it seems that many in the Republican Party lost sight of this truth. First on healthcare, and now on taxes, they have decided that it would be easier not to work with Democrats at all, so they have chosen a partisan path, where the only ones with whom they have to compromise are themselves. It is "going to be easy," they said.

And the result: We now expect, on this floor, a bill so dangerous and so reprehensible to the taxpayers of this country that nearly every major organization representing taxpayers, small businesses, workers, farmers, seniors, home builders, realtors, teachers—and I could go on—oppose this bill.

There are more serious problems with the Republican tax bill than time to address them on this floor, so I want to highlight the three that make it so utterly dangerous to our economy and to the middle class.

First, most of the benefits of the tax cuts Republicans are proposing will benefit only those at the very top 1 percent; the 99 percent left behind. According to the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center's latest analysis, under the Republican plan, 47 percent of the tax cuts will benefit that top 1 percent, just 1.2 million households making more than \$900,000 a year.

Let me repeat: the top 1 percent will get nearly half of all the tax cuts in this bill, and 50 percent for the 99 percent.

Second, the Republican plan raises taxes on 36 million middle class fami-

lies. That is not what the Speaker said it was going to do. He said he would give everybody a tax cut. That was not true, and is not true. 36 million middle class American households will see their taxes go up over the next 10 years as a result of this Republican plan.

And third, the Republican plan will explode the debt by more than \$1.7 trillion over the next decade. This bill is the granddaddy of all debt creators. This means that those tax cuts, more than half of which benefit only the top 1.5 percent, will be paid for by a huge tax increase on our children and on our grandchildren.

The late Senator Russell Long from Louisiana liked to cite an old ditty about who gets stuck with the pain of tax increase. He said: "Don't tax you, don't tax me, tax that fellow behind the tree," meaning, of course, that none of the voters want a tax increase, so if you raise taxes, make sure it is someone else who is out of sight and out of mind.

In this case, sadly, Mr. Speaker, that fellow behind the tree is a child. This is a tax increase on all those children. It is a child who can't vote and doesn't have a voice in this debate.

The Republican plan asks Members to pile \$1.7 trillion or more of debt onto our children and grandchildren and put the fiscal sustainability of our country at further risk. When confronted with this fact, we heard only the same arguments we heard in 2001 and 2003, before the last major Republican effort to cut taxes precipitated the worst recession in our memory and a period of severe budget tightening that led to disinvestment in our country under the threat of sequestration.

That argument, flawed and false, is that these tax cuts will grow the economy so much that the ensuing growth will magically erase all the deficits we know their plan will accrue.

So easy, Mr. Speaker, so easy. The cuts will simply pay for themselves, we

□ 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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are told. We have been told that before, of course. The cycle repeats: Republican promises that tax cuts will pay for themselves, followed by massive deficits, 189 percent increase in the deficit under Ronald Reagan, followed by Republicans insisting that we respond with austere cuts to investments in our people and in our opportunity. So easily they forget.

But middle class Americans will not forget who is responsible when their taxes go up, when their tax increases pay for tax cuts for the top 1 percent, and when, in the years ahead, more and more investments need to be cut to pay the interest on the debt under which this plan will bury the children and grandchildren of America.

And all because my colleagues across the aisle wanted to skip out on doing what they knew would be hard, just as they did when former Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp introduced his comprehensive tax reform that was responsibly paid for. That is Dave Camp, Republican, State of Michigan. He is retired now, but he offered a responsible bill, and it was not even considered by his committee.

He asked his colleagues to do something hard, of course, but they dismissed it, dismissed it out of hand, because it would have required hashing out a difficult compromise. But easy is no synonym for successful.

President Kennedy told us that we choose these things, that is, tackling our greatest challenges, “not because they are easy, but because they are hard.”

So I ask my Republican friends—no, I urge them, set aside this dangerous, reckless, and irresponsible bill. Instead, let’s choose the hard path that involves hard choices and trust and all of those things that made tax reform successful in 1986, which are the missing elements in this flawed bill.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats are ready to sit down with you and work on this challenge, together. It won’t be easy, that is a promise, but if we do it together, if we do it in a way that doesn’t balloon the debt or raise taxes on the middle class, we have a chance to do it right. Let’s take that chance.

RECOGNIZING RURAL HEALTH WEEK

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this week is Rural Health Week in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It is a time to promote awareness of the full range of issues that impact rural health throughout the State and the health status of rural Pennsylvanians.

Nationally, Pennsylvania ranks as one of the States with the highest number of rural residents, with 23 percent of Pennsylvanians residing in rural areas.

Rural communities also face unique healthcare concerns, a lack of providers, accessibility issues, particularly in terms of transportation and technology, and affordability issues as a result of larger percentages of uninsured and underinsured citizens and greater out-of-pocket health costs.

Mr. Speaker, before I was elected to serve in the House of Representatives, I spent nearly 30 years in the nonprofit healthcare field, assisting those with life-changing diseases and disabilities. I am acutely aware of the challenges many face when it comes to obtaining reasonably priced healthcare. It is especially critical for rural America, like much of the Fifth Congressional District of Pennsylvania.

We are facing a healthcare crisis in our Nation’s rural areas. These often disadvantaged populations are still struggling to access affordable, quality care. Many remain uninsured. Most are underinsured; however, access to quality care remains the largest challenge.

Even when people gain access to health insurance, it doesn’t equal access to care. Rural hospitals across the country are closing, leaving patients without access to their emergency rooms and long-term healthcare facilities.

Eighty rural hospitals in the United States have closed since 2010. One in three rural hospitals are financially vulnerable. At the current closure rate, more than 25 percent of rural hospitals will close in less than a decade.

In addition to hospital closures, a workforce shortage plagues rural America. Seventy-seven percent of more than 2,000 rural counties in the United States are designated as having a shortage of healthcare professionals. Recruitment and retention of experienced professionals, including primary care physicians, is an ongoing challenge.

Furthermore, the opioid crisis that is sweeping the Nation has ravaged our rural communities, leaving even more of the population in need of crucial health services. Adolescents and young adults living in rural areas are more vulnerable to opioid abuse than their urban counterparts.

The prevalence of fatal drug overdoses has skyrocketed in rural areas. High unemployment and a greater rate of the types of injuries that result in prescriptions for opioid medications have contributed to this. But there are ways to increase treatment options.

Just last week, the House approved a bill that I introduced that would expand healthcare access for our veterans through telemedicine. The bill allows VA-credentialed healthcare providers to practice telemedicine across State lines.

Mr. Speaker, our veterans should receive the best care possible, no matter where they are located. With advances in technology, we see new opportunities for veterans to obtain coverage through telemedicine, especially in some of our most rural areas.

As we celebrate National Rural Health Day this Thursday, it is my hope that we continue to strive for a 21st century healthcare system that works for everyone in America. With technology today, we have the opportunity to expand services, regardless of where one resides, particularly for those in rural regions where the need is great and the services are scarce.

PRESIDENT TRUMP’S AMERICA FIRST DOCTRINE

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, last week, the President visited Asia for the first time as Commander in Chief, and took the opportunity, while on foreign soil, to reiterate his America First doctrine.

I rise today because an America First doctrine mentality will not lead to success for the United States or the world. This way of thinking is an outdated, obsolete, and dangerous form of isolationism. It will not keep us safe. It will not make us stronger economically.

Ironically, this phrase paints a picture that is blatantly un-American. America First sends a signal to the global community that the United States no longer wants to carry the torch of freedom and democracy which shines brighter through inclusion and collaboration.

On the national security front, the United States has the strongest military the world has known. For decades, allies have counted on the U.S. to step up to the plate to work with them to protect the shared values we hold dear.

As we face numerous international challenges, both old and new, we need to put more faith and investment into our international and diplomatic institutions, not weaken them. The United States did not earn its reputation as leader of the free world by standing back and allowing darker forces to prevail.

As oppressive regimes like Russia seek to undermine democracies, including our own, America’s commitment to democracy must be stronger than ever.

The President’s threats to NATO and the U.N. have caused our trusted allies to question our commitment to collective defense. We know that when countries work in concert, the chance of conflict decreases.

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Despite its challenges, globalization has led to one of the most peaceful and productive times in world history. Adopting protectionist policies would stifle this progress, and certainly won’t put America first.

Our efforts to address difficult domestic and international challenges are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they can and should happen simultaneously. We defeated communism, in part, by showing the world that a commitment to democracy and expanding