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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MARSHALL).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 28, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ROGER W. MARSHALL 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 1:50 p.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

CONNECTICUT'S CRUMBLING FOUNDATIONS

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to talk about a positive, encouraging decision that occurred last week for the State of Connecticut that was issued by the Under Secretary of the Treasury, David Kautter. It concerned a terrible problem that has swept through the State best known as crumbling foundations.

Due to some outstanding journalism that took place over the last couple of years by a TV reporter by the name of George Colli, Jr.; Hartford Courant editorial writer Carolyn Lumsden, who did a series on this problem; and Journal Inquirer's Eric Bedner, who has been consistently reporting on this issue, it came forward and was flushed out to the public that a quarry in north central Connecticut was supplying aggregate concrete for homes over the last 30 years that contained a material known as pyrrhotite.

Pyrrhotite is a metal substance which, when it is exposed to moisture over a period of time, oxidizes or rusts and creates a sickening spider web cracking that ultimately compromises the foundation on homes. Estimates run as high as 19,000 homeowners who unknowingly have this form of concrete that threatens probably their family's biggest asset, namely, their home.

As you can see in this picture, this is an example of a home in Coventry, Connecticut, where the home was lifted with a house jack and the contractor, Don Childree, was actually able to remove the concrete by hand. That is how compromised and unstable the home was because of this terrible problem.

This picture shows an example of a condominium project that was completely jacked up for the repairs, which involved jacking up the house, removing the old foundation, pouring a new foundation, and then lowering and re-connecting the condominium to the new foundation.

For a homeowner of a rather average-size house, we are talking about repairs that total as much as \$150,000 to \$200,000. In some cases, it almost surpasses the family's value in their home.

It has set off a wave of litigation and claims against property casualty insurers, with mixed results. The property

casualty policies, in many cases, require only coverage for a sudden collapse as opposed to something that happens over a period of time.

It is devastating for the homeowners who are affected by this. It affects about 40 communities in north central and eastern Connecticut.

On Wednesday, the Treasury Department issued a ruling extending the property casualty loss Tax Code provisions to allow these homeowners to take a deduction for their loss. This was a 19-month process which took place, from my office, with an outstanding staffer, Beata Fogarasi; from Congressman JOHN LARSON's office in the Hartford area with an outstanding staffer by the name of Sylvia Lee; and with Under Secretary Kautter, who issued the ruling that will provide safe harbor for people who have suffered a loss to be able to claim that on their tax returns.

We had the support of the departing IRS Commissioner, John Koskinen, as well as the National Taxpayer Advocate, who endorsed this request last year under the prior administration—two administrations working with Members of Congress, presenting the facts and the law and getting a decision which, actually, is a positive move forward for homeowners who are in this affected region.

It showed the interplay of the free press, of the organizing that took place, and the Connecticut Coalition Against Crumbling Foundations, led by Tim Heim from Willington, Connecticut. Organized homeowners did rallies, did town halls, brought their case forward, and it resulted in real change. The needle moved to allow people much-needed relief.

We have more work to do. As Winston Churchill said: "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. It is the end of the beginning."

The decision the day before Thanksgiving by the Treasury Department

□ 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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