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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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gave great hope to these homeowners that, actually, the system can work, and that is probably the most powerful emotion that people took away from the decision that took place on Wednesday.

We are going to continue to move forward to help people, middle class, hardworking people who pay their bills, have invested in their life's biggest asset, their home, to make sure that they are protected and they get help.

REAUTHORIZING FISH RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS IN UPPER COLORADO AND SAN JUAN RIVER BASINS

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

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. Speaker, most of us know how important water is in our States and the impact it plays in growth. It is directly tied to economic development and the health and beauty of the places we live.

Today, in accordance with commitments I have made to build improved quality of life in the rural areas of my district, I am introducing bipartisan legislation that will reauthorize the Bureau of Reclamation to provide cost sharing for the endangered fish recovery implementation programs in the Upper Colorado and San Juan River basins.

This bill is important because the successful recovery of these endangered species paves the way for critical projects in these waterways, projects that will facilitate water for agriculture, economic development, and other important uses not just in the rural areas of Utah's Third Congressional District, but in Colorado, Wyoming, Arizona, and New Mexico as well.

This bill reauthorizes a program that has become a national model for addressing the demands for water development to support growing Western communities. It has been run with accountability and solid results since 2012. Constituents will be pleased that the revenue for this project comes not from tax dollars but, rather, from fees collected by the projects from water users within the area.

The bill also strikes an important balance between conservation, recreation, and ensuring that we have access to public lands and natural resources.

The programs support millions of people who depend on the river's water to grow food, generate electricity, and serve the needs of cities and towns.

To quote Utah's Governor, Gary Herbert: "The success of the . . . program is vital for . . . our State's continued progress and providing for the needs of the citizens of Utah."

I would like to express my appreciation to Congressman ROB BISHOP and the members of the Natural Resources Committee, who have done the heavy lifting on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues in the House and the Senate will support this very important bill.

A SALUTE TO THE BRAVE WOMEN WHO SPEAK OUT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CURTIS). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, as a practicing obstetrician and gynecologist for 25 years, I certainly had a very unique perspective of many of the unique challenges faced by women in the workplace.

For many women, I would see them once a year and, in a very casual greeting, ask them how they were and what was new. Once in a while, a woman would have a new job, and I would ask her: "Wow. You had a great job. Why did you leave that?" Too often, the answer was because of sexual harassment.

Now, as a United States Congressman, I think it is important that I do more than just listen to these constituents of mine. I was sent here to be their voice, to be a strong voice for all of my constituents, and especially to draw upon my experiences as an obstetrician and gynecologist to be an advocate for women.

With the strongest and most unequivocal terms I can voice, Mr. Speaker, I rise to condemn sexual harassment and assault and those cowards who perpetrate it.

Mr. Speaker, I am also here to salute those brave women who are speaking out about their past experiences here on Capitol Hill. These women are the victims. They should be treated as very courageous folks who are sharing their story to help protect others. In doing so, they are not only helping to identify another predator, but they are helping the thousands of women who will come after them and work in these hallowed Halls.

By bringing these dark, disgusting secrets to light, they make the workplace across America that much of a safer environment for all women, something we must not stop working toward, and something we must all take responsibility to foster.

In the plainest terms, I want to make sure all men know that it is unacceptable behavior, to not allow your co-workers to perpetrate it, and that those who assault or harass women should receive the harshest punishment. There is no place in America for this behavior, and we must all take responsibility for ensuring it has no place in our offices.

I would offer up this advice that was given to me many years ago, that all men treat every woman as though they were your mother, your sister, or your daughter, and let that be your creed when you are choosing your words and your actions.

Let us all take responsibility and use this incredible social moment to make a lasting impact for my daughter, our

granddaughters behind them, and for future generations. It certainly starts with me in my office, my sons, my grandsons, the people who work with me, and the people I choose to surround myself with. We can all be that shining example, and I pray that my colleagues will join me in making this so.

WE HAVE A SPENDING PROBLEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARSHALL). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARRINGTON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, history is replete with examples of prosperous nations and powerful empires whose demise was not as a result of adversaries on the outside but, rather, the enemy within.

Congress and our President face several challenges to ensure the next generation inherits a safe, strong, and free country. There is the rise of global Islamic terrorism, escalating nuclear threats, increasing geopolitical instability, the need to modernize our military and ensure it is prepared to address those threats, and, finally, the need to revive our economy and give more and better jobs to middle and working class Americans.

While these are serious issues and they necessitate a sense of urgency and bold actions, they are all but irrelevant if we experience a sovereign debt crisis. This is not a hypothetical. This is a real probability, and if we stay on our current trajectory, we will all but assure our children and grandchildren will suffer the consequences.

If the United States experiences a debt crisis, how are we going to fund a safety net for our agriculture producers and our most vulnerable? How are we going to have transportation and other critical infrastructure to support economic growth? And, most importantly, how are we going to give the tools to our men and women in uniform so they will be successful and safe? How will we fund these national priorities if our government is insolvent?

Today, the United States is \$20 trillion in debt—over 70 percent of GDP. That is roughly \$165,000 per taxpayer. If all current policies stay in place, in the next 10 years, we will be \$30 trillion in debt, or nearly 90 percent of GDP, the highest level we have seen since 1947, according to the CBO. We will have \$1 trillion in annual deficit spending; and, get this, we will spend more on the interest on our debt than we will on national defense.

Just to give you a sense of how quickly this debt is amassing, in the next 24 hours, we will have increased our debt \$1.5 billion.

I want to be clear. This is not a revenue problem. Just this past year, according to the monthly Treasury statement, the Federal Government collected record amounts of both individual income tax revenue and payroll tax revenue.