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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. MARSHALL).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 9, 2018.

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 8, 2018, 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.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION DECLARES WAR ON STATE LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, Friday, the Trump administration declared war on State legalization of marijuana as they come out on the wrong side of history and the American public.

The Obama administration recognized that the vast voter-driven move-

ment to legalize marijuana at the State level was something that couldn't be stopped and, in fact, that the Federal Government shouldn't interfere. Their Justice Department issued guidance, known as the Cole amendment, that, as long as these voter-approved State legalization efforts were enforced rigorously and thoughtfully, the Federal Government wouldn't interfere with what the voters wanted.

Friday, Sessions and the Trump administration overruled that guidance and declared open war on the part of 93 U.S. attorneys to feel free to interfere with what local voters have decided.

This is strongly opposed by the American public. Over 60 percent in poll after poll show that Americans favor legalization of marijuana. When it deals with medical marijuana, that percentage is over 90 percent. We have seen State after State, approve medical marijuana including Florida, with a 71 percent "yes" vote in November of 2016.

If the question is, regardless of how you feel about marijuana, should the Federal Government interfere with what the voters have decided, three out of four voters say the Federal Government should keep their hands off it.

Luckily, at least as far as medical marijuana is concerned, they are protected from interference by the Justice Department because of the amendment that I have authored with my friend DANA ROHRBACHER. It is in the continuing resolution. It needs to be in any long-term funding bill. In fact, we should embrace an amendment by our colleague TOM MCCLINTOCK from California, that would expand those protections to any State legal marijuana activity.

The Justice Department is not just on the wrong side of history and the American public, they are missing a chance to cure the damage caused by selective and cruel enforcement of

marijuana laws. We are still arresting tens of thousands—mostly young men of color, especially African-American men—for something the majority of Americans now think should be legal.

We miss a chance to win the war against opioid death and addiction. In States that have medical marijuana—surprise—there are fewer pills prescribed. The longer the States have had medical marijuana, the lower the overdose deaths. In California, which has had medical marijuana the longest, there are a third fewer opioid deaths. We are missing an opportunity to build on that.

We are missing the opportunity to increase the hundreds of millions of dollars that are now going to the State tax coffers to deal with education and addiction and law enforcement through State legal efforts and away from the drug cartels and the black market. Indeed, if we clean up this mess, we will have billions of dollars to devote to public purposes and further undermine the strength of drug cartels that use the black market to fund their efforts.

It is past time that Congress steps up and fixes this mess.

The good news is this reckless action by the Trump administration and Jeff Sessions will accelerate the time that we support what State and local governments should do: rationalize our cannabis policy and stop this ineffective, failed prohibition.

LAW ENFORCEMENT APPRECIATION DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, on National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, we salute and thank the brave men and women who make up our law enforcement community.

Officers on the local, State, and Federal level dedicate their efforts to keep

□ 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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us safe. They serve to protect the vulnerable and to defend us from harm. They patrol the neighborhood beats, walk our streets, and willingly put their lives on the line to do the work that makes our society safe.

These men and women preserve our way of life by steadfastly safeguarding us from crime. To ensure the safety and protection of others, many have lost their lives in the line of duty. Their sacrifice must not be forgotten, and their families should always remain in our prayers.

Though today is National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, I believe members of our law enforcement community deserve our gratitude every day.

NEW YEAR, NEW TAX CODE

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, it is a new year, and I am thankful that my Republican colleagues and I made good on our promise to bring about a new Tax Code. Due to the historic passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, most citizens, couples, and companies will finally receive the tax relief they have so desperately needed.

The list of companies nationwide that have announced pay raises, bonuses, and 401(k) contributions is growing. Companies that weren't able to invest more in their employees in the past have found renewed confidence in this Nation's economic future.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle proclaimed that this bill was a tax scam that would only profit the rich. These baseless claims are the very epitome of fake news, and nothing could be further from the truth.

Already, more than a million Americans have received bonuses because of our efforts to reform the Tax Code. \$900 billion is being distributed to hardworking American taxpayers by job creators as of today.

Thanks to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, we have witnessed companies begin to reinvest in the future of employees. In fact, Aflac announced it will increase 401(k) matching from 50 percent to 100 percent for the first 4 percent of employee contribution, on top of issuing one-time bonuses to employees.

Our job creators are so inspired by the reforms we worked hard for, and those who are working toward retirement will enjoy these benefits for years to come.

While some in this Chamber stated that tax reform would lead to Armageddon, I would like to point out that, for many, tax reform has brought about what Reagan called morning in America again. Proponents of the status quo and naysayers claimed that the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act would cost taxpayers. That is simply not the truth.

Even modest increases in GDP growth caused by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will substantially contribute to a leveling off of the deficit. The Congressional Budget Office stated, for every one-tenth of 1 percent increase in GDP, nearly \$270 billion in revenue is added over 10 years.

Most importantly, hardworking American taxpayers will now keep more of their hard-earned cash. Estimates show that married couples taking advantage of the new standard deduction in the Fifth District of North Carolina may receive a tax cut to the tune of \$1,834. That is no small sum.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that House Republicans kept our promise to bring about more jobs, fairer taxes, and bigger paychecks in 2017, and I look forward to this continued success in 2018.

IT IS TIME TO STOP THE ATTACK ON THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, last October, President Trump loudly proclaimed that the Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare, was "virtually dead." He said it was finished, it was gone. This was after the pummeling that this law had been taking over 2017 in the unsuccessful effort by the Republicans to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Again, last October was a critical moment, because enrollment was about to commence for 2018's policy year, and the Trump administration announced that they were going to cut in half the time that people would have an opportunity to go out and learn about rates, to talk to get enrollment help, and also to sign up for different plans. They also cut the marketing budget by 80 percent and eliminated funding for folks at the State level to actually provide face-to-face assistance. So it all looked pretty grim back in October in terms of what that would result in in terms of enrollment for 2018.

Well, as a famous resident from the State of Connecticut, Mark Twain, once infamously said: Rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated.

Yesterday, the Connecticut exchange, the Connecticut Access Health Exchange, announced their enrollment numbers for 2018. Rather than going down, even though they were only able to enroll people in half the time there was in 2016, and even though they had no budget in terms of trying to actually promote and advertise, their enrollment went up. It went up by 3 percent in terms of the number of people who signed up for Anthem Blue Cross plans, for ConnectiCare plans, and for Medicaid plans.

Again, it was done because of this amazing grassroots, organic effort by libraries, by community health centers, by human service agencies, by hospitals that went out and took on the task of getting the word out that, in fact, the Affordable Care Act was still alive and that people would have access to affordable health plans. Sure enough, it resulted in an increase in health plans.

Interestingly, the young invincibles, the young enrollees that everybody predicted were going to abandon the

program because the enforcement of the mandate was going to be relaxed by the IRS actually had a very strong, healthy number.

Coming from a State that is known for its insurance history—it was the insurance capital of the world—the fact of the matter is that getting those young enrollees, those young members to sign up for these plans, in fact, portends well for 2019 and beyond.

This morning, The Hill newspaper reported that for ObamaCare insurers, actually, their financial prospects are looking much better for 2019 because the system has stabilized.

Now, again, there is still work that could be done. There is a bill, H.R. 3748, a Medicare buy-in, which would allow people 50 and up to voluntarily sign up for Medicare, again, using subsidies if they qualify or paying the full cost, which would still be 40 percent less than the plans that are on exchanges throughout the country for people 50 and up. It would not affect the deficit, and, in fact, arguably, it would strengthen the Medicare trust fund because you would get a younger population into the Medicare Program.

So there is work that we can do that is optional, voluntary, in terms of trying to provide more choices for individuals out there; but, clearly, what happened yesterday in Connecticut and throughout the country in terms of enrollment figures, that despite the active efforts by the Trump administration to undercut and sabotage this law, in fact, shows that the law has a life of its own, that, in fact, people are voting with their feet in terms of still trying to get access to the critical needs of every human being and every American, which is access to healthcare.

I want to particularly congratulate Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman, who spearheaded this effort in Connecticut and yesterday stated: This just shows how valuable the Affordable Care Act is to thousands of residents in Connecticut; also, Jim Wadleigh, the director of the exchange, who, again, was not distracted or demoralized by the comments coming out of the White House but still plunged forward and still persistently and determinedly went out and made sure that people got the real information, the real facts, the real news so that they could, in fact, take an opportunity to protect themselves and their families from the inevitable problems of sickness and accident, that every American and every Member of Congress enjoys through their health benefits, for every resident in the State of Connecticut.

It is time for us to stop the attack in terms of a program that has provided millions of Americans coverage and opportunity to healthcare. We should work together on bills like H.R. 3748, a voluntary, deficit-neutral attempt to try and strengthen and provide cheaper alternatives for people 50 and up and small businesses. That is the way forward, not this persistent, nonstop hyperpolitical, hyperpartisan attack