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## House of Representatives

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

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,  
November 27, 2018.

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

### IN CELEBRATION OF REAL CHRISTMAS TREES

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor this year's National Christmas Tree Contest winner who hails from my home county of Avery in North Carolina's Fifth District, Mr. Larry Smith.

This year, Mr. Smith won the national tree contest hosted by the National Christmas Tree Association, whose members have presented the of-

ficial White House Christmas tree for display in the Blue Room since 1966.

Growers must first win their local competitions in order to qualify for the association's national contest. At the national competition, growers, industry experts, and consumers vote to choose the real Christmas tree grower who will provide the official White House Christmas tree.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent this year's winner and was delighted to join Mr. Smith, his family and friends in presenting the First Family with its Fraser fir Christmas tree last week.

As a former Christmas tree grower myself, I can attest to the importance of recognizing this often overlooked, yet highly significant, farming industry. Christmas trees have held a historic place in American family tradition since 1850. Long before artificial trees were around, real trees brought Christmas spirit into homes with their evergreen and fragrant branches during the season.

Just as importantly, Christmas trees play a vital role in the North Carolina high country's economy by providing jobs and livelihoods for thousands of North Carolinians. The Fifth District is one of the largest producers of live-cut Christmas trees in the country, producing over 20 percent of the real Christmas trees in the United States.

Representing over 95 percent of all species grown in the State, the North Carolina Fraser fir Christmas tree is the most popular Christmas tree in North America. It is shipped to every State in the U.S., as well as the Caribbean islands, Mexico, Canada, Bermuda, Japan, and other points all over the world.

Congratulations once again to Mr. Smith, and thanks to Christmas tree growers across the country for contributing to our economy and providing the joy of having a real Christmas tree to families worldwide.

### ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share some good news with the House. Over a year and a half ago, we passed the Small Business Health Fairness Act.

Small businesses were hit hard by flawed mandates, soaring costs, and limited choices under ObamaCare. The Education and the Workforce Committee worked hard to produce the Small Business Health Fairness Act, which expanded healthcare options and lowered costs for working families by encouraging small businesses to come together through association health plans and negotiate for lower costs on behalf of their employees.

In October of last year, President Trump issued an executive order that built on the solutions in that bill, directing the Department of Labor to remove barriers and make association health plans a viable option for businesses and their employees.

Well, it is working. In my home State of North Carolina, individuals in the hospitality industry will soon have access to a new association health plan that provides affordable, comprehensive coverage. Nearly half a million workers in North Carolina alone will have options they didn't have before thanks to association health plans.

In Oklahoma, chambers of commerce at the State and local level are working with some of the smallest businesses around to form association health plans and allow these talented individuals to keep doing what they really want to do, innovating and creating jobs only they will be able to create.

Even farmers in Minnesota and Nebraska are finding ways to come together for better bargaining power that puts people and their healthcare choices first.

Association health plans put people in charge. They empower small businesses to offer the same benefits that

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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