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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. POLIQUIN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 29, 2018.

I hereby appoint the Honorable BRUCE POLIQUIN 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.

MY WORK FOR AMERICA IS NOT DONE

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

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, when I was born, separate but equal was the law of the land. Even in a northern city like Chicago, a young Puerto Rican kid knew where he could and could not go, which beaches and pools were open to him, and which were off-limits.

Segregation and discrimination by race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation were deeply embedded in the

customs and culture of our society, and upheld by the State and Federal Government.

So as I prepare to leave office after 26 years representing the people of the Fourth District of Illinois, I think it is important to reflect on how far we have come and how far we still have to go before this country lives up to its lofty ideals enshrined in our most sacred documents and origin mythology.

That a Puerto Rican born in Chicago in 1953, 65 years ago, the son of Spanish-speaking immigrants with little education who were driven by poverty from the mountains of Puerto Rico, would be able to speak into this microphone at all is perhaps a ringing endorsement for what this Nation stands for.

But let us be clear: People sacrificed and died so that I could speak here today. People I never met, like Medgar Evers, Emmett Till, and countless others, died in the struggle against discrimination and American apartheid, and opened the path for me to be here today.

The Voting Rights Act and other civil rights legislation passed in my lifetime on this floor were soaked in the blood of martyrs, old and young, who kept moving forward until everyone had the right to vote and every vote was counted.

Even as the President and his party challenge the principles of the Voting Rights Act today, I have always tried to honor those who have given their lives to make America freer and stronger.

To be blunt, were it not for the sacrifice of Black Americans, Black people in this country and their allies, who literally had their homes and churches bombed fighting to make this country live up to its own creed, I would not be here speaking to you today. That has always and will always guide me.

When the Fourth District was created to give Latinos an opportunity in

Chicago to have a voice in Congress, I was the first to win that seat. While the majority of my constituents then in 1992 were 65 percent Latino, on election day, the majority of voters were White.

In 26 years and 13 elections, that has changed. Today, voters on election day in the majority Latino Fourth District, which I represent, are, in fact, Latino.

Early on, I realized the constituent services in my district were not restricted to veterans' benefits and Social Security, although we work hard on those issues. In my district, helping people navigate the complex and expensive process of citizenship was a top need and became a top priority for my office.

We helped more than 55,000 people—let me underscore that, 55,000 immigrants—become citizens, sponsoring workshops, helping people resolve issues, and setting a standard that I feel is unmatched by any congressional office.

Just last month, I spoke with a woman who told me a remarkable story. Her daughter had assembled all of her documents and was prepared to apply for citizenship, and then she left the file on a Chicago subway system train. A few days later, this woman told me, a knock came at her door. Someone had found her daughter's folder, and they didn't give it to the CTA's lost and found, but, rather, they made sure it got to my office on Fullerton Avenue in Chicago.

My office and staff were so associated with citizenship and helping the immigrant communities that this Good Samaritan felt there was only one logical place to return the documents. Indeed, we worked with her daughter to make sure all of her documents and fees were filed. Today, she is a citizen of the United States of America.

When I walk through my district and talk with moms and dads, they tell me how my office touched their lives.

□ 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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