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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. PETERS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 14, 2019.

I hereby appoint the Honorable SCOTT H. PETERS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2019, 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.

HUMANITARIAN STANDARDS

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

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, two names have been lost in months of government shutdowns and threats of national emergencies: Jakelin Caal Maquin and Felipe Gomez Alonzo. Those were the children who died in December while in the custody of our Federal Government.

Let me tell you a bit about Jakelin's story and how, in the next 48 hours, we will take a historic first step to forever

change how our Nation treats children fleeing violence.

Jakelin Caal Maquin was 7 years old. She joined her father in fleeing the extreme danger and poverty of her village, San Antonio Secortez in Guatemala. Together, they dreamed of new opportunities, of new safety, of a home free from violence and discrimination where they could build a life and support their loved ones at home.

Jakelin and her father chose the same destination that asylum seekers, immigrants, and refugees have sought for centuries: the United States of America.

But the conditions I saw at the Border Patrol facilities where Jakelin and her father were held were not worthy of our American ideals. The conditions did not demonstrate respect for the human dignity of the individuals in our Federal Government's care.

Look, I am a doctor. I know what a functioning emergency medical response protocol looks like and how it should operate, and this was not it.

I saw women, infants, toddlers, and the elderly packed and even piled on top of each other, open toilets in crowded cells without any privacy, visibly sick people, children coughing on one another, and I immediately saw that the Border Patrol agents did not have the resources to respond to a life-threatening medical emergency.

Mr. Speaker, let me put this into perspective. I traveled to Haiti days after the devastating 2010 earthquake, where I served as the medical director of the country's largest camp of internally displaced people. The conditions I saw at the New Mexico Border Patrol facilities were worse than those I saw in Haiti, the most impoverished country in the Western Hemisphere, after their most challenging and devastating disaster.

Here we are, the greatest nation on our planet, and we are putting children in cages and denying them free access to food, water, and a private toilet.

Then and there, I committed myself to creating humanitarian standards that are worthy of human dignity: real solutions, not empty promises, that will save the lives of children at the border.

I introduced legislation that makes it clear Congress expects CBP to implement three crucial reforms as soon as possible:

First, provide meaningful medical examinations of individuals entering our borders. A basic physical exam would have shown warning signs of Jakelin's septic shock and most probably saved her life. A child who dies from septic shock does not look normal 8 hours beforehand.

Second, invest in essential medical equipment and trained medical personnel available to respond to life-threatening emergencies. When medical care is far away, agents need the resources, equipment, and knowledge to care for each other and the individuals in their custody.

Third, provide basic humane living conditions that are safe and hygienic, where individuals can access adequate food, water, and showers.

These are straightforward reforms. They move us closer to a system that is safe, humane, and aligns with our fundamental ideals as Americans.

Our work is not done, but we have reached an important milestone. We are beginning to address the humanitarian crisis at our border, not with rhetoric and political showboating or grandstanding, but with real, life-saving solutions.

This week, we will not just pass a bill that averts a government shutdown; we will pass a bill that provides funding for, and holds CBP accountable to, implementing the humanitarian standards included in my legislation, H. Con. Res. 17. These reforms will save lives and help restore our legacy as a nation that recognizes the dignity and fundamental rights of every human being.

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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