



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2019

No. 35

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. KELLY of Illinois).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 26, 2019.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ROBIN L. KELLY 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.

VA MEDICAL CENTERS

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

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I have run a small business, and I know that any organization needs long-term certainty. No organization can successfully operate under a revolving door of short-term leaders, especially not one tasked with caring for America's heroes. Unfortunately, this is what is happening at our Nation's VA centers.

Almost 20 VA medical centers, nationwide, currently lack a permanent

director. Some of these facilities have not been staffed by a permanent director in almost 2 years. Instead, these facilities are managed by short-term directors who stay on the job for just a few months.

There is just not a lot you can do in a few months. It is not nearly long enough to review operations, recommend improvements, and see these reforms brought through to an end. That is why I introduced bipartisan legislation with Mr. COSTA from California that put an end to this revolving door. Our bill pushes the VA to hire permanent directors at all VA medical centers—no more interim directors.

We all want a VA system that can complete its mission to care for those who shall have borne the battle. Having consistent leadership is the least we can do for our Nation's heroes.

ASSAULT ON THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I say to the people of southern Illinois and this country: Your constitutional rights are under assault. If you are a law-abiding gun owner, a sportsman, you need to pay attention.

This week, the House Democrats will bring a bill to the floor that will restrict your freedoms and do little to reduce gun violence.

As a father and a grandfather, I want to reduce gun violence as much as anyone, but we have to be smart. We can't get roped into scoring political points. That is why I worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle last year on a measure which is now law to increase security for our kids in the schools. But the gun control bill being considered this week makes it harder for law-abiding citizens to defend themselves and others against criminals who have guns.

We need to enforce the laws already on the books, not limit the rights of law-abiding citizens who want to protect their families.

EMERGENCY DECLARATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MALINOWSKI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Madam Speaker, I rise to urge that we come together today to defend the Constitution of the United States by repudiating President Trump's emergency declaration of February 15.

Few provisions of the Constitution are more plain than Article I, Section 9, Clause 7: "No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in consequence of appropriations made by law."

The President has immense powers, but he cannot spend money unless we, the people's Representatives in Congress, have agreed that he can.

Now, there might be extraordinary circumstances when a President could violate that principle, when all of us would agree that he must act but there is no time to ask Congress for funds: a military invasion or a massive natural disaster, for example. The National Emergencies Act provides for that.

But if the situation on the southern border were that kind of emergency, then the President hasn't been acting like it. For 2 years, when his party controlled the House and Senate, he never asked us for money to build a wall, and if we truly faced that kind of imminent threat, a wall would not even be an emergency measure given how long it would take to build.

The critical point is this: When the President finally got around to asking us for money, we deliberated on his request, and we said no. You may believe we were right or you may believe we were wrong, but that is what the elected Representatives of the American people decided.

So the question before us today is not how do we secure the border; it is whether this President or any President can use emergency powers to defy the Congress when he disagrees with a

□ 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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