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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 14, 2019.

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

VOTE TO LOWER PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, about 6 months ago, this country went through a historic election that shattered records that go back almost 100 years. It was the largest voter turnout for a midterm election since 1914. It elected a new majority in the House of Representatives by over 10 million votes.

If you drill down below those top lines, what you will see is that the biggest driving issue for American voters, who turned up in record numbers last November, was, in fact, the issue of healthcare.

If you drill down even further, what you will find is that the cost of prescription drugs was the biggest concern that people had about the security and stability of their healthcare. And why not?

Recent polling by Kaiser showed that 79 percent of Americans feel that prescription drug prices are unreasonable. Eighty percent believe that pharmaceutical company profits are to blame. One-third of Americans said they haven't taken their medications as prescribed because they have trouble affording it.

Again, the stories, in terms of the disparity of pricing in the U.S. versus other parts of the civilized, developed world, are just rampant. Obviously, we pay the highest prices here in this country, and the next highest country, Switzerland, pays 25 percent less than U.S. patients do for comparable medications.

This week, the new majority in the House of Representatives is going to be taking up H.R. 987, the Strengthening Health Care and Lowering Prescription Drug Costs Act, which we will be voting on either Thursday or Friday. This bill, which listened to patients all across the country and stakeholders who have been trying to endure these ridiculous costs, will do a number of things.

Number one, it will end pay-for-delay, which will prohibit brand-drug manufacturers from paying off generic companies that produce a competing generic drug. In other words, they are maintaining their exclusivity by paying off generic manufacturers, which are designed to create a stronger marketplace and lower prices for American patients.

It also ends the practice of parking by generic drug companies. Again, once you apply to the FDA for a generic drug, you can get 180 days where you exclude anyone else, any other generic manufacturer, from competing with a similar medication.

The FDA has estimated that these practices cost American patients \$3.5 billion in higher drug costs every year.

We will be voting this week, finally, to stand up to special interests, to listen to what experts and people who are close to this market are telling us about ways of trying to widen the marketplace to create more competition, and to, ultimately, lower the drug costs for American patients that are killing State Medicaid budgets and are also killing employer-based health plans. If you listen to what they are saying, that is where the cost driving is the most acute.

This past week, in the State of Connecticut, Attorney General William Tong announced a new lawsuit against generic manufacturers, which was profiled on "60 Minutes" last Sunday night.

Mr. Tong demonstrated how they have smoking-gun evidence of price-fixing amongst different drug companies. Forty-four States are joining Connecticut in that effort.

It is time, whether it is the legislative branch of Congress or whether it is a different branch, in the court systems, that we start holding drug companies accountable.

The vote that is going to take place this week keeps faith with that historic turnout last fall to make sure that we are going to get real action to address the issue of healthcare.

RELIEF FOR BLUE WATER NAVY VIETNAM VETERANS

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, we are also voting this week on H.R. 299—it will be this evening—the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, which will finally eliminate a 17-year barrier

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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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for people who served in the sea services during the Vietnam conflict and who are being denied access to VA benefits for the scourge of Agent Orange illnesses.

Again, this is a process that has taken forever. We passed this measure in the last Congress by unanimous vote. It was blocked from consideration by two Senators last December.

Congratulations to MARK TAKANO, our new House Committee on Veterans' Affairs chairman, for bringing up this bill immediately in the new House of Representatives, to make sure that we get this long-overdue justice for people who served in the Vietnam conflict taken care of.

Veterans service organizations that have been relentless in their advocacy for blue water Vietnam veterans, such as The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, AMVETS, MOAA, and Military Order of the Purple Heart, are supporting this legislation.

It is going to be important for us to get this bill passed out of this Chamber and force the Senate to do the right thing and provide justice for those who served in that conflict and who are still suffering from cancers, from heart disease, and from skin ailments because of exposure to a chemical that they had absolutely no idea was unsafe.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 6 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

PROCEEDINGS OF FORMER MEMBERS PROGRAM

The following proceedings were held before the House convened for morning-hour debate:

UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION OF FORMER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS 2019 ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS

The meeting was called to order by the Honorable Cliff Stearns, vice president of Former Members of Congress Association, at 8 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Lord God of history, we thank You for this day, when former Members return to Congress to continue, in a less official manner, their service to our Nation and to this noble institution.

May their presence here bring a moment of pause where current Members consider the profiles they now form for future generations of Americans.

May all former Members be rewarded for their contributions to this constitutional Republic and continue to work and pray that the goodness and justice of this beloved country be proclaimed to the nations.

Bless all former Members who have died since last year's meeting—24 in all. May their families and their constituents be comforted during a time of mourning and forever know our gratitude for the sacrifices made in service to Congress.

Finally, bless those here gathered, that they might bring joy and hope to the present age and supportive companionship to one another.

Together, we call upon Your holy name, now and forever.

Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable Cliff Stearns led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Mr. STEARNS. The Chair now recognizes the president of the United States Association of Former Members of Congress, the Honorable Martin Frost of Texas, to address the Members.

Mr. FROST. Thank you, Cliff. It is always a distinct privilege to be back in this revered Chamber and to see so many of my good friends and former colleagues here.

On behalf of FMC, I appreciate the Speaker's invitation to return to this wonderful place and to present to Congress FMC's 49th annual report.

I will be joined by some of our colleagues in reporting on FMC's activities and vision for the future.

I also am submitting, for the RECORD, a more detailed review of FMC's 2018 activities.

First, I would like to ask the Clerk to call the roll.

The Clerk called the roll and the following Members answered "present":

Mr. Blanchard of Michigan
 Mr. Coyne of Pennsylvania
 Mr. Carr of Michigan
 Mr. DiGuardi of New York
 Mr. Frost of Texas
 Mr. Gingrey of Georgia
 Mr. Goodlatte of Virginia
 Mr. Green of Texas
 Mr. Hertel of Michigan
 Mr. Jones of Oklahoma
 Ms. Kennelly of Connecticut
 Mr. Kolbe of Arizona
 Mr. Konnyu of California
 Mr. Kopetski of Oregon
 Mr. Lancaster of North Carolina
 Ms. Lincoln of Arkansas
 Mr. Matheson of Utah
 Mr. McMillen of Maryland
 Mr. Mica of Florida
 Ms. Morella of Maryland
 Mr. Murphy of Pennsylvania
 Mr. Payne of Virginia
 Mr. Rahall of West Virginia
 Mr. Slattery of Kansas
 Mr. Stearns of Florida
 Mr. Tanner of Tennessee
 Mr. Weldon of Florida

Mr. STEARNS. The Chair announces that 27 former Members of Congress have responded to their names.

Mr. FROST. Thank you all for joining us today. As I prepared for today's report, it brought back many, many

happy memories of my 26 years serving in this august body.

For all of us, service in this remarkable building was the pinnacle of our professional lives, and I know that for each and every one of us there are memories that will forever remind us of the great privilege we enjoyed as a representative of our constituents.

For me, these memories include great friendships with colleagues from both sides of the aisle, working with terrific and talented young people as a part of my staff, and pushing forward pieces of legislation that I know have made a huge, positive difference.

By serving in Congress, we were given the opportunity to serve our country and its citizens. I am very proud that through FMC we can continue, in a small measure, the public service that brought us to Congress in the first place.

My colleagues and I will describe later in this report the many projects through which FMC Members continue to give back.

As you know, every year during our annual meeting we seek to recognize a colleague for her or his exemplary public service before, during and after Congress. This tradition was started in 1974, when we recognized President Gerry Ford with our first Distinguished Service Award and has continued annually since. Other recipients include Tip O'Neill, Bob Michel, Jack Kemp, Tom Foley, and many others.

The award rotates between the parties, and this year a Republican former Member is slated to be recognized.

When our executive committee started considering whom to honor, immediately Connie Morella of Maryland emerged as the clear favorite, and, by unanimous consent, we agreed that she should be our 2019 Distinguished Service honoree.

I now invite Connie to join me here at the dais.

Connie, I have a few remarks, and then you will have the opportunity to say something also.

Connie Morella, former Member of the House of Representatives and former ambassador, exemplifies like few others a commitment to serving her community and her Nation.

Her entire career, since earning her B.A. from Boston University, was focused on public service. Initially, that service was in education as a secondary school teacher in Montgomery County. Though impossible to confirm, I would guess that Montgomery County is the place in America with the highest number of residents able to quote Shakespeare, thanks to her.

She became active in politics based on an issue that defined her political career: women's rights.

Little did she know, when she became involved with the League of Women Voters, that she herself would become a trailblazer, an inspiration, and a mentor to countless women leaders spanning generations.

After serving in the Maryland House of Delegates for 8 years, she ran for