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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. DENT).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 9, 2006.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHARLES W. DENT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: "Whoever meditates on the law of the Lord will bring forth much fruit at harvest time."

Lord God, who can bring forth blessings from just deeds, listen to our prayer this day. Give us the wisdom to take time to meditate upon Your revelation, Your law. Help us to find knowledge in prayerful reflection and be assured of Your love, especially in times of difficulty.

Your law holds nature and all peoples together.

May lawmakers today reflect the mindset and gracious manner revealed in Your loving commands. And may their work contain the depth of justice and the expansive embrace of human goodness that You reveal to Your people, by giving them Your law which lasts until now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. PORTER 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 10 one-minute speeches on each side.

THE UAE AND OUR PORTS

(Mr. KELLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, putting the UAE in charge of our ports is as crazy as outsourcing our Border Patrol to Saudi Arabia.

We have two Achilles heels: our Mexican border and our seaports.

The UAE says that they are our friends. Here is some straight talk: the UAE gave us two terrorists on 9/11. They provided the money for the attacks of 9/11. They recognized the Taliban on 9/11. They refused to freeze Osama bin Laden's assets after 9/11. They have voted against us at the U.N. 90 percent of the time since 9/11. And today they announced that they will threaten the United States of America if we block this transaction. If these are our friends, what the heck does an enemy look like?

Mr. Speaker, we have but one choice: block this ports deal. We should not outsource our national security to anyone.

PRESIDENT'S BUDGET OUT OF TOUCH WITH PRIORITIES OF AMERICAN PEOPLE

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, President Bush is now touting the line item veto as the magic formula to get our deficit under control. Then why does the President not begin by actually sending Congress a balanced budget?

For 5 years now, one of the President's main priorities has been to provide billions in tax breaks to his friends in the pharmaceutical and insurance industry, the oil and gas industry, and America's wealthiest elite. When the President provides these tax breaks to his friends, he increases the deficit and prevents the Federal Government from being able to properly address the concerns of hardworking Americans.

There is no doubt the President has lost control of the deficit, piling mountains of debt on the backs of our children and grandchildren. Under President Bush, a projected 10-year \$5.6 trillion surplus has turned into a \$3.3 trillion deficit. This year the deficit is expected to reach \$423 billion, the largest deficit in history. And yet the President suggests making his tax breaks to his friends permanent.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO LOWER HEALTH CARE COSTS

(Mr. MURPHY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. Speaker, according to the Centers for Disease Control, every 6 minutes someone in this country dies from an infection they picked up in a hospital. That is 90,000 people and a total cost of \$50 billion. Yet when hospitals adhere to patient safety measures, they can dramatically reduce these infections.

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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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A hospital in Oklahoma performed 400 surgeries without an infection. A hospital in Pittsburgh reduced these infections greatly and saved millions of dollars. A hospital in St. Louis received savings of \$1.5 million.

I am pleased that the Energy and Commerce Committee will take up this issue and hold hearings on this in a couple of weeks. We need to take action and save lives. At this time when we get so concerned about so many issues in America, is it not time that Congress tackled these issues head-on and worked out such issues as pay-for-performance incentives through Medicare and Medicaid to greatly reduce infections and save thousands of lives?

To learn more on this, people can look at my Web site at murphy.house.gov.

URGING COMPREHENSIVE LOBBYING REFORM

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, while Republicans are doing their best to distance themselves from their lobbying scandal, they just cannot seem to shake off Jack Abramoff.

Jack Abramoff recently told Vanity Fair: "Any important Republican who comes out and says they didn't know me is certainly lying."

While President Bush denies knowing him, Jack Abramoff says he knew President Bush well enough to joke with him about weight lifting. Former Speaker Gingrich said he didn't know Jack Abramoff well; yet Jack Abramoff said, "I have more pictures of Newt Gingrich than I do of my wife."

Senator CONRAD Burns, Jack Abramoff says: "Every appropriation we wanted we got. Our staffs were as close as they could be. They practically used Signatures as their cafeteria."

And to add insult to injury, in January, Senator SANTORUM, the architect of the K Street Project and a Republican point person on lobbying reform, vowed to stop his weekly lobbyist meetings; yet we now find he continues to do them.

It is just business as usual here in Washington. Mr. Speaker, the Republicans may be lip-syncing reform, but clearly the "for sale" sign is still up on the West Lawn.

It is time for a change. It is time to change the culture of corruption in Washington, a culture that has real costs for the American people. We can do better. We need to do better.

MEDICARE PROGRAM NOT CONFUSING

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to discuss the Medicare part D prescription drug plan, a historic program that renews our commitment to our Nation's seniors.

This plan gives seniors choices for prescription drug coverage that will cost less while offering more benefits. It has brought Medicare, a program created 40 years ago, into the 21st century. Millions of seniors who were without access to drugs are now getting them and many are saving thousands of dollars a year.

Clearly, people have liked what they have heard about the program as sign-ups for the third week of February amounted to 546,000 and the week before numbered 543,000. All told, almost 26 million people have signed up so far.

The Democrats say that seniors are confused by this program. I am feeling a little bit confused myself, and here is why: Democrats are holding town halls for the sole purpose of criticizing this plan while at the same time telling seniors they should consider signing up. Well, I guess I can understand why they are confused.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing confusing about a program that will help Medicare beneficiaries pay for their prescription drugs while at the same time saving them money.

MISPLACED PRIORITIES AND FISCAL MISMANAGEMENT

(Mr. MORAN of Virginia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, when future generations of Americans look back at this time in our Nation's history, they will have to conclude that this Republican Congress and White House has been the most fiscally irresponsible in our Nation's history.

In 5 years we have turned a projected \$5.6 trillion surplus into a projected \$3.5 trillion deficit, a \$9 trillion fiscal reversal. Seventy-seven percent of it is attributable to tax cuts, most of which benefit the wealthy, and to the so-called war on terrorism.

And why do I say the so-called "war on terrorism"? Because in this budget, this President's budget, he would provide tax cuts for the top 1 percent of Americans, greater than the entire amount of money he wants to spend on homeland security. And when you consider the fact that half of America's students do not even graduate from high school today, you have to ask why the amount of money he gives to the top 1 percent of Americans is almost twice as much as the entire amount of money he wants to spend on the education budget; and it is almost three times what he would spend on veterans health care.

This is misplaced priorities and fiscal mismanagement.

PROTECTING AMERICA'S CHILDREN

(Mr. FOLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, let me first thank my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee for voting overwhelmingly to put the port deal on ice. We are not anti-Arab. We want disclosure. We want certainty of transactions. We want no secrecy on these particular deals.

I also want to thank them for their courageous vote and excellent vote on H.R. 3132, the Children's Safety and Violent Crime Reduction Act. Overwhelmingly passed by voice vote, that measure is on its way to the other Chamber to set up for the first time a national sex offender registry, getting background checks on foster care parents so we know if we are putting our kids with appropriate individuals, a national database requiring bracelet monitoring for sex offenders.

We track library books better than we do sexual predators. It is time we get this right. This bill does that. It puts in law guarantees that will protect our kids. It is high time we passed this measure. I thank Senator FRIST, John Walsh, among others, who have brought this to the forefront of the national conscience, and I urge we get that bill to the President's desk before we lose another child.

THE RISING COST OF HEALTH CARE

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has released a report that details what most of us already knew, that health care costs are rising and they are rising at an increasing rate.

The bureaucrats and the Members of Congress talk about SGR, they talk about pay-for-performance, and they talk about CPT codes. What is left out of the discussion is that which is most important, and that is the patient.

As a physician for over 25 years, I know that the current health care road we are on continues to move us in the wrong direction. A patient-centered system is necessary if we are to increase access to quality care.

I ask my colleagues here in this Chamber to take a bipartisan approach to solving this issue: look at the numbers; read the reports; and, above all, listen to the American people. They are the families and the small businesses and the employers who are trying to provide health care coverage.

America has the ingenuity, but we must also have the will to make the decisions necessary to get us on the right road in health care.

WIRELESS PRIVACY AMENDMENT

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday was a good day for the millions of