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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 o'clock and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HARPER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 3, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable GREGG HARPER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, 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, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

EXTENDING THE SPECIAL IMMIGRATION VISA PROGRAM

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the floor of this House has been the scene of many heated exchanges of late—the shutdown controversy around the Affordable Care Act and budget differences—but in the midst of some real tension and frustration, there was a bright spot last evening.

I was pleased that there was a unanimous consent agreement to approve

H.R. 3233 that I introduced with Representative ADAM KINZINGER that kept the Special Immigrant Visa program alive for Iraqi nationals who helped the United States during the war effort at great peril to themselves and their families. These are the interpreters, the guides and drivers, people who performed a myriad of functions that were essential for American operations both militarily and diplomatically and for our development efforts.

Since I introduced the first legislation on these refugees 6 years ago, I have watched impatiently as the flawed Special Immigrant Visa program has sputtered, leaving Iraqis and Afghans twisting in the wind trying to escape those countries, away from people with long memories who seek to do them harm.

Then, Monday night, it died. September 30, the visa program for the Iraqis expired. After 72 hours of furious activity, last night, the United States sent a signal that we were not going to leave them behind. Last night, Congress came together—the House and the Senate, Republican and Democrat—to make it possible to uphold our end of the bargain. But, unfortunately, the program still is horribly flawed, disastrously slow, and in dire need of reform. But we can take heart that the bipartisan leadership displayed on this issue might make it possible for us to actually make it work.

I would thank my colleagues, ADAM KINZINGER, TULSI GABBARD, CHRIS GIBSON, STEVE STIVERS, and STENY HOYER and others who stepped in during this tumultuous time to make sure the project continued.

Despite what was going on behind the scenes, there were many staff without whose tireless dedication to doing the right thing this would never have happened. I would like to thank Robert Karem in Leader CANTOR's office; Mariah Sixkiller in STENY HOYER's office, Dimple Shah in Chairman GOOD-

LATTE's office, and Chad Kreikemeier in Senator SHAHEEN's office. The Senator helped spearhead that effort on the other side of the Capitol.

And off the Hill there were veterans, veterans like Matt Zeller, who was not going to let the person whom he depended on in Iraq suffer that fate. Organizations off the Hill, like the Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project and their staff, Katie Reisner and Becca Heller, were invaluable in keeping the progress going.

It was kind that Chairman GOODLATTE, the Judiciary Committee chair, introduced the unanimous consent request. There was lots of scrambling and many items at loose ends, but somehow we were able to follow through with this small but critical step to keep the program alive. Now the challenge is to finally make it work for these desperate Iraqis and Afghans.

Kirk Johnson's book, "To Be a Friend Is Fatal: The Fight to Save the Iraqis America Left Behind," is a call to action. It details what we need to do to meet our obligations.

In the midst of all the controversy and frustration here on Capitol Hill, we were able to come together for a brief moment this evening. Let's not let the shutdown overshadow the myriad of details that are important—even life and death—for people at home and abroad. Those who risked their lives for the American mission in Iraq and Afghanistan deserve our best efforts. Last night we saw a glimpse of it. I hope we are able to follow through.

PASS DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SPENDING BILLS

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

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to represent Redstone Arsenal, one of America's premier military bases and home to the

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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