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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. FLEISCHMANN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 13, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHARLES J. FLEISCHMANN 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 6, 2015, 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, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

CONCESSIONS TO CUBA ARE JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, as an 8-year-old child, I was forced to flee Havana, Cuba, with my family for the shores of the United States of America, this shining city on a hill and a beacon of hope and freedom to the world.

The Cuban American Members of Congress are all united by our love of this great country and our love and respect for freedom, for democracy, and

the rule of law because of where we come from and whom we represent. For us, these principles aren't concepts that we take for granted. We cherish them because we know the alternative.

We need look no further than just 60 miles south of the United States to see the alternative, where the Castro regime has been entrenched for over 55 years and ruling the island with an iron fist.

This is Berta Soler, one of the leaders of Las Damas de Blanco, the Ladies in White, a peaceful dissident group. Berta has been detained so many times, she says to me, that she has lost count. That is why we stand united in a bipartisan manner, in steadfast opposition to any attempts by the Obama administration to normalize relations with the Castro regime.

President Obama's audacity of hubris has resulted in one exercise in folly after another, and engagement with Cuba is the height of that folly. What have we gotten in return? Let me turn to the next poster. This poster has a list of some of the many wanted criminals who have sought refuge and have gotten it in Castro's Cuba. We haven't gotten any reforms from this deal.

We haven't gotten the return of these dozens of criminals that Castro has been harboring because they have fled from justice in America, like convicted New Jersey State trooper killer Joanne Chesimard. After this deal was announced, the Castro regime said: Oh, no, all of these people, we will give them asylum. The FBI has put her on the most wanted terrorist list; yet Castro says: We will give them asylum.

What have the Cuban people received as a result of this administration's concessions? Well, 53 political prisoners supposedly were released, Mr. Speaker, like some of these activists, who were rounded up in a catch-and-release program of the Castro regime.

The administration hails this list of 53 as a victory, ignoring the fact that

hundreds of political and anti-regime activists like these were arrested and detained immediately before and after the announcement of the changes, and almost 2,000 people were arrested or detained last year alone. This infamous list of 53 that has been praised by this administration and the Castro regime is another ruse.

Over a dozen individuals on that list were released prior to the December 17 announcement, including Carlos Andres Sanchez Perez. He was released over 1 year ago. Some were arrested even before June. Catch-and-release is the new program, the new playbook of the Castro regime, and Obama deliberately has fallen for that ruse.

Now, the regime will feel emboldened because the United States has just signed off on its mistreatment of its citizens, and President Obama has extended an economic lifeline to the regime that will allow it to continue this repression.

Before there can be any discussion of changing our policy toward Cuba, Mr. Speaker, all political prisoners must be released, not this fake list of 53; fair and multiparty elections must be held; and the fundamental human rights of every Cuban must be respected.

Mr. Speaker, I warn my colleagues to pay close attention to what the Obama administration is attempting to do in Cuba because this will track with its attempts at reconciliation with Iran, another rogue nation and state sponsor of terrorism. The administration's efforts in Cuba have been the test case for Iran, and the two have paralleled each other.

While the administration was holding secret talks with the Castro regime, we know that he was penning secret letters to Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei and conceding to Iran the right to enrich uranium.

These concessions to Cuba are just the tip of the iceberg, and it will open the doors to similar measures in Iran

□ 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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where the Supreme Leader will see what is happening in Cuba and says: Hey, we can get away with that as well.

Both have serious consequences for our national security as other nations see that we lack the courage of our convictions, and they will be willing to test us. In fact, Nicolas Maduro after the prisoner exchange said, “We will exchange Leopoldo Lopez,” a human rights activist whom Nicolas Maduro has imprisoned in Venezuela, for one of the criminals in prison here in the United States. They want to test us; they want to see what they can get for holding innocents in prison.

Just look at the appeasements that this administration has made to Russia, to Iran, to North Korea. These rogue regimes will continue to act with impunity, and our allies have turned away from us because, instead of working with our allies, we have been appeasing our enemies.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like for this Congress to take a close look at that list of 53 prisoners and remember that even if that were a true list, which it is not, it is not about 53. It is about freedom for all political prisoners, some of whose names we will never know.

WE NEED A NEW AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, we are now in our 6th month of war against ISIS, and make no mistake about it, we are at war in Iraq, though I do not recall a debate or a vote in this Chamber authorizing that.

I would respectfully remind the President, who is well-versed in constitutional law, of something he already knows but appears unwilling to address: the executive is not permitted under the articles of the Constitution to unilaterally authorize military action in a situation that does not constitute an imminent threat.

There is no doubt that ISIS is a depraved and repugnant organization, but our intelligence community has repeatedly said it does not imminently threaten the United States. Even if that assessment were to change following the horror we witnessed in Paris, we would still need a clear authorization and a serious debate about yet another American war in Iraq.

I and several of my colleagues in both Chambers have been calling for such a debate since last August. In November, the President said he intended to work with the Congress to craft a new Authorization for Use of Military Force, or an AUMF, in the anti-ISIS campaign.

Before it adjourned last year, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations drafted and passed a new, if vague, AUMF against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

Mr. Speaker, the 113th Congress abrogated its responsibility to acknowledge that the ongoing military campaign in Iraq and Syria cannot be sustained on the back of war powers notifications of two outdated AUMFs.

The start of this new Congress is a perfect time to actually do something about this urgent need by debating and voting on something required of us 6 months ago. Over 3,000 American troops have been deployed to retrain Iraqi Army brigades that will allegedly be the new and improved force to take over against ISIS.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff declined to say over the weekend how long this training would take, so the Prime Minister of Iraq volunteered a guess: 3 years. In 3 years, which seems awfully optimistic, Iraq may be able to rebuild and restructure its military.

Does this mean 3 more years of coalition airstrikes, if we even have a coalition by then? Does that mean 3 more years of military advisers to train forces that will never be ready? Does that mean 3 more years of American troops sent out to reoccupy those decrepit bases that served as a stark reminder of the last time—more than 10 years ago—we went to war in Iraq without a strategy?

Mr. Speaker, apparently, the reading of the Constitution on the House floor last week was gratuitous, since the Congress has no intention of following a key section of the Constitution. When it comes to war and peace, Mr. Speaker, the authority remains firmly with the Congress; yet we have sent our country's sons and daughters to war without a new bill, a serious debate, or a proper vote.

Where is our sense of priority, reading the Constitution or obeying it? Where is our sense of responsibility? We have already had 6 months of unilateral war against ISIS. Another 3 years is intolerable.

Mr. Speaker, it is up to you to invite the President to come up here and address this House, all 535 Members of Congress, to tell us what he needs and what he has decided is worth the sacrifice. It cannot be done, it should not be done, without an authorization from this Congress. To fail to do that is eroding to the very Constitution that we say we support in this House.

We have a civilian control of the military, not by one man, but by 535 Members of Congress. That is the way it is supposed to work. We need to have this debate now.

HELP FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

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

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, we were sent to Washington by our constituents to work together to encourage accountability, transparency, and limited government. Big-

ger government does not necessarily mean more responsive government, but it has come to mean more costly government.

When our small businesses and entrepreneurs, the backbone of our economy, are forced to divert resources to costly new mandates, it means less capital for growing their business, less capital to hire more employees, less money to raise employee wages.

Two statistics, to me, jump out. First, 64 percent of the new jobs created in this country in the past 15 years have been through small businesses. Last year alone, new regulations cost our economy \$67 billion.

We are going to be dealing with several regulatory reform measures this week, bipartisan pieces of legislation that will modernize the Federal rule-making process and put more power back in the hands of job creators.

We need to help those who are too often squeezed by regulation the most: small businesses. We need to give them a larger voice in the process. We need to be a country that continues to welcome new ideas and innovation, not a nation that overregulates from Washington and inhibits our full economic potential.

I look forward to forthcoming regulatory reform measures to help streamline our government, get Washington out of the way, bring stability and certainty to small businesses, and help grow our economy.

□ 1015

END HUNGER NOW

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I have come to the floor today to give a voice to those who are hungry, to share their struggles, and to challenge my House colleagues to take meaningful action to end hunger now.

Last week the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities released a troubling new report estimating that roughly 1 million unemployed Americans will be cut off from SNAP benefits over the course of 2016. The report anticipates that those affected will lose between \$150 and \$200 per person per month in food benefits—cuts that will cause serious hardship. Mr. Speaker, this is shameful, and it deserves our attention. We should be working to end hunger now, not making it worse.

The 1996 welfare law limits individuals aged 18 to 50 who are not disabled or caring for young children to 3 months of SNAP benefits in any 36-month period if they aren't employed or in a work training program for 20 hours or more a week. That sounds reasonable, but when jobs and job training are not available, it isn't so reasonable.

During times of high unemployment, Governors can request a waiver to the 3-month time limit for their State.