



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 2016

No. 4

Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, January 11, 2016, at 2 p.m.

House of Representatives

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 7, 2016.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DARIN LAHOOD to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2016, 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.

VISAS AND WORK PERMITS

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

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, Washington has, once again, undermined and betrayed struggling Amer-

ican workers who seek jobs that pay enough to support their families.

In December, on less than 72 hours' notice, Congress and President Obama shoved down the throats of Americans a 2,000-page, financially irresponsible, \$1.1 trillion omnibus spending bill that not only risks America's solvency, it also threatens American jobs for American workers.

Under old law, 66,000 H-2B foreign worker visas could be issued each year. Buried deep inside the 2,000-page omnibus spending bill, on page 701, is an obscure provision without even a heading that, according to labor expert John Miano, increases available H-2B visas up to 264,000 per year, effectively quadrupling visas for low-skilled, temporary nonagricultural foreign workers.

Making matters worse, on New Year's Eve, while America focused on football games and celebrations, President Obama issued a 200-page proposed rule to illegally bust statutory green card immigration caps by approving unlimited numbers of work permits for foreigners who don't have green cards. This White House action is yet another brazen display of contempt for immigration statutes, the rule of law, and American workers.

The White House argues importing foreign labor is necessary because of a claimed shortage of American labor. Similarly, House Speaker PAUL RYAN claims increasing foreign worker visas "helps small businesses who cannot find labor when there's a surge in demand for their labor, like seafood processing or tourism."

This claimed labor shortage is unsupported by jobs or wage data and is political bunk. Per Federal labor statistics, 57 percent—57 percent—of Americans without a high school diploma had no job in 2015's second quarter. That bears repeating. Fifty-seven percent of Americans without a high school diploma had no job in 2015's second quarter. That is a lot of Americans who would love to have those jobs President Obama and Congress denied Americans and gave to foreigners.

Economics 101 explains that wages rise if there is a labor shortage and fall if there is a labor surplus. According to Census Bureau data from 2007 to 2014; wages for security guards went down 6.1 percent, for cooks down 4.4 percent; for janitors down 1.2 percent; for ushers, lobby attendants, and ticket takers, down 7.1 percent; for hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks, down 7 percent. The list of falling wages for low-income American workers goes on and on. This falling wage data is compelling evidence that there is no shortage of American labor and, to the contrary, that there is an oversupply of American labor that demands cutting foreign labor, not expanding it.

Mr. Speaker, while these surges in foreign worker visas and foreign labor work permits is a huge victory for special interests that profit from suppressed wages, it is a debilitating loss for struggling American families.

Unemployed and underpaid Americans desperate for a good-paying job have every right to be angry at a Federal Government that takes American jobs from American citizens and gives

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.



Printed on recycled paper.

H105

them to foreigners. Americans have every right to be angry at Washington elected officials who care more about special interest campaign contributions than American voters who elected us. I hope those Americans will remember their anger during 2016's primary and general elections. That is the way to force Washington to represent us.

Mr. Speaker, I can't speak for anybody else, but, as for me, MO BROOKS from Alabama's Fifth Congressional District, I fight for the economic interests of American citizens and against policies that undermine the struggling American voters who sent us here. That is part of the reason why I voted against December's financially irresponsible omnibus spending bill—and am proud of it.

MALHEUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, with the odd drama playing out in Oregon where armed thugs have taken over a Federal wildlife facility, it is important to reflect on what the wildlife refuge system is all about.

If these people had any argument with the President, it was with President Roosevelt, who 108 years ago established the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge as a response to protect natural resources, especially the slaughter of wild birds for feathers to adorn women's hats.

It is ironic that the President, who in his younger days participated in the slaughter of over 6 million buffalo that roamed the Midwest plains on a magnificent ecostructure, realized the necessity of protecting these resources. Today we benefit from the foresight of this conservation President who provided the cornerstone of environmental protection that enriches us all.

The notion that somehow this is the "wild west," where people can do with public land what they want, is thoroughly discredited. This mind-set from the 1800s that there were endless, wide-open spaces, where people could do what they wished, when they wished, where they wished, is tinged with regret and tragedy. We took away the land from Native Americans that our government had given to them in solemn treaty, ratified by Congress.

The mind-set that public lands of the West were to be exploited as rapidly as possible is still embodied in the Mining Act of 1872, which essentially allows anyone, including foreign mining operations, to exploit our country's mineral resources at basically no cost and with no enforceable obligation to repair the damage they inflicted. The West is now blighted with thousands of abandoned mines and oil and gas wells that will risk being a permanent scar on the landscape. While private profit

was pursued, the public was left with the consequences and the cost of clean-up, if it ever occurs.

The longstanding battles over American rangeland between competing owners and between competing uses, like cattle and sheep, were not pretty. There is no doubt that there are still significant problems dealing with public land management, in part because the rules of the game are still set by the Mining Act of 1872 and the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934.

All but the most reckless individuals would agree that if these statutes were written today they would look fundamentally different with more protections and clarity. It was into this void that Teddy Roosevelt stepped, declaring critical national monuments. He established wildlife refuges to benefit countless generations to come.

These amazing treasures are not just scenic wonders. They hold extraordinarily valuable habitat for wildlife, waterfowl, helping preserve the land and the water and the ecosystem that goes far beyond what is simply spectacular to look at.

This is America's heritage. We struggle on an ongoing basis to recover from the reckless, thoughtless exploitation of the last two centuries. The vast majority of the American public supports this effort, even if they never visit the remote Western regions. Indeed, the fact that they are often inaccessible is the only way that they are preserved. Imagine tour buses, motorized vehicles, hordes of tourists, their infrastructure and their litter, and the destructive effects that would have.

The sideshow with the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge obscures a much larger and important public policy: protecting our heritage, enhancing it, and avoiding reckless behavior of a few that will penalize generations to come.

That is why the Harney Basin Wetlands Initiative of people in that region, facilitated by the refuge between 2010 and 2013, was a textbook example of collaboration, where all the stakeholders created a vision and a 20-year plan for the refuge and the surrounding landscape, including the biggest wetland restoration project ever undertaken.

It would be valuable for us to look behind the headlines to the facts on the ground, the history of the resource, the struggle for protection, the tremendous benefits for all Americans, and what the stakeholders in that region accomplished together.

REPEALING THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I was proud to vote in favor of the Restoring Americans' Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act, which repeals the Affordable

Care Act, or the ACA. With yesterday's passage of the bill, it marks the first time repeal of the ACA has been sent to President Obama's desk.

In the past year, several significant problems with this law have become ever more clear. We have seen a large number of healthcare co-ops go under. One major healthcare provider, UnitedHealthcare, announced it is pulling out of the ACA exchange. This system is just not sustainable.

Late last year, the Congressional Budget Office released a report stating that the ACA will lead to a reduction of work-hours equivalent to 2 million jobs over the next decade. The CBO attributes this reduction to healthcare subsidies tied to income, raising effective tax rates for Americans, and creating a disincentive for people seeking promotions or new, higher paying jobs. It also points to higher taxes and penalties as a reason for the reduction in work-hours.

In comparison, the Restoring Americans' Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act will reduce the Federal deficit by more than half a trillion dollars over the next 10 years. It will also eliminate costly provisions, such as the individual and employer health insurance coverage mandates, the Cadillac tax on high-cost plans, and it will enhance the solvency of Medicare. It also ensures that Federal tax dollars will not go to providers of abortion.

Mr. Speaker, over the past several years, dozens of ACA reforms have been signed into law. However, we have only scratched the surface when it comes to addressing problems with this law. It is time to come together to support a comprehensive approach that ensures responsible use of taxpayer dollars and fixes the issues affecting our Nation's healthcare system.

HAYMARKET CAFE

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, today I am honored to share the story of the Haymarket Cafe, started by brothers Peter and David Simpson, in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Mr. Speaker, one of the surest signs of a vibrant local economy is a lively restaurant scene. You know a town or a region is humming economically when you have a wide variety of restaurants to choose from. It is a sign that people have enough money left over after paying all of their bills to spend on treating themselves and their families. It is a strong indication that people feel secure in the direction of the economy.

But for millions of low-wage workers across the country, the story is more complicated than that, and the picture is not all that pretty. For all the economic vibrancy associated with restaurant culture—and though restaurants employ almost 1 in 10 private