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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 21, 2016.

I hereby appoint the Honorable STEVE WOMACK 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 1:50 p.m.

WORLD WATER DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is World Water Day. It is an opportunity to learn more about water-related issues and find ways to make a difference.

Growing up in the mountains of North Carolina, I lived in a house without electricity or running water. That experience taught me very quickly and very early in life that water is a valuable and precious resource when you

have to carry it home from a spring twice a day, and that lesson has stayed with me.

Many of us take for granted that when we turn on our taps or faucets, water will always be there. However, more than 660 million people lack access to safe water and 1.2 billion people live in areas with inadequate water supply.

There are many organizations throughout our country and throughout the world that are working to change that situation. We can support the many organizations that aim to preserve and defend this vital natural resource, but it is also important that we evaluate how we use water as individuals.

On World Water Day, I hope all of us will explore how we can take steps to preserve this fundamental resource and make it safe and accessible for the world's population.

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, today is World Down Syndrome Day. This is a day that creates a global voice for the rights and inclusion of people with Down syndrome.

According to the National Down Syndrome Society, there are more than 400,000 Americans living with Down syndrome. This is an issue that hits very close to home for me and my family.

On June 21, 2008, my grandson, Stanley, was born with Down syndrome. I have 10 grandchildren and one on the way. Each one is unique and special, but let me tell you about Stanley.

Stanley loves more than you can ever imagine. There is nothing more fun than coming in and looking up and seeing Stanley say: Hey, Grandpa Mike, I need a hug.

I can tell you that when families find out that one of their children or grandchildren will have Down syndrome, you are worried and you are concerned, but it is not something to be afraid of. It is something that, yes, they will have special needs, but children and adults with Down syndrome can be trained and educated to a level where they can become self-supportive, active members of society, and be a great part of not only this Nation, but this world.

As I said earlier, there is no one that loves more, stronger, and so unconditionally. Maybe we should take a lesson from them, Mr. Speaker. Our family and all families that have members with Down syndrome are blessed beyond measure.

JUDGE MERRICK GARLAND NOMINATION

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, President Obama nominated Judge Merrick Garland to replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia on the Supreme Court of the United States.

Judge Garland is an extraordinarily qualified candidate, highly esteemed within the legal community, and highly accomplished as a prosecutor and appellate judge. He was confirmed to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals in 1995, by a vote of 76-23, with a majority of Republicans voting in favor of his confirmation. Indeed, an even larger number of Republicans said he was well qualified, and I will speak to that.

Under normal circumstances, Judge Garland would now be sitting down this week for one-on-one meetings with Senators on both sides of the aisle in preparation for his confirmation hearings, but Senate Republicans, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, have made it clear that they will not be operating under normal procedure. Instead, they

□ 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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are refusing even to meet with Judge Garland. Let me suggest they are refusing to do their duty.

Their approach is inconsistent with the expectations of our Founding Fathers and a disservice to the American people, to the Court, to American justice, and to the American people, and their justification has no basis in fact.

Justice Anthony Kennedy, who sits now on the Court, was confirmed during the final years of President Reagan's second term. In fact, he is one of the 14 Justices in our history who have been confirmed during a Presidential election year, including Louis Brandeis and Benjamin Cardozo.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is hardly precedent that a lame duck President must allow a Supreme Court vacancy to sit unfilled for months. We do not allow that for the House of Representatives and, for the most part, we don't allow it for the United States Senate. There is a timeframe, indeed, in every State to fill seats in the House of Representatives so that the American people will be represented. To politicize this process is irresponsible and jeopardizes the proper functioning of our Supreme Court.

In 1988, during the Kennedy confirmation process, President Reagan said, "The Federal judiciary is too important to be made a political football." I agree, and I hope Senate Republicans would, too, because we all know that their decision has nothing to do with Judge Garland's qualifications.

Senator HATCH, a Republican from Utah, in 1997, called Judge Garland "highly qualified" and said, "his intelligence and his scholarship cannot be questioned." When put forward for the D.C. Circuit Court, Judge Garland was cited by Senator HATCH as "a fine nominee." He ultimately voted to confirm Judge Garland to the D.C. Circuit Court.

While Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY, who chairs the Judiciary Committee on the Senate—also a Republican—opposed Judge Garland's nomination to the Circuit Court, it ought to be noted that it was only because he thought there were already too many judges on that bench, not because Judge Garland lacked qualifications. In fact, Senator GRASSLEY made this clear by saying, "I have nothing against the nominee. Mr. Garland seems to be well qualified and would probably make a good judge on some other court."

Senator JEFF SESSIONS, a conservative Republican from Alabama, agreed with Senator GRASSLEY about too many judges on the Circuit Court, and said of Judge Garland: "I would feel comfortable supporting him for another judgeship." Although he didn't say it, but another judgeship would be a Justice on the Supreme Court of the United States. Now, Senator GRASSLEY and Senator SESSIONS have an opportunity to put Judge Garland on another court—one that has a vacancy needing to be filled.

Our Founding Fathers set up a Court of nine Justices, cognizant of the problem that would occur if there were a 4-4 tie. That is the situation that exists today, and it can be remedied by the United States Senate now.

Let's not play political games. If Republicans don't want Judge Garland on the Court, schedule a vote and cast their votes accordingly.

Senate Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL said just yesterday on ABC's This Week: "Under the Constitution, we have a shared responsibility. This is not something he"—referring to the President—"does alone. He nominates; we confirm."

That, of course, is absolutely accurate. I would say to Senator MCCONNELL that the President has met his responsibilities. Now it is time for the Senate to do so as well.

Some Senate Republicans, Mr. Speaker, agree. Senator MARK KIRK of Illinois said on Friday: "Cast a vote. The tough thing about these senatorial jobs is you get 'yes' or 'no' votes. Your whole job," Senator KIRK observed, "is to either say 'yes' or 'no' and explain why." That is democracy. That is responsibility.

Furthermore, in February, Senator SUSAN COLLINS, Republican of Maine, said: "I think the obligation of the Senate is to carefully consider any nominee whom the President submits. The best way to do that, in my judgment, is public hearings." Senator COLLINS was absolutely right.

Under pressure from within their own ranks, Senate Republican leaders can only stall for so long before they must face up to their responsibility to give Judge Garland the fair hearing he deserves and that the American people expect.

I believe Judge Garland will make a fine Supreme Court Justice, Mr. Speaker, and I thank President Obama for selecting someone so "highly qualified," intelligent, and whose "scholarship cannot be questioned," "a fine nominee." All of those, of course, are Senator HATCH's words.

I hope that Judge Garland will be swiftly confirmed. Leaving the Supreme Court with the possibility of gridlock, as we have seen the Congress at gridlock, is not good for our country, not good for the American people, and does not serve our democracy well.

Senator MCCONNELL, hold hearings. Reflect upon Judge Garland's competency, intellect, and suitability to serve on the Supreme Court. Do your duty.

SUNY POTSDAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK) for 5 minutes.

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to celebrate a tremendous milestone for a school in my district, the State University of New York at Potsdam.

On March 25, 1816, the document that would establish what is now known as SUNY Potsdam was signed, making it one of our Nation's first 50 colleges and the oldest institution in the SUNY system. Since that time, this school has developed a well-deserved reputation for providing a topflight education, especially in the liberal arts and science fields, and is the proud home of the world-renowned Crane School of Music, which I toured last year.

As the cochair of the Congressional STEAM Caucus, I am proud that SUNY Potsdam is leading the way in incorporating the arts into the traditional science, technology, engineering, and math curriculum.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to stand on the House floor today to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the founding of SUNY Potsdam.

□ 1215

AMERICANS BEING UNJUSTLY HELD IN IRAN

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

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, these faces are not household names, faces; no one knows who these unknown Americans are. And that is because they have been held in Iran for so long.

September 18, 2015, and also detained in 2015.

Of course they were not detained the 444 days that Iran, a totalitarian dictatorship and theocracy, held 52 American diplomats, and the world is not watching the same as they did then. That is how this President could make a deal with Iran and not include these victims of this dictatorship.

So today, Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor to remind people that in the years, the decades, since I was a young lieutenant in 1979, when the Ayatollah Khomeini blamed students for somehow doing something—not his government—and continued to blame them and blames them in many ways until today, the Iranian Government, today, would still hold our Embassy hostage. It still is a shell waiting for a return, a return that I fear this President wants to do by executive order. He has already thrown aside so much of what was working to stop this regime from spreading terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, as we speak today, these people are held hostage, and the American people are being held hostage by a President who chooses to use the pen and the phone over the democratic means at his side.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue coming to the floor and pointing out that Iran continues to be a dictatorship spreading violence throughout the region; continues to fund Hamas and Hezbollah; continues to, in fact, destabilize countries in the region, and now does so with 140 billion more dollars.

Mr. Speaker, it is extremely important that we stand firm in this House