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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. FLORES).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
April 26, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable BILL FLORES 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 17, 2012, 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.

IMMIGRATION

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, with the unfortunate Arizona State immigration law under review by the Supreme Court, it's an appropriate time to take a step back and look at the big picture. Mexico is exhibiting some of the demographic changes taking place around the world that are seen in the most extreme forms in places like Japan and Italy, where birth rates are falling, their populations are aging,

and dramatic stress is placed upon their economies.

It's not yet to that point in Mexico, but the game has definitely changed. In contrast, the United States has had a growing and vibrant population, in no small measure because we've been energized from people around the world. It's time to consider our immigration policies and practices for the future.

Even though there's been no more contentious issue in American politics than that of immigration, the situation surrounding Mexican immigration has changed profoundly. As I mentioned, the birth rate is falling, and for the first time as many people are leaving the United States for Mexico as are arriving from Mexico in the United States.

Illegal entry is clearly declining. The number of arrests at the border demonstrates that. People are being deported in greater numbers than ever before. It's not that there isn't still a problem. There are still some bad actors coming across the border, no mistake about it.

There are important opportunities to concentrate on what's important, such as people who are dealing with drugs, pose security threats, and who are criminals. Wasting resources on a scattershot effort on people who are here just to work or to be with their families is not particularly a wise use of resources, and it doesn't make us any safer.

It's past time to deal with the millions of people who are already here and part of the fabric of our communities. Often, they are with families that include children who are citizens and other family members who are citizens as part of an extended family. It's not just the members of those extended families that rely on one another; America relies on these millions of people, as the Alabama legislature found out with draconian efforts to try and deal with illegal immigrants—and

legal immigrants, by the way—that ended up almost ruining a number of their farmers, and their legislature had to backtrack.

Immigrants have always been a source of America's strength. Our current policies inflict damage to the realities of those family ties, especially to children who are already citizens.

We also do other dumb things. We deny VISAs to smart people who are educated at great expense at some of the finest institutions in America with important skills that will be valuable to business. We make it hard for them to work here. Unfortunately, if their skills are going to be utilized, too often they end up being hired by foreign overseas competitors, or American companies have to create jobs for them overseas.

There are a half-dozen pieces of legislation in a piecemeal fashion that will make it better. One of the most important is the DREAM Act, which would allow children who were brought here at an early age to be able to earn the right to citizenship if they have done well with their education or serve in the military.

I'm pleased to see all of these different pieces of legislation that would bring a measure of rationality and fairness gaining support. The most important thing we can do is return to that spirit of bipartisan cooperation that was exhibited by the late Ted Kennedy and, by the way, how JOHN MCCAIN used to be, before he ran for reelection in today's Arizona, because they were sponsoring comprehensive immigration reform. They didn't rely on half a dozen pieces of legislation, but really looked at the problem holistically for the people involved, for the community, and for the country. They would have a thoughtful path to citizenship that people could earn, not being granted amnesty but by paying taxes, learning the language, demonstrating a clear commitment to what it takes to

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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