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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. TROTT).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 13, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DAVID A. TROTT 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 3, 2017, 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. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

VALUABLE FARM BILL LISTENING SESSIONS

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, over the course of the summer, I was able to join some farm bill listening sessions with Chairman MIKE CONAWAY and Ranking Member COLLIN PETERSON. These sessions were titled "The Next Farm Bill, Conversations in the Field," and they allowed committee members to gather input di-

rectly from farmers, ranchers, and stakeholders across the country.

As the House Agriculture Committee works to craft the next farm bill, these listening sessions have allowed us to hear firsthand from those who are directly impacted by the farm bill. They provide us with real world examples of what is working and what isn't.

With farmers in every region of this country, we heard many different perspectives. This feedback will help us write the best legislation possible.

Now, my schedule permitted me to attend listening sessions in Gainesville, Florida; San Angelo, Texas; and Decatur, Illinois. I also hosted a listening session in my own district. Our "Barnyard Discussion" at Penn State's Ag Progress Days focused on issues driving the state of agriculture in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I was joined by my Democratic colleague, Congressman DWIGHT EVANS of Philadelphia; as well as Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Russell Reading; and Rick Ebert, president of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.

We heard from a variety of stakeholders, including those from the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, the Center for Dairy Excellence, the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts.

Penn State's Ag Progress Days is Pennsylvania's largest outdoor agricultural expo. Proudly, there are numerous opportunities for attendees to hear from their State and Federal lawmakers about regulations, policies, and government programs through various events and exhibits.

The Barnyard Discussion is an annual event for me and, in the same fashion, as the committee's listening session, it allows me to hear how our Federal policies are working for those who are directly impacted by these decisions. Producers from across the Commonwealth flock to Pennsylvania

Furnace for the 3-day event that features the latest technology and research exhibits, educational programs, and guided tours.

This year marked the 42nd year, and it is one of only three agriculture exhibitions in the country to be sponsored by a major university. I especially enjoyed the Barnyard Discussion, and I gathered excellent insight about the challenges and successes facing the agriculture industry.

These sessions were particularly important to me, as chairman of the Nutrition Subcommittee, because Federal nutrition programs are vital to ensuring that all Americans have access to healthy foods, especially our low-income populations, the elderly, and those living in areas with strained access to nutritious foods, or what we call food deserts.

Programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—or SNAP—support agriculture and lessen the effects of poverty on our most vulnerable citizens.

As we begin to work on the next farm bill, we will continue to identify ways—through Federal, State and local programs—to provide safe and nutritious food for those who need it most. Gathering feedback from Americans who farm every corner of this Nation is essential as we work to construct the next farm bill. I am grateful to all those who shared their stories and their insights with us.

Our farmers feed. They are the stewards of our land, and their insights are invaluable to the Agriculture Committee.

SOLVING PROBLEMS OF REPETITIVE FLOODING

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

□ 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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Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, as we watch the horrific scenes of destruction from Hurricane Harvey and Irma, I must say that I have been taken back in time.

I came to Congress 20 years ago in the aftermath of serious flooding in my hometown of Portland, Oregon. I was Portland's Commissioner of Public Works at the time, and we had to scramble to try and prevent flood damage into our central city.

Since that time, I have spent a great deal of time and energy focusing on what we can do to solve problems of repetitive flooding, having Federal policies in place that makes it less likely that people will be in harm's way. Sadly, over the course of over 20 years, we are very slow to learn these messages.

First and foremost, we continue to provide payments to properties that are repeatedly flooded. When we started over 15 years ago on a program for reforming the flood insurance program, one of the best examples that we used for the need for reform was a home in suburban Houston that had flood insurance payments 17 times in less than 20 years. The total was over \$1 million for a piece of property that was less than \$120,000 in value. We would have been far better off buying it at a generous price and returning it to its natural state, saving the taxpayers money and minimizing future flood damage.

Such is the case when we looked at what was going on with Hurricane Katrina, where we have problems in Louisiana over the years, a city, New Orleans, that is slowly settling, and has engaged in development in some areas where people, like in the lower Ninth Ward, were repeatedly subjected to flood damage.

But what we have done too often in the past is we have put people back in harm's way. We shouldn't be spending Federal flood relief to put people back in the same situation and having a problem with rising tides because of global warming, changing weather patterns that are going to cost us more money and put more people at risk.

There are some simple steps. First, we ought to get rid of the deficit for the flood insurance program. There is no way that premiums are going to make up a deficit of over \$24 billion that is going to be even bigger after the bills become due for Irma and for Harvey. Let's stop pretending that.

Wipe the slate clean, like we did with the so-called doc fix, and get down to solutions. Part of the solution is to make sure that people pay actuarial rates for flood insurance. Pay what it has cost. Disguising that cost gives people a false sense of security and reduces that economic incentive to get out of harm's way, while it makes it less likely that the program will be self-supporting.

Have adequate, accurate flood insurance maps. We ought to immediately move towards accurate flood maps so that people get the right signals. Now,

actuarial rates, actual flood insurance maps will cause some disruption and financial problems for some people, so this should be phased in over time; it shouldn't happen immediately. But those pricing signals should be clear. We should stop subsidizing some and sending inaccurate signals for others.

We ought to invest in mitigation. We save about \$4 for every dollar we spend flood-proofing areas, making them less dangerous in the future. These are simple, commonsense steps that have been suggested by experts for years.

We do nobody any favor subsidizing them living in harm's way; allowing local governments to evade their responsibilities to make sure that people don't build in dangerous places; and putting first responders, police, firefighters, and utility workers at risk as they rush in to try and save people in dangerous situations.

Over the next 3 months, we have a unique opportunity to finally learn these lessons, save taxpayer dollars, save lives, save property, and get on with the business in a way that is more sustainable. Given the problems we are facing with climate change in the future, these problems are only going to get worse. We ought to start now to solve the problem.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF NICHOLAS LAFOND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. ZELDIN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ZELDIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of Nicholas Lafond, a young man from Miller Place, in New York's First Congressional District, who, just a couple weeks back, was taken from us far too soon due to the disease of addiction.

A bright, intelligent, and talented young man, Nick was loved by all who knew him. He was an honor student who was accepted to Stony Brook University with the intention of pursuing a career in education.

However, from a young age, Nick struggled with anxiety, which, sadly, led him down the path of heroin addiction as a teenager. He fought this addiction tirelessly with the love and support of his family and friends, and he sought several forms of treatment. Tragically, just last month, Nick lost his battle with addiction at the age of 25.

On August 31, I attended a press conference in recognition of International Overdose Awareness Day, where I met Nick's parents, Francine and Leonard, and discussed their son, who had been laid to rest only 2 days prior. The courage of these heartbroken parents, to come to this event and talk about Nick so soon after his passing, is absolutely incredible.

As a father, the thought of losing a child is unbearable. Through my discussion with Mr. and Mrs. Lafond, you could feel their commitment to fighting this terrible epidemic so that no

other parent would have to go through their experience.

Shortly after our discussion, I received a letter from the Lafonds detailing Nick's story and outlining so many of the steps we can take as a community to make drug addiction a thing of the past. From their words, you can feel their passion for this cause.

Though it is too late to save their son, Francine and Leonard have dedicated themselves to easing the grip of addiction upon our society. Their selflessness and bravery in the face of unthinkable tragedy is truly beyond compare.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to stand here and share Nick's story with you and the American people and to discuss this critical priority. Every single day, Americans like this young man fall to drug addiction. It is one of the absolute greatest threats we face as a nation, and it will not subside unless we continue to act.

Here in my home county of Suffolk, heroin and opioid abuse is an especially deadly and destructive scourge. There is no one solution to ending the drug epidemic. This is a complex issue involving all levels of government, our community leaders, law enforcement, schools, churches, and everyday Americans.

We must form a collaborative effort to discuss and develop localized community-based solutions to tackle this crisis by increasing treatment, recovery services, and education. Simple incarceration is not and will never be the lone answer to this crisis.

In the last Congress, I was proud to have cosponsored and help pass into law the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, or CARA, which provides a total of \$8.33 billion in funding over 5 years to help combat the heroin and opioid abuse epidemic and funds many initiatives on the local level. While this is a step in the right direction, it is not enough to truly end this plague upon our Nation.

As Francine wrote to me in her letter, "To make headway against this awful epidemic, the approach must be multifocal, swift, and forceful. We not only need dollars to be put toward law enforcement and treatment, both of which we know have limited effect, we also need to concentrate on addressing the underlying psychological issues that lead to opioid abuse. These are not drugs one uses to party. They are extremely strong and effective painkillers one uses to escape life. The world is a harsh place for kids today, so much different than when I or even you were young."

The complexity of this issue is unrivaled, and we cannot turn a blind eye to any potential effort. This needs to be a highest priority to resolve. We cannot rest until tragic incidents like what happened to Nick Lafond become a thing of the past.

I would like to read a poem Nick wrote while in rehab, only weeks before his passing, which describes his tragic struggle: