

And I want Members to know that the committees have had essentially 2 days to work in this place, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; and the committees have been complaining that they aren't able to get their work done. I want everybody to know, Mr. BLUNT and I are close friends. We are not close Democratic friends and Republican friends; we are close friends. We see one another a lot, we talk to one another a lot, but what I have said, and the whip knows I have said this, we are going to come in Monday nights. Now, why are we going to come in on Monday nights? Because if we do not come in Monday nights and we come in Tuesday night at 6:30, the committees cannot meet because they can't get quorums.

Woodrow Wilson said that the work of Congress is done in its committees. If committees can't work, the Congress can't work. America sent us here to work, to get its work done, to make a difference, to take us in a new direction, and that is on our side.

I am prepared, as the leader, to take some of the flack when sometimes, as we wanted to do today, as the whip knows, we wanted to do the pension bill today. Mr. DREIER objected, it wasn't in the regular order, we understand that, we are going to accommodate that, so we are going to do it Monday. We think it is going to be an overwhelming vote on that. That could have been done today. We could have done that and moved it on, but we will be here on Monday. And committees will have Tuesday and Wednesday. Next week is a short week, the week after is a short week, so we won't be meeting on Fridays. So we are not on an onerous schedule.

But I would say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, this leader wants to accommodate the interest of Members. Why? Because I know you work hard, because I have been here for 26 years and I work very hard, and my colleagues work hard. I want you to also know that I think it is our responsibility and duty to the American people to be here in sufficient time to allow us to do the people's business.

And I want the people to know that when we are not on the floor on a Friday and only doing a half an hour or an hour's work, as the gentleman indicated, that our committees have 4 hours, from 9 to 1, to try to do their work.

Now, we are early in the session, so they may not have needed today. And, yes, I could, as practice has been, when we get to Thursday conclude, well, we can get this out of the way and go home. I know Members like to do that.

I want Members to be informed on a regular basis it is my intention, as the leader, as the person responsible for scheduling, to talk to our committee chairmen and committee ranking members that they will have the opportunity to get their work done, and I am hopeful that they will report that work to the floor.

My friend and I have discussed getting work for the floor is sometimes

difficult; but I say to my friend, I think it is more difficult if the committees don't have the opportunity to work. We are trying to provide that, while at the same time, I say to my friend, provide for Members' schedules, not only at home to work, but Members to be at home to see their children and their families and their wives and their husbands. We think that is important as well.

So scheduling, as my friend, Mr. BLUNT, has observed, is tough; but we are going to try to provide a schedule which provides the opportunity to do our business here and at home and to make sure that we stay in close touch with our families.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. BLUNT. I am reminded of a friend of mine, when I was the Secretary of State in Missouri, who was the leader, the Democratic leader in the State Senate, was fond of saying: If you can't change your mind, you can't change anything. I am absolutely confident that no committees met today. And I understand the work the committees do in the Congress. When the committees aren't working when we could have added 30 minutes onto the schedule last night and been done, not in the middle of the night, by 7 o'clock, I think that would have been a good decision to make. I would hope my friend will remain flexible about that in the future.

This has gone on some time today. I appreciate the chance to talk about the work next week. I am also hopeful, and I would ask, will the change in the rules on allowing delegates to vote in the Committee of the Whole, will that go to the Rules Committees, and will there be a chance for Republicans to at least offer amendments?

Mr. HOYER. The answer to your question is it will go to the Rules Committee; the Rules Committee will consider it. I have not talked to the Rules Committee, nor have I talked to you or to Mr. BOEHNER about what you might want to do on that, but we will do that.

Mr. BLUNT. Well, the gentleman is right, we certainly haven't had any discussion on this until the floor today.

I would also make the point that last week we did take two bills to the Rules Committee; but before any opportunity was given to even offer an amendment, it was announced that no amendments would be allowed. I think that is unprecedented in the last 12 years, where at least the Rules Committee always heard the amendments and tried to offer amendments and always offered a substitute in every instance that I am aware of.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUNT. I yield briefly, as the gentleman can usually out-talk me.

Mr. HOYER. I would like to yield to Mr. DEFAZIO of Oregon.

Mr. DEFAZIO. I am a member of the full Transportation Committee; and Water Resources, a subcommittee of Transportation, did meet today. Per-

haps there were other committees meeting.

Mr. BLUNT. I would ask my friend how long you met and what was the topic.

Mr. DEFAZIO. I don't serve on that subcommittee any longer. I met some people on the way to the committee who told me they were meeting.

Mr. BLUNT. I appreciate the information.

Mr. HOYER. I just knew that you would be delighted to have that information.

Mr. BLUNT. I would be glad to find out the substance of that meeting this morning. I doubt it was very substantive or could not have been done yesterday. I think all the Members understand this discussion.

I think the general coverage of Congress meeting for 5 days a week was a disservice to the institution. It is like assuming that a surgeon only does the surgeon's work when they are in the operating room.

Another point that I believe I am helping my friend, the majority leader, make is, when we are in committee and not on the floor, that doesn't mean we are not working. When we are at home holding town hall meetings or meeting with constituents, or in my case, seeing how we are doing restoring power to 200,000 people that didn't have power in my district this week in weather that was between 6 and 26 degrees all week, it was impossible for me to be there today because I had to be here to cast a vote that could have been cast last night.

I hope we all work hard. Certainly the majority has had the better of this argument so far because it is a lot of fun to talk about Members of Congress that don't work, or suddenly Members are working. Another thing I am going to tell my friend we are going to do, frankly, is keep track of how many hours we worked in essentially a 3- and 4-day week versus a 4- and 5-day week. So far, we are winning in hours of working on the floor.

We worked hard; you worked hard. On the appropriations process, I would have liked to have finished that last year. It is clear to me that the unwillingness of the other body to move forward, a thing neither you nor I have a lot of control over, was the real reason we didn't get more of that work done. We had 11 of our 12 bills done by the 4th of July, without tremendous effort to keep Members here on Friday. The year before we had all of our bills done by the 4th of July. I think that is a reasonable target for us, and I hope that we help achieve that target this year.

We do want to get our work done. This is a bicameral legislative system. We don't control what happens on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I asked to speak because the whip yielded back his time.

I understand the gentleman's contention. Very frankly, we did our business in a timely fashion and got a lot done these last 2 weeks, in our opinion. We may differ on that. We got, we think, a lot done in a bipartisan fashion, really, in terms of the votes.

I will tell you, the Foreign Affairs Committee had a hearing today; it is going on now. Lee Hamilton is testifying on Iraq. We believe that is timely and important. So that committee is meeting. I just got the notice of what committees are meeting.

I only state that because I believe my friend is correct, that early on we don't have as many committee meetings. We believe that having the time available for our committees to get work done is going to facilitate having meaningful work on the floor, and we hope that we can do our meaningful work on the floor in hours where it will provide for Members not having to work until 11 o'clock and 12 o'clock at night, even though it may save them 2 or 3 hours on a Friday. But we are going to work with you. We have worked together; we are going to continue to work together. We will have differences.

I am going to work with Mr. BOEHNER, the leader, to accommodate our Members. You are my friend. The fact that we are in session or not in session is not an indication of whether Members are working. That representation was never made, nor was it ever intended to be made. It is a misrepresentation, certainly in my view, that that is any contention of mine or implication that ought to be drawn. I think the gentleman agrees with that. Members work hard whether we are in session or not in session.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY,
JANUARY 22, 2007

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning hour debate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR
WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON
WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

PROVIDING FOR A JOINT SESSION
OF CONGRESS TO RECEIVE A
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I send to the desk a privileged concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 38) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the concurrent resolution.

The Clerk read the concurrent resolution, as follows:

H. CON. RES. 38

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the two Houses of Congress assemble in the Hall of the House of Representatives on Tuesday, January 23, 2007, at 9 p.m., for the purpose of receiving such communication as the President of the United States shall be pleased to make to them.

The concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PENSION BILL REGARDING CONVICTED FORMER MEMBERS FALLS SHORT

(Mr. KIRK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, today Congressman Ney was sentenced to 30 months in jail after pleading guilty to two Federal felonies. Amazingly, under our law he will still collect a congressional pension funded by the U.S. taxpayer. In fact, other Members of Congress who pled guilty or were convicted of crimes collect. Congressman Rostenkowski collects. Congressman Traficant collects. Congressman Cunningham collects. All taxpayer-funded pensions.

On Monday, we will take up a very limited bill to kill pensions for Members of Congress who commit only one of four felonies. The legislation we will consider misses 17 other public integrity felonies that the House already adopted with the support of Speaker PELOSI and Speaker HASTERT in previous years. The legislation we consider on Monday has never been through a committee and the leadership will not allow any amendments to the legislation. There will be no vote permitted to add the other 17 public integrity felonies that should have been part of this needed reform. The legislation that we will consider on Monday will fall short of the potential that we had to reform this House.

□ 1200

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHANDLER). The Chair will now recognize Members for special orders not beyond 2 p.m.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NO NEW TAXES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about an issue that is not so much on our agenda in these first 100 hours, but I believe it will encompass much of our focus during the course of the 110th Congress. It has to do with the how and why that we will achieve fundamental entitlement reform.

President Bush and many leaders in the new majority in the House and Senate have spoken of the priority of reforming Social Security and dealing with the extraordinary unfunded obligations of our mandates in future years. The President, to his credit, 2 years ago raised the prospect of fundamental Social Security reform. But the American people rejected the President's call.

And I rise today to speak about what I believe the parameters of that debate should be from the perspective of a conservative in the minority who believes in the principles of limited government.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the American people did not reject the Social Security reform or the personal retirement accounts that the President advanced. I think they rejected the entire debate and how it unfolded. I think they rejected the notion that the predominant goal of Social Security reform was to make the numbers add up or, in the language of the wonks, to achieve solvency in Social Security. Such a yardstick expresses no opinion on how to fix an increasingly bankrupt system, and I believe that as a result it invariably blesses benefit cuts or tax increases as a result.

And while President Bush has spoken to his opposition to tax increases, Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson has repeatedly said, in conversations with Members of the House and Senate, that "everything is on the table," raising the specter of the possibility of raising taxes to achieve Social Security reform. And even the President's own Press Secretary, when asked directly whether the White House was ruling out a tax increase to achieve Social Security reform with this newly minted