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House of Representatives

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

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 8, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ELLEN O. TAUSCHER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

As the creator and guide of the universe, we turn to You, praise You and thank You for the visit yesterday that reminded us of our history and pleaded for renewed friendship between the United States and the Republic of France.

Yesterday, Lord, we were also blessed with the visit of the Religious Council of Jerusalem. Religious leaders of the three great Abrahamic faiths, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, after their meetings in the Holy City were moved by Your spirit acting within them to come to Capitol Hill. Here they gave witness to common concerns and prayerful hopes for peace in the Holy City where they live.

Lord, hear their prayer, lest the rocks themselves cry out with the anguished cry of Your people who seek justice and reconciliation.

May the mindful process and experience of this interfaith Council of Jerusalem be imitated across our Nation and in the Holy Land so that mutual understanding can build trust. Without compromising religious faith, they are on the road to peace by creating com-

mon agreement on principles and formulating a common language in secular terms. Thus will they together give You glory, now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. FLAKE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 680. An Act to ensure proper oversight and accountability in Federal contracting, and for other purposes.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 10 one-minute on each side of the aisle.

WAR DESTRUCTIVE OF NATIONAL AGENDA

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, the Defense bill contained a request for millions of dollars to retrofit B-2 Stealth bombers so they can carry 30,000-pound bombs, bunker busters, which would be germane to the administration's intention of attacking Iran. Imagine for a moment 30,000-pound bombs dropped on nuclear research labs in Natanz and in Bushehr, and you have a humanitarian and ecological disaster on your hands.

Now, the case for war against Iran is being built on lies, just as the case for war against Iraq was built on lies. Nearly 4,000 troops dead; nearly a million innocent Iraqis perished in the conflict; borrowing money from China to fight a war against Baghdad.

It is time to impeach this Vice President for leading this country into a war that is so destructive of our national agenda. It is time for us to reclaim our Constitution and to reclaim the troops.

SEND H.R. 4104 TO PRESIDENT

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

Mr. WICKER. Madam Speaker, House Democrats have failed in their misguided attempt to hold veterans spending hostage. Yesterday the Senate voted to delink the MilCon-VA bill from the Labor-HHS conference report. The Senate's action was commendable and should have been expected.

Veterans groups from around the Nation have made it clear it is wrong and cynical to use their bill for political purposes. Now the Democratic majority is saying they will not even try to have this vital legislation on the President's desk by Veterans Day. But there is a way out of this box.

Yesterday, I introduced the MilCon-VA conference agreement as a stand-

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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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alone bill, H.R. 4104. It is identical to the bill already agreed upon by House and Senate negotiators. It could be passed today by unanimous consent and immediately sent to the Senate.

Members who are tired of the political games should cosponsor this bill and urge Speaker PELOSI to take it up today.

PERU TRADE AGREEMENT BY, FOR AND ABOUT WALL STREET

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. It's a beautiful day within the D.C. beltway. And under the dome, another day, another free trade agreement. But on Main Street America, things are not so bright. The dollar is dropping like a rock with skyrocketing oil and gas prices.

We are borrowing \$2 billion a day from overseas to buy things that we don't make here in America anymore. We have lost 5 million manufacturing jobs, 40,000 in Oregon. But this isn't the same old failed trade policy, they tell us. Not yet another platform to exploit cheap labor. It is decorated with negligible environmental and labor protections.

And the burgeoning middle class in Peru, all three of them, are going to go on an orgy of buying U.S. goods after this passes. But the destructive, multinational, corporate-written chapter 11 core that led to the failure of NAFTA, CAFTA and other trade agreements remains at the center of this policy.

This agreement is by, for and about Wall Street, plain and simple. It doesn't address our current economic crisis. It is not in the best interest of American workers, the U.S. economy, or our national security.

FUNDING OUR VETERANS

(Mrs. DRAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. DRAKE. Madam Speaker, this is day 39. That is 39 days so far that our veterans have not had the use of the increased funding for their benefits in health care. That is \$18.5 million a day not able to be used.

The work on this bill has been done for months. But instead of sending this bill to the President, the Democratic leadership decided to use our veterans as a smoke screen in an effort to pass billions in unrelated domestic spending.

They failed in their scheme when the Senate yesterday split the bills to consider these funding issues separately and on their own merits. But today, with Veterans Day quickly approaching, the Democratic leadership is going to put our veterans aside to consider billions in bloated domestic spending instead of bringing a clean veterans bill to the floor.

I won't stand for it. The American people won't stand for it. I'm standing

with our veterans. Send a clean Veterans appropriations bill to the President now.

ENDING ILLEGAL LOGGING

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, illegal logging is a scourge of poor countries and rich countries alike. It damages the environment, often very fragile ecosystems, it disrupts the lives of poor, indigenous people. It corrodes their governments through bribery and often violence. Illegal logging also hurts rich countries as our timber and lumber manufacturing industries lose to those who cheat and bribe, over a billion dollars a year in lost sales in the United States.

We can do something about it. Yesterday, the Natural Resources Committee passed out my illegal logging bill to give the tools for the first time, to our government, to do something about it. Later this morning, we can pass the Peru Free Trade Agreement, with not just the strongest environmental protections ever in a trade agreement, but with specific provisions to halt the illegal mahogany harvest in Peru's forests. This can be the most significant Congress ever in the global fight to end illegal logging by passing these bipartisan measures.

LEAVE POLITICS OF DISRESPECT BEHIND

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam Speaker, it is a rare opportunity to rise in support of commonsense decisions coming out of the other body, so it gives me great pleasure to rise in full support of the majority's decision on the other side of this Capitol to separate the Labor-HHS approps bill from legislation that funds our military installations and veterans health care. I certainly hope the majority on this side is paying attention.

While the other body has said "no" to politicizing veterans health care, "no" to putting the security of our military installations at risk, and "no" to budget-busting pork, it appears that the majority on this side is, well, a little tone deaf.

So, Madam Speaker, our veterans and men and women in uniform deserve better. They deserve quick action from the leadership in this House to pass a clean veterans bill and provide the funds they need. Let's leave the politics of disrespect behind. Let's pass a clean veterans bill.

ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX FIX

(Mr. HALL of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HALL of New York. Madam Speaker, if nothing is done soon, 27 million families across the country will be obligated to pay the alternative minimum tax, the AMT. Over 100,000 of these middle-class families live in New York's 19th District. They will have to go through the tedious process of computing their tax returns twice, and they will end up having to pay thousands more than they otherwise would.

The AMT is an unfair tax which in 1970, when it first took effect, only affected 155 households in the entire country. The people who pay it lose the opportunity to take many of the deductions and exemptions that make the tax code friendlier to families. Under the AMT, it doesn't matter what money is spent on health care, on property tax or on education; everyone pays the same amount of tax regardless.

Tomorrow, we will consider legislation to allow almost 73,000 of my constituents to escape the AMT. Today, millions of middle-class families are in danger of being ensnared by a tax that was never intended to affect them.

COMMENDING FOUR FIRST DISTRICT OHIO SCHOOLS

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

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, everybody knows that the key to America's future is providing an excellent education for our children. As a former schoolteacher myself, it gives me great pleasure to recognize four schools from my congressional district, Ohio's First, which have truly lived up to this commitment. Elm Avenue Primary School, Hilltop Primary School, Our Lady of Visitation, and St. James School in White Oak have recently been named 2007 Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence.

Achieving test results in the top 10 percent of the State is truly an accomplishment. Some, like St. James, have received it in the past. On Monday, I presented them a flag that was flown in their honor over this very building, and the atmosphere was really electric. These kids were filled with enthusiasm and pride for the job they had done, and they are to be commended, as are their teachers, their administrators, the parents, but especially the students.

I want to commend all those schools for the excellent work they have done. This is the future of America. And if this is our future, America's future is bright.

DEMOCRATS COMMITTED TO OUR VETERANS

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

Mr. ARCURI. Madam Speaker, regardless of how my colleagues choose to characterize it, the new Democratic