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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. LAMALFA).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 26, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DOUG LAMALFA 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 3, 2013, 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.

SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA PROGRAM

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, in 2007, I introduced the first legislation to help the Iraqi and Afghan nationals that helped Americans in those countries to get them to safety in the United States. These are the people who were interpreters, guides, and drivers—people who performed countless tasks without which our military, diplomatic, and redevelopment efforts

would have been impossible. There was an implicit promise that, as they risked their lives to help us, we would work to protect them when the American presence was scaled down. Thousands of these people are now threatened on a daily basis by people with very long memories.

It would seem as though this shouldn't be an impossible task. After all, these are people who risked their lives to protect and serve Americans. If they had wanted to harm us, they had countless opportunities to lead people down the wrong path, attack, assault, and mislead; but, by all accounts, thousands of these people performed critical tasks faithfully, if not flawlessly.

What has not been flawless is how the State Department and Homeland Security have managed the Special Immigrant Visa program we fought so hard to establish. It takes incredible effort to fight bureaucracy, delays, and the procedural hurdles, which too often end in frustration. Approvals have been just a trickle, and there is no sign of improvement. Instead, the program could disappear.

The authorization for the Iraqi Immigrant Visa expires in 4 days. And this is a country that is on the verge of collapse. Violence is on the upswing and these people have been left twisting. Many have been forced into hiding. Others, along with their families, have not just been threatened, but killed.

We have been unable to get anything on the continuing resolution to keep the program alive. Frankly, given the state of play in Congress right now, the continuing resolution doesn't look like a very stable basis for hope.

There is a possible solution: a unanimous consent provision that will extend the program, at no additional budget cost, which will keep the pipeline open to accept visas until we can get back to meeting our moral obligation.

It should be a simple matter to pass the House. There is overwhelming bi-

partisan support that is led in the most articulate and forceful way by new Members in both parties, like TULSI GABBARD and ADAM KINZINGER, who are themselves veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. This bipartisan group of recent veterans has seen the invaluable service and sacrifices of these people, and they feel a deep commitment to their safety. Sadly, not everybody in Congress feels that commitment, that moral obligation. The House Judiciary Committee leadership has been passive, if not outright opposed.

There's no guarantee that there will be a continuing resolution. In fact, the odds are getting a little more remote by the day. If this program shuts down for even a few hours, it will set back progress because of the cumbersome, convoluted nature of the program and security checks. People will be forced back to square one for approval, with their lives in great peril.

I would hope the House Republican leadership does not allow one or two people to veto meeting our moral obligation that has such broad bipartisan support. It will be to the shame of this body if we can't come together and protect the people we counted on in battle—and who are now counting on us.

This sad story is documented in Kirk Johnson's recent book, "To Be a Friend is Fatal: The Fight to Save the Iraqis America Left Behind." The title really says it all: "To Be a Friend is Fatal: The Fight to Save the Iraqis America Left Behind."

So far, we have failed them. I hope the House will rise to the occasion before it's too late.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF HARRIET HOWARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DESJARLAIS) 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. DESJARLAIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of Harriet Howard, a great Tennessean who recently passed away.

Harriet Howard, of Rutherford County, is known throughout our community for her tireless efforts on behalf of our military veterans. Not only did Harriet devote countless hours to volunteer work; she helped ensure that veterans in our State have access to the care they need and deserve.

Harriet launched a well-known public communications campaign that led to female veterans receiving quality medical coverage. She set up a petition drive to prevent the Alvin C. York VA Medical Center in Rutherford County from closing. Today, the hospital remains open as a direct result of her efforts. Finally, she raised more than \$125,000 for the Tennessee Fisher House for a new facility in Murfreesboro. Harriet also served her country in the military as a Navy clerk for more than 39 years.

Our State owes an immeasurable debt of gratitude to Ms. Howard. I know she is missed by countless veterans and their families.

UNBUDGED IN OUR TRACKS

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, lately, the people's House, this House of Representatives, has been called a lot of other things—dysfunctional, unpopular, and gridlocked—but one word, inspired by Charles Dickens, seems particularly fitting these days: bleak.

In 1852, Charles Dickens wrote the novel "Bleak House" about the dismal failures of the British judicial system. The title "Bleak House" refers to the main courthouse, above which reads the warning:

Suffer any wrong that can be done you rather than come here.

Given the recent inaction, and perhaps dysfunction, I feel a similar moniker may need to be placed above our own door.

This body has reached a point where our inaction is no longer harmless. Our inability to act and govern is having real and harmful effects. We are on the verge of causing great suffering.

Take, for example, health care. We passed health care reform 3 years ago. While everyone does not like all of its provisions, the fact is it's the law of the land. It's not going away. But rather than working together to improve the bill, as has been done with every other major piece of legislation, such as Medicare part D, many in this House are not only refusing to make adjustments; they are trying to stop its implementation altogether. There are efforts under way to dissuade young people from signing up for insurance, to prevent assisters from helping folks access insurance, and to scare seniors. Rather than coming together to improve our health care system, the dys-

function of this body is actually harming the health and well-being of millions of people.

Take the inability to pass a continuing resolution as another example of how the gridlock of this body is hurting our country. What was once a routine act of debating funding levels and priorities and passing a budget has devolved into a hijacking of government and the funding of health care. This is a game of chicken that risks shutting down the entire government and injuring millions of Americans.

Leaders on the other side of the aisle understand the devastating effect of such a shutdown. Speaker JOHN BOEHNER said in April 2011:

If you shut down the government, it'll end up costing more than you'll save because you interrupt contracts.

Yet despite such warnings, we continue to risk a deeply damaging government shutdown.

Finally, efforts to increase the debt limit should serve as another sober reminder of how dysfunctional and harmful this body has become. The debt limit has been raised 78 times, including 49 times by Republican Presidents and 29 times by Democratic Presidents. Once again, what was once standard operating procedure has become a hostage for extreme positions.

Many in this House are willing to risk the full faith and credit of the United States in order to push their extremism. Defaulting on our debt would cause irreparable damage to our recovery and risk sending us back into recession. As George W. Bush's chief economic adviser, Keith Hennessey, put it:

Not raising the debt limit could lead to "a catastrophic event."

Still, we continue down this dangerous path.

And these are just a few of the most topical examples. The list of items we are unable to tackle goes on and on: tax reform, entitlement reform, reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, transportation and infrastructure, immigration reform, postal reform, a decent farm bill, and commonsense gun violence legislation. We are indeed making Truman's do-nothing Congress look positively busy.

Yesterday, Senator CRUZ quoted Dr. Seuss. Today, I would like to do the same. But I am drawing from a different Seuss tale, the story of "The Zax." For those not familiar, the Zax is about two Zaxes going two different directions and who meet face-to-face. Each Zax refuses to go any direction but the direction it was headed. The Zaxes stand so long that a highway overpass is built over them, and the story ends with each Zax still standing there "unbudded in their tracks."

From Dickens to Seuss, great writers can teach us and warn us about the dangers of obstinacy and intransigence. Refusing to act has surely led us to a very bleak place indeed. Let's not end up like the Zaxes, "unbudded in our tracks," and unable to tackle the great challenges of our time.

CONGRATULATING TIDIOUTE COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise in recognition of Tidioute Community Charter School in Tidioute, Pennsylvania.

Earlier this week, the United States Secretary of Education awarded Tidioute Community Charter School the recognition of National Blue Ribbon School for 2013. The National Blue Ribbon is awarded to public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students are achieving very high learning standards or are making notable improvements toward those standards.

Mr. Speaker, the National Blue Ribbon Award reaffirms the hard work of the students, faculty, and families who make up the Tidioute Community Charter School. I commend them for creating an environment where young minds are able to gain knowledge and skills; and, through a rigorous curriculum, students have developed the character to realize their own full potential.

Tidioute Community Charter School students exemplify just what it means to be young learners preparing for their roles in the 21st century. Equally so, the quality instruction, creativity, and support of the teachers and families have made the Tidioute Community Charter School deserving of our praise.

END HUNGER NOW

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to again talk about the need to end hunger now.

Last week, this House passed a bill that cut \$39 billion from the Nation's preeminent anti-hunger safety net program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. Formerly known as food stamps, SNAP is a program that provides food to low-income individuals and their families. It also has among the lowest error rates of any Federal program. Additionally, the bill contained new work requirements for people receiving SNAP benefits.

Mr. Speaker, the notion of new and stricter work requirements sounds terrific. I'm sure it polls very well. But the reality is that the majority of people receiving SNAP who can work, actually do work. In fact, working people are the fastest-growing priority of the SNAP program.

And let me note that SNAP already has work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents. Under current law, they are eligible for SNAP benefits for only 3 out of every 36 months unless they work 20 hours a