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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 24, 2002.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN ABNEY CULBERSON to set as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) for 5 minutes.

THE FEDERAL DEBT

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, tonight I and some others are going to do a one hour special order, on some of the problems, the misconceptions about the debt of the Federal Government. The policy committee that I serve on, the Republican Policy Committee, met with Art Laffer, who I consider an esteemed economist in this country. One of my questions to Art was what is worse as far as being a downside to economic growth—the debt and going deeper into debt in this

country or having tax increases, and he said they are both about the same. They take private money out of circulation that could be used to expand businesses and jobs.

And that brings a question that this body must consider. How big should the Federal Government be in terms of a percentage of gross domestic product? How fast should the expenditures of this Congress grow compared to inflation? We have been growing from 2 to 4 times the rate of inflation every year for the last 20 years. The elections of politicians to come up with new programs, to come up with pork barrel projects to take back to their districts probably enhances the chances that they are going to be reelected. So the tendency has been to have government grow faster than the economy, faster than the ability of the American taxpayer to pay, and certainly faster than what is good for us in terms of increasing taxes and debt.

Politicians, Members of Congress, Members of the Senate, the President have tended to say, well, we can expand government and not have it quite so visible in terms of the American worker digging into their pockets, if we pay for some of that increased spending with increased debt.

When I was first elected to Congress 10 years ago the debt of the Federal Government was four trillion dollars. Today guess what the debt is in just under 10 years? The current debt of the Federal Government is \$6.2 trillion. A 50 percent increase in 10 years. So we can imagine if we project that kind of debt increase for the next 20 years we are leaving our kids and our grandkids a tremendous indebtedness burden because we think the expenditures today are so important that it justifies higher taxes and more debt for our kids to pay.

I think there is a misunderstanding about debt. We have said we have paid the debt down. Actually, the total debt

of this country over the last 20 years has continued to increase, and so has the obligation of our kids to pay off our overzealous spending. I am a farmer from Michigan. Our tradition has been to try to pay off the mortgage on the farm to give our kids a little better chance. In Congress we are doing the opposite. We are increasing that obligation.

Tune in tonight to the special orders and we will talk more on the problems of going deeper and deeper into debt and the increased downside for the economy.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 30 minutes.

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to urge the Republican leadership to address the unfinished business of the American people's agenda. The House has a lot of work to do and not a lot of time in which to do it. In America today millions of hard working families face challenges in their daily lives.

Since January, 2001, our Nation's economy has deteriorated dramatically and this House has failed to provide real relief to the families who need it most. We have seen the most anemic period of economic growth since Dwight Eisenhower was President. In 18 months the stock market has lost \$4.5 trillion in value. More than 2 million people have lost their jobs. A wave of corporate scandals has eroded people's fundamental faith in our Nation's free markets and scores of corporations have become bankrupt.

Consumer confidence dropped in each of the last 4 months and is at the lowest level since November, 2001. Our Nation's retirement security system has

□ 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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also been undermined and in great difficulty. In 18 months Republican economic policies have taken \$2 trillion from the Social Security Trust Fund. Baby boomers' retirement benefits have been jeopardized.

In each of the last few years, prescription drug prices have soared more than 10 percent. Reliable prescription drug coverage eludes almost two-thirds of all Medicare recipients. On a daily basis, senior citizens face a choice between buying food, paying the rent, or buying their medicine. Senior citizens actually slice pills into halves because they cannot afford their full prescriptions.

Faced with these challenges, the House Republican leadership has failed to address people's kitchen table concerns. In the last 18 months this leadership passed an agenda that satisfied the special interests, misled the American people, and dismissed the interest of America's hard working families. But for bipartisan action after the September 11 terrorist attacks, Republicans amassed a record of nonachievement in this 107th Congress and failed to make a difference, a real difference, in people's lives.

On the economy Republicans have demonstrated a devotion to special interest-driven tax cuts. In 2001, in a mammoth tax cut giveaway, Republicans gave the lion's share of the breaks to those who least needed tax relief. The Republican economic plan turned record surpluses into deep deficits for the decade ahead. The only surplus that is left is after they have squandered most of the Social Security surplus.

The Republican economic agenda rejected the fundamental values that in the 1990s propelled the longest economic expansion ever recorded: Opportunity, responsibility, and community. In a so-called stimulus bill, the Republican agenda even tried to give Enron a \$254 million tax break. For the economic victims of the September 11 attacks, the Republican agenda blocked the extension of unemployment benefits legislation for 5 months. For people who had lost jobs in this Republican recession, the Republican agenda blocked the extension of health care benefits legislation. This ideological agenda has blocked a modest, very modest, minimum wage increase even though in the 5 years since the last increase the minimum wage's real value has fallen 11 percent.

This agenda has done almost nothing positive for Americans. It has instead led to large layoffs, weakened America's manufacturing sector, and helped produce big losses in people's pensions, IRAs, and mutual funds across the board. Faced with this mounting tide of bad economic news, Republicans continue to support more special interest tax cuts for the wealthiest individuals. In April, in the middle of a recession, they voted to extend provisions in the spring 2001 tax cut bill that would not take effect until 2011. Think about

it. As families face financial hardships, the Republican majority wasted valuable time trying to cut taxes for the wealthiest individuals starting 10 years from now, in 2011.

In recent weeks they have wasted the House's time and people's money, passing the exact same tax cut all over again. Republicans sliced their 10-year enrichment plan for the wealthy into individual tax cut pieces in order to distract attention from the absence of a real agenda that would address America's real problems.

The sole passion of House Republicans has been to reward their wealthy political clientele for the next decade and beyond at the expense of every other need of the American people. Republicans pass one press release after the next and abdicate their responsibility to lead America. They seek to create the illusion of real life legislative progress on America's real problems where none exists. Perhaps more telling about their inability to carry out their responsibility to govern is that to date not a single spending bill has been sent to the President, just one week before the new fiscal year begins. In fact, since the August recess, this House has failed to pass a single spending bill and it is the House that must originate this important budgetary legislation.

Republicans are failing at this most basic task because their misguided economic plan is starving important investments we can and must make in our families' futures, especially in educating our children. Their budget plan would force 50,000 kids from after-school programs that keep children safe. Republicans will leave children trailing behind in America. In fact, because some Republican moderates understand cuts will have to be made, they have been unable to bring key bills to the floor and now their strategy appears to be delay, delay, delay until after the November elections to avoid voters' wrath.

This week the House will have to pass the first of what will probably be several continuing resolutions to try to fund the Federal Government. Republicans are simply kicking the can down the road, looking ahead to a possible lame duck session to fix their budgetary problems while they continue to deny the consequences of this deeply misguided economic plan.

A lame duck session deprives voters of the legislative information to make an informed decision, and by delaying key spending decisions, Republicans are depriving critical resources to public schools, hospitals, homeland security, among other priorities.

The House should not adjourn before holding a full debate on all of these spending bills and priorities. People deserve common sense solutions to the challenges that confront them. That is why I hope Republicans will at least accept our offer to convene a bipartisan economic growth summit to put together a plan that will cut the budg-

et deficits, bring back responsibility and discipline, and get us back on the path to long-term economic growth and opportunity.

Even now as we consider a resolution to go to war, there is an unwillingness to reconsider Republican economic and budgetary decisions made more than 1 year ago, before September, 11, 2001. Furthermore, Democrats support a 21st century energy agenda that creates jobs, protects the environment, and expands the economic pie for all of us; education investments to create the most trained and most highly skilled work force on the planet; a minimum wage increase for hard-working families; and a second round of extended unemployment benefits because for over 1 million people their benefits have been exhausted, and by December, 1.5 million people will be in this position.

Second, this House must have a free and fair debate about our Nation's Social Security future. Despite repeated promises to safeguard the surplus, the Republican leadership passed an economic plan that diverted \$2 trillion from Social Security into other non-Social Security initiatives. Putting special interest tax cuts first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth, Republicans broke our commitment to save Social Security first and jeopardized the baby boomers' Social Security benefits.

Social Security is the greatest retirement security program ever conceived. Social Security puts food on people's table, shelter over people's head. It spells the difference between poverty and dignity in the lives of millions of senior citizens, surviving spouses, and people with disabilities. It represents the largest, most reliable income source for middle-income seniors.

Republicans have at least five plans to privatize and cut Social Security benefits. These schemes make it clear: Either Republicans will have to cut benefits, divert trillions of dollars from other as yet unspecified programs, or they will have to do both things. According to one study, senior citizens, surviving spouses, and people with disabilities would see benefit cuts between 30 and 46 percent annually if the Republican privatization proposals get enacted. Therefore, I can think of few more crucial priorities than a full Social Security debate with a spotlight shining on Republican's privatization schemes.

I am deeply disappointed that House Republicans seemingly do not want this debate and they do not want this vote. The Republican leadership is doing everything in its power to sweep Social Security under the carpet until after the November election. They understand just how unpopular the privatization agenda has become, especially since the near record drop in the stock market of the last months. The American people have a right to know the consequences that flow from this decision. They deserve a frank, honest

discussion about all of the Republicans' Social Security privatization proposals. As elected leaders, it is our obligation and our responsibility to hold this discussion before the November elections so the people, the people, can decide Social Security's future.

In addition, Republicans must complete the unfinished business of the American people's prescription drugs agenda. Right now they are trying to run out the clock on the crucial challenge of prescription drug prices. I have talked to hundreds of senior citizens who have urged the Congress to cut prescription drug prices down so hard-working families can afford them. In this Congress Republicans have failed these families while protecting the profits of the biggest drug makers that support their campaigns.

In July Republicans passed a sham bill written by the prescription drug lobby. They refused even to let us vote on our Democratic alternative. They rejected a real Medicare prescription drug benefit rooted in the right values, a benefit available and affordable to all, and 100 percent available, reliable and guaranteed. The Republican bill represented a fraud and a farce. It was not worth the paper it was written on. It covered barely a fraction of America's senior citizens, put the benefit in the hands of private insurance companies, and took a dangerous first step toward privatizing Medicare. On a party-line vote, it passed the House. Days later I was in Missouri and I saw commercials underwritten by the pharmaceutical lobby. The spots praised Republican candidates for supporting the Republican prescription drug bill fraud. That bill secured the profit priorities of our Nation's drug makers over, and at the expense of, our Nation's senior citizens. It is the same special interest Republican story line on the issue of prescription drug prices.

This summer the Senate, 78 to 21, passed a good, bipartisan bill that will close loopholes used by drug makers to stifle competition, keep prescription drug prices high, and maximize industry profits. This simple legislative step could cut prescription drug prices by about 60 percent. According to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, it would save consumers \$60 billion in prescription drug prices each year. In the House, Democrats are circulating a petition to discharge the Senate-passed bill because Republicans also refuse to debate this. Not surprisingly, the pharmaceutical lobby is starting an advertising blitz attacking the Senate bill, scaring people with the canard that if this bill is enacted, somehow, magically, medical and pharmaceutical advances will come to a grinding halt. The drug companies continue to fund Republican campaigns as a reward for Republican actions and inactions on this high-priority agenda item.

The special interests can afford to pay for this largess. Since January the big drug makers earned more than \$37 billion in prescription drug sales. On

this issue the special interests have seized and controlled the agenda.

Before adjournment we must make this the people's House again. We must not let it be the pharmaceutical companies' subsidiary corporate interest. We should and we must vote in this Congress to try to lower prescription drug prices for all Americans. Preventing more corporate scandals and bringing corporate criminals to justice is the fourth piece of unfinished business here in the House. Again, the reality, the sad reality, is that special interests have guided the Republican response to the whole basket of corporate accountability issues.

Under Republican leadership thousands of Americans have lost jobs due to corporate misbehavior. In recent months Arthur Andersen fired 7,000 employees, Global Crossing fired over 9,000 employees, WorldCom fired over 20,000, and Enron fired over 4,500. This is not part of a normal business cycle, to say the least. In recent months people's pensions lost \$210 billion and State pensions lost \$4 billion combined when WorldCom and Enron stock plummeted because their books had been cooked.

In response to these awful mind-numbing developments, House Republicans passed watered-down special interest legislation to create the appearance of action when the truth was a failed Republican deregulatory agenda. Republicans blocked accounting industry reform for months until the pressure became so great they had no choice but capitulation. But they refused to impose stiff penalties on employers who mislead employees about the value of company stock. They failed to punish CEOs who run their companies into the ground. They blocked our efforts to eliminate tax breaks and Federal contracts that corporations still today receive by relocating overseas to avoid paying American taxes.

In April Republicans passed a pension reform bill that failed to protect pensions from corporate abuse and indiscretions. One House Republican even acknowledged that the bill "does little to protect people's pensions." It failed to give employees control over their nest eggs and retirement plans. It treated executive pensions better than employee pensions, maintaining two sets of rules. It offered employees no legal remedies when companies abused people's 401(k)s.

I believe America has the greatest, most vibrant free enterprise system on the face of this planet. But for the sake of every consumer, every CEO, every employee and every investor, we must create one set of rules for all, reward hard work with fair play and ensure that corporate criminals pay the price. I will continue to stand on this floor and fight for comprehensive business, employees' and investors' bills of rights. Let us get it done today and restore people's faith after what has happened to their precious savings.

Sadly, the Republican response to all these challenges is to "run out the

clock" on the Congress, as one newspaper wrote over the weekend. I saw a headline just yesterday calling the Republican agenda an "Avoidance Agenda." I quote Bob Novak: "Apart from the war on terrorism, the Republican party," he says, "flinches from standing for much of anything in the 2002 election."

To retain their majority, Republican leaders have created a playbook that reveals the failed Republican agenda and mocks the priorities of their constituents. In recent weeks even with misguided bills, Republicans seem incapable of taking any action.

Republicans pulled an education tax bill, pulled the bankruptcy conference report. Now they waste time and over \$100,000 a day of the people's money, according to one calculation, passing press release bills, one more obvious than the next. The nonsense of the House resolutions, as I would like to call them, will make zero impact on people's actual lives. The same can be said of other well-meaning resolutions that represent the lion's share of the legislative agenda with House Republicans in the majority.

In this session the House has passed at least 40 suspension bills to bestow names on post offices. Under Republican leadership this House has considered the following resolutions, among others: Supporting the Goals of the Year of the Rose; Honoring the Invention of Modern Air Conditioning; recognizing the Significant Contributions of Paul Ecke, Jr. to the Poinsettia Industry, and for other purposes; Ensuring Continuity for the Design of the 5-cent Coin, Establish the Coin Design Advisory Committee, and for other purposes.

At the rate we are going nobody is going to have any coins to redesign if we do not get this economy straightened out. This House is becoming irrelevant because people's kitchen table priorities are not being addressed on a constructive and bipartisan basis. Instead of wasting time on empty, meaningless gestures and then voting to allow the President's plans to privatize Social Security to take effect; sheltering unpatriotic offshore corporate tax havens from paying their fair share of taxes; blocking campaign reform; passing the largest gift to the wealthy in the history of this Nation in the form of massive tax breaks, without even considering a new economic plan; passing a gift to Enron and other oil and gas interests through a dirty energy bill; delaying and bending to corporate interest in addressing the corporate scandals and protecting pensions; delaying and then undoing the strong air safety rules Congress enacted to safeguard the public in the aftermath of September 11, Republicans should have been working with Democrats to address the American people's unfinished and important business.

The American people want us to raise the minimum wage, protect investor

rights, enact job training, pass Medicare prescription drugs, cut prescription drug prices, and extend unemployment benefits. People also want us to reform our elections and voting apparatus to ensure that every vote counts and that what happened in 2000 and 2002 in Florida and elsewhere never ever happens again.

People want us to enact a real Patients' Bill of Rights with teeth and effectiveness and not the sham Republican legislation that is languishing and waiting in going to conference. They want us to help school districts across America get class size down to 18 students in each classroom. They want us to pass school construction to promote safety in every public school, create a stable learning environment and meet the staggering backlog of unmet school construction needs.

People want us to close the pay gap between men and women. They want us to overturn new White House rules and restore real medical privacy protections to every American patient. They want us to make polluters, not taxpayers, foot the cleanup bill and maintain the Super Fund program that cleans up toxic waste. They want us to enhance our hate crimes law and provide more resources to States and local jurisdictions to help investigate and prosecute these heinous crimes. They want us to reinstate worker safety protections to prevent repetitive stress injuries in the workplace, just to name a few.

This agenda is worthy of the American people's highest dreams and hopes for their family. It is worthy of people's real concerns that are there on a day-to-day basis. It is incumbent upon us all to stop wasting time in this House, to stop being irrelevant to the people's real agenda, and to get about the business of the American people's domestic security agenda. Let us do it on a bipartisan basis, let us enact an agenda that creates opportunity for all to fulfill their potential and let us not adjourn before it is done. Let us get to work.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 3 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

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

Lord of all creation and Wisdom for the ages, we turn to You in prayer. To

turn to You is to humble one's self as a person, as a Nation. Although we often approach You with hesitancy, it is only because of our sins or weakness of faith, for You are always present and ever faithful, for You alone are God.

To step into Your holy presence, O Lord, is to be boldly revealed, as in a hall of piercing mirrors. Before You all our fears, resentments of the past and deepest fault lines come to light. But receive us once again as Your very own.

Guide us as Your people. Accomplish in us Your righteous purpose. Shape the body of this House to shoulder its proper responsibilities so to bring forth justice across our land and peace to the world. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Mr. ISAKSON 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.

PUBLIC LANDS DAY

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, September 28, in honor of National Public Lands Day, a 3,000-mile trek crossing six states and 14 national forests will end in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Last July 31, two teams began this unique journey with one group departing from New Mexico and the other from Montana. Their travels were solely on public lands and consisted of hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, canoeing, boating and driving SUVs.

Those Americans making this trek also worked to educate people, especially our youth, on the importance of public lands. Public lands are a tremendous source for clean air, clean water and open space, and they provide important natural resources, such as minerals, coal, gas, oil, forage and timber.

It is my hope that National Public Lands Day will remind all of America of the important role public lands play in protecting ecosystems, as well as contributing to our national economy and our national defense.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, Congress must enact responsible public land policies.

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I am so glad that the people of the Seventh District, like many people throughout America, have no compunctions letting you know where they stand. For the last week I have been getting telephone calls, e-mails, i-mails, people stopping me on the street, and they are saying, let us give peace a chance. Let us go slow on this war business. Let us let the inspectors inspect. Let us let them do their job.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with them.

MIDSHIPMAN EDWIN JOSEPH O'HARA

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, 60 years ago, on September 27, 1942, Midshipman Edwin Joseph O'Hara saw two enemy surface raiders suddenly appear out of the morning mist to attack the vessel he was on. Heavy guns of one raider pounded his ship, and machine guns fired from the other, spraying the decks for one-half hour at close quarters.

The heroic gun crew of O'Hara's ship exchanged shot for shot with the enemy, placing 35 shells into the waterline of one of the raiders, until its crew was forced to abandon their sinking ship. All of the gun crew were killed or wounded when an enemy shell exploded the magazine of their gun.

At the explosion, Midshipman O'Hara ran aft and single-handedly served and fired the damaged gun with five live shells remaining in the ready box, scoring direct hits near the waterline of the second raider. O'Hara was mortally wounded in this action.

With boilers blown up, engines destroyed, masts shot away, and ablaze from stem to stern, the ship finally went under, carrying O'Hara and several of his shipmates with her.

O'Hara was awarded the Merchant Marine Distinguished Service Medal for his bravery, bravery we should never forget.

TOURING THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

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

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, yesterday a group of staffers for Members who are part of the Congressional Caucus on Missing and Exploited children took part of a tour and briefing at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and I want to thank them today for taking the time to see