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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Chaplain, Reverend James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

We pray, O gracious God, a full measure of your grace to all who seek you in prayer. To those who are ill or know uncertainty for their well-being, grant healing and strength; for those who know not the joys and opportunities of freedom, grant liberty; for those who are fearful for their security or experience conflict or war, grant peace; for those who do not have the necessities of life, grant nourishment for body, mind, and soul; and for those who seek greater meaning or purpose in their own lives, grant direction and fulfillment and the blessed assurance of Your grace and love. This is our earnest prayer. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. 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. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. DOGGETT 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.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON TODAY

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business

in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with today.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will recognize 15 1-minutes on each side.

FCC SHOULD SAFEGUARD RURAL TELEPHONE SERVICE CONSUMERS

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, it is time for the Federal Communications Commission to do something to safeguard the telephone rates that people living in rural America pay.

When the Telecommunications Act of 1996 passed, there was one thing Congress wanted to ensure: that rates for residential and rural customers did not skyrocket. To protect against that, the FCC was directed to come with a "competitively neutral" support program.

The law required them to take action by May of last year. We have yet to see action. They announced possible rules, but also stated a whole new round of administrative proceedings. Right now, the FCC is debating which computer model will give them the right answers. Some of the smaller telephone companies have seen their support programs frozen in place; others are still up in the air.

This is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. I urge the FCC to resolve this issue and resolve it soon. For rural Americans, telephone service at affordable rates is not a luxury, it is essential.

THE REPUBLICAN WAR

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I have already said many times on the floor of the House how important it is for us to move on an agenda of managed care reform for consumer protection; and I have to say today that I am very upset to hear that the National Association of Manufacturers is down here today visiting Members trying to basically pressure Members to not support managed care reform.

We have an internal memo that basically says that the message the House Republican leadership is going to send is that we are at war and need to start fighting against managed care reform, and Senator LOTT says that the Senate Republicans need a lot of help from their friends on the outside. "Get off your butts. Get off your wallets."

The Republican leadership is now involved in this special interest activity. They are talking about their wallets and getting off their butts to try to fight against managed care reform.

Mr. Speaker, the American people have spoken out. They want managed care reform. They want quality health care. The Republican leadership should not be backed up by these special interest groups that are down here today to fight against these important, very important, consumer protections that the American people are demanding. This is the beginning of the Republican war.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SUNUNU). Members should refrain from directly referring to members from the other body.

□ 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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