it should be fixed now; its not fair, I paid for everyone else's road they should pay for mine; Toll roads mean toll booths and having to carry a jar of quarters in my car; Toll roads pose problems at toll plazas; and We have waited long enough its our turn.

The Interstate Highway System is a critical link in the transportation infrastructure. It is truly one of the greatest and most expensive public works projects ever undertaken. While the interstate system includes only 7% of roadway lane-miles, more than 22% of our travel is on it. It will also require nearly a third of our annual capital expenditures to improve it in the future. Yet reconstituting the interstate system cannot be toll financed.

The privatization and tolling provisions of ISTEA on the NHS Act should be expanded to allow tolls on the Interstate System if a road, bridge, or tunnel, is restructured, substantially improved, or its capacity is expanded. This will attract the investment and expertise of the private sector to complete needed, minor reconstruction projects, improvements, and expansions to the system faster and at less cost. It will also reexamine the financial burdens these projects place on many State Departments of Transportation.

State and local governments have yet accepted private equity as additional money to meet their transportation needs. I believe Congress could create a better environment for the acceptance of tolling as an alternative financing, including but not limited to tolls, congestion pricing, mileage pricing, and public-private partnerships, when the cost exceeds $10,000,000. Such a provision would make it more likely for government entities to pursue alternative financing.

The private sector is at a disadvantage to government in financing infrastructure due to the disparity in rates between taxable and tax exempt financing. The federal government also loses tax revenue when tax exempt bonds are used to finance improvements. Eliminating this disparity would make taxable financing more competitive and the federal government would increase its tax revenues.

Unlike the power and telecommunications industries there is no clear track record of private investment in toll roads and the delivery of transportation infrastructure. As a result, the financing of such investments can be difficult to obtain. By making the unobligated balance in the trust fund available as a guarantee for transportation infrastructure projects place on many State Departments of Transportation.

The public’s unrealistic expectation that traditional transportation financing can meet their needs is evidenced by the statements listed above. The current system is unable to meet those expectations due to major changes in automobiles and our travel patterns. Increased fuel efficiency and larger numbers of vehicles coupled with increases in the number of trips and trip length has contributed greatly to our current funding situation. Neither the gas tax nor license fees are increasing. Moving away from these funding mechanisms to charging for the space used on a road would help change these expectations. Charging for highway travel by the mile would make us more aware of the cost of travel and would assess costs to the largest users. This would result in more prudent use of highway resources. In addition, we would also permit the introduction of congestion pricing to highway travel. Most commodities are paid for in this fashion. Introducing it into highway pricing would improve utilization of the existing system and lessen demand for additional capacity.

Drivers have not liked paying tolls because they do not like the thought of being charged for quarters, stopping and paying the tolls. This is no longer necessary. My company, Hughes Transportation Management Systems, has adapted a toll collection system that tolled drivers at freeway speeds on the open road without toll plazas. Eliminating toll booths and stopping to pay tolls eliminates most driver’s objection to toll financing.

In closing, I would like to state that I am very positive on the opportunities and benefits of highway infrastructure privatization. This optimism is buoyed by continued bipartisan support of the Minnesota legislature, business, and labor. We are continuing our efforts despite the fact that we are charging a fee for a service that our competition, government, is giving away “free”. We would like to participate more fully. Addressing these challenges today would improve the competitive disadvantage we now face. I would be happy to answer your questions.

HEALTH COVERAGE AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. JERRY F. COSTELLO
OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 28, 1996

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Kennedy-Kassebaum substitute to be offered by the Democratic leader, and in support of the bill as amended. Unfortunately, radical members of the majority conference have hijacked this bill and turned it into a special-interest Christmas tree, which could very well jeopardize its passage in the Congress.

Health insurance reform is long past due. Millions of Americans are still routinely denied health care coverage because of preexisting conditions. Some are forced to remain in stagnant jobs and turn down promotions or other job opportunities in order to insure the continuation of their employer-sponsored health care benefits.

The Senate has introduced legislation with wide bipartisan support to address the issue of portability of insurance. That legislation, the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill, ensures health insurance portability from one employer to another. President Clinton voiced his support for this legislation during his State of the Union Address. In the House of Representatives, my colleague, Representative ROUKEMA has introduced similar legislation, and 192 of my colleagues have joined me in cosponsoring Representative ROUKEMA’s legislation.

With the broad bipartisan support of this health insurance reform bill, it is a disgrace that the Republican leadership has sabotaged the enactment of this legislation by adding controversial provisions to the bill. Some Members in the Senate have suggested these provisions may end the chances of passage of this legislation, which is why I will vote for the Kennedy-Kassebaum-Roukema substitute and against passage of the bill today. It is important to let partisan politics jeopardize the health care of the American people. We have waited for too long. The time is now to pass and enact a clean health insurance reform bill that will assure the portability of health insurance when individuals change jobs.

PROPOSES MADE

HON. BILL BAKER
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 29, 1996

Mr. BAKER of California. Mr. Speaker, today I wish to submit for the Record a section of the public law which enumerates the statutory obligations the Department of Energy has toward its employees at defense nuclear facilities, concerning workforce restructuring.

The Department of Energy faces some tough budgetary and programmatic decisions in the coming weeks and months. Many of these decisions will no doubt be important to our Nation in safeguarding our nuclear stockpile, in ensuring our energy security in the future, in advancing the pace of energy sciences, and in stewarding our national resources. It is this stewardship role I speak of today, specifically the stewardship of the valuable, competent employees at DOE’s nuclear facilities.

Mr. Speaker, these workers are truly national assets. They work on the cutting edge of science and engineering, bolstering our Nation’s security status and it energy future. These men and women do yeoman’s work for our country in areas of science you and I can barely comprehend. Though perhaps rarely appreciated or understood by the average American taxpayer, these people give their all at national laboratories like Sandia, Lawrence Livermore, and Los Alamos. Our Nation is the richer for their sacrifice and commitment to our collective good.

In light of recent statements by DOE officials indicating an all-out push to downsize at some nuclear facilities, it is essential that the bureaucracies that administer our Government’s policies respect the value these workers add to the national good.