

passage of this vital legislation and thank Chairman SHUSTER for his excellent efforts in bringing this bill to the floor in a timely fashion.

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, as an original cosponsor of H.R. 3923, the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act, I rise to express my strong support for this important bill designed to ensure that families of aviation accident victims receive timely emotional care and support when they most need it.

Those whose loved ones perish or are injured in airline crashes are particularly vulnerable as illustrated by the recent experiences of families of the victims of the TWA flight 800 tragedy near my district on Long Island, and the ValuJet crash in the Everglades. The surviving families require immediate attention by personnel who are adequately trained and experienced in handling these disasters.

H.R. 3923 makes the National Transportation Safety Board the lead Federal agency in dealing with the needs of victims' families. An NTSB employee would serve as a family advocate to act as a point of contact between the Federal Government and family members, as well as a liaison between the families and the airline.

In addition, the NTSB would designate an organization experienced in dealing with families in times of crisis—such as the Red Cross—to coordinate the care and support of families; meet with families who come to the scene of the accident; provide counseling to the families; ensure the privacy of the families; inform the families of the role of government agencies and the airline; arrange a proper memorial service; obtain a passenger list to provide information to families; and, use the airline's personnel and resources as needed.

Other important features of H.R. 3923 require the airline to submit a plan within 6 months for addressing the needs of the families of passengers involved in an airline crash; publicize a reliable toll-free number for handling calls from family members; notify families as soon as possible of the fate of their loved ones using trained personnel; and, provide the passenger list to the family advocate and the Red Cross immediately, even if all names have not been verified.

Finally, the bill creates a task force to develop a model family assistance plan, which would be completed and sent to Congress within a year. The task force would involve the NTSB, the Department of Transportation, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Red Cross, family representatives, as well as the airlines.

Families and friends, and often whole communities, are affected by these tragedies. The role of the Federal Government must be to support victims' families in any way possible, to help ease their pain after losing a loved one. They deserve no less, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill before us today.

Mr. BLUTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act. I learned first hand of the horrible experience that families of victims of air disasters go through.

A woman from my district in Swansea, MA lost her parents in the tragic incident that brought down TWA Flight 800 on July 17, 1996. She learned by reading the plane's manifest in the newspaper that her parents did, in fact, perish in this horrific aviation incident. Days after the plane crash this woman continued to receive unacceptable treatment

from the airline. She found herself caught in a bureaucratic nightmare when trying to get her daughter home from overseas to attend a memorial service. She was forced through hoop after hoop to simply confirm her daughter's relationship to the deceased. This is not the kind of experience one should be expected to go through during this period of enormous grief.

Therefore, I cosponsored this legislation and I commend Chairman SHUSTER and Chairman DUNCAN for moving this bill on a fast track. The legislation before us today reforms procedures for dealing with families of aviation accident victims. This bill establishes a family advocate within the National Transportation Safety Board [NTSB] to act as a liaison between the Government and the families, and it directs the NTSB to designate an independent organization, such as the Red Cross, to take primary responsibility for the emotional care and support of families. The bill also directs the airline to release the passenger list to the family advocate and Red Cross immediately so that families will have another option in their quest for information about the fate of loved ones.

To lose a loved one in an aviation disaster is a sudden and emotionally devastating experience. I am pleased to be a part of legislation that will help to ease this burden on families in the future.

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3923, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, on that, I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BE-REUTER). Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

DEEPWATER PORT MODERNIZATION ACT

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2940) to amend the Deepwater Port Act of 1974, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2940

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Deepwater Port Modernization Act".

SEC. 2. DECLARATIONS OF PURPOSE AND POLICY.

(a) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are to—

(1) update and improve the Deepwater Port Act of 1974;

(2) assure that the regulation of deepwater ports is not more burdensome or stringent than necessary in comparison to the regulation of other modes of importing or transporting oil;

(3) recognize that deepwater ports are generally subject to effective competition from alternative transportation modes and eliminate, for as long as a port remains subject to effective competition, unnecessary Federal regulatory oversight or involvement in the ports' business and economic decisions; and

(4) promote innovation, flexibility, and efficiency in the management and operation of deepwater ports by removing or reducing any duplicative, unnecessary, or overly burdensome Federal regulations or license provisions.

(b) POLICY.—Section 2(a) of the Deepwater Port Act of 1974 (33 U.S.C. 1501(a)) is amended—

(1) by striking "and" at the end of paragraph (3);

(2) by striking the period at the end of paragraph (4) and inserting a semicolon; and

(3) by inserting at the end the following:

"(5) promote the construction and operation of deepwater ports as a safe and effective means of importing oil into the United States and transporting oil from the outer continental shelf while minimizing tanker traffic and the risks attendant thereto; and

"(6) promote oil production on the outer continental shelf by affording an economic and safe means of transportation of outer continental shelf oil to the United States mainland."

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

(a) ANTITRUST LAWS.—Section 3 of the Deepwater Port Act of 1974 (33 U.S.C. 1502) is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (3); and

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (4) through (19) as paragraphs (3) through (18), respectively.

(b) DEEPWATER PORT.—The first sentence of section 3(9) of such Act, as redesignated by subsection (a), is amended by striking "such structures," and all that follows through "section 23," and inserting the following: "structures, located beyond the territorial sea and off the coast of the United States and which are used or intended for use as a port or terminal for the transportation, storage, and further handling of oil for transportation to any State, except as otherwise provided in section 23, and for other uses not inconsistent with the purposes of this Act, including transportation of oil from the United States outer continental shelf."

SEC. 4. LICENSES.

(a) ELIMINATION OF UTILIZATION RESTRICTIONS.—Section 4(a) of the Deepwater Port Act of 1974 (33 U.S.C. 1503(a)) is amended by striking all that follows the second sentence.

(b) ELIMINATION OF PRECONDITION TO LICENSING.—Section 4(c) of such Act is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (7); and

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (8), (9), and (10) as paragraphs (7), (8), and (9), respectively.

(c) CONDITIONS PRESCRIBED BY SECRETARY.—Section 4(e)(1) of such Act is amended by striking the first sentence and inserting the following: "In issuing a license for the ownership, construction, and operation of a deepwater port, the Secretary shall prescribe those conditions which the Secretary deems necessary to carry out the provisions and requirements of this Act or which are otherwise required by any Federal department or agency pursuant to the terms of this Act. To the extent practicable, conditions required to carry out the provisions and requirements of this Act shall be addressed in license conditions rather than by regulation and, to the extent practicable, the license shall allow a deepwater port's operating procedures to be stated in an operations manual approved by the Coast Guard rather than in detailed and specific license conditions or regulations; except that basic standards and conditions shall be addressed in regulations."

(d) ELIMINATION OF RESTRICTION RELATING TO APPLICATIONS.—Section 4(e)(2) of such Act is amended by striking "application" and inserting "license".

(e) FINDINGS REQUIRED FOR TRANSFERS.—Section 4(f) of such Act is amended to read as follows:

"(f) AMENDMENTS, TRANSFERS, AND REINSTATEMENTS.—The Secretary may amend, transfer, or reinstate a license issued under this Act if the Secretary finds that the amendment, transfer, or reinstatement is consistent with the requirements of this Act."

SEC. 5. INFORMATIONAL FILINGS.

Section 5(c) of the Deepwater Port Act of 1974 (33 U.S.C. 1504(c)) is amended by adding the following:

"(3) Upon written request of any person subject to this subsection, the Secretary may make a determination in writing to exempt such person from any of the information filing provisions enumerated in this subsection or the regulations implementing this section if the Secretary determines that such information is not necessary to facilitate the Secretary's determinations under section 4 of this Act and that such exemption will not limit public review and evaluation of the deepwater port project."

SEC. 6. ANTITRUST REVIEW.

Section 7 of the Deepwater Port Act of 1974 (33 U.S.C. 1506) is repealed.

SEC. 7. OPERATION.

(a) AS COMMON CARRIER.—Section 8(a) of the Deepwater Port Act of 1974 (33 U.S.C. 1507(a)) is amended by inserting after "sub-title IV of title 49, United States Code," the following: "and shall accept, transport, or convey without discrimination all oil delivered to the deepwater port with respect to which its license is issued."

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 8(b) of such Act is amended by striking the first sentence and the first 3 words of the second sentence and inserting the following: "A licensee is not discriminating under this section and".

SEC. 8. MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND NAVIGATIONAL SAFETY.

Section 10(a) of the Deepwater Port Act of 1974 (33 U.S.C. 1509(a)) is amended—

(1) by inserting after "international law" the following: "and the provision of adequate opportunities for public involvement";

(2) by striking "shall prescribe by regulation and enforce procedures with respect to any deepwater port, including, but not limited to," and inserting the following "shall prescribe and enforce procedures, either by regulation (for basic standards and conditions) or by the licensee's operations manual, with respect to"; and

(3) by redesignating clauses (A), (B), and (C) as clauses (1), (2), and (3), respectively.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER] and the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. BORSKI] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER].

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield such time as he might consume to the gentleman from New York [Mr. BOEHLERT].

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished chairman of the committee for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning in strong support of this bipartisan legislation to improve the way we manage and promote the use of deepwater ports. Unfortunately, only one deep-

water port has been constructed since the passage of the original 1974 Deepwater Ports Act, the Loop facility off the coast of Louisiana.

Deepwater ports make environmental and transportation safety sense, and with the passage of this measure, deepwater ports will make economic sense. By unloading supertankers laden with oil in deep offshore waters, we can dramatically reduce the likelihood of catastrophic oil spills like we have witnessed on both the Pacific coast and, most recently, off the coast of Rhode Island.

The Louisiana delegation has long realized the benefits of deepwater ports and has taken the lead in developing H.R. 2940. The gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. HAYES] has been especially effective in educating the members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on the merits of deepwater ports. Deepwater ports will become increasingly important as traffic entering our Nation's ports continues to grow.

This legislation has been developed with extensive input from transportation and environmental interests, and I am confident that this measure reflects the best ideas of both of these very important constituencies. We should be doing more to promote the use of deepwater ports, and this legislation is a huge step in the right direction.

As we enter into the next century, it would be my hope that we could develop deepwater ports for the Atlantic and Pacific coast as well. I urge all of my colleagues to support the passage of this Deepwater Port Modernization Act.

I thank the ranking member of our subcommittee, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. BORSKI], for his cooperation. I thank the distinguished chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER], for his leadership, and the ranking member of the full committee, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. OBERSTAR], for his partnership. Together we are moving on important legislation.

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2940, the Deepwater Port Modernization Act, which will help streamline the layers of regulation that apply to deepwater ports. Despite the ever growing thirst in this country for imported oil, there is currently only one deepwater port operating, and that port, the Loop facility in Louisiana, is only operating at 60 percent of its capacity.

The changes contained in H.R. 2940 should make it easier for deepwater ports to compete against other shipment options which do not face the same complex web of regulations. With passage of H.R. 2940, coordinated licenses and operation manuals will streamline the process. I want to emphasize that a provision in the intro-

duced bill that would have allowed a relaxation of environmental monitoring requirements for deepwater ports has been removed to address serious concerns about it.

H.R. 2940 contains only modest changes to existing law. Hopefully these changes will be enough to provide the springboard for more widespread use of deepwater ports for oil imports that was envisioned by the Deepwater Port Act of 1974. During the past 3 years a daily average of 700,000 barrels of oil have passed through the 48-inch pipeline that links the Louisiana offshore oil port 18 miles off the Louisiana coast to its inland storage terminal.

Loop is the off-loading point for about 12 percent of the Nation's oil imports. With the passage of this bill, and as the Nation's oil imports increase, Loop and other proposed deepwater ports should be used on a greater scale. H.R. 2940 is a sensible streamlining of regulations for an efficient means of meeting our Nation's needs for imported oil.

I believe very strongly, Mr. Speaker, that we should be working to reduce the demand for imported oil. Our Nation cannot maintain its position as a global power if we continue to increase our demand for foreign oil on a virtually unlimited basis.

However, until we begin to turn our oil import policy around, the use of deepwater ports makes sense. I urge support of H.R. 2940, the Deepwater Port Modernization Act.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would urge strong support for this legislation which is bipartisan and updates and improves the Deep Water Port Act of 1974. Representative JIMMY HAYES along with other colleagues introduced this legislation back in February. Our committee held hearings and worked with all the interested parties to craft this legislation. In some respects, the 1974 act has worked very well. However, there is a clear need to modernize and improve this act in several areas which have already been outlined. The committee report on this legislation contains a detailed description of the bill and of the committee's intent.

Finally, let me thank the ranking Democrat of the committee, JIM OBERSTAR, the chairman and ranking member of the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee, SHERRY BOEHLERT and BOB BORSKI, and the chairman and ranking member of the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee, HOWARD COBLE and BOB CLEMENT. They have been very instrumental in moving this important legislation. I would urge its strong support.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. CLEMENT], the distinguished ranking member of the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation.

Mr. CLEMENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2940, the Deepwater Port Modernization Act. This bill will streamline the licensing and operating procedures.

On March 28, the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation held a joint hearing on this bill with the Subcommittee on Water Resources. At that time we received testimony from the administration, the deepwater port industry, and the environmental community on this legislation and how this industry has developed much differently from what was anticipated when the Deepwater Port Act was enacted in 1974.

The amendments contained in H.R. 2940 will allow the deepwater facility in Louisiana and the proposed deepwater port in Texas to meet new market conditions. For example, the present law prohibits the deepwater port from shipping oil from other oil production facilities on our outer Continental Shelf to refineries on shore. This prohibition is eliminated to allow these facilities more flexibility in their operations.

Since we have had only one deepwater port built to date, the regulations and licensing process were designed for that single facility. As a result the bureaucratic hurdles that must be overcome to make minor changes to the facility are overly burdensome and expensive. H.R. 2940 will allow many of the day-to-day decisions affecting the facility and minor modifications to the port to be completed by getting the approval of the local Coast Guard captain of the port instead of the Secretary of Transportation.

The history of the deepwater port in Louisiana demonstrates that this facility is safe and poses less of a threat to the environment than lightering crude oil between two floating tankers.

I am hopeful that H.R. 2940 will make the LOOP deepwater port facility more cost efficient and promote the construction of other deepwater ports in the United States.

I urge my colleagues to support the passage of H.R. 2940, the Deepwater Port Modernization Act.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. HAYES] who has been a prime mover of this legislation.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank both sides of the aisle, in the room as well as in the committee, and to briefly repeat the argument that was made that as a consequence of our energy dependence, we have the extraordinary circumstance where America is now looking at more of its energy needs coming from the region in the world that is most unstable, so that even with a small skirmish in the northern part of one country, the price

of a barrel of oil moves up almost 30 percent. This just cannot be acceptable as future energy policy.

In connection with what the House has done earlier in recognizing additional production that can be gained through advanced technology on our Outer Continental Shelf, it then becomes a simple question to understand what is the most environmentally efficient way to try to reduce energy dependence as well as to make sure that those folks in Pennsylvania, in the Northeast, as well as at my home on the gulf coast, are able to plan their future needs based upon a price of energy that allows them to lead their daily lives.

The answer is, we have got to increase the ability to move these ports. Whenever they give you a quote in a national news media about the price of oil, they do not tell you the cost to get it to the pump. When you begin looking at tens of thousands of miles in movement each and every year, you understand that all of that cost is added on, as opposed to shallow and deep offshore with much smaller distances to move.

The environmental dangers elevate with every mile that a tanker moves, and therefore, energy dependence on the Middle East also means environmental concerns and fears at a higher and higher level.

Finally, to my knowledge, no one in this place that keeps a notebook and a report on just about every subject has ever calculated the cost of our military presence in a region that we defend almost solely because of its energy production capability that we are so dependent upon. I wonder what the price of a barrel of oil would be in the Middle East if you put on the line all of those military personnel, aircraft carriers, and F-117A's that make that security, hopefully, dependable for the immediate future.

With that in mind, I want to again thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. This is the right thing for the only existing facility in Louisiana, and Louisiana is doing the right thing in helping to ensure the energy independence of America's future, for Pennsylvania and the rest of the Nation.

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. OBERSTAR], the distinguished ranking member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, this bill has a broad consensus now and should pass. It was not always so.

At the outset, when the legislation was first proposed to revitalize the Louisiana offshore oil port and to revitalize the basic underlying law itself, there was considerable environmental concern and vigorous opposition. In fact, there were concerns expressed by the Department of Transportation that wanted to maintain a very strong regulatory hold on this legislation. Those concerns came to my attention.

I discussed these matters with the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER], our chairman, and with the gentleman from New York [Mr. BOEHLERT] and the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. BORSKI], the chairman and ranking member of the subcommittee, and we set about on our side to resolve within our Democratic ranks the outstanding issues. We brought in the environmental groups, we brought in the Department of Transportation, we heard them out, and we came up with proposals which I think were well received by the majority. We worked out a very fine bipartisan solution.

I say that because I have a piece of legislation pending in the other body that is not receiving the same kind of comity. I would hope that the leading supporters of this legislation in the other body would extend the same comity to concerns House Members have about issues that are intensely of concern to the people in their district.

This legislation is going to benefit not only the Louisiana offshore oil port but all future possible deep water ports by allowing ports to become more competitive, be more efficient and to do so in an environmentally safe regime with economic considerations that will advance the cause of energy efficiency and keep the cost of imported energy within reach and keep our U.S. ports competitive.

We can do those things when we work together on a sound, bipartisan, constructive basis, to look at what is best for the overall interests of the country. I urge the same kind of comity from our colleagues in the other body.

It had been my intention to obstruct the passage of this legislation by asking for a recorded vote, but I will not do that out of respect for our chairman and out of respect for the merits of the issue and in hopes that we get the attention of our colleagues across the way.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to assure the gentleman from Minnesota that, as he knows, I am very well aware of the important legislation that he is referring to in the other body and as he knows we have already expressed our strong support for his legislation and this legislation, while I expect will pass the House overwhelmingly today, of course, what happens as we go to conference is a question mark and that question could be answered in the affirmative or the negative based on the comity which we know our good friends in the other body are likely to give to us.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I support this important legislation. It amends the Deepwater Port Act to remove some restrictions on the use of deepwater ports and clarifies and simplifies certain Coast Guard regulations. This legislation is designed to strengthen the ability of deepwater oil ports off of the U.S. coast beyond U.S. territorial waters to conduct their business. There is currently only one licensed deepwater port off of the

coast of the United States, which is the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port. I hope this legislation will help us see more of such ports off of the U.S. coast, especially in my home State of Texas.

With respect to operations of a deepwater port, the bill would require deepwater ports to only comply with regulations established in the Transportation Department's facilities operations manual instead of the various other licensing provisions that are currently required. Additionally, the bill would enable the Coast Guard to streamline the approval process for maintaining certain environmental safeguards.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, when the U.S. House of Representatives first debated the merits of deepwater ports on June 6, 1974, Members on that day supported the concept of deepwater ports much for the same reasons that we support them here today—deepwater ports make environmental and economic common sense. This afternoon, H.R. 2940, the Deepwater Port Modernization Act, epitomizes the very essence of how this 104th Congress has tried to streamline our Federal regulatory structure to better meet the needs of the regulated community while still protecting the public interest and the environment.

H.R. 2940 will reduce the top-down, duplicate and unnecessary barriers that inhibit our Nation's only deepwater port—the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port [LOOP]—from making the business decisions required to most effectively compete in today's marketplace. This bill will make it easier for other potential deepwater ports to be constructed and operated successfully. Finally, H.R. 2940 will further improve one of the most cost effective and environmentally friendly means of transporting crude oil onshore.

The Deepwater Port Modernization Act clarifies LOOP's authority to receive oil from the Outer Continental Shelf [OCS]. Deepwater finds will significantly reduce our national dependence on imported oil and help keep more investments in oil exploration and production in Louisiana. Approximately 30 discoveries have been made by the offshore oil and gas industry on deepwater leases in the Gulf of Mexico, amounting to an estimated total of 3 to 4 billion barrels of oil. Recent discoveries have the possibility to provide yields equal to or greater than Prudhoe Bay, AK. With LOOP's proximity to the OCS and its available underused capacity, producers will have a cost effective and environmentally responsible option to transport these large oil quantities to pipelines and refineries across the Nation, particularly if the Federal Government removes unnecessary regulatory barriers.

LOOP's license allows the facility to physically double in size, but doing so has never made economic sense—until now. With such new sources of oil on the OCS and increased capacity, it is estimated that at least 200 new jobs will be created in Louisiana nearly doubling the employment at LOOP. The port's annual economic impact will also nearly double to \$62.7 million. Currently, LOOP employs more than 225 people, and has an economic impact of \$32.7 million each year on the local economy, including wages and purchases of local materials and services.

Under current law, LOOP is the only strictly regulated entity among its chief competitors. Day-to-day business decisions are inhibited and delayed due to federal requirements calling for unnecessary oversight at the highest

levels of the Federal Government. H.R. 2940 would simply regulatory activities, and enable LOOP and any new deepwater ports to respond more quickly to changing market conditions and improving technologies, as well as to pursue appropriate business opportunities, using procedures more comparable to those applicable to their competitors.

H.R. 2940 removes a redundant mandatory antitrust review for even minor changes in LOOP's license. The outdated legislative language proved unnecessary because abundant competition exists especially from ligherering operators that was not anticipated in 1974 when the Deepwater Port Act was originally enacted. Additionally, enforcement of rules will be transferred from the Department of Transportation [DOT] to local authorities, including the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, which support my bill.

H.R. 2940 makes a commitment to guaranteeing the efficient movement of this environmentally protective mode of transportation. I want to thank Chairman SHUSTER, Chairman BOEHLERT, Chairman COBLE, and the House leadership for bringing the Deepwater Port Modernization Act before the House, and I urge its immediate adoption.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BEREUTER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2940, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SNOW REMOVAL POLICY ACT OF 1996

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3348) to direct the President to establish standards and criteria for the provision of major disaster and emergency assistance in response to snow-related events, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3348

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Snow Removal Policy Act of 1996".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) winter snow storms in recent years, and particularly in 1996, have interrupted essential public services and utilities, caused widespread disruption of vital transportation networks, stranded many motorists, and isolated many homes and businesses;

(2) the impact of the winter snow storms was of such severity and magnitude that effective response was beyond the capability of State and local governments;

(3) the policy of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for providing major dis-

aster and emergency assistance in response to snow-related events is unclear; and

(4) regulations should be promulgated for providing major disaster and emergency assistance in response to snow-related events in order to ensure the fair treatment of States and local governments that have incurred costs associated with such a response.

SEC. 3. RULEMAKING TO ESTABLISH STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR SNOW-RELATED EVENTS.

(a) NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING.—The President, acting through the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, shall issue a notice of proposed rulemaking to promulgate—

(1) standards and criteria for declaring a major disaster or emergency under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act in response to a snow-related event; and

(2) standards and criteria for providing assistance under such Act in the case of a snow-related major disaster or emergency, including reimbursement for snow removal and for debris removal and emergency protective measures.

(b) REQUIREMENT.—Rules to be promulgated under this section shall ensure that in determining the eligibility of a State or local government for assistance in connection with a snow-related event, the President will give consideration to existing capabilities of the State or local government.

(c) DEADLINES.—The President, acting through the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, shall issue—

(1) a proposed rule under this section not later than 3 months after the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(2) a final rule under this section not later than 9 months after such date of enactment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER] and the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. BORSKI] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER].

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the blizzard of 1996 swept across 12 States and the District of Columbia threatening the lives of thousands of individuals. Many of my constituents were cut off from critical facilities, such as hospitals, by record snowfalls.

At the time it appeared that the Federal response to this crisis was haphazard. Many State and local officials considered FEMA's response unfair and inconsistent with previous policy.

H.R. 3348 simply requires FEMA to set a coherent policy for responding to snow events so that Federal assistance will be more uniform and fair.

I would like to thank Mr. QUINN for bringing attention to this matter. However, as he points out, this is a bipartisan effort. More than half of the 25 cosponsors are Democrats, including Mr. TRAFICANT, Mr. MASCARA, Ms. NORTON, Mr. STUPAK, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. TOWNS, Mrs. LOWEY, and Mr. KILDEE.

FEMA has had the authority to provide assistance to clear roads in the event of severe snowstorms since 1988. Since that time, FEMA has responded to snowstorms in three winters, 1993, 1994, and 1996. In each year, the total assistance was well under \$1 million.