

Mr. Speaker, I implore my colleagues, we should be working to make sure that all students have that opportunity, not just a few. I urge the Members of the House to conduct and to support legislation in that way.

ORCA WHALE PODS

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

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my deep concern over the recent capture of orca whales off the coast of Japan. Earlier this month five orca whales were netted and separated from their whale family, called a pod. A whale pod, like a human family unit, is vital for the survival of orcas. These captured orcas are scheduled to be sold to marine amusement parks and a whale museum.

The capture of orcas was allowed under a permit to gather them for research purposes. Clearly, the use of whales for business and entertainment purposes blatantly violates the conditions of the permit.

It is my understanding that orca pods appear very infrequently in Japanese waters. Destroying even one orca pod can cause great harm to the small orca population in that area.

The captured orca pod will certainly suffer as a result of so many of its members being separated, and could even cause the pod's complete disintegration. I cannot condone this act and will do whatever I can to see that the five whales are released immediately.

□ 1415

GIVE TEACHERS A BREAK

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

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of talk in Washington these days about education. The President is talking about education. Business people are talking about education. At just about every level someone is talking about education, and every politician I bump into wants to talk about education.

But as a former two-term State superintendent of schools, I can tell you talk is cheap, ladies and gentlemen. That is why last week I went into the classroom and began a program I call Give Teachers a Break. I took over a history and political science class and taught a group of students in Lee County High School in Sanford, NC in an effort to really give a teacher a break.

This program puts Congressmen in the classroom where children are so they can understand what is happening day in and day out with a teacher, the problems they face, the difficulties of education, so we can learn from what is happening and we can look into the face of the next generation and have a reminder of what is at stake.

I am proud that a number of my colleagues in this House have already decided to join in this program, and I challenge every Member of the U.S. Congress to do it. Mr. Speaker, it is no great feat to talk the talk on education. Today I challenge every Member to walk the walk and give a teacher a break.

MAKE COLLEGE DEGREES ACCESSIBLE

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

Mr. BLAGOJEVICH. Mr. Speaker, in today's America the price of the American dream comes attached to a college tuition bill. Yet rising college costs are steadily making that dream a mirage for many working families. In all too many cases, parents face the awful choice between deep debt and telling their child something they could never have imagined: "We'd like to send you to college, but, we're sorry, we simply can't afford it."

One of our Nation's great poets once asked, "What happens to a dream deferred?" If college tuitions remain out of reach for average American families, we will find the answer to that question in a lost generation of our children.

Mr. Speaker, we must make the American dream a reality again before college degrees become the exclusive possession of the privileged. We must make it a reality again so college degrees can serve as pathways to a lifetime of opportunity.

The best way to start is for this Congress to pass President Clinton's plan to increase the Pell Grant Program. We all know that a college degree is not a right and the American dream is not an entitlement, but it is our duty to make college degrees accessible, and by doing so we can make the American dream a reality for millions of people who want nothing more than a chance to get ahead.

AMERICANS WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE ON THE RISE

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to draw attention today to an article that was on the front page of the New York Times that found through a recent survey that the number of uninsured in New York City is dramatically on the rise. I am talking about the national crisis of health insurance and the fact that increasingly more and more Americans have no health insurance. This of course was in New York City, but it has implications nationwide.

Interestingly enough, the biggest problem is with children, children that have no health insurance. We know that the President has put forward a proposal to expand health insurance

options for children so that more and more children are insured, and I think that this report, which I will call more attention to in the next few weeks, really explains why that is important.

It says right here that most uninsured families in the city make between \$15,000 and \$45,000 a year. These are working people. And the report found the number of children without insurance has gone up twice as fast as the number of adults. This was a report that was put out by the New York City public advocate Mark Green, and in his report it also finds that the proportion of children who have no health insurance rose to almost 20 percent in 1995, up from 14 percent in 1990.

The report is very informative because it really throws aside a lot of the myths that we have about who is not getting the health insurance. It is the working people, it is the children, it is the people that have a lot to contribute to this society, and we need to address it in this Congress.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SOL-OMON). Pursuant to the provisions of clause 5 of rule I, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on the motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 4 of rule XV.

Such rollcall vote, if postponed, will be taken on Wednesday, February 26, 1997.

AIRPORT AND AIRWAY TRUST FUND TAX REINSTATEMENT ACT OF 1997

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 668) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reinstate the Airport and Airway Trust Fund excise taxes, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 668

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; AMENDMENT OF 1986 CODE.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Airport and Airway Trust Fund Tax Reinstatement Act of 1997".

(b) AMENDMENT OF 1986 CODE.—Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

SEC. 2. REINSTATEMENT OF AIRPORT AND AIRWAY TRUST FUND EXCISE TAXES.

(a) FUEL TAXES.—

(1) AVIATION FUEL.—Subparagraph (A) of section 4091(b)(3) is amended to read as follows:

“(A) The rate of tax specified in paragraph (1) shall be 4.3 cents per gallon—

"(i) after December 31, 1996, and before the date which is 7 days after the date of the enactment of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund Tax Reinstatement Act of 1997, and

"(ii) after September 30, 1997."

(2) AVIATION GASOLINE.—Subsection (d) of section 4081 is amended by striking the paragraph (3) added by section 1609(a) of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 and by striking paragraphs (1) and (2) and inserting the following new paragraphs:

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The rates of tax specified in clauses (i) and (iii) of subsection (a)(2)(A) shall be 4.3 cents per gallon after September 30, 1999.

"(2) AVIATION GASOLINE.—The rate of tax specified in subsection (a)(2)(A)(ii) shall be 4.3 cents per gallon—

"(A) after December 31, 1996, and before the date which is 7 days after the date of the enactment of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund Tax Reinstatement Act of 1997, and

"(B) after September 30, 1997."

(3) NONCOMMERCIAL AVIATION.—Paragraph (3) of section 4041(c) is amended to read as follows:

"(3) TERMINATION.—The rate of the taxes imposed by paragraph (1) shall be 4.3 cents per gallon—

"(A) after December 31, 1996, and before the date which is 7 days after the date of the enactment of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund Tax Reinstatement Act of 1997, and

"(B) after September 30, 1997."

(b) TICKET TAXES.—

(1) PERSONS.—Subsection (g) of section 4261 is amended to read as follows:

"(g) APPLICATION OF TAXES.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The taxes imposed by this section shall apply to—

"(A) transportation beginning during the period—

"(i) beginning on the 7th day after the date of the enactment of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund Tax Reinstatement Act of 1997, and

"(ii) ending on September 30, 1997, and

"(B) amounts paid during such period for transportation beginning after such period.

"(2) REFUNDS.—If, as of the date any transportation begins, the taxes imposed by this section would not have applied to such transportation if paid for on such date, any tax paid under paragraph (1)(B) with respect to such transportation shall be treated as an overpayment."

(2) PROPERTY.—Subsection (d) of section 4271 is amended to read as follows:

"(d) APPLICATION OF TAX.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The tax imposed by subsection (a) shall apply to—

"(A) transportation beginning during the period—

"(i) beginning on the 7th day after the date of the enactment of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund Tax Reinstatement Act of 1997, and

"(ii) ending on September 30, 1997, and

"(B) amounts paid during such period for transportation beginning after such period.

"(2) REFUNDS.—If, as of the date any transportation begins, the taxes imposed by this section would not have applied to such transportation if paid for on such date, any tax paid under paragraph (1)(B) with respect to such transportation shall be treated as an overpayment."

(c) TRANSFERS TO AIRPORT AND AIRWAY TRUST FUND.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (b) of section 9502 is amended to read as follows:

"(b) TRANSFERS TO AIRPORT AND AIRWAY TRUST FUND.—There are hereby appropriated to the Airport and Airway Trust Fund amounts equivalent to—

"(1) the taxes received in the Treasury under—

"(A) subsections (c) and (e) of section 4041 (relating to aviation fuels),

"(B) sections 4261 and 4271 (relating to transportation by air),

"(C) section 4081 (relating to gasoline) with respect to aviation gasoline (to the extent that the rate of the tax on such gasoline exceeds 4.3 cents per gallon), and

"(D) section 4091 (relating to aviation fuel) to the extent attributable to the Airport and Airway Trust Fund financing rate, and

"(2) the amounts determined by the Secretary of the Treasury to be equivalent to the amounts of civil penalties collected under section 47107(n) of title 49, United States Code."

(2) TERMINATION OF FINANCING RATE.—Paragraph (3) of section 9502(f) is amended to read as follows:

"(3) TERMINATION.—Notwithstanding the preceding provisions of this subsection, the Airport and Airway Trust Fund financing rate shall be zero with respect to taxes imposed during any period that the rate of the tax imposed by section 4091(b)(1) is 4.3 cents per gallon."

(d) FLOOR STOCKS TAXES ON AVIATION GASOLINE AND AVIATION FUEL.—

(1) IMPOSITION OF TAX.—In the case of any aviation liquid on which tax was imposed under section 4081 or 4091 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 before the tax effective date and which is held on such date by any person, there is hereby imposed a floor stocks tax of—

(A) 15 cents per gallon in the case of aviation gasoline, and

(B) 17.5 cents per gallon in the case of aviation fuel.

(2) LIABILITY FOR TAX AND METHOD OF PAYMENT.—

(A) LIABILITY FOR TAX.—A person holding, on the tax effective date, any aviation liquid to which the tax imposed by paragraph (1) applies shall be liable for such tax.

(B) METHOD OF PAYMENT.—The tax imposed by paragraph (1) shall be paid in such manner as the Secretary shall prescribe.

(C) TIME FOR PAYMENT.—The tax imposed by paragraph (1) shall be paid on or before the first day of the 5th month beginning after the tax effective date.

(3) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this subsection—

(A) TAX EFFECTIVE DATE.—The term "tax effective date" means the date which is 7 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(B) AVIATION LIQUID.—The term "aviation liquid" means aviation gasoline and aviation fuel.

(C) AVIATION GASOLINE.—The term "aviation gasoline" has the meaning given such term in section 4081 of such Code.

(D) AVIATION FUEL.—The term "aviation fuel" has the meaning given such term by section 4093 of such Code.

(E) HELD BY A PERSON.—Aviation liquid shall be considered as "held by a person" if title thereto has passed to such person (whether or not delivery to the person has been made).

(F) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Treasury or the Secretary's delegate.

(4) EXCEPTION FOR EXEMPT USES.—The tax imposed by paragraph (1) shall not apply to—

(A) aviation liquid held by any person on the tax effective date exclusively for any use for which a credit or refund of the entire tax imposed by section 4081 or 4091 of such Code (as the case may be) is allowable for such liquid purchased on or after such tax effective date for such use, or

(B) aviation fuel held by any person on the tax effective date exclusively for any use described in section 4092(b) of such Code.

(5) EXCEPTION FOR CERTAIN AMOUNTS OF FUEL.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—No tax shall be imposed by paragraph (1) on any aviation liquid held on the tax effective date by any person if the aggregate amount of such liquid (determined separately for aviation gasoline and aviation fuel) held by such person on such date does not exceed 2,000 gallons. The preceding sentence shall apply only if such person submits to the Secretary (at the time and in the manner required by the Secretary) such information as the Secretary shall require for purposes of this paragraph.

(B) EXEMPT FUEL.—Any liquid to which the tax imposed by paragraph (1) does not apply by reason of paragraph (4) shall not be taken into account under subparagraph (A).

(C) CONTROLLED GROUPS.—For purposes of this paragraph—

(i) CORPORATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—All persons treated as a controlled group shall be treated as 1 person.

(II) CONTROLLED GROUP.—The term "controlled group" has the meaning given such term by subsection (a) of section 1563 of such Code; except that for such purposes, the phrase "more than 50 percent" shall be substituted for the phrase "at least 80 percent" each place it appears in such subsection.

(ii) NONINCORPORATED PERSONS UNDER COMMON CONTROL.—Under regulations prescribed by the Secretary, principles similar to the principles of clause (i) shall apply to a group of persons under common control where 1 or more of such persons is not a corporation.

(6) OTHER LAWS APPLICABLE.—All provisions of law, including penalties, applicable with respect to the taxes imposed by section 4081 or 4091 of such Code shall, insofar as applicable and not inconsistent with the provisions of this subsection, apply with respect to the floor stocks taxes imposed by paragraph (1) to the same extent as if such taxes were imposed by such section 4081 or 4091, as the case may be.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATES.—

(1) FUEL TAXES.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply to periods beginning on or after the 7th day after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) TICKET TAXES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The amendments made by subsection (b) shall apply to transportation beginning on or after such 7th day.

(B) EXCEPTION FOR CERTAIN PAYMENTS.—Except as provided in subparagraph (C), the amendments made by subsection (b) shall not apply to any amount paid before such 7th day.

(C) PAYMENTS OF PROPERTY TRANSPORTATION TAX WITHIN CONTROLLED GROUP.—In the case of the tax imposed by section 4271 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, subparagraph (B) shall not apply to any amount paid by 1 member of a controlled group for transportation furnished by another member of such group. For purposes of the preceding sentence, all persons treated as a single employer under subsection (a) or (b) of section 52 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 shall be treated as members of a controlled group.

(f) APPLICATION OF LOOK-BACK SAFE HARBOR FOR DEPOSITS.—Nothing in the look-back safe harbor prescribed in Treasury Regulation section 40.6302(c)-1(c)(2) shall be construed to permit such safe harbor to be used with respect to any tax unless such tax was imposed throughout the look-back period.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER] and the gentleman from New York [Mr. RANGEL] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER].

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry. Is either the gentleman from Texas or the gentleman from New York opposed to the bill? If not, I would like to request the time in opposition.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman from New York opposed to the motion?

Mr. RANGEL. No, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman from Tennessee opposed?

Mr. HILLEARY. Yes, I am, Mr. Speaker, in its present form.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York [Mr. RANGEL] does not qualify as opposed. The Chair will recognize the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. HILLEARY] to manage the 20 minutes in opposition.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, may the chairman of the full committee advance time to the minority?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas may yield time by the minute or he may yield the gentleman such time as he may consume.

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I was prepared for the inquiry by the gentleman from Tennessee and I ask unanimous consent to yield 10 minutes of my time to the gentleman from New York [Mr. RANGEL] to assign as he may see fit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER].

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous matter on H.R. 668.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, today I bring before the House a bill, H.R. 668, the Airport and Airway Trust Fund Tax Reinstatement Act of 1997. This bipartisan legislation was requested by the administration and is urged by airport authorities and operators across the country to restore funding to the Airport and Airway Trust Fund.

It is critical that the House pass H.R. 668 without delay or change. Absent the additional trust fund revenues this bill provides, essential aviation capital programs, including safety enhancements, will not proceed beyond the end of February.

H.R. 668 corrects a \$1.2 billion shortfall in the trust fund and reinforces the trust fund finances by restoring temporarily, through September 30, 1997, the

10-percent passenger ticket tax and other Airport and Airway Trust Fund excise taxes which lapse after 1996. In addition, the bill renews expired authority for the transfer of aviation taxes from general revenues into the trust fund.

I cannot overstate the importance of moving this bill swiftly. Within 5 days the FAA will start sending out notices canceling or suspending contracts which involve safety expenditures and airport improvements. We do not have the luxury of time to deliberate alternatives which carry no guarantee of speedy consideration in this Chamber or in the Senate. Rather, an informal Committee Transportation Task Force is examining in depth the issue of long-term financing for our Federal aviation system so that this kind of crisis does not occur again.

So that my colleagues have a clear understanding of the consequences of delay or inaction, the Federal Aviation Administration has informed me that some 850 airports located in every State, Guam, and Puerto Rico will be impacted. Furthermore, of the \$1.3 billion total at risk, more than half is attributable to small- and medium-sized airports.

In summary, this bill addresses the safety concerns of the airports, pilots, and air travelers in every State. The House should also be aware that the Senate Finance Committee has already acted upon identical legislation to expedite Senate floor consideration of this measure and expected White House approval.

Again, I urge my colleagues to allow this bill to move forward immediately. A delay will only jeopardize important air safety improvements and, worse, cast doubt on Congress's ability to act responsibly and effectively where essential Government safety programs face sudden financial disruptions.

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of all of our Members, this is not a tax increase. This is a reinstitution of an expired provision. These funds are used for only one purpose, and that is our airports and airways. Passengers deserve to know that when they fly, they will fly safely, and this bill is essential in that regard.

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

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise to support our chairman in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, this bill expired because of an attempt at budgetary gimmickry that has almost jeopardized the safety of our airports and our passengers and our pilots, but that is behind us, and I think we have learned a lesson, and in order to ensure the safe operation of the Nation's air transportation system, I join with the chairman in sharing the urgency with which we act, and that is why this matter is on the suspension calendar.

This bill will extend a ticket tax through the end of September, 1997,

which will give the Congress and our committee an opportunity to come up with a long-term funding plan because, as pointed out by the chairman of the committee, this is merely the re-institution of an existing tax that nobody challenges is necessary if we are going to safeguard our airways.

The bill also extends the Treasury Department authority to transfer tax revenue to the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, which is a critical issue for the Federal Aviation Administration. Without the necessary transfer of tax revenue, the FAA will be unable to commit to capital projects as early as March, and March is, of course, just a couple of days away.

We have to make certain that there is confidence felt by Americans, and we have the responsibility to provide that for Americans who fly for work or for pleasure. As a matter of fact, it impedes the efficiency of our commerce, as we have to transfer our goods and services to all parts of our country and to the world.

I think it is very important that this tax be extended to give the committee an opportunity to assure this Congress and the Nation that this will not happen again and that we are going to work it out in such a way that it cannot happen again. I certainly know that Members on our side are prepared to work with the majority party and with the President in making certain that we come up with a proper solution of this very serious problem.

If it has not been said, I think the Congress should know that this bill passed out of the Committee on Ways and Means on a voice vote without objection.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 668, the Airport and Airway Trust Fund Tax Reinstatement Act. I oppose the bill in its present form precisely because, as its title indicates, it is a tax increase, a \$2.7 billion tax increase.

We will probably hear debate from supporters about how reasonable and sensible this tax increase is. We have already heard it is a user fee, and that it is. We may hear about how this is simply putting a tax back that has been in existence for many years. We may hear about how this is only a temporary extension of an old tax. We may hear about how there is a plan to make this an even better tax or user fee in the next fall. But one fact remains, Mr. Speaker. To quote a letter I received Monday from the National Taxpayers Union, quote, "This bill standing alone indisputably raises taxes."

□ 1430

To quote a letter I received Monday from Americans for Tax Reform, quote, "ATR does not support renewing this tax," unquote.

To quote a letter I received this morning from Citizens Against Government Waste, quote, "We are greatly

concerned that one of the first substantive pieces of legislation considered by the 105th Congress is one that will raise taxes. That is exactly what H.R. 668, the Airport and Airway Trust Fund Tax Reinstatement Act, will do, raise taxes on American travelers," unquote.

To quote another letter I received this morning, quote, "Citizens for a Sound Economy strongly oppose H.R. 668, the Airport and Airway Trust Fund Tax Reinstatement Act of 1997. This tax will cost U.S. taxpayers \$2.7 billion," unquote.

And just as I came to the floor someone handed me yet another letter from the American Conservative Union, and I will quote part of it:

"As it stands now, this legislation will have the effect of raising taxes on American consumers by another \$2.7 billion between now and the end of September 1997. We find it unconscionable that such legislation should be allowed to come to the floor of the House without an offsetting tax cut provision."

I know we can call this tax by many different names. We can call it an excise tax, we can call it a user fee, we can call it an assessment on air travelers, we can call it revenue enhancement. But you know, back home in Tennessee that old story about if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, talks like a duck, it is probably a duck. That is what we say back home, and that is what a lot of people say.

You can call this tax whatever you want. You can dress the tax up however you want. But it still quacks like a duck. It is not just me and the people of Tennessee calling this a tax, but the National Taxpayers Union, American Conservative Union, the Counsel for Citizens Against Government Waste, Citizens for a Sound Economy, and the Americans for Tax Reform also call it a tax.

Mr. Speaker, this year the Federal Government is expected to spend \$1 trillion 631 billion. The problem here is that we are not taxing Americans too little, but the Federal Government continues to spend too much.

Mr. Speaker, I do not understand what all the rush is about to raise this tax. The report filed by the Committee on Ways and Means clearly states the current balance in the trust fund is sufficient to fund the FAA's operating expenses to the end of the 1997 fiscal year. As I understand that, planes will continue to fly, flight controllers will continue to remain in their towers, and they will continue to provide safe and efficient air travel for Americans.

If the problem is that we will run out of funding for capital improvement projects at airports, that can be solved very quickly without any tax increase. I have been advised that if we pass simple transfer authority to the Treasury, capital projects will be able to continue for several months while we figure out how to get an agreement on a revenue-neutral bill to pass.

More than \$1 billion in excise taxes have been collected by the airlines last

fall, but they do not send the check to the Treasury until the end of this week. The problem we have is that the Treasury has no legal authority to transfer the money to the airport trust fund. We could pass a simple bill giving the Treasury the authority it needs to transfer the money to the airport trust fund. Then we can figure out how to give the American taxpayers a break, or at least not give them another black eye.

There is no reason why we need to be steamrolling taxpayers just to continue paving runways. Instead we should try to give them a break.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to oppose this tax increase.

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

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. RAMSTAD], a member of the committee.

Mr. RAMSTAD. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that this legislation before us today represents a bipartisan and unanimous effort on the part of the Committee on Ways and Means to find an immediate solution to the very real crisis threatening the solvency of the airport and airway trust fund.

In my home State of Minnesota, the Metropolitan Airports Commission was seriously concerned when the trust fund was expected to run out of money in June or July of this year. Now that we know the expected date of insolvency is March, there is absolutely no time for delay. And I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, as the No. 1 ranked Member of Congress last session by the National Taxpayers Union, I take a back seat to nobody when it comes to protecting American taxpayers. And as this letter I have, which I will submit for the RECORD, from Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform clearly states, this is not a tax increase, as the chairman also stated. It is the reinstatement of an existing and necessary tax.

Mr. Speaker, it is also worth noting that this is a temporary measure. A transportation task force, in fact, of the Committee on Ways and Means is working hard right now in developing fair alternatives to the present excise tax, and I hope a fair funding mechanism will be developed later this year in the context of FAA funding and our larger budget negotiations.

But while we consider the equities of reforming the system, it is absolutely crucial for national air safety that we temporarily and immediately restore the aviation excise taxes. Our Nation's safety depends on this action, and it is too important, Mr. Speaker, to fall victim to political posturing or political grandstanding.

I urge my colleagues to do the right thing for Americans who travel by air, and support this bill.

The letter referred to is as follows:

AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM,
Washington, DC, February 24, 1997.

Congressman JOHN BOEHNER,
House Republican Conference.

DEAR JOHN: I sincerely appreciate your commitment to the Pledge and all of the work that you have done to uphold and strengthen it. You have been one of the leaders in the House of Representatives concerning the Pledge, and I wanted you to know that your efforts are recognized.

I would also like to thank you for your question regarding the pledge and the air ticket tax. Although ATR does not support renewing this tax, voting for it will not violate the Federal Taxpayer Protection Pledge, because it does not "increase the marginal income tax rates for individuals and/or businesses," and it does not "reduc[e] or eliminat[e] deductions and credits." In addition, ATR will not include this vote in our next rating of Congress.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thanks again for all of your help!

Sincerely,

GROVER G. NORQUIST,
President.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. NEAL] a member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, today we are debating a very serious piece of legislation. This legislation reinstates Federal aviation taxes which expired at the end of the year. Due to our failure to reach a budget agreement and only the willingness to enact short-term extensions, we are now faced with this serious situation.

The House Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Finance Committee, acting in a bipartisan manner, moved quickly on this legislation, and we have indeed offered what I think is a correction. But unfortunately there are those who will have people believe that this is a tax increase. This is an extension of a tax that expired because of the Congress' inability to promptly renew the tax.

I do not think any of us here are in favor of raising taxes, and what we must remember is that this is not a new tax. One of the criticisms frequently leveled in this institution of tax increases as they are proposed is that they contribute to unnecessary spending and that there is no accounting of how indeed those dollars are spent.

Well, that is certainly untrue of Federal aviation taxes. Revenue from these taxes are placed in the airport and airway trust fund, and I underscore the term trust fund. The fund provides 100 percent of the Federal funding for airport improvements, facilities, equipment, research, engineering, planning, and development projects and about 75 percent of the Federal Aviation Administration's operating funds. This fund is solely based upon aviation excise tax revenue. We ought to act promptly.

Last week the FAA stopped all fiscal 1997 airport improvement grants, and in my State of Massachusetts this affects 14 projects.

The extension of this Federal aviation tax is an issue which impacts all

of our constituents, as we know, from time to time based upon a headline that grips all of us. We all benefit from safe and effective air transport.

I have a letter from Chairman Saltmarsh of the Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission and I think a line from this letter succinctly summarizes this debate.

If the aviation excise taxes are not reinstated quickly, the FAA fiscal crisis could result in a degradation of air transportation safety.

We should heed this message and enact the reinstatement of the aviation ticket taxes. The extension through the end of this fiscal year serves all of our constituents well, and I currently serve on a task force which is reviewing all of these excise tax proposals.

I urge my colleagues today to let common sense prevail. It is our responsibility to reinstate these aviation taxes. These taxes are of necessary purpose and provide a purpose and service which benefits all of us.

I also think it is interesting that a year ago we were in the midst of a stalemate in this institution over how much authority the Secretary of the Treasury ought to have. Today the suggestion is being made in one quarter that we ought to refrain from action on this aviation tax proposal, and instead turn the authority for this issue over to the Treasury Secretary so that he might assemble a solution. That is not the role of the executive branch in this instance.

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. PAUL].

(Mr. PAUL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, if I could be convinced that this piece of legislation was truly the honoring of a user fee, I believe I could give it some support. I believe user fees and trust funds may be a way to go in many of the areas of our system that overtaxes and overspends. But I have come to the conclusion that this so-called reinstatement is a tax increase. Not only would I not be satisfied with even maintaining a tax, I would like to see taxes go down. The fact that there will be \$2.7 billion more extracted from the American taxpayers, I feel compelled to oppose this piece of legislation.

But at the same time, I would like to put in a good word for the trust funds. Truly, if we would follow our commitment to the trust funds and not use these trust funds for spending in the general revenues, I think we would all be better off. Whether it is the Social Security trust fund or whether it is the highway trust fund or the airport trust fund or the port trust fund, I think it would be much better if they were true user fees, and since I conclude that this is not a true user fee and it is an actual increase of taxes going into the general revenues, I feel compelled to oppose this piece of legislation.

I urge my colleagues to vote no on H.R. 668.

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. DUNCAN].

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the reinstatement of the 10 percent ticket tax. I want to commend the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER] for his leadership on this issue. Chairman Archer is chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, has never supported an increase in taxes, and neither have I.

We have the safest and most efficient aviation system in the world, but it is growing by leaps and bounds due to great increases in both air passenger and air cargo traffic. We simply cannot operate a safe, efficient, rapidly growing system for free. We have to spend money on it, and this means either some type of tax or some type of user fee or some combination of both.

Speaker GINGRICH has asked the Subcommittee on Aviation, which I chair, to look into a user fee system. We have already held 2 days of hearings on this and have heard from many outstanding witnesses, but we are still a long way from reaching any type of consensus on this. In the meantime while we consider user fees or other types of taxes, we need to reinstate the 10 percent ticket tax.

Aviation is one of the few major fields in which the United States still leads the world, but we need to support Chairman ARCHER and take this very necessary step today to make sure that we maintain a safe and efficient aviation system.

I urge my colleagues to support the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER] and the Committee on Ways and Means and reinstate this tax. This is not a tax increase and we need to take this step at this time.

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, how much time is remaining on my side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SOLUMON). The gentleman from Tennessee has 12 minutes remaining, the gentleman from Texas has 3 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from New York has 4 minutes remaining. So the gentleman from Tennessee has substantial time ahead of them.

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman from New York wish to speak again on this before we wind up?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman from Tennessee have no further speakers at this point?

Mr. HILLEARY. I have no further speakers other than myself.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I will leave it up to you how we handle this. I have one more speaker and I assume we want to end it all together, so if the gentleman intends to use all of his time, I think it is important to know that.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas has the right to close, and the gentleman from Tennessee has the right to speak just before the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. RANGEL. I only have one more speaker.

Mr. HILLEARY. I will be speaking and I will be consuming the rest of my time and then yielding back.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman from Texas have no further speakers except himself to close?

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time other than my closing speech.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In that case, the Chair will recognize the gentleman from New York to close for his side.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I have one speaker. I did want to make some closing comments.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. OBERSTAR], who is the ranking senior member on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

□ 1445

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I thank our Democratic leader on the committee for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, to characterize this bill as a tax increase is a disservice to truth, to history, and to aviation. The truth simply is that this bill represents the reinstatement of a fee. It is called a tax, but it has been treated as a fee, a fee that was the unintended victim of the budgetary train wreck that we engaged in at the end of 1995 and the beginning of 1996. Nobody intended that this fee, that these funds should lapse. It is only fair, it is only fair to air travelers that we reinstate this fee and these funds into the Aviation Trust Fund.

The history that we would be disserving is that in 1970 air travelers of this country, through the Congress, agreed to impose a fee to be deposited in a trust fund like the Highway Trust Fund for the purposes of aviation, to serve the needs of a growing sector of our economy, which sector today represents \$600 billion, 10 percent of our gross domestic product in the United States.

To allow this fee to lapse and the funding that goes into the Aviation Trust Fund to lapse would be a disservice to aviation. It would mean that there would be no money for airport construction unless we are prepared to appropriate funds out of the general revenues, which, in effect, would be a real tax increase on the rest of the American economy. There would be no funds for airport improvement projects, runways, taxiways, overlays, parking aprons on the side of airports.

There would be no funds to continue the modernization of the air traffic control system, the \$32 billion modernization program which we get a monthly report on the status; 87 to 90 percent of a \$32 billion program is already in place and we are making progress toward finishing the job by the end of this decade; and air traffic controllers would not be paid.

All of us in this body who travel on weekends would find our travel schedules grinding to a halt unless we are

prepared to appropriate funds from some other source. Again, air travelers agreed to impose this fee on themselves in 1970. For 27 years this revenue stream has funded the needs of aviation.

As the former chairman of the Subcommittee on Aviation, I say those funds are wisely invested in stimulating the most dynamic sector of the Nation's economy, which in international affairs generates for the United States a huge surplus balance of payments in aviation trade, in cargo and passengers with the Pacific Rim and the European Community, and we ought not to do such a disservice to aviation, to that important economic sector, by allowing this fee to expire.

So I commend the chairman of the committee for undertaking this initiative, and our Democratic leader for moving it forward. We look forward to working with the committee on developing an alternative means of financing air traffic control in the coming months.

Mr. Speaker, I am in strong support of this measure, and I appreciate it being scheduled in an expeditious manner. With this bill, the aviation trust fund will not go broke a month from now. If the bill is not passed, there will be a forced curtailment of about three-fourths of our planned and already appropriated aviation capital development spending for the balance of this fiscal year.

We are responding to a crisis created when the taxes expired at the end of last December and the airline industry, legally, did not remit the taxes collected last fall until this week. But traveling public needs to understand that this is a created crisis, not one that just happened.

Rather than provide a steady stream of revenues to fund most of the Federal Government's aviation safety and security programs and the operation of the air traffic control system, the Congress allowed the aviation taxes to expire twice in the past 14 months, and with this bill, there is the distinct possibility that the taxes will expire again 7 months from now.

We have fallen into the mode of funding long-term capital improvements and the day-in-and-day-out operations of the Federal Aviation Administration in a hand-to-mouth fashion. This is no way to proceed.

We should be establishing a long-term source of funding for the Nation's aviation programs, so that we are not in what has grown to become a perpetual funding crisis. The reason we are not doing so is clear: Our budget scorekeeping rules will permit these expired taxes to be counted as new revenue when they are reinstated, and hence, under our budget scorekeeping rules, the Congress can forgo, much more easily, tough budget and tax choices later. This is a neat trick; a cute gimmick; but it plays games with our Nation's aviation system.

There is no choice but to support this bill, but we should be doing something for a much longer term. And if we need to change our system of funding our aviation programs when we get recommendations from the National Civil Aviation Review Commission later this year, let us do so. But we should not have to do so in the artificially created crisis atmosphere that we will find ourselves at the end of this fiscal year.

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SCARBOROUGH].

Mr. Scarborough. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Tennessee for yielding me this time.

Let me say first of all that as a father of two children, ages 9 and 6, as somebody that goes up in the air two times a week, three times a week, every time I step onto an airplane I obviously am concerned, because I do not want my boys growing up without a father. The more I travel, the more I realize I am taking my life into my own hands.

Despite that fact, I think that we have come to a point as a country where we are taxing our citizens 50.2 percent of every dollar they earn. This is another \$3 billion tax increase, any way you want to put it, that is not being offset right now.

Let me say that on any tax policy, I trust the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee more than anybody else, and if the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER] had his way over the past 2 years, America would be on its way to tax reform in such a way that would save the United States of America and make us the strongest Nation in the world.

I would vote for the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER] for President 2000, but he is not the man who is going to be making the final decisions on whether we can offset the \$3 billion that we need to offset. That man is on the other side of Pennsylvania Avenue. He has demagogued the tax issue for 2 years, and we cannot trust the administration to play straight.

So I refuse to take part in voting for any bill that will make Americans pay more than the 50.2 percent of every dollar that they earn in the future. I hope that we can vote down this bill and that Chairman Archer can be given the leeway he needs to go ahead and find the \$3 billion to offset the tax increase, because I will tell my colleagues this: Neither Chairman ARCHER, neither the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. HILLEARY] nor myself came up to Washington to raise taxes any more than what the other side of the aisle has been doing for the past 30 years. So I respectfully will vote against this bill and would ask other conservatives to do the same.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. HILLEARY] for proving that any issue coming before this House can be debated and that there are two sides to every story. However, the gentleman should know that as a result of this tax expiring, it has not been of any lesser cost to the traveler, and so the airports are collecting this money and it is not being transferred for the purposes that the Congress intended.

So my colleague may get caught in a Catch-22 that in your effort to reduce

the cost to passengers, that is not happening, and at the same time you are not providing the service which this Congress has an obligation to provide. So I would hope that the Members take that into consideration in supporting this bill.

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the remainder of my time.

Let me just finish up this debate on my side by commending the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER]. I would echo what the gentleman from Florida said. I know that he is not for tax increases; everybody knows that, and I know he has worked hard on this. I am going to support an increase in funding for the FAA and airline safety. That is not really at issue.

I just want to say, though, that this has been a tax that we have reinstated before. This is reinstating it this time, it has been reinstated before. The last time we reinstated it, we did so with a corresponding tax cut so that it was not really a net tax increase. That is all we are asking for this time, is a corresponding tax cut.

I do not really care what we call it. We can call it a tax increase, we can call it a user fee increase, we can call it whatever we want. I do not think that is a big issue; it is really a mute issue. I think a lot has been said about airline safety. That is a mute issue. Everybody is for that, and they are not in danger of losing funding that would bring their operations below any kind of safety standards. But this is a big issue to me, and it kind of goes to the essence of what I think we are as conservatives.

Mr. Speaker, when we left this town last fall, we were asked to vote for billions of dollars of new spending that was going to eventually go on the backs of our grandchildren, and we had to do that because we were being beaten up back home politically and we had to get back to defend ourselves. Sometimes you have to do those things. Sometimes you have to take a step backward so you can live to fight again another day, and we did live in the elections and we are here to fight another day. This is that other day. We took that step backwards last fall so we could take two steps forward in the 105th Congress.

Well, this is the first substantive bill that we are going to be voting on, and it is a \$2.7 billion increase in revenue, however you characterize it. Is this what the conservative 105th Congress is going to stand for, if the first substantive bill we vote on is a tax increase?

It goes to the very essence of what we are as conservatives. We are for balancing the budget and shrinking the Federal Government so that those folks back in Tennessee or Florida, or wherever, that are working two jobs just trying to make ends meet, both spouses working two jobs, do not have yet another program that they have to pay for.

Mr. Speaker, this is a tax on people who buy jet fuel and it is a tax on people who buy tickets from airlines, but these are real people, ordinary people; these are not high income people, all of them. I had a lady a couple of years ago, about a year-and-a-half ago call me, and her son was being sent off to Bosnia and he had been in the Army and he had been in Korea, and he had just come back, was in California, and then he got orders to go to Bosnia. She could not afford to go out to California to see him and she was distraught. She could not afford that ticket, at whatever cost it was. I managed to find her a way to get out there to see him, but there are other folks. The grandmother who wants to go out and see that grandchild that has just been born, she has never seen that grandchild.

These are not all high income people. These are regular folks. This is another increase on their backs, call it a user fee, call it a tax, call it whatever we want. This is not really something that I oppose, the increase of this user fee/tax. But we must have an offsetting tax cut so it is not yet another tax increase, so that this very bond, this very cord that bonds all conservatives.

Mr. Speaker, we disagree on abortion and this and that and the other, but one thing that we all agree on is that we do not want to feed the Federal Government, that monster, any more money in any form. That is the one thing we can all agree on, and the first thing that we are being asked to vote on of substance in the 105th Congress is an enhancement or increase of that fee or that tax or whatever you want to call it.

That is why I rise in opposition to this bill as it is presently formed. I would move to support it if it had an offsetting tax decrease.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the position of the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. HILLEARY], but I must say that the funds that will be raised from this tax go for a very special purpose, and they are limited to go for that very special purpose, and that is to provide safety for the air travelers.

I wish that we could have tickets sold all over this country without a tax in it so that we could have lower air fares for every passenger, but it takes money to build a safety infrastructure, and if we do not pass this bill, many improvements in safety infrastructure will not occur.

Antiquated radar systems that have already had repairs will not be replaced with modern radar systems. I would not want to be on that plane that does not get that infrastructure as a result of failing to pass this tax. Deicing capabilities in airports across this country that need to be available will not be done, and on and on and on.

Yes, the air traffic controllers will be there, but what kind of computer

backup, what kind of technology are they going to have? Will we continue to depend upon computers that still use the old vacuum tube, which none are made in the U.S. today? We have to go to Poland to buy the replacement, repair parts, because we have not updated those computers, and that now will be put on the sidelines if we do not pass this bill.

The Americans for Tax Reform, and I have a letter here signed by Grover Farquist, the president, says that they support this bill, that this is not an increase in the personal or corporate income tax. Members should know that.

I am sure the gentleman from Tennessee did not intentionally misrepresent their position. But this is a good bill, it is a needed bill. It is a bill that will pass sometime this year if it does not pass now, and in the meantime, if we do not pass it now, we are potentially jeopardizing improvements in the safety infrastructure that is essential to all of us as air travelers.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the passage of the bill.

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 668. This measure is critical to ensure that funds will continue to flow to the aviation trust fund. The Memphis and Shelby County airport authority, which is located in my congressional district is due to receive approximately \$11,000,000 in airport improvement grants this fiscal year to construct a new third parallel runway at Memphis International Airport. The airport authority is also expecting an additional \$4,000,000 for the Noise Compatibility Program.

Mr. Speaker, my congressional district is one of the Nation's top distribution centers in part because the largest cargo airline in the world operates from our international airport. H.R. 668 is essential to commerce not only in the Ninth Congressional District but throughout the Nation and the world. I urge my colleagues to vote for H.R. 668.

Mr. GINGRICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of a short-term reimposition of the aviation excise taxes through the end of the current fiscal year. I want to take this opportunity to reiterate my strong support of the work underway by Chairman BILL ARCHER's Ways and Means Committee Transportation Tax Task Force, led by Congressman MAC COLLINS, to examine alternative means of assessing aviation costs. The short-term renewal which we are considering today in no way diminishes the efforts of the task force to identify a long-term solution to FAA financing. This extension will provide the task force with the time needed to study the issues and make recommendations to Chairman Archer.

I commend Chairman ARCHER and Representative COLLINS for the fair, thorough and deliberative manner in which the task force is conducting its review, and I look forward to reviewing the task force's report.

Aviation is a vital sector of our national economy. If we are to maintain our preeminent aviation status in the world, we must ensure that the FAA has the resources to procure state-of-the-art equipment and employ the most efficient processes. At the same time, we must determine an equitable and efficient way possible to charge users for aviation services and cover the costs of the FAA.

This short-term extension will give FAA the necessary resources to perform its important duties as we examine and develop possible alternative methods of financing the FAA. I urge my colleagues to support the short-term extension and the long-term effort to reform FAA operations and financing.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I join Chairman Archer and the ranking member in strong support of H.R. 668. It is vital that the House take action today to reinforce funding for the airport and airway trust fund.

H.R. 668 temporarily restores the 10 percent passenger ticket tax and other airport and airway trust fund excise taxes which lapsed last December 31. This legislation extends these excise taxes through September 30, 1997. Prompt enactment of this legislation is essential to our Nation's air transportation system. Failure to do so would result in the airport trust fund having inadequate revenues to support airport capital improvements and safety enhancements beyond March 1997.

While H.R. 668 addresses the short-term solvency of the airport and airway trust fund, Congress must do a better job of ensuring a dependable revenue stream to support our Nation's air transportation system.

The excise taxes supporting the airport trust fund first expired at midnight on December 31, 1995. Despite pleas from some of us for immediate action, Congress sat on its hands for nearly 9 months before reinstating the excise taxes on August 27, 1996. Then, 5 months later, Congress let the excise taxes lapse again. Now, once again, we're temporarily extending the taxes until September 30.

Certainly, there's a lot of interest in restructuring the ticket taxes that support the airport trust fund. I personally believe the current excise tax is inequitable and should be restructured so that the financial cost of maintaining our Nation's air transportation system is more fairly spread among those who use the system. Congress should explore all the options to make the ticket tax as fair as possible. I hope my colleagues will agree that we should resolve this matter promptly so this debate will never again disrupt the air transportation system.

Mr. GANSKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of extending the user fees that fund the our airports and airways. Extending this program renews our commitment to providing our constituents with safe and modern air travel without breaking our commitment against new taxes.

The surcharge on airline tickets has been in place for more than a quarter of a century and is a critical step in ensuring that those who use the airway infrastructure contribute to its maintenance and improvement.

The ticket tax expired at the end of last year. At the time, Congress chose to delay action on extension of the tax. Congress and the administration agreed that there was sufficient money in the trust funds to cover expenses between then and the start of fiscal year 1998. It was thought that during the intervening months, Congress could consider changes to the ways in which money is collected for the trust funds and include those reforms in a broader budget bill.

Unfortunately, however, the need for immediate action has become apparent. If the surcharge on airline tickets is not immediately extended, there could be significant shortfalls in

these critical accounts, delaying needed airport improvement programs such as those going on in Des Moines today.

More importantly, a depletion of the trust fund poses a very real and very serious safety threat to our already strained air traffic infrastructure. I believe that we will be gambling with public safety if we fail to act promptly to extend the ticket tax.

The ticket tax has been a regular feature of airline travel since 1970. Although it lapsed at the end of last year, passage of this bill is not a new tax. It is an extension of an existing one which has expired.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this important legislation.

□ 1500

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SOLOMON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 668.

The question was taken.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

PERMISSION FOR SPEAKER TO ENTERTAIN MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1997

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that on Wednesday, February 26, 1997, the Speaker be authorized to entertain motions to suspend the rules and pass the following two bills: H.R. 624, the Armored Car Reciprocity Amendments of 1997; and H.R. 497, to repeal the Federal charter of group hospitalization and medical services.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

PERMISSION TO INSERT PROGRAM AND REMARKS OF MEMBER REPRESENTING THE HOUSE AT GEORGE WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY CEREMONIES

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the program and the remarks of the gentlewoman from Maryland [Mrs. MORELLA], the Member representing the House of Representatives at the wreath-laying ceremony at the Washington Monument for the observance of George Washington's birthday on Thursday, February 20, 1997, be inserted in today's CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE WASHINGTON
(By Congresswoman Connie Morella)

Honored guests, ladies and gentlemen.

We gather here today at this monument in this great federal city of Washington to

honor George Washington, the father and founder of our country. He was a soldier, a nation builder, and a statesman—and, thanks to that mythmaker Parson Weems, a man who could never tell a lie.

As every school child knows, along with that cherry tree tale, Washington was Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Armies, and led the American colonies in their war of revolution against the British Crown.

For eight long years, through many defeats and hardships, Washington led his army of farmers, shopkeepers, and backwoodsmen against the mighty forces of King George III. Many doubted he would succeed, but he stayed the course, never wavering until finally the British were defeated and American independence was won.

(As an aside, I have to remind all the Virginians present that Maryland too has a certain connection to Washington. Monumentally and personally.)

I would like to point out that most of the marble facing for the monument came from Maryland—with a little help from Massachusetts!

As a Marylander, I am very proud to also point out that General Washington, after saying goodbye to his officers in New York City, traveled to Annapolis, Maryland, where the Congress was sitting. Two days before Christmas in 1783, Washington resigned as Commander-in-chief "with satisfaction the Appointment I accepted with diffidence. . . Having now finished the work assigned me, I now retire from the great theater of Action." Or so he thought.

Washington hoped to return to his beloved Mount Vernon, there to resume his life as a country gentleman and farmer. But, as we all know, our struggling young country needed him again, and again he answered the call to serve: to ensure our newly won independence, to help transform the government of the new nation from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution, and then to lead the new republic through its earliest days as its President.

Incidentally, a few of our Founding Fathers were rather smitten by royalty. In fact, John Adams proposed that we call our chief executive "High Royal Highness, the President of the United States, and the Protector of the Liberties of the States." How's that for a title? Fortunately, Washington prevailed, and the title became simply "Mr. President."

Today, we search for role models, for leaders whose steadfastness, character, and selflessness will inspire our children to be good citizens, to use their talents in the service of their communities and country. My friends, we serve our children and grandchildren well when we celebrate the life and career of George Washington.

In 1814, fifteen years after Washington's death, Thomas Jefferson reflected upon his friend, our Friend President:

"His mind was great and powerful. . . no judgment was ever sounder. . . Perhaps the strongest feature in his character was prudence, never acting until every circumstance, every consideration, was maturely weighed, refraining if he saw a doubt, but, when once decided, going through with his purpose. . . His integrity was most pure, his justice the most inflexible I have ever known. . . He was indeed, in every sense of the words, a wise, a good, and a great man."

Ladies and gentlemen, I can add nothing more.

PRESIDENT GEORGE WASHINGTON
265TH BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCE

Thursday, February 20, 1997, 11:00 am,
Washington Monument, Washington, DC.

PROGRAM

Opening: Arnold Goldstein, Superintendent, National Capital Parks Central.

Presentation of Colors: Joint Armed Services Color Guard.

To the Colors: Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps.

Pledge of Allegiance: Cub Scout Stephen Strenio, Cub Scout Pack 461, Bethesda, Maryland.

Welcome: Superintendent Goldstein.

Musical Selection: Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps.

Remarks: Russell Train, First Vice President, Washington National Monument Society.

Remarks: Terry Carlstrom, Acting Regional Director, National Capital Region, National Park Service.

Remarks: Honorable Constance Morella, Maryland Eighth District, U.S. House of Representatives.

Presentation of the Wreaths: The Wreath of the U.S. House of Representatives, Honorable Constance Morella. The Wreath of the Washington National Monument Society, Russell Train. The Wreath of the National Park Service, Terry Carlstrom.

TAPS

RETIRING OF THE COLORS

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. (Mr. GEKAS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

WITHDRAWAL OF REQUEST FOR SPECIAL ORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. (Mr. GEKAS). The gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. GEKAS] withdraws his request for a special order.

THE ISSUE OF EDUCATION AND THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, we are again quite pleased to observe that the bipartisan consensus on education is rolling forward. I heard this morning a colleague speak of a new initiative to get Congressmen to go into the classrooms.

We have had such initiatives in New York, where they want you to be a principal or teacher for a day, for some time. These kinds of initiatives are minuscule in terms of the overall problem of improving education, but they are important. It is important to have as much contact as possible.

I understand over the weekend there was a special conference held in Chicago on education as it impacts upon the black community. Nowhere is it more important than in the black community that we take a close look at what is happening with education. The crisis in education is very much the number one crisis in the African-American community.