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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. EWING].

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, March 4, 1997.

I hereby designate the Honorable THOMAS W. EWING to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leader limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California [Mr. FILNER] for 5 minutes.

THE BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE SAFETY AND CONGESTION RELIEF ACT

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I was honored yesterday to join Senator BARBARA BOXER in San Diego, CA, in my district as we announced historic legislation to improve our Nation's border transportation infrastructure. Today, Senator BOXER and I will introduce this legislation that we have called the Border Infrastructure Safety and Congestion Relief Act.

Mr. Speaker, it is critical that Federal funding be found for border high-

way and rail projects without affecting California's Federal highway assistance. Our legislation would establish a \$500 million border infrastructure fund to pay for construction and improvements to border area infrastructure and would fund Federal loan guarantees to rehabilitate shortline freight railroads.

Historically, U.S. investment in its transportation infrastructure has resulted in a system of roads, highways, bridges, railroads, airports, and seaports that is unmatched around the world. This transportation system has been crucial in keeping America's economy strong.

Similarly, we know that border infrastructure is absolutely essential for the continued economic development of my city and county of San Diego, and we cannot afford to see America reverse this infrastructure investment policy now. Yet that is precisely what is happening because of Federal inaction on border infrastructure issues. Further inaction will place our national transportation infrastructure and our economic well-being in great jeopardy.

Federal mandates regarding trade and immigration have placed a tremendous strain on roads, bridges, highways, and rail lines that simply cannot accommodate the increased traffic that results from these decisions. State Route 905 in San Diego and the reestablishment of the San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railroad are just two such unfunded mandates in the city of San Diego.

By order of the Federal Government, all commercial traffic traveling between San Diego and Tijuana, the two largest cities on the United States-Mexico border, uses a city street called Otay Mesa Road. Though it is currently only a four-lane street, this road carries hundreds of thousands of trucks every week. It is time that the Federal Government devoted its resources to establishing an effective, efficient, and

safe highway connection to our Federal Interstate System.

The San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railroad would establish a direct and important transcontinental commercial rail link between San Diego and the rest of the United States. This link is critical for the economic development of our port and for creation of thousands of jobs. Both priorities are high on the list for the city and county of San Diego, the San Diego Association of Governments, our chamber of commerce, our port and business and political leaders all through our county.

With this infrastructure in place, San Diego would achieve its rightful status as a world class, 21st-century city with an open door to the great future of the Pacific rim trade. Without it, America's sixth largest city is relegated to a "bedroom community" status with no door to the vast world just outside its doorstep.

The lesson is simple. The Federal Government must take responsibility for its trade policies and accept the consequences of its action. We must stop passing the infrastructure buck.

I am glad to say there is a glimmer of hope, however. The Clinton administration has heard our pleas and will soon announce its proposals to fund border construction and trade corridor improvements in the Infrastructure Safety and Congestion Relief Act. We welcome the administration's response and we look forward to their recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, Senator BOXER and I are taking the necessary steps to accept our own Federal responsibility and will be working together with all interested parties to begin addressing this Federal obligation. We strongly welcome and encourage Congress and the Clinton administration to join with us.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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