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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 (Mrs. BIGGERT).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,

July 17, 2000.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JUDY BIGGERT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 8. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to phaseout the estate and gift taxes over a 10-year period.

H.R. 4391. An act to amend title 4 of the United States Code to establish sourcing requirements for State and local taxation of mobile telecommunication services.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 4205. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2001 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendment to the bill (H.R. 4205) "An Act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2001 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe

personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes," requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. WARNER, Mr. THURMOND, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. SANTORUM, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. HUTCHINSON, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. BYRD, Mr. ROBB, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. CLELAND, Ms. LANDRIEU, and Mr. REED, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, 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 leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

GAS PRICES

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, I am here to speak on a growing controversy, the controversy of who is to blame for the high gas prices, particularly in the Midwest, the high spikes. Some say it is big oil and others say it is the result of the EPA forcing through Phase II formulated gasoline.

Let us this afternoon analyze the facts and begin to see where the responsibility lies. Let me cite from an internal Energy Department memo that proves that the administration knew that the new formulated gasoline, RFG, as required by EPA was a major reason for the spikes in the Midwest.

The memo was circulated while the administration was publicly blasting the big oil companies for gouging Americans. The Washington Times obtained the June 5 memo that was written for Secretary Richardson of the Department of Energy by the Department's acting policy director, Ms. Kenderdine.

This memo mirrors what analysts and oil companies have been stating; the mix of high demand and low supply has led to high prices for all gasoline. We all realize that; that makes sense. Of course, that is part of the cycle in a free market experience. The disturbing part of that memo goes on to say, and let me quote, Madam Speaker, "the Milwaukee and Chicago areas supply situation is further affected by, among other things, an RFG formulation specific to the area that is more difficult to produce."

Despite the clear-cut facts in the memo, the administration has claimed that the price hikes and spikes were unexplainable. In fact, they have openly speculated that it is probably big business beating up on poor citizens again. When, in fact, it is big government beating up on the American taxpayers again.

Refineries have been working to capacity to produce a new EPA-mandated gasoline and have been strained to meet the summer demands. This has left reserve supplies in a dangerous position.

According to the DOE memo, Chicago refineries do not have the capacity to step up production when there is a shortage and the specifically formulated gasoline mixed with the ethanol in the region could not be imported from other areas because few make the unique blend of fuel.

The most damaging evidence is the conclusion in that memo from June 5 that supplies were sufficient to meet overall demand at the time. The market was "sufficiently tight," he went

□ 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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on later to say "that any disruption in the distribution system could contribute to Phase II RFG shortages" throughout the summer. So there we have it, that is where the spikes came from.

The White House has attempted to rely on a strategy to deflect blame from the real culprit, themselves. Considering the gasoline problems facing Americans today, I am very surprised at the timing of the EPA and this administration to move forward with the implementation of this new blend, this RFG Phase II.

I do not think the administration intentionally did this, but I am not sure. Where is their energy plan today? Where are the steps that could have prevented this from happening? Why did the EPA simply not postpone changing the gas formulas until such a time as the oil market had leveled off? Also, why did St. Louis, Missouri receive a waiver while, to my knowledge, no other city did?

Another shocking piece of this show is on Friday, June 30, the EPA released in a proposed rulemaking a comment period on whether reformulated gasoline is needed to meet the air quality standards. In other words, they are saying is this even needed. What? I mean, here they are mandating they be put in place, yet now they are issuing a memo to say is it needed. You mean to tell me that they insisted on moving forward with Phase II of RFG without knowing if they even needed to keep the program?

When will the EPA do their homework before they force regulations upon the American people? It appears to me from the evidence that the spiked prices in the Midwest were due to the EPA forcing a new formulation, a new blend of gasoline, during this time of high OPEC prices and low supplies.

The EPA should accept responsibility for putting the public through the expensive process of reformulated gasoline without proof that the gasoline would help improve our air and should withhold moving forward with any other new RFG regulations in any other cities.

Madam Speaker, the EPA and Department of Energy must formulate a plan and study to make sure their plan is effective before they gouge the American people at the pumps.

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, the Federal Government has no greater priority than to be a good partner to promote livable communities.

The morning paper carried a story about another independent study to chart the ecological vital signs of our national park systems.

Madam Speaker, I think this is an important area to pose attention to,

first, because it shows how the Federal Government can lead by example, and, second, it serves as a powerful refutation that somehow the United States, being a huge and wealthy Nation, does not have to worry about things like sprawl and congestion, unplanned growth and loss of farmland, that we just pave more, continue to expand, create more of whatever land we wish of farm, housing or roads.

Madam Speaker, it is reminiscent of Alice in Wonderland's experience with the Mad Hatter's tea party. "Yes, that's it" said the Hatter with a sigh, "it's always tea time and we've no time to wash the things between whiles."

"Then you keep moving round, I suppose?" said Alice.

"Exactly so," said the Hatter, "as the things get used up."

"But what happens when you come to the beginning again?" Alice ventured to ask.

"Suppose we change the subject," the March Hare interrupted, yawning. "I'm getting tired of this. I vote the young lady tells us a story."

Our tea party with the built and natural environment is not solved with more stories. We are going to have to face realities in our mature cities, small town America, fraying suburbs, even in our national parks. There are limits to the strains we can put on the land in our transportation systems.

The numbers are staggering in our national parks and other federally-managed sites. In 1997, over 370 million visitors increasingly jammed on clogged parking lots, jammed highways, fragile and irreplaceable resources suffering damage from too many vehicles and too many people. Nearby gateways communities are also negatively impacted by trafficking, decreased air quality, but there is a new trend in thinking about how we solve these problems.

Part of the TEA-21 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century called for a coordination and study between the Department of Transportation and the Secretary of the Interior. They have already produced recommendations for public transportation services at 128 sites that will enhance the visitor experience and protect the environment.

Madam Speaker, this new broach to transportation has already produced tangible results in a number of areas.

The Zion National Park in Utah, which has suffered from severe congestion, gridlock and destruction of natural resources, has helped to implement a new program, a shuttle bus system initiated in May of this year helps protect the fragile natural resources and protect visitors away as they visit from the canyon and provide services to the gateway community of Springdale.

The National Park Service has proposed a light rail transit system for the south rim of the Grand Canyon. It will allow visitors to leave their cars out-

side the park and ride the light rail train to a canyon view information plaza, there they can view exhibits, ride alternatively-fueled vehicles and hike along the canyon's rim. Construction has already begun on the information plaza in April, and the light rail system is expected to be in place by the spring of 2004.

It is also a priority to reduce traffic congestion in the Yosemite National Park. It is already implemented a 2-year demonstration program for a regional transportation system that would allow visitors to leave their cars outside the park and travel by shuttle bus into and around the Yosemite Valley.

Together activities like this will reduce reliance on private automobiles for visitors, allow for sustainable use and enjoyment of our public lands, improve the livability and quality of life in nearby communities, and allow visitors to better enjoy their experience.

Unlike the Mad Hatter, we cannot continue to just move to the next place at the party. Fortunately, this leadership shows how we can achieve this, not just for national parks, but as a model for American communities to make them safer, healthier and more economically secure.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 41 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Lord, our God, our history as a people has been great. We are humbled by reflecting upon the events of the past. Fill us with hope and vision.

Preserve us from making the mistakes of the past. Grant us greater judgment that we may be children born of freedom and strong in virtue.

May we honor the heroic men and women of the past who, when insulted, did not return insult; and, when threatened, handed themselves over to You, the One who judges justly. In them we have come to recognize Your grace shining through human weakness.

May those who suffered for justice' sake receive the beatitude's reward; and may those who cried out in the void of justice, today be heard that a new day of peace may be born rooted in justice, for You live and are attentive to our cries now and forever. Amen.