

of Investigation was the way that, I believe, there was the first time his identity was ever mentioned in the media or anyplace else. The Cox Committee made no recommendations.

I do think the people who suggest in some fashion that Congress has been identifying particular ethnic group as responsible for espionage or as security risks, is inappropriate and inaccurate.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 534.

The question was taken.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SMALL WATERSHED REHABILITATION AMENDMENTS OF 2000

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 728) to amend the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to provide cost share assistance for the rehabilitation of structural measures constructed as part of water resource projects previously funded by the Secretary under such Act or related laws, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 728

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 "Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments of 2000".

TITLE I—DAM REHABILITATION

SEC. 101. REHABILITATION OF WATER RESOURCE STRUCTURAL MEASURES CONSTRUCTED UNDER CERTAIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS.

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (16 U.S.C. 1001 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"SEC. 14. REHABILITATION OF STRUCTURAL MEASURES NEAR, AT, OR PAST THEIR EVALUATED LIFE EXPECTANCY.

"(a) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section:

"(1) REHABILITATION.—The term 'rehabilitation', with respect to a structural measure constructed as part of a covered water resource project, means the completion of all work necessary to extend the service life of the structural measure and meet applicable safety and performance standards. This may include (A) protecting the integrity of the structural measure or prolonging the useful life of the structural measure beyond the original evaluated life expectancy, (B) correcting damage to the structural measure from a catastrophic event, (C) correcting the deterioration of structural components that

are deteriorating at an abnormal rate, (D) upgrading the structural measure to meet changed land use conditions in the watershed served by the structural measure or changed safety criteria applicable to the structural measure, or (E) decommissioning the structure, if requested by the local organization.

"(2) COVERED WATER RESOURCE PROJECT.—The term 'covered water resource project' means a work of improvement carried out under any of the following:

"(A) This Act.

"(B) Section 13 of the Act of December 22, 1944 (Public Law 78-534; 58 Stat. 905).

"(C) The pilot watershed program authorized under the heading 'FLOOD PREVENTION' of the Department of Agriculture Appropriation Act, 1954 (Public Law 156; 67 Stat. 214).

"(D) Subtitle H of title XV of the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 (16 U.S.C. 3451 et seq.; commonly known as the Resource Conservation and Development Program).

"(3) STRUCTURAL MEASURE.—The term 'structural measure' means a physical improvement that impounds water, commonly known as a dam, which was constructed as part of a covered water resource project, including the impoundment area and flood pool.

"(b) COST SHARE ASSISTANCE FOR REHABILITATION.—

"(1) ASSISTANCE AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary may provide financial assistance to a local organization to cover a portion of the total costs incurred for the rehabilitation of structural measures originally constructed as part of a covered water resource project. The total costs of rehabilitation include the costs associated with all components of the rehabilitation project, including acquisition of land, easements, and rights-of-ways, rehabilitation project administration, the provision of technical assistance, contracting, and construction costs, except that the local organization shall be responsible for securing all land, easements, or rights-of-ways necessary for the project.

"(2) AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE; LIMITATIONS.—The amount of Federal funds that may be made available under this subsection to a local organization for construction of a particular rehabilitation project shall be equal to 65 percent of the total rehabilitation costs, but not to exceed 100 percent of actual construction costs incurred in the rehabilitation. However, the local organization shall be responsible for the costs of water, mineral, and other resource rights and all Federal, State, and local permits.

"(3) RELATION TO LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS.—As a condition on entering into an agreement to provide financial assistance under this subsection, the Secretary, working in concert with the affected unit or units of general purpose local government, may require that proper zoning or other developmental regulations are in place in the watershed in which the structural measures to be rehabilitated under the agreement are located so that—

"(A) the completed rehabilitation project is not quickly rendered inadequate by additional development; and

"(B) society can realize the full benefits of the rehabilitation investment.

"(c) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR WATERSHED PROJECT REHABILITATION.—The Secretary, acting through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, may provide technical assistance in planning, designing, and implementing rehabilitation projects should a local organization request such assistance. Such assistance may consist of specialists in such fields as engineering, geology, soils, agronomy, biology, hydraulics, hydrology, economics, water quality, and contract administration.

"(d) PROHIBITED USE.—

"(1) PERFORMANCE OF OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE.—Rehabilitation assistance provided under this section may not be used to perform operation and maintenance activities specified in the agreement for the covered water resource project entered into between the Secretary and the local organization responsible for the works of improvement. Such operation and maintenance activities shall remain the responsibility of the local organization, as provided in the project work plan.

"(2) RENEGOTIATION.—Notwithstanding paragraph (1), as part of the provision of financial assistance under subsection (b), the Secretary may renegotiate the original agreement for the covered water resource project entered into between the Secretary and the local organization regarding responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the project when the rehabilitation is finished.

"(e) APPLICATION FOR REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE.—A local organization may apply to the Secretary for technical and financial assistance under this section if the application has also been submitted to and approved by the State agency having supervisory responsibility over the covered water resource project at issue or, if there is no State agency having such responsibility, by the Governor of the State. The Secretary shall request the State dam safety officer (or equivalent State official) to be involved in the application process if State permits or approvals are required. The rehabilitation of structural measures shall meet standards established by the Secretary and address other dam safety issues. At the request of the local organization, personnel of the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture may assist in preparing applications for assistance.

"(f) RANKING OF REQUESTS FOR REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall establish such system of approving rehabilitation requests, recognizing that such requests will be received throughout the fiscal year and subject to the availability of funds to carry out this section, as is necessary for proper administration by the Department of Agriculture and equitable for all local organizations. The approval process shall be in writing, and made known to all local organizations and appropriate State agencies.

"(g) PROHIBITION ON CERTAIN REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary may not approve a rehabilitation request if the need for rehabilitation of the structure is the result of a lack of adequate maintenance by the party responsible for the maintenance.

"(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to provide financial and technical assistance under this section—

"(1) \$5,000,000 for fiscal year 2001;

"(2) \$10,000,000 for fiscal year 2002;

"(3) \$15,000,000 for fiscal year 2003;

"(4) \$25,000,000 for fiscal year 2004; and

"(5) \$35,000,000 for fiscal year 2005.

"(i) ASSESSMENT OF REHABILITATION NEEDS.—The Secretary, in concert with the responsible State agencies, shall conduct an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of covered water resource projects in all States in which such projects are located.

"(j) RECORDKEEPING AND REPORTS.—

"(1) SECRETARY.—The Secretary shall maintain a data base to track the benefits derived from rehabilitation projects supported under this section and the expenditures made under this section. On the basis of such data and the reports submitted under paragraph (2), the Secretary shall prepare and submit to Congress an annual report providing the status of activities conducted under this section.

“(2) GRANT RECIPIENTS.—Not later than 90 days after the completion of a specific rehabilitation project for which assistance is provided under this section, the local organization that received the assistance shall make a report to the Secretary giving the status of any rehabilitation effort undertaken using financial assistance provided under this section.”.

TITLE II—DAM SAFETY

SEC. 201. DAM SAFETY.

(a) INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT OF OTHER DAMS.—

(1) INVENTORY.—The Secretary of the Army (in this section referred to as the “Secretary”) shall establish an inventory of dams constructed by and using funds made available through the Works Progress Administration, the Works Projects Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

(2) ASSESSMENT OF REHABILITATION NEEDS.—In establishing the inventory required under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall also assess the condition of the dams on such inventory and the need for rehabilitation or modification of the dams.

(b) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall transmit to Congress a report containing the inventory and assessment required by this section.

(c) INTERIM ACTIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary determines that a dam referred to in subsection (a) presents an imminent and substantial risk to public safety, the Secretary is authorized to carry out measures to prevent or mitigate against such risk.

(2) EXCLUSION.—The assistance authorized in paragraph (1) shall not be available to dams under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior.

(3) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of the cost of assistance provided under this subsection shall be 65 percent of such cost.

(4) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section a total of \$25,000,000 for fiscal years beginning after September 30, 1999, of which not more than \$5,000,000 may be expended on any 1 dam.

(d) COORDINATION.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall coordinate with the appropriate State dam safety officials and the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS).

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the efforts of the gentleman from Texas (Chairman COMBEST) and the ranking member, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM), in helping me bring forward H.R. 728, the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments.

I also appreciate the support of the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman SHUSTER) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT) for this very important bill.

Seeing the need for rehabilitation of aging dams built across the State of Oklahoma and the country, I introduced H.R. 728. This legislation will give the Secretary of Agriculture the

authority to provide financial assistance to local organizations for up to 65 percent of the total rehabilitation construction costs for those dams built under the Small Watershed Program.

H.R. 728 will authorize a total of \$90 million over the next 5 years, beginning in 2001, to help us rehabilitate our Nation's watershed projects and ensure that we and our communities continue to enjoy the benefits that watershed projects offer.

My predecessors left a legacy with the Small Watershed Program. They realized the impact that this program would have on both the State of Oklahoma and the Nation as whole.

I was raised in and still live in Roger Mills County, Oklahoma. One of the things I most clearly recall from growing up there was the sight of these flood control dams near my home. I did not know it at the time, but those dams were built because community and political leaders knew from firsthand experience the importance of flood control. They had witnessed the horrible floods that washed across Oklahoma's watersheds in the 1930s and 1940s, terrifying events that inspired them to take the necessary steps to reduce the threats that flooding poses to people, land, and water quality.

Since 1944, over 10½ thousand small watershed dams have been built in the United States. Over 2,000 of those dams are located in Oklahoma. Many of these dams were planned and designed with a lifespan of 50 years. Fifty years ago there was little concern about what to do when these dams reached their life expectancy.

During the week of July 4, 1998, a celebration in Cordell, Oklahoma, marked the 50th anniversary of America's first United States Department of Agriculture small watershed dam. This is just one of a thousand dams that will reach the end of their 50-year life expectancy within the next 10 years.

Although the Federal government paid for the construction costs of these dams, under current law, there is no Federal authority or funds to rehabilitate them. Repair costs are far beyond the budgets of the local sponsors.

The Federal government clearly has a responsibility to ensure dam safety. We cannot wait until a disaster happens. If rehabilitation is not done, we may be faced with the awesome and awful possibilities of flooding, loss of wildlife habitat, water shortages, and pollution. Far more regrettable in the case of failure, we might be confronted with the loss of life, and yes, property, crops, and livestock.

The economic impact of dam failures on communities and local economies would be devastating. We must act before any of these situations occur.

The small watershed program is one of our Nation's most successful public and private partnerships. In fact, these completed small watershed projects have provided over \$2.20 in benefits for every \$1 in cost. Very few government programs can make that claim. We

must continue to build on this partnership.

Today the Small Watershed Program represents an \$8.5 billion Federal investment and an estimated \$6 billion local investment in the infrastructure of our Nation. We do not allow our highways to crumble, nor should we ignore our small watershed dams. It is time we address the rehabilitation needs of these structures.

The fact is, these small watersheds have done such a good job that most people do not even realize they exist as they drive by them, as they go up and down the highways. There are not many programs that have that kind of a success factor.

We must continue to build on this program that our predecessors started over 50 years ago. It has been a great privilege to champion this cause here in our Nation's capital that will have such a direct impact on my home county, my home State, and our Nation as a whole. I look forward to seeing this legislation passed into law, and continuing to build on one of the most successful programs our government has known.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 728, the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments of 2000. This bill amends the Watershed Protection and Flood Control Protection Act, also known as P.L. 566 program, to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to provide financial assistance to eligible local organizations to cover a portion of the total cost for the rehabilitation of structural measures originally constructed as part of the Department of Agriculture's USDA water resource project.

Under current law, the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, is authorized to provide technical and financial assistance to local organizations in planning and carrying out small watershed projects for flood protection, agriculture and water management, recreation, municipal and industrial water supply, and wildlife enhancement.

Many of the 10,000-plus dams built under this program are reaching the end of their 50-year design life and are in need of rehabilitation. In fact, some now pose a threat to public health and safety.

During the Committee on Agriculture's markup of this legislation, I offered an amendment to protect the privacy of information provided to USDA by the farmers and ranchers participating in the Department's voluntary programs or receiving technical assistance.

My amendment, which was accepted by the committee, was designed to protect the trust established between the USDA and America's farmers and ranchers resulting in the high level of

participation we currently enjoy in our voluntary conservation programs.

When landowners come in on a voluntary basis to work on their local NRCS, Farm Service Agency, or conservation district office to implement conservation measures on their farms and ranches, they need to be assured that the information they provide remains confidential. Concerns have been raised that if this information was transferred to other agencies or entities, it would lose its confidential nature and could be made public.

The provision I offered would not have prevented other Federal agencies from collecting data under their own statutory authority. It would merely protect from disclosure to other Federal regulatory entities the confidential information provided to USDA, local conservation districts, or RC&D councils by a farmer, rancher, or landowner who has participated in the USDA conservation program.

Without this protection, the billions of dollars in technical and financial assistance spent every year by the taxpayers to help the Nation's landowners protect our soil and water resources could be jeopardized because of the unwillingness of producers to participate in our voluntary programs. In short, my amendment would have ensured that our voluntary, incentive-based programs are kept separate from the regulatory efforts of other agencies.

If Members doubt the callous disregard that some Federal agencies have for the American farmer, rancher, and the average citizen in general, look no further than EPA's persistence with the total maximum daily load (TMDL) regulations.

After a dozen congressional hearings, 35,000 written comments, and clear intent from Congress via the military construction conference report that the proposed TMDL regulations needed to be withdrawn and thoroughly re-examined, the EPA persisted in their policy to put forth these tainted regulations.

We need to send a strong message that information provided on a voluntary basis for purposes of receiving assistance from USDA should remain confidential to all parties working in cooperation with USDA. While it is unfortunate that this could not be accomplished here today on this worthy bill, this issue must be addressed by Congress.

I want to applaud and thank my colleague, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS), for his hard work in working to draft and pass this legislation. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 728.

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

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHERWOOD).

Mr. SHERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I rise in support of H.R. 728, the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments of 2000.

First let me congratulate the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) and his colleagues, and commend the leadership of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Committee on Agriculture for moving forward with this important legislation.

□ 1600

H.R. 728 responds to a growing crisis in water resources infrastructure throughout this Nation. There are over 10,000 dams constructed under national resource conservation service programs; many are in need of critical repair and are presenting flooding and environmental threats to communities.

This bill responds in two ways. Title I authorizes NRCS to rehabilitate aging and deteriorating dams constructed under the agency's small watershed program. Title II authorizes the Corps of Engineers to inventory and assess the condition of dams constructed decades ago under other authorities, such as the Work Projects Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps, and in the interim, to provide emergency measures to prevent risks to the public.

A good example of these aging dams is the Mountain Springs dam right on the edge of my congressional district. It is a dam that has provided flood control and watershed qualities throughout 60 years, and now it is about to be drained because it is deemed dangerous. We need these things attended to.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to emphasize that these projects should be performed in the most cost-effective manner that accomplishes the rehabilitation objective. However, the Secretary is not required to develop a cost benefit ratio analysis or a cost benefit ratio.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is about restoring infrastructure, enhancing public safety, and protecting the environment. America's rural communities in particular will benefit.

For all of these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to support H.R. 728.

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER).

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

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Oklahoma for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 728. I want to thank the distinguished gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) for his outstanding initiative and effort in introducing this legislation and the leadership of the two committees for advancing it.

As a cosponsor of this legislation, this Member certainly supports the goals of this measure. It is clearly appropriate to provide necessary resources to aid in the rehabilitation of the small watershed structures which

have been constructed over the past 50 years. These small dams and other structures, constructed under the P.L. 566 program, have provided numerous benefits over the past decades, including flood control, wildlife habitat, recreation, irrigation and water supplies.

This program has been especially important to Nebraska. Over the years, the P.L. 566 program has resulted in the installation of 880 dams and other structures in Nebraska. In fact, this Member is proud to point out that his district, the First Congressional District of Nebraska, has more P.L. 566 dams and structures than any other district in the Nation. The more than 700 structures in this Member's district provides flood protection, reduces erosion and provides many useful benefits.

Throughout Nebraska, it is estimated that the State realizes a minimum of \$27 million in annual direct benefits as a result of these structures. Documentation and examples of those benefits are found in the report by the National Resource Conservation Service, the NRCS, of the USDA, entitled "Protecting the 'Good Life' through P.L. 566; The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act across Nebraska."

As just mentioned, during the previous 50 years, more than 10,000 upstream flood control dams have been built throughout the United States. The NRCS has provided cost-sharing and technical assistance while local sponsors have assumed responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the structures when they were completed. Unfortunately, many of those structures are now reaching the end of their 50-year designed life. Without significant rehabilitation, much of this investment could be lost.

This act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to cover a portion of the total costs incurred for the rehabilitation of those structures. The bill does not allow any assistance to be provided to perform operation and maintenance activities, a limitation this Member strongly supports.

During a hearing of the Subcommittee on Water and Environment of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, this Member shared with the subcommittee a letter from Dayle Williamson who, until very recently, was the outstanding, highly respected director of the State of Nebraska's Natural Resources Commission, he just retired, which emphasized that the sponsors of Nebraska's projects have been providing adequate maintenance over the years for the structures. Therefore, he suggested, and this Member agrees, that they should not be penalized for their stewardship by allowing other States to tap into scarce resources to perform routine operation and maintenance which they routinely should have been providing. The gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) has taken that fully into consideration. Another outstanding feature of this legislation.

This Member additionally asked for specific safeguards to ensure that funding would not be used for the purposes of routine operation and maintenance. I am pleased, therefore, to note that a provision was added to the legislation which states that the Secretary of Agriculture may not approve a rehabilitation request if it is determined that the need for rehabilitation of the structure is the result of a lack of adequate maintenance by the party responsible for the maintenance.

Nevertheless, it is clear that there are a great many instances where assistance is appropriate and necessary. This Member believes that H.R. 728 recognizes this growing need and provides a far-sighted approach in addressing these problems. By providing additional assistance now, we can ensure that the original investments will continue to pay dividends well into the future.

Mr. Speaker, this Member urges his colleagues to support H.R. 728 and again commends the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) for his outstanding initiative.

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

Mr. Speaker, let me just say again in reiteration of what all of my colleagues who have testified in favor of this legislation today and the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I do also thank them for their work and input into this very important legislation.

I know, speaking from back home in Texas, the importance of these projects has been demonstrated time and time again over these 50 years, but now particularly as cities like Dallas and Fort Worth begin to look at some very serious flood concerns that they have and how they might address that. Other cities all over the United States, most communities will find, when one looks at how to solve a problem of flood control that one will find the small watershed projects would be right at the top of the list.

Now, when we have these large number of dams that have been built and are in need of rehabilitation, this legislation only make makes very, very serious common sense.

So I appreciate, again, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) for bringing this legislation to all of our attention, and all of the cooperation that has been made to reach it to the point to where we are today. I encourage the House to support the bill.

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

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I wish once again to express my appreciation of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM), the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER), and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHERWOOD) and all of the members of the

various committees and subcommittees who worked on this.

From a concept that initially came together in July of 1998 at a gathering to celebrate 50 years of successful service by one of these structures to the bill, that was then filed again in February of 1999, that has worked its way through subcommittee and full Committee on Agriculture, subcommittee and full Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, that has been examined by resources, a bill that is, if there is such a thing, a textbook way of reviewing legislation, we have at one point or other in the last year and a half examined every facet of this concept, I think, from every perspective.

The legislation that we have today, thanks to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM), ranking member, and the gentleman from Texas (Chairman COMBEST), and many other Members, is a good solid piece of legislation that will do the things that need to be done in this country and in a fashion we will all be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support the continued program that has been so successful for half a century now or more.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 728, the small watershed rehabilitation amendments of 2000. The bill takes steps to improve the nation's deteriorating water resources infrastructure and requires the Secretary of Agriculture to rehabilitate aging dams built under programs of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The bill also requires the Secretary of the Army to inventory and assess certain dams from the Great Depression era and authorizes actions to mitigate against immediate threats to public safety.

I commend Representative FRANK LUCAS and his colleagues for championing this legislation and the leadership of the Agriculture Committee for their cooperation, as well. Thanks should also go to my colleagues on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, in particular Representative JIM OBERSTAR, the ranking Democrat, Representative SHERRY BOEHLERT, the chairman of the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee, and Representative BOB BORSKI, the subcommittee's ranking member.

The Transportation and Agriculture Committees share jurisdiction over the NRCS's small watershed program and worked together closely to revise and improve title I of this critically important legislation. I also appreciate the Agriculture Committee's cooperation with respect to title II, relating to the Army Corps of Engineers' authorities regarding dam safety and included by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Mr. Speaker, the needs are great. Rehabilitating the nation's dams will not be cheap but the benefits will be enormous. With over 10,000 small watershed dams in need of rehabilitation, H.R. 728 takes an important and timely first step. We anticipate NRCS and affected local communities will undertake cost-effective rehabilitation measures and coordinate closely with State dam safety officials. We also anticipate that, if funded, this bill will make communities safer and cleaner as flooding and sedimentation risks are reduced.

Mr. Speaker, I support passage of H.R. 728, and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 728, the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments of 2000. H.R. 728 authorizes the Department of Agriculture, through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, to rehabilitate dams constructed as part of their small watershed program and other conservation programs.

This bill also authorizes additional dam safety measures for the Corps of Engineers. H.R. 728 requires the Secretary of the Army to inventory and assess the condition of certain dams and to take interim actions to prevent threats to public safety.

This bill invests in our nation's aging dam infrastructure. It will increase public health and safety and environmental protection. It will bring jobs, piece of mind and environmental benefits to communities with deteriorating dams.

The final language, essentially what the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee reported last November, is the result of extensive input from engineers, construction contractors, environmental advocates, dam safety officials, local government representatives, and Federal agencies. It includes, among other things, important flexibility in defining "rehabilitation" so that environmentally sound and locally supported options, such as "decommissioning," may be considered.

I congratulate Representative FRANK LUCAS and his colleagues for pursuing this legislation and I thank the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Agriculture Committee for their cooperation and leadership. In particular, I thank the leadership of the Agriculture Committee and Chairman BUD SHUSTER, Ranking Democrat JIM OBERSTAR, Ranking Democrat of the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee, Representative BOB BORSKI, for their interest and support. From the beginning, our Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, which I chair, recognized H.R. 728 could help make communities safer and cleaner.

For all these reasons, I urge my colleagues to pass this important, critically-needed legislation.

Mr. WATKINS. Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today in full support of H.R. 728, the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments of 1999. Most importantly, I want to stress to my colleagues why this piece of legislation is vital to so many rural areas of the United States.

Since the 1940's, over 100,000 small watershed dams have been built under USDA programs. Small watershed dams provide great benefit to their surrounding areas. These dams provide downstream flood protection, water quality improvement, irrigation water, and rural water supplies. In flood control alone, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the USDA estimate the small watershed dams prevent more than \$800 million in damages each year. People can also enjoy increased recreation and wildlife habitat.

The bad news is that many have reached or are rapidly approaching their fifty year life span. Numerous structures are in need of rehabilitation to ensure the continued environmental and economic benefits that our country currently enjoys. Action must be taken to prevent the loss of life, water supply, and flood control that these dams afford to many rural areas.

Currently, no funding source exists to restore watershed projects, and local sponsors do not have the resources to attempt to save these dams. H.R. 728 establishes financial assistance for the assessment and rehabilitation of small watershed dams over the next ten years. With federal cost sharing, local sponsors will now have the opportunity to repair these crucial watersheds.

The necessity of federal attention to this problem is critical, and I thank my friend and Oklahoma colleague Mr. LUCAS for his leadership of this matter and his support and commitment to the restoration of these structures. I call upon my colleagues to recognize the importance of this legislation with their support of H.R. 728.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 728, 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.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read:

"A bill to amend the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to provide cost share assistance for the rehabilitation of structural measures constructed as part of water resource projects previously funded by the Secretary under such Act or related laws, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 728, the bill just adopted.

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

There was no objection.

CONGRATULATING REPUBLIC OF LATVIA ON 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF REESTABLISHMENT OF INDEPENDENCE FROM FORMER SOVIET UNION

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 319) congratulating the Republic of Latvia on the 10th anniversary of the reestablishment of its independence from the rule of the former Soviet Union.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 319

Whereas the United States had never recognized the forcible incorporation of the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the former Soviet Union;

Whereas the declaration on May 4, 1990, of the reestablishment of full sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Latvia furthered the disintegration of the former Soviet Union;

Whereas Latvia since then has successfully built democracy, passed legislation on human and minority rights that conform to European and international norms, ensured the rule of law, developed a free market economy, and consistently pursued a course of integration into the community of free and democratic nations by seeking membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); and

Whereas Latvia, as a result of the progress of its political and economic reforms, has made, and continues to make, a significant contribution toward the maintenance of international peace and stability by, among other actions, its participation in NATO-led peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) congratulates Latvia on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the reestablishment of its independence and the role it played in the disintegration of the former Soviet Union; and

(2) commends Latvia for its success in implementing political and economic reforms, which may further speed the process of that country's integration into European and Western institutions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 319.

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

There was no objection.

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

(Mr. BEREUTER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks, and include extraneous material.)

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member rises in very strong support for H. Con. Res. 319, a resolution congratulating the Republic of Latvia on the 10th anniversary of the reestablishment of its independence from the former Soviet Union. This Member is pleased to be a cosponsor of this important statement of support.

Mr. Speaker, the Baltic States of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia had been prosperous and progressive independent nations, a set of three nations, prior to the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, an agreement that heralded 5 decades of repression.

The United States, of course, never recognized this unlawful act of international aggression. By 1990, the Soviet terror machine no longer held sway, and the long-standing courage and determination of the Latvian people was finally rewarded with freedom. Again, it was the United States that was among the first to recognize their independence when they broke free.

No one could have predicted the rapid reintegration with the West. Free elec-

tions have now become the norm, and the Saeima acts as a fully-functioning parliament. Inflation has been reduced, and Latvia has made major strides in privatization.

While the export market to Russia has collapsed, important new trading partnerships have been found in Poland, Germany and the West. Much remains to be done, but Latvians and Latvian-Americans can take justifiable pride at what has thus far been accomplished in Latvia.

For our part, the United States continues to work for the Baltic nations to deepen and broaden our relationship. As but one example, NATO military officers, including Americans, continue to work with the Latvian military directly and through NATO's Partnership For Peace program.

Latvia-Americans should also be proud of their contributions, with some retired military officers actually serving in key positions in the Latvian Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defense.

As the NATO Summit in Washington, D.C. last year concluded, Latvia joined in the Enhanced and More Operational Partnership, EMOP, a program designed to speed the day when Latvia can become a full contributing member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The goal, which this Member strongly endorses, is to move beyond the expressions of support and facilitate the concrete steps that will result in Latvia's further integration into the West.

In other areas of cooperation, Peace Corps volunteers now teach Latvian schools and help Latvian small businessmen and women with such basic tasks as accounting and marketing. This Member is particularly pleased that the United States has created a Baltic American Enterprise Fund designed to underwrite fledgling entrepreneurs from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

Finally, this Member would point out that the House of Representatives has been and is assisting the Latvian Saeima with such basic necessities as law books and computers, various kinds of library assistance.

In 1995, this Member was part of a bipartisan House task force which approved and oversaw this assistance to this parliamentary body, as we did in the other two Baltic States, and visited Latvia for that and other foreign policy security purposes. It should be noted, additionally, that such assistance most assuredly is not a hand-out. Rather, we are offering a helping hand to a nation with historically close ties to the United States. We are helping Latvians build a future where their country can continue to progress in its rightful place as a full member of the European family of democratic nations.

Mr. Speaker, this Member congratulates, in particular, the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) for crafting a resolution that merits