

It is for these reasons that the bipartisan leadership of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee propose to restore the purchasing power of the gas tax, which was last increased more than a decade ago. Under the Committee's proposal, the gas tax would increase by a nickel and the average commuter would pay only an additional \$36 per year. The user fee system has served us well. We should further utilize the strengths of that system to generate the necessary revenues to meet the needs of the transportation system.

Regrettably, the reason we are here today with another extension bill is because Administration ideology and political expediency is trumping good policy. The reauthorization bill is again delayed. As we approach the summer construction season, States will be slow to make the necessary investments during these uncertain times. Good-paying jobs will be lost or never created. Last fall, State transportation officials estimated that an extension bill would mean \$2.1 billion in project delays and the loss of more than 90,000 jobs. This extension simply compounds those losses.

Instead, we now face vigorous behind-the-scenes efforts by the Administration and the Republican Leadership to cut the funding levels in our bipartisan bill and develop budget schemes that shift money from one account to another—to increase revenue to the Highway Trust Fund without increasing the user fee. While I will work with all parties to ensure that we find the necessary resources to increase our transportation investment, I will not support smoke-and-mirror proposals that simply further ideological objectives or political expediency, but not the long-term interests of the highway and transit programs.

Faced with these current roadblocks, we must again extend the highway, transit, and transportation safety programs or face a shutdown of both the Department of Transportation agencies and Federal surface transportation funding.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, there is one other very important element of this extension that deserves mention. That element is its continuation of the Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) program, as that program is set forth in TEA 21. Since enactment of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982, Congress has included a program to aid socially and economically disadvantaged businesses to successfully compete for transportation construction contracts. Because of this program, we have made impressive strides in increasing the participation of minority- and women-owned businesses in Federally-assisted transportation construction contracts. Today, more than 20,000 DBE's participate in the program. However, as recent evidence demonstrates, there continues to be a compelling need for the DBE program.

The current program is narrowly tailored to allow States to set and refine goals for participation of disadvantaged businesses in Federally-assisted transportation contracts. These goals must be appropriate for the State's population. Further, the current program requires States to try and meet those goals by race-neutral means. It is only when race-neutral means fail to achieve sufficient DBE participation, that race-conscious means may be used.

Indeed, as recent data provided by the States have shown, the lasting effects of discrimination are such that the overwhelming majority of States must continue to use race-

conscious means to try and achieve their participation goals. For example, my home state of Minnesota established a goal for 2002 of 10.3 percent DBE participation in Federally-assisted transportation construction contracts. Minnesota officials determined that only 2.6 percent of this goal could be achieved with race-neutral means and 7.7 percent would need to be met using race-conscious means. Despite its good-faith effort to achieve this self-imposed goal, Minnesota was only able to achieve 6.63 percent DBE participation.

Minnesota's experience demonstrates two important facts about the program. First, as courts throughout the country have found, the DBE program is truly one of setting goals; it is not a quota system. States must make a good-faith effort to achieve its goal. Second, the goal setting required by the DBE program is crucial to increasing participation of DBE's in Federally-assisted transportation contracts. In Minnesota state-funded transportation contracts, where there was no DBE goal established, DBE participation was only 4.42 percent.

By extending this program today, we specifically reaffirm the government's compelling interest in ensuring that States receiving Federal funds for transportation construction make a good faith effort to ensure participation by minority- and women-owned businesses in those construction projects.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3783.

HONORING SUSAN BOOTH FOR HER OUTSTANDING COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC SERVICE

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to join the many gathered to pay tribute to an outstanding member of our community, Susan Booth, as she is honored by the Devon Rotary and named a Paul Harris fellow. The Paul Harris fellow recognition was created in memory of Paul Harris, the founder of Rotary, as a way to show appreciation for contributions to the foundation's charitable and educational program. Every Paul Harris fellow receives a pin, medallion and a certificate when he or she becomes a fellow, identifying the recipient as an advocate of the foundation's goals of world peace and international understanding. The commitment and dedication that Susan has demonstrated is indeed a reflection of all that the Rotary stands for. It is wonderful to see her work so proudly recognized by her community.

Founder of the Archway Foundation, Susan has spent nearly 15 years collecting donations to feed and clothe homeless children in Romania. Inspired by a television program about Romanian orphans abandoned when communism collapsed, Susan, a railroad conductor on a commuter train between Connecticut and New York's Grand Central Station, switched to night shifts so that she could earn a master's degree in social work. Upon completing her degree, Susan went to Bucharest on a week's vacation in search of these Romanian orphans who were living in sewers

and abandoned buildings. With only a short list of contacts, Susan was fortunate to find an individual who knew where to look. "In that sewer, I found my life's work," she has said. Indeed, she has dedicated countless hours to her mission.

Operating out of her own home and a post office box, Susan collects clothing and donations and has been awarded hundreds of thousands in charitable grants. Through her hard work and the generosity of her contributors, Archway has been able to purchase two small homes in Romania as well as employ several Romanians. One of the homes is used as a soup kitchen from which volunteers take food out to hundreds of homeless children every week and provide groceries to squatter families who take refuge in abandoned buildings.

It is not often that you find an individual with such dedication and commitment. Susan's good work has touched the lives of thousands of needy children. More importantly, she has inspired countless numbers of people to donate their time and energy to provide one of life's most precious gifts: hope.

I am proud to stand today to join the Devon Rotary and the many family and friends who have gathered this evening in extending my sincere thanks and heart-felt congratulations to Susan Booth as she is named a Paul Harris fellow. Yours is a legacy that is sure to continue to inspire generations to come.

INDIA DISSOLVES PARLIAMENT: ELECTIONS COMING; MINORITY NATIONS SHOULD VOTE FOR FREEDOM

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I noticed the other day that India is dissolving its Parliament on February 6. They will be having new elections soon, perhaps as soon as March.

These elections, unlike ours, change faces, but don't seem to change policy. The repression of minorities continues no matter who wins. This repression has killed over 250,000 Sikhs since 1984, over 300,000 Christians in Nagaland since 1947, over 85,000 Kashmiri Muslims since 1988, and tens of thousands of other minorities. More than 52,000 Sikhs, as well as tens of thousands of other minorities, continue to be held as political prisoners. Yet India cites elections like the ones upcoming to show that it is a democracy.

That isn't very democratic for the minorities, is it, Mr. Speaker? As I have said before, the mere fact that they have the right to choose their oppressors doesn't mean they live in a democracy.

Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, has issued an open letter to the Sikhs in Punjab on the elections urging the Sikhs in Punjab to reject all major parties and vote for candidates inclined to support the freedom of Khalistan, the Sikh homeland that declared its independence on October 7, 1987. That is the only way the Sikhs can survive. The Akali Dal is corrupt, he points out, and the Congress Party organized the June 1984 attack on the Golden Temple, the seat of Sikhism.

We can support this cause by stopping U.S. aid to India until human rights are fully observed for all people there and by declaring our support for a free and fair vote on the subject of independence for Khalistan, for Kashmir, for Nagalim, and for all the minority nations of South Asia.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put the Council of Khalistan's open letter on the upcoming elections into the RECORD at this time.

COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN,
Washington, DC, February 4, 2004.

OPEN LETTER TO THE KHALSA PANTH
PARLIAMENT DISSOLVED; ELECTIONS COMING
SIKHS MUST STOP SUPPORTING CORRUPT
BADAL, WHO DIMINISHED IMAGE OF SIKH NATION
ONLY IN A FREE KHALISTAN CAN SIKHS
PROSPER AKALI LEADERSHIP CONTROLLED BY
INDIAN GOVERNMENT

DEAR KHALSA PANTH: WAHEGURU JI KA
KHALSA, WAHEGURU JI KI FATEHI!

The Indian government has dissolved Parliament. New elections are coming, perhaps as soon as March. Elections under the Indian Constitution will not free the Sikh Nation. Use this opportunity, however, to elect committed, honest Sikhs who are committed to freeing Khalistan to Parliament. Do not support Badal or the Akalis. They are corrupt and have betrayed the Khalsa Panth. Not even a single Akali protested the unprecedented corruption of Badal. They have disgraced the name of the old Akalis who sacrificed their lives for the well being of the Sikh Nation.

The Guru gave sovereignty to the Sikh Nation. ("In Grieb Sikhin Ko Deon Patshahi.") The Sikh Nation must achieve it. We always remember it by reciting every morning and evening, "Raj Kare Ga Khalsa." Now is the time to act on it. Do we mean what we say every morning and evening?

The fire of freedom still burns strong and bright in the heart of the Sikh Nation. Last year Sikhs openly held seminars in Punjab on the subject of Khalistan. This is a very good sign and we salute the people who participated in these seminars. They are keeping the flame of freedom lit. Now I urge Sikhs to unite and take action to liberate our homeland, Punjab, Khalistan. It is time to start a Shantmai Morcha to liberate Khalistan from Indian occupation.

Never forget that the Akal Takht Sahib and Darbar Sahib are under the control of the Indian government, the same Indian government that has murdered over a quarter of a million Sikhs in the past twenty years. The Jathedar of the Akal Takht and the head granthi of Darbar Sahib toe the line that the Indian government tells them. They are not appointed by the Khalsa Panth. The SGPC, which appoints them, does not represent the Sikh Nation anymore. They have become the puppets of the Indian government and have lost credibility with the Sikh Nation. Otherwise they would behave like a real Jathedar, Jathedar Gurdev Singh Kaunke, rather than like Indian government puppet Jathedar Aroor Singh, who gave a Siropa to General Dyer for the massacre at Jalianawa Bagh. These institutions will remain under the control of the Indian regime until we free the Sikh homeland, Punjab, Khalistan, from Indian occupation and oppression and sever our relations with the New Delhi government.

Yet the Akali Dal continues to support Badal, even though he was prosecuted and jailed for his corruption. According to India-West, the Punjab Vigilance Bureau carried out raids on Badal's properties for several months and filed a charge-sheet in a local court charging Mr. Badal with siphoning off Rs. 784 million, the equivalent of \$17 million in U.S. money, during his five years as chief

minister. The article says that Mr. Badal and his family hold assets of Rs. 43.26 billion (nearly \$1 billion), most of which are located outside India. Half the population of India lives below the international poverty line. About 40 percent live on less than \$2 per day.

The Badal government was the most corrupt one in Punjab's history. They sold jobs for a fixed fee. They came up with a new, dignified term for bribery: "fee for service." If you didn't pay the fee, you didn't get the service. The Chief Minister's wife was so experienced that she could pick up a bag of money and tell how much money was in it. Parkash Singh Badal was a disaster for Punjab and a disgrace to the Sikh Nation. How can the Akali Dal, which is supposed to represent the interests of the Sikh Nation, continue to support him?

Badal's corruption brought Punjab to bankruptcy. He was bankrupt morally and religiously as well as bankrupting Punjab financially. It is time for new leadership that shows the moral fabric a Sikh is supposed to have. Badal has destroyed the moral fabric of the Sikh religion. What happened to the concept of fairness and honesty?

The Akalis who protest Badal's prosecution are morally degenerate. They are destroying the moral fabric of Sikhism as a religion and a society. They should be ashamed of themselves. In addition to stealing from the people of Punjab, Mr. Badal worked against the cause of Sikh freedom. Badal was under the complete control of his masters in New Delhi, the militant, fundamentalist Hindu nationalist BJP. He has a long record of betraying the Sikh Nation.

The Akali Dal conspired with the Indian government in 1984 to invade the Golden Temple to murder Sant Bhindranwale and 20,000 other Sikh during June 1984 in Punjab. If Sikhs will not even protect the sanctity of the Golden Temple, how can the Sikh Nation survive as a nation?

The Akali Dal has lost all its credibility. The Badal government was so corrupt openly and no Akali leader would come forward and tell Badal and his wife to stop this unparalleled corruption. That is why the Akali Dal was defeated in the elections by the Congress Party. The Sikh Nation never can forgive or forget the attack on the Golden Temple. The Congress Party is the enemy of the Sikh Nation. Badal was so corrupt that the Sikhs had to vote for their enemy, the Congress Party, rather than Badal and his henchmen because there was no other party to vote for.

Because Sikhs are slaves in India, there is nobody to defend the Sikh interests internationally. Recently, an issue came up of the French banning the wearing of turbans in school. If Khalistan were free, the Sikh Nation could call the French Ambassador and tell him to stop this harassment of Sikhs. Our Ambassador to France would tell the French government the same thing: the turban is part of the Sikh religion and Sikhs should not be harassed.

Remember the words of Professor Darshan Singh, former Akal Takht Jathedar: "If a Sikh is not a Khalistani, he is not a Sikh." Sikhs should vote only for candidates who are prepared to do so. Otherwise, you are just voting to condemn your children and grandchildren to continued slavery under brutal Brahmin theocratic rule.

The time to achieve our independence is now. India is not one country. It has 18 official languages. Soon Kashmir will be free from Indian occupation. Now America is involved in it. As L.K. Advani predicted, "When Kashmir goes, India goes." We agree with him.

When I met President Bush on December 5, he personally told me, "I am aware of the Sikh and Kashmiri problem and we stopped India and Pakistan from going to nuclear

war." The Sikh diaspora has a moral responsibility to help the Sikh Nation to achieve its sovereignty by freeing Khalistan from Indian occupation.

The time has come to liberate our homeland. It is the only way that we can prevent further degenerations of the Sikh Nation like the Badal regime. Sikhs must claim their birthright by liberating Khalistan. Only by freeing Khalistan will we put an end to this corruption and restore control of Punjab and its assets to the people, to whom it rightfully belongs. A free Khalistan is a must for the survival of the Sikh nation and will provide an optimal environment for the Sikh Nation to progress to its optimum potential politically, religiously, and economically.

Panth Da Sewadar,
Dr. GURMIT SINGH AULAKH,
President, Council of Khalistan.

HONORING JULIE DEMARIA

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, to honor Julie DeMaria and her family, and the people of San Jose on the establishment of Operation Care and Comfort.

Operation Care and Comfort is a self-funded, all-volunteer organization whose sole purpose is to supply care packages to the men and women of our military serving overseas. Since last summer Julie rallied neighborhood volunteers and businesses to donate items, including T-shirts, pins, hats and food items to send in the care packages. Most importantly, hand written letters of support are included in each package to the troops, showing our gratitude, and support for their service to our country.

Because of Julie's efforts, the San Jose community has now shipped over 27,500 pounds of care packages to our troops and she is still going! Her devotion to her community and love for her country does not go unrecognized.

On behalf of the House of Representatives, I want to thank Julie DeMaria, her family, and all the volunteers in the San Jose Community involved in Operation Care and Comfort for their service to the United States.

REMEMBERING LUCILLE
WESTBROOK

HON. MIKE ROSS

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to rise in honor of the life and lasting memory of Lucille Westbrook. Lucille, a fifth-generation Arkansan, was born in the small town of Nathan, attended Nashville public schools, and spent her life as an involved citizen, advancing issues dearest to her and worked to preserve the heritage of her community and state. She passed away Saturday, January 31, 2004, at the age of 86.

Described by those who knew her well as "brilliant" and "beloved", Lucille was a well known face and name to the citizens of Howard County. Early in her life, she worked for