

Specifically, this bill will establish the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services as a distinct entity within the U. S. Department of Justice and will reauthorize hiring programs for three specific purposes—community policing officers, local counterterrorism officers, and school resource officers. The bill also reauthorizes funds for technology grants and community prosecutors. The COPS program and the community policing approach are, and should continue to be, an important part of our national crime-fighting strategy.

Your commitment to reducing crime and your recognition of the important role local law enforcement plays throughout the nation is commendable. Be assured that the City of Orlando will do our part in the fight against crime and, given the proper resources, we can keep Orlando one of the safest cities in the nation.

Sincerely,

BUDDY DYER,
Mayor.

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to show my support for H.R. 1700, the COPS Reauthorization Act of 2007.

The original COPS bill, passed in 1994, enabled local law enforcement agencies to hire 117,000 additional police officers across the Nation. H.R. 1700 will establish the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services as a distinct entity within the U.S. Department of Justice and will reauthorize hiring programs for three specific purposes: community policing officers, local counterterrorism officers, and school resource officers.

School resource officers are especially important to keep schools safe and to keep children in school. About 13.7 million or 22 percent of children and youth were physically bullied in the last year and 15.7 million were teased or emotionally bullied. Bullying behavior has been linked to other forms of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping and dropping out of school, fighting, and the use of drugs and alcohol. Having school resource officers on campuses will help combat this growing problem.

School resource officers are also needed to combat the national gang epidemic. In Los Angeles alone during the last 5 years, there were over 23,000 verified gang related violent crimes. These include 784 homicides, nearly 12,000 felony assaults, approximately 10,000 robberies and just under 500 rapes. It is imperative to reauthorize the COPS program and get more officers on the street to stop this trend.

I am proud to support this bill and encourage all of my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 1700, COPS Reauthorization Act of 2007.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1700 the COPS Improvements Act of 2007.

Unfortunately, over the past several years funding for the hiring of additional police officers has been drastically reduced and the COPS program was basically eliminated.

The Community Oriented Policing Services Improvements Act revives the grant hiring program. These grants will allow local police departments to hire 50,000 additional police officers over the next 6 years.

I know in Houston after Hurricane Katrina we saw a significant rise in violent crime. This program will allow our local communities to hire additional police officers to protect their citizens.

This bill will also provide critical funding for technology grants and hiring community pros-

ecutors. These are tools that our communities need to reduce our crime rates.

When the COPS program was eliminated our nation experienced a drastic increase in crime rates. By providing our law enforcement community with adequate funding and technology we will give them the ability to reduce crime rates.

I have strongly supported this program since it was first introduced during the 1990's. Today I urge my colleagues to support this critical piece of legislation today.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, in my remarks in support of H.R. 1700, the "COPS Improvements Act of 2007," I refer to amended language in the bill that would have required COPS grant recipients participating in the "Troops-to-Cops" program to give special hiring preference to former members of the Armed Forces who served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. I first introduced this provision in an amendment during the Judiciary Committee markup of H.R. 1700. I withdrew that amendment with the understanding that, after working with Ranking Member LAMAR SMITH upon the committee's urging to craft mutually agreeable language, this provision was to be included in the final version of H.R. 1700.

Through what I believe to have been an inadvertent omission, the hiring preference for veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom was not included in the final version of H.R. 1700 that has been presented to the full House of Representatives. It is my understanding that the language will be added either in the Senate bill or at conference and, therefore, will be contained in the bill sent to the President for his signature.

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of HR 1700, the COPS Reauthorization Act. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this important legislation that will reauthorize the Community Oriented Policing Services grant programs.

Over the first 10 years of its existence, from 1994 to 2005, the COPS hiring grant programs have helped local law enforcement agencies hire 117,000 additional police officers. As a result there have been significant drops in the crime rates across our Nation. Unfortunately the previous Congress drastically reduced and then eliminated funding for the COPS hiring grants in the 2005 and 2006 funding cycles.

H.R. 1700 will reinvigorate the COPS program by authorizing \$600 million a year for hiring grants. This level of funding will help put an additional 50,000 police officers in our communities over the next 6 years. I am proud that this Congress is acting to restore funding for these hiring grants that are so critical to local law enforcement agencies across the country.

In addition, this legislation will authorize \$350 million for COPS technology grants. These grants will help local law enforcement agencies buy critical technology like computers for patrol cars and crime mapping software. I have seen this type of crime mapping software at work in the city of Santa Ana, California, in my district. This technology acts as a force multiplier, allowing each officer to be more effective in fighting crime and keeping our communities safe.

H.R. 1700 also authorizes \$200 million for programs that focus on hiring the community prosecutors that play a critical role in following up on police work and convicting criminals.

All of these COPS grant programs will provide critical resources to local law enforcement agencies across the country that are facing a variety of challenges including emerging and ongoing gang activity. In previous years, a COPS grant provided funding to the Santa Ana Police Department for Firearms Identification technology that can read the unique fingerprints that connect bullets and guns. The Santa Ana Police Department has been able to solve many gang-related shootings and other violent crimes by using this ballistics technology. I hope that the passage of this legislation will help ensure that law enforcement agencies across the nation benefit from the valuable COPS grant programs.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for H.R. 1700.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 1700, the Community Oriented Policing Services Reauthorization Act, which has provided greater numbers of police officers to protect our citizens in every State in the union. My district in Oregon has benefited significantly from this program through the addition of 279 police officers and a total of over \$24 million secured for local law enforcement agencies since 1994.

I find it perplexing that the administration continually attempts to reduce funding for COPS when independent studies confirm that the grants significantly contributed to the crime reduction in the late 1990s. Nationally, the strain on law enforcement has never been greater, as resources are stretched to combat the recent rise in crime while also addressing homeland security responsibilities. For this reason, I support the revitalization of this program to protect our families and give law enforcement the support they need.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1700, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. CONYERS. 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 question will be postponed.

SAFE AMERICAN ROADS ACT OF 2007

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1773) to limit the authority of the Secretary of Transportation to grant authority to motor carriers domiciled in Mexico to operate beyond United States municipalities and commercial zones on the United States-Mexico border, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1773

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 "Safe American Roads Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. LIMITATION ON GRANTING AUTHORITY.

The Secretary of Transportation may not grant authority to a motor carrier domiciled in Mexico to operate beyond United States municipalities and commercial zones on the United States-Mexico border, except under the pilot program authorized by this Act.

SEC. 3. PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of Transportation may carry out, in accordance with section 350 of Public Law 107–87, section 31315(c) of title 49, United States Code, all Federal motor carrier safety laws and regulations, and this Act, a pilot program that grants authority to not more than 100 motor carriers domiciled in Mexico to operate beyond United States municipalities and commercial zones on the United States-Mexico border.

(b) **LIMITATION ON COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLES PARTICIPATING IN PILOT PROGRAM.**—The number of commercial motor vehicles owned or leased by motor carriers domiciled in Mexico which may be used to participate in the pilot program shall not exceed 1,000.

(c) **PILOT PROGRAM PREREQUISITES.**—The Secretary may not initiate the pilot program under subsection (a) until—

(1) the Inspector General of the Department of Transportation submits to Congress and the Secretary a report—

(A) independently verifying that the Department is in compliance with each of the requirements of subsections (a) and (b) of section 350 of Public Law 107–87; and

(B) including a determination of whether the Department has established sufficient mechanisms—

(i) to apply Federal motor carrier safety laws and regulations to motor carriers domiciled in Mexico; and

(ii) to ensure compliance with such laws and regulations by motor carriers domiciled in Mexico who will be granted authority to operate beyond United States municipalities and commercial zones on the United States-Mexico border;

(2) the Secretary of Transportation—

(A) takes such action as may be necessary to address any issues raised in the report of the Inspector General under paragraph (1); and

(B) submits to Congress a detailed report describing such actions;

(3) the Secretary determines that there is a program in effect for motor carriers domiciled in the United States to be granted authority to begin operations in Mexico beyond commercial zones on the United States-Mexico border;

(4) the Secretary publishes in the Federal Register and provides sufficient opportunity for public comment on the following:

(A) a detailed description of the pilot program and the amount of funds the Secretary will need to expend to carry out the pilot program;

(B) the findings of each pre-authorization safety audit conducted, before the date of enactment of this Act, by inspectors of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration of motor carriers domiciled in Mexico and seeking to participate in the pilot program;

(C) a process by which the Secretary will be able to revoke Mexico-domiciled motor carrier operating authority under the pilot program;

(D) specific measures to be required by the Secretary to protect the health and safety of the public, including enforcement measures and penalties for noncompliance;

(E) specific measures to be required by the Secretary to enforce the requirements of section 391.11(b)(2) of title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act;

(F) specific standards to be used to evaluate the pilot program and compare any change in the level of motor carrier safety as a result of the pilot program;

(G) penalties to be levied against carriers who, under the pilot program, violate section 365.501(b) of title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act;

(H) a list of Federal motor carrier safety laws and regulations for which the Secretary will accept compliance with a Mexican law or regulation as the equivalent to compliance with a corresponding Federal motor carrier safety law or regulation, including commercial driver's license requirements; and

(I) for any law or regulation referred to in subparagraph (H) for which compliance with a Mexican law or regulation will be accepted, an analysis of how the requirements of the Mexican and United States laws and regulations differ; and

(5) the Secretary establishes an independent review panel under section 4 to monitor and evaluate the pilot program.

SEC. 4. INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT OF PANEL.**—The Secretary of Transportation shall establish an independent review panel to monitor and evaluate the pilot program under section 3. The panel shall be composed of 3 individuals appointed by the Secretary.

(b) **DUTIES.**—

(1) **EVALUATION.**—The independent review panel shall—

(A) evaluate any effects that the pilot program has on motor carrier safety, including an analysis of any crashes involving motor carriers participating in the pilot program and a determination of whether the pilot program has had an adverse effect on motor carrier safety; and

(B) make, in writing, recommendations to the Secretary.

(2) **RECOMMENDATIONS.**—If the independent review panel determines that the pilot program has had an adverse effect on motor carrier safety, the panel shall recommend, in writing, to the Secretary—

(A) such modifications to the pilot program as the panel determines are necessary to address such adverse effect; or

(B) termination of the pilot program.

(c) **RESPONSE.**—Not later than 5 days after the date of a written determination of the independent review panel that the pilot program has had an adverse effect on motor carrier safety, the Secretary shall take such action as may be necessary to address such adverse effect or terminate the pilot program.

SEC. 5. INSPECTOR GENERAL REVIEW.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Inspector General of the Department of Transportation—

(1) shall monitor and review the pilot program;

(2) not later than 12 months after the date of initiation of the pilot program, shall submit to Congress and the Secretary of Transportation a 12-month interim report on the Inspector General's findings regarding the pilot program; and

(3) not later than 18 months after the date of initiation of the pilot program, shall submit to Congress and the Secretary an 18-month interim report with the Inspector General's findings regarding the pilot program.

(b) **SAFETY DETERMINATIONS.**—The interim reports submitted under subsection (a) shall include the determination of the Inspector General of—

(1) whether the Secretary has established sufficient mechanisms to determine whether the pilot program is having any adverse effects on motor carrier safety;

(2) whether the Secretary is taking sufficient action to ensure that motor carriers domiciled in Mexico and participating in the pilot program are in compliance with all Federal motor carrier safety laws and regulations and section 350 of Public Law 107–87; and

(3) the sufficiency of monitoring and enforcement activities by the Secretary and States to ensure compliance with such laws and regulations by such carriers.

(c) **REPORT TO CONGRESS.**—Not later than 60 days after the date of submission of the 18-month interim report of the Inspector General under this section, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on—

(1) the actions the Secretary is taking to address any motor carrier safety issues raised in one or both of the interim reports of the Inspector General;

(2) evaluation of the Secretary whether granting authority to additional motor carriers domiciled in Mexico to operate beyond United States municipalities and commercial zones on the United States-Mexico border would have any adverse effects on motor carrier safety;

(3) modifications to Federal motor carrier safety laws and regulations or special procedures that the Secretary determines are necessary to enhance the safety of operations of motor carriers domiciled in Mexico in the United States; and

(4) any recommendations for legislation to make the pilot program permanent or to expand operations of motor carriers domiciled in Mexico in the United States beyond municipalities and commercial zones on the United States-Mexico border.

SEC. 6. DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of Transportation may carry out the pilot program under this Act for a period not to exceed 3 years; except that, if the Secretary does not comply with any provision of this Act, the authority of the Secretary to carry out the pilot program terminates.

(b) **FINAL REPORT.**—Not later than 60 days after the last day of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a final report on the pilot program.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1773.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, we have before us very important legislation. It is bad enough that NAFTA has caused the United States to hemorrhage more than 1 million jobs; but now the administration with the NAFTA trucks proposal would add insult to injury. Not only would it put in jeopardy more American jobs, those of American truck drivers, but it would also jeopardize the safety of the traveling public on America's highways.

I want to congratulate Representative BOYDA for bringing such an important issue to the Congress so early in her congressional career and Representative HUNTER on the other side of the aisle for his contributions to this issue and to this legislation.

We have here what is called a SAP. It is a statement of administration policy. They take us for saps if they believe we will believe the information they have conveyed to us in this letter.

They say that the safety standards, including hours of service, driver medical standards, financial responsibility, and drug and alcohol testing, will all be remedied by their program. There is and are no hours of service regulations in Mexico. We have heard anecdotal evidence from Mexican truck drivers that they are often forced, as they are exploited down there working for relatively low wages compared to truck drivers in the U.S., to drive for 48 to 72 hours at a stretch. How do they do that? They laugh and they say "dust." What is dust? Drugs, uppers. They are commonly used in Mexico. There are no meaningful hours of service regulation. There is no drug testing in Mexico, and illegal substances are frequently used for these extended trips.

But the administration would have us believe that by signing a piece of paper and waving a magic wand and having in place paper provisions on drug and alcohol testing or hours of service, that these things will happen meaningfully. Suddenly, there will be a tremendous change in the culture of the American trucking industry.

They go on to say there will be an in-depth safety inspection before they are allowed to operate in the United States. Well, that is interesting because in testimony before my committee recently, the administration admitted that when a new bus carrier, and we are having a problem with illegally run bus service, what is called "curb service" here in the Northeast, it takes them up to 18 months to get out and certify that company actually exists and look at the papers in a filing cabinet. They never go out and look at the buses. Never.

We have the same thing going on with the American trucking industry. Only a tiny fraction of trucks are inspected on an annual basis. But somehow, magically, an agency that is totally overwhelmed by the volume of traffic is going to inspect each and every truck meaningfully in Mexico, inspect the credentials of the Mexican truck drivers in depth, certify the nonexistent drug testing programs, and certify tracking of the nonexistent hours of service in Mexico. And then they say that this will all be made available to the American public.

Here is the form in which it is made available. It is right here in the Federal Register. They are saying we are requiring publication, and they say it would be redundant to have all of the safety audits in detail published in the Federal Register because they put up this page. It has a date. That is good. That is a good start. It is up for 7 days, by the way.

And in order to access this page, you have to know the MX docket number. You have to know the particular docket number of that Mexican carrier. You have to know specifics to get nonspecific information that will only be posted for 7 days. And if you get through that maze and you happen to hit the 7-day window, because it goes

down after 7 days, I guess they don't have enough memory capacity down there at DOT to leave it up longer for the public to review to, you get this, a form that has the applicant information, business address, and status. Quote: "Provisional authority issued."

That is the in-depth information that FMCSA is going to put up for the American public to review to understand that these audits are being conducted and these carriers are safe.

We need this legislation so we can be assured that we are protecting the safety of the American public.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to voice my support for H.R. 1773, the Safe American Roads Act of 2007, which passed the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee by unanimous vote, 100 percent support by both Democrats and Republicans.

In order to comply with NAFTA, the Department of Transportation has taken steps to fully open the Mexican border to truck traffic. To start this process, DOT has announced a cross-border demonstration program. The bill we are considering today specifies requirements that DOT must meet when implementing this program.

But compliance with NAFTA does not mean we have to or even that we should open the border without any scrutiny of the process. It is a priority for our committee and for this Congress to stay engaged on this issue and ensure that the border opening for trucks is handled properly with the safety of American motorists as our top priority.

A major theme of the bill we are considering today is constant review of the program as it is implemented by the Department of Transportation.

The bill requires DOT to ensure the trucks crossing into the U.S. not only understand our safety regulations for motor carriers, but that they are fully compliant with them as well. This bill also requires DOT to maintain an active review of the demonstration project. DOT must respond to the Inspector General's periodic reviews and provide comments and suggestions to make the program better. And when we mean better, we mean safer.

I want to say that this bill is an excellent example of bipartisanship. Concern over Mexican trucks does not fall on one side of the aisle or the other. Many Republicans and Democrats both feel strongly about this issue. It impacts the entire country.

Two bills were recently introduced that address this issue, one by our colleague, Mrs. BOYDA from Kansas, and one by Mr. HUNTER from California, on which I was an original cosponsor. While Mrs. BOYDA's bill is the base bill and we certainly want to commend her, the bill we are considering today has many aspects from Mr. HUNTER's bill as well, combined together to create the

bill we are voting on today. I believe H.R. 1773 was made stronger by taking the best attributes from both the Boyda bill and the Hunter bill.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we need reciprocity. I said at a hearing on this legislation that we should not approve more Mexican trucking companies than American trucking companies that are approved to go into Mexico. We need reciprocity, and we need fairness for American trucking companies and American workers. Again, though, I will voice my support for this bill, H.R. 1773, and I urge my colleagues to support it as well.

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON).

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman OBERSTAR and the subcommittee Chair, Mr. DEFAZIO, and the ranking member, Mr. DUNCAN. I am very pleased to join them in support of this bill.

As you know, Texas shares a longer border with Mexico than any other border State. In 2004, at Texas border ports of entry, there were 3 million commercial crossings.

The safety and congestion impacts of this pilot program will be felt the most by Texas drivers, roads and businesses. The impact will be felt particularly by my constituents as Interstates 20, 30, 35 and 45 all converge in the heart of my congressional district.

I agree with the chairman of the committee when he says we must not bolster trade with Mexico at the expense of the safety of American drivers. This bill requires that Federal motor carriers complete all safety inspections on the Mexican side of the border. The bill also mandates that safety can be assured before Mexican trucks enter our country under this program.

We in Congress cannot afford to be soft in our oversight of this matter. Passing a safety inspection in Mexico, even one administered by Federal motor carriers, is not a guarantee to Mexican trucks and drivers that they will have free rein over our roads.

In the event that this program proves successful, it is important for this body to give adequate guidance and assistance to border States like Texas to address the burden of increased freight traffic, including congestion, air quality, and wear and tear on our roads. The Department of Transportation cannot use Texas and other border States as guinea pigs and not give them the support they need.

In closing, I fully support this bill. It removes much of the uncertainty regarding safety that this committee found in the Department of Transportation's proposed pilot program.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to our colleague, Mrs. MILLER

of Michigan, who has been one of the most active members of our committee on this particular legislation.

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. I appreciate the gentleman yielding time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in very strong support of H.R. 1773, the Safe American Roads Act. This legislation sets out very, very stringent, quantifiable safety standards which the Department of Transportation must meet before permitting Mexican-based trucks to operate through the United States.

Before coming to Congress, I had the pleasure of serving for 8 years as the Michigan Secretary of State with a principal responsibility of being that State's chief motor vehicle administrator. I was also the chairman of the Traffic Safety Commission of my State, and so I had the responsibility for all licensing, commercial drivers licenses as well as hazardous material endorsements. So I had immediate concerns about how the DOT pilot program might compromise the safety of our roads. Here in the United States, we have reciprocity amongst the States so we can share driving records across State lines.

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In Mexico, licensing requirements are very poor, and it's well-known that fraud in their system runs rampant. In fact, the Transportation Committee heard in testimony from the DOT's Inspector General that one in five Mexican driving records contained an error of some type. Mr. Speaker, if we had a 20 percent error rate in the United States we would consider it a crisis, and I actually believe that was a very low estimate.

There are also concerns about the insurance provisions of this program. American truckers must carry very expensive insurance policies in the event that they are in an accident. What if it happens that a Mexican truck has an accident somewhere in the United States? Good luck to the victims of that accident who will try to collect on damages from a Mexican company.

I believe that if we let these Mexican truckers into our country with questionable identification and insurance, it exposes American drivers to more dangerous conditions on our roadways.

First of all, because the Mexican drivers are allowed to work far longer hours than our truckers; and secondly, it is well-known that there's widespread drug use in this profession, as the chairman of our subcommittee has already articulated. Presently, there is no system under which secure testing could take place. In fact, it's been said that there is not a single testing lab in Mexico to ensure that the drivers coming into our country are drug free.

The numbers I think are the easiest way to tell whether or not this proposal is a fair deal for the United States. As soon as this pilot program was announced, 800 Mexican trucking companies lined up to come into the United States. By contrast, only two

American companies desired to deliver into Mexico. I think those numbers are very indicative of whether or not this is a fair agreement for the United States.

Because of all of these problems, groups like the Teamsters, as well as the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, also the Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety have all come out in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure the program can only take place once these trucks and drivers from Mexico can meet the same standards that American trucks and drivers do. Trucks participating in the pilot program will be subject to rigorous safety inspections limited to a total of 1,000. Their drivers must also demonstrate clean driving records and have a proficiency in English.

This legislation as well would require extensive oversight and review of the pilot program from an independent review panel.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

I thank Chairman DEFAZIO and Ranking Member DUNCAN and Chairman OBERSTAR for this creative solution to a very difficult problem.

I happen to live at the border. I represent the whole California-Mexico border. Through my district, at least 4,000 trucks a day pass through. That means across the whole border three or four, five times that will cross. The volume is enormous. There is no way for us to inspect this incredible volume of traffic. In fact, when there was a test case several years ago of inspecting all the trucks, they found 100 percent of the trucks had either insurance or safety violations.

We are dealing with issues of insurance. We are dealing with issues of truck safety. We're dealing with issues of driver certification and jobs on this side of the border. There's no question that these certifications are just not the same standards that we apply. We have fraudulent use of papers. There is enormous difficulty in getting accountability.

But, in addition, if we allow the truckers to cross they will be in this country and able to take jobs away from our local companies, especially small trucking companies. It costs them about 150 dollars to go to L.A. from San Diego and back. A Mexican trucker will do it for 50 dollars. That puts all our guys out of business if the administration proposal was allowed to go through.

So I thank the Chair for coming up with this creative solution. This is a bad, bad vision that the administration has to allow all trucks across in a way which does not really meet the safety or insurance or certification standards

that we have in this country. And we're going to have a major accident somewhere, and the people in America are going to say how did this happen.

Well, we intend in Congress to make sure that we keep our safe roads and we keep our jobs for American truckers.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO).

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the gentleman from Tennessee for yielding, and I'd like to thank the leadership on the Transportation Committee for the creative solution that you have brought back with H.R. 1773 because it places important restrictions upon the pilot program planned by the Department of Transportation to allow Mexican trucks to operate across this country.

My first concern with the pilot is its impact on the safety of our Nation's highways. This Congress gave this department specific criteria to ensure adequate safety and security measures were taken prior to allowing Mexican trucks to travel on our highways. I believe it is important that all of these criteria are met prior to the start of any pilot project on our Nation's highways.

I am also very concerned about the economic consequences of allowing Mexican trucks to operate within the United States. It is my hope that if this pilot program is indeed implemented, the Department will work closely with State and local law enforcement to ensure that the prohibition on point-to-point deliveries within the United States by Mexican trucking companies is enforced.

I am especially pleased that this bill will require a plan to enforce existing English proficiency regulations prior to the start of any pilot program. It is critical for the safety of anyone on the road that truckers are able to understand traffic and warning signs and are able to communicate with law enforcement and emergency management officials.

It is absolutely critical that we stop the Department from implementing their pilot program until we can ensure the safety of our American motorists and our American highways.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Kansas (Mrs. BOYDA), the author of the legislation, who's made an extraordinary commitment so early in her career.

Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas. Thank you, Chairman DEFAZIO. I certainly appreciate your support.

This is a tremendously huge issue in my district. People want to know that Congress is out there making our roads safe. I have two children and went back and forth on I-70 between Kansas City and St. Louis for years with two little kids. The truck traffic is amazingly dense. We spent years encouraging truck safety and spending billions of

dollars on safety and environmental standards, and it just does not make any sense to now watch that be reversed.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Transportation has unveiled a pilot program that will permit poorly regulated Mexican traffic onto American highways. In its present form, the DOT proposal exhibits reckless disregard for America's road safety, not to mention our border security and our economic interests.

Under current law, trucks registered in Mexico can drive only within a narrow border zone in the United States before cargos are transferred to an American vehicle. This system not only protects U.S. highways from unsafe Mexican traffic, but it prevents drug smuggling and illegal immigration, and it safeguards American transportation jobs.

But the DOT intends to halt this very sensible system. Under their pilot program, Mexican-domiciled trucks could penetrate far into the American heartland. The traditional safety standards required for vehicles on American roads, such as frequent safety inspections, limits on the number of hours driven in a day, drug testing and criminal background checks for drivers hauling hazardous materials, either would not be applied or would be weakly enforced.

Mexico certainly does not have a system right now for keeping these kinds of records in place. It's ridiculous for us to consider that they will be able to enforce these regulations in any way that comes up to our standards.

Again, let me say that our trucking industry has spent so much money getting our trucks, making them safer and so much to bring them up to environmental standards, it's just crazy to now say that we are going to bring in trucks that do not have to meet those same standards.

If the DOT pilot program proceeds as planned, drivers in Kansas and all across America will soon share their roads with unsafe Mexican trucks. The flood of foreign traffic will inevitably rise, result in collisions, injuries and even fatalities.

I introduced the bill now under consideration, the Safe American Roads Act of 2007, to rein in the Department of Transportation. The bill requires the cross-border pilot program to comply with 22 specific strict safety criteria. It creates an independent review panel to monitor and evaluate the pilot program after it launches, and it provides that the program can be terminated at any point if the Secretary of Transportation does not comply with all of these provisions.

By decisively approving the Safe American Roads Act, Congress can protect the millions of American families who drive our highways every day. I'd also like to thank Chairman OBERSTAR and Chairman DEFAZIO for their assistance and support, and I certainly urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to our colleague from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES).

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman DUNCAN for the time and wish to add my strong support to H.R. 1773, along with Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. OBERSTAR, Mrs. BOYDA, and want to thank the chairmen and ranking members of Transportation and Infrastructure for their leadership on this issue.

I was proud to cosponsor Congressman HUNTER's legislation, H.R. 1756, and am happy to support the revised H.R. 1773, the bill before us, which incorporates many of the strongest provisions from the Hunter bill. Safety of Americans and American highways must always take precedence over some obscure treaty obligation. As far as I am concerned, the safety of Americans and enforcing American law is far and away the number one priority here.

It's commonsense legislation that would prevent Mexican motor carriers from operating in the United States beyond the commercial zones of the United States-Mexico border until the Secretary of Transportation unequivocally certifies several minimum standards: requiring English language proficiency and ensuring U.S. law enforcement personnel have the ability to access databases, verify driving records, identification, criminal history and risk to homeland security the same way the information is used to verify U.S. operators. We do not need 90,000-pound unguided missiles on our highways.

Every day, the trucking industry ships more cargo in our Nation than any other mode of transportation. The American professionals behind these rigs and their equipment are subject to constant stringent safety standards. This bill ensures that at the very minimum Mexican truckers are subject to the same standards as our own operators. The safety of our citizens on our roadways must be our top priority, and I urge all Members to support H.R. 1773.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, could I ask the time remaining please.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Oregon has 7½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Tennessee has 10½ minutes remaining.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FERGUSON).

Mr. FERGUSON. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee.

I want to thank Congresswoman BOYDA for her work on addressing this very important issue and of course Chairman OBERSTAR and Ranking Member MICA and all those who have worked so hard on this legislation. I am a strong supporter and cosponsor of the Safe American Roads Act.

This legislation takes a reasoned and commonsense approach to dealing with opening our borders to Mexico-domiciled trucks. Instead of providing blanket access to U.S. roads, this bill

places important standards and restrictions on the DOT's proposed pilot program, ensuring that our roads remain safe and that our Nation's trucking industry remains competitive.

The heart of this legislation centers on establishing a pilot program that employs standards that we in Congress approved, while maintaining an open comment period to ensure that expert opinions are considered with respect to safety and compliance and enforcement.

The bill ensures accountability through both the administrative and legislative process, requiring an Inspector General review of the pilot program to determine whether Mexico-domiciled motor carriers participating are in full compliance with U.S. motor carrier safety laws, and requiring a report to Congress within 90 days of completion of the program.

The Safe American Roads Act does not aim to close America's roadways to foreign truckers. Instead, it requires the Department of Transportation to tap on the brakes, to slow down and make sure that the road we travel down is one that ensures the highest standards of safety and accountability.

Further, the legislation ensures the competitiveness of our Nation's trucking industry by preventing Mexico-domiciled motor carriers from accessing U.S. highways until U.S.-based trucking companies are given comparable access in Mexico.

□ 1300

Once again, I want to thank Congresswoman BOYDA for introducing this legislation and her work with Mr. HUNTER and so many others. I urge all of our colleagues to join me in supporting passage of this legislation.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, how much time remains on our side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Tennessee has 8½ minutes remaining.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE).

Mr. POE. Thank you to the gentleman from Tennessee for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this legislation as a cosponsor. Being from Texas, we get the brunt of trucks coming from Mexico into the United States. Mexican truck drivers shouldn't be treated any better or worse than American truck drivers.

The general reputation of the American trucking industry is very good. They maintain their vehicles, and they maintain competence of their drivers. This legislation will require the same of Mexican truck drivers that come into the United States to have vehicles that don't pollute, that are not overweight, that are maintained as well as American trucks, and it will require the simple but very logical principle that Mexican truck drivers that drive throughout the United States, those massive 18 wheelers, be able to read a street sign.

I think it's important that people who drive our freeways are able to read the directions and the signs of the cities into which they travel. This legislation makes a lot of sense; it's common sense. It's needed to equalize the crossings into the United States of Mexican truck drivers with the competence of American truck drivers.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the chairman of the Transportation Committee, Mr. OBERSTAR, for 5½ minutes.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I thank the gentleman for yielding and for his splendid leadership of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, this portion of the session holding intensive hearings charting the future course for transportation as we move into the second half of the authorization of the SAFETEA-LU bill, and laying the groundwork for the future transportation of America. The gentleman has done a superb job.

I congratulate the Congresswoman, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, for recognizing the threat of Mexican trucks admitted unabashedly, without restraint, into the United States, or very minimal restraint that the Department proposed.

I also express my great appreciation to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) for participating throughout the shaping of this legislation and working constructively for a reasonable counter to the administration's plan. The gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) with his ever-judicial manner has helped us shape a very good balance to the allowing of Mexican trucks into the United States.

This cross-border pilot program the administration launched is not just a little initiative, something to let pass, it's a major shift in transportation policy. They were intent on opening the border with minimum public notification and at great cost to safety.

Despite serious concerns raised by the Congress, by safety advocates in the private sector, by nonprofit organizations, by States who were concerned about Mexican-domiciled trucks coming into the United States, this legislation limits the authority of the Secretary to open the U.S.-Mexican border to trucks coming into the United States.

It will not allow a 1-year pilot program as simply a gimmick, a ruse, under which they can allow the border to be opened unilaterally under terms and conditions that the Department or the administration might choose. Instead, we have a strict set of prerequisites, a strict set of conditions. A pilot program of 3 years, 100 motor carriers for Mexico, 1,000 trucks, does not provide blanket authority for 3 years. If the Secretary fails to comply with any provision of the act, the program terminates.

We also require the Inspector General of the Department of Transportation, concurrently, while the program is under way, to review and report back to the public, to the Congress, to the

Department where there are failures and deviations, if there are any, from the program that we have set in place, especially if Mexican carriers do not meet strict Federal safety requirements.

This is not a run, operate, and evaluate. It is operate and concurrently evaluate what the Department is doing, what the Mexican trucks are doing. Are they, in Mexico, requiring fundamental elements of highway safety that U.S. drivers are required to submit to? Do they have hours of service requirements comparable to those in the United States?

Mexico does not have a single certified lab to test drivers for drug and alcohol compliance, as our drivers are required to be subjected to. The Inspector General has to verify that every requirement of section 350 of Public Law 107-87, the basic authority under which they propose to operate, has sufficient mechanisms in place to ensure safety, to enforce safety.

DOT has to also, under this legislation, provide the public with an opportunity to comment on issues of safety and cabotage, that the trucks that come into the United States and deliver goods to a destination point and carry goods back to Mexico aren't moving goods from one U.S. city to another U.S. city in violation of our cabotage laws. We don't allow it in aviation; we are not going to allow it in trucking.

We are living up to our commitments under NAFTA, but we have put in place requirements that are vigorous, protections that are important to protect travelers on our U.S. roads from failures in Mexico.

Now, the Department of Transportation has sent up their letter, their statement of policy, in which in one place there is a complaint that this legislation gives the agency "only 5 days to take action necessary to address adverse findings or terminate the program."

That's a requirement on safety. If you find an unsafe condition, how much longer than 5 days do you want to allow it to go? How much longer do you want to have an unsafe condition existing on our roads? That's just dead wrong.

Then, in another provision, they complain that we, their language says, purporting to require the Secretary of Transportation to submit legislative recommendations to Congress. They submit legislative recommendations to Congress, every executive branch agency. Whether we want them or not, they submit legislative recommendations. We are saying the Secretary may submit. If there are some things they want changed, we invite them to submit their recommendations to the Congress.

I simply don't buy that. I think they are sort of a half-hearted statement.

This is good legislation, good sound policy. It protects U.S. drivers and allows us to keep commitments under NAFTA, and we will protect American roadways.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the ranking Republican on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, a man who has been a leader on this legislation and on many others, Mr. MICA.

Mr. MICA. I thank our ranking member, Mr. DUNCAN.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today in support of H.R. 1773, the Safe American Roads Act of 2007. This bill has some good provisions in it. I regret that a bill which I consider even better and stronger, which was drafted by Mr. HUNTER, the gentleman from California, and introduced in Congress, is not the bill that we are considering.

I am sorry Mr. HUNTER is not with us today also to speak, but I know he has many important obligations in his responsibility in securing our national defense.

Again, I believe Mr. HUNTER's bill would have been a stronger bill that would have even more teeth to make certain that Mexican trucks comply with not only our safety regulations, but also our economic regulations against cabotage.

Now, let me make the record clear that I served in Congress when NAFTA was voted on in 1993. I did not vote for that legislation, and one reason was some of the unfair provisions, the inequity between the economy of Mexico and the United States. I had no problem with Canada, but Mexico is a different situation. I am for open and fair trade, but what passed in NAFTA then and today was a trade agreement between unequal partners when it comes to Mexico.

This administration, the Bush administration, unfortunately, has inherited what I call the haunting legacy of the Clinton administration, one of the haunting legacies, which pushed for passage of a lopsided NAFTA agreement. Back in 1993, in October, actually in October of 1992, President Clinton had only positive things to say about NAFTA.

Also, I have quotes by current Speaker PELOSI, then the Representative from California: "In supporting NAFTA, I am casting my vote for the young people of America and for the future."

The future isn't to send jobs to the south, to Mexico, and then now open up the borders and truck the product produced by those jobs to the north. The responsibility we have in Congress is to make certain that even though we have to comply with some of the terms of this unfair agreement, that we do protect the safety, that we do protect the economic opportunity and the disaster this unfair agreement has brought upon our economy.

So it's critical today that Congress, that what we are doing today maintain, at least at a minimum, in keeping the unfair provisions of the treaty enacted by a Democratic Congress, under the promotion of President Clinton, from doing even more damage to us at this time.

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

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I will close on our side.

I will simply say that no matter how much we want to have good relations and trade with our friends in Mexico, and we all certainly want that, the first obligation of the U.S. Congress is to the American people.

This bill is important for the safety of American roads, it's important to our American trucking companies, our small businesses, and to our truck drivers. It's legislation that all of our colleagues can support, and I urge our colleagues to do so.

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

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

My good friend from Florida, the ranking Republican member of the committee, made a point that NAFTA was promoted by and passed during the Clinton administration. That's true, and I have continually castigated that administration and that President for that act.

However, he does need to remember that the agreement was negotiated by the first Bush administration, adopted by the Clinton administration, unfortunately, and to the discredit of the Clinton administration, and passed the House of Representatives with a large majority of Republican votes. Yes, it was a Democratic House, but a very substantial majority of the Democrats opposed the legislation.

So this is truly a bipartisan problem. But if he wants to attribute blame, the Republican Members of the House would bear that, and not the Democratic Members, although we were in the majority. He also talked about unfair portions of the agreement.

Well, the President has the authority to give 6 months' notice at any time that we are going to withdraw in order to require renegotiation of provisions of the agreement. So if this President felt any of the provisions were unfair, or they felt they were under duress to allow the Mexican trucks into this country, they have the tools to renegotiate that agreement. I wish they would use those tools. But they won't because this administration is all about killing off American jobs and American labor. That's what this is ultimately intended to do.

You can get a Mexican truck driver to work for a heck of a lot less than a Teamster in the United States. You can get a Mexican dock worker to work for a heck of a lot less than a longshoreman in the United States.

That's what this ultimately is designed to do. The dream of the NAFTA proponents is that the goods, all the goods, the things we don't make in America anymore, will be imported from China to a port in Mexico, avoiding the U.S. ports, the U.S. longshoremen, and loaded on Mexican trucks, avoiding U.S. trucking companies and U.S. drivers and brought up into America's heartland.

This bill is about protecting the safety of the American traveling public. That's what's before us today. I would love to renegotiate and revisit NAFTA any day of the week, but today we are all about the safety of the American public. That's what we are ensuring with this legislation.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1773, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. DEFAZIO. 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 question will be postponed.

□ 1315

JAMES A. LEACH FEDERAL BUILDING

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1505) to designate the Federal building located at 131 East 4th Street in Davenport, Iowa, as the "James A. Leach Federal Building," as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1505

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

SECTION 1. DESIGNATION.

The United States courthouse located at 131 East 4th Street in Davenport, Iowa, shall be known and designated as the "James A. Leach United States Courthouse".

SEC. 2. REFERENCES.

Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the United States courthouse referred to in section 1 shall be deemed to be a reference to the "James A. Leach United States Courthouse".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GRAVES) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous materials on H.R. 1505.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1505, as amended, is a bill to designate the Federal building in Davenport, IA, as the James A. Leach United States Courthouse. Our former colleague, Jim Leach, was elected to Congress in 1977 from Iowa and served for 14 consecutive Congresses. His contributions to and interests in the House of Representatives are numerous, including his long-standing support for the use of HOPE VI HUD funds to help smaller cities develop affordable housing.

A career public servant, Congressman Leach served 30 years as a Representative in Congress, where he chaired the Banking and Financial Services Committee, the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, and the Congressional Executive Commission on China.

He holds eight honorary degrees, has received decorations from two foreign governments, and is the recipient of the Wayne Morris Integrity in Politics Award, the Woodrow Wilson Award from Johns Hopkins, and the Adlai Stevenson Award from the United Nations Association, and the Edgar Wayburn Award from the Sierra Club.

Jim Leach was hard working, highly respected on both sides of the aisle, and dedicated to the welfare of his constituents. It is fitting and proper to honor his public service with this designation. I support 1505 and urge its adoption.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1505 designates the United States courthouse located at 131 East 4th Street in Davenport, IA, as the James A. Leach United States Courthouse. The bill honors Congressman Leach's dedication to public service.

Congressman Leach began his long and distinguished career of public service as a congressional staffer in the 1960s. He later served as a foreign service officer and as a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly.

In 1976 Congressman Leach was elected to the House of Representatives. He served in the U.S. House for 30 years, from 1977 to 2007. During his time in Congress, he chaired the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, and the Congressional Executive Commission on China.

Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation and urge my colleagues to do the same.

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

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR).

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, Congressman Jim Leach was a very decent, distinguished and thoughtful Member of Congress. He was a learned Member of the body. He's a personal friend.

He served this country in many capacities. He began his service as a staff