

It is so sad that in our country, the richest in the world, 37 million people live below the poverty line and deal with these fears every day.

As a Congress, we need to do more to help these people, which is why I am proud to stand in support of Congresswoman BARBARA LEE's bill, H. Con. Res. 198, and the goal of cutting poverty in the U.S. in half in the next 10 years.

This bill, recognizing the problem of poverty in our country is a good start, but we need to do more. We can put our money where our mouths are, starting with an economic stimulus package that gets money to the people who need it most in an economic downturn. This can be done by extending unemployment insurance and food stamps to help the neediest among us . . . not by extending tax breaks for the richest people in this country who have amassed great wealth at the expense of the rest of us. Let's do the right thing and help those who actually need it.

Madam Speaker, again I thank Representative LEE for her leadership in fighting poverty and for bringing this resolution to the floor and urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of resolving to cut poverty in half over the next 10 years. America is the richest country in the history of the world, yet 37 million Americans languish in poverty. The poverty rate is an inexcusable 17 percent for all children and 33 percent for black children. As a body, Congress has a moral obligation to alleviate poverty and provide all people with opportunities to lead healthy and independent lives.

The resolution, H. Con. Res. 198, before us is simple: it puts Congress and the Nation on the clock and acknowledges our collective responsibility to the impoverished and disadvantaged. As a country, we spend more than all other countries combined on our military and ongoing wars. Yet, our poverty rate is dead last among developed nations. Clearly, we have the financial ability to drastically reduce the number of people living in poverty. The question is do we have the political will.

I believe the answer is yes. During the 1960s the poverty rate fell from over 22.2 percent to 12.6 percent. These gains were brought about by the creation and expansion of a strong safety net supported by programs such as Medicaid, food stamps, and AFDC. Now, the safety net is frayed and under constant attack from those who don't blink when approving the \$500 billion to fight the Iraq war, but would like to see crucial entitlement programs "wither on the vine." This resolution rejects the failed ideology that has brought us the manmade disaster in New Orleans and the shame of an additional 5 million people living in poverty since 2000.

As we celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday, we must redouble our efforts to fight poverty. Congress has to expand SCHIP and continue moving toward universal health care. We need to ensure that all families can afford childcare, decent housing, nutritious meals, and a good education. These are basic human rights. As a society, our obligation is to lift those who are disadvantaged and provide opportunities. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and rededicate ourselves to eradicating poverty.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong and unwavering support for H. Con.

Res. 198 and am pleased to be a co-sponsor on this Congressional Resolution that draws attention to the approximately 37 million Americans who live in poverty. In particular, I am bound and determined to meeting the Resolution's goal of cutting poverty in half over the next 10 years.

The number of impoverished Floridians increased from 859,888 in 2000 to 943,670 in 2005, a 9.7 percent rise, representing almost 6 percent of the total population. Over those years, Broward County's severely poor grew from 77,942 to 82,327, while Miami-Dade's poverty rate of 6.8 percent was among the highest in the State.

African Americans and Hispanics have poverty rates far above the poverty rate for Caucasians. In 2005, 24.9 percent of African Americans (9.2 million) and 21.8 percent of Hispanics (94 million) had incomes below poverty, compared to 8.3 percent of non-Hispanic whites (16.2 million) and 11.1 percent of Asians (1.4 million). Although African-Americans represent only 12.6 percent of the total population, they make up 24.8 percent of the poor population.

And among those that are the highest of our country's poor are our children. In 2005, 12.3 million children (17.1 percent) were poor. For African American children, this statistic is even higher—in 2005, 34.2 percent of black children were poor (3.7 million). This is inexcusable in a country where so many live in great wealth.

Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom.

It is time to change these statistics. Our citizens with minimal education, and our citizens without a job are among those that are the most susceptible to poverty. Clearly, Americans need to work. We need to do what we have to do to make this happen.

And we need to do this soon, and not drag our feet on this important issue. This Resolution will motivate us to get moving and gives us a very necessary goal—to cut poverty in half over the next 10 years.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 198, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

JUDGE RICHARD B. ALLSBROOK POST OFFICE

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4211) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service lo-

cated at 725 Roanoke Avenue in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, as the "Judge Richard B. Allsbrook Post Office".

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4211

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

SECTION 1. JUDGE RICHARD B. ALLSBROOK POST OFFICE.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 725 Roanoke Avenue in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, shall be known and designated as the "Judge Richard B. Allsbrook Post Office".

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the "Judge Richard B. Allsbrook Post Office".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia? There was no objection.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am pleased to join my colleagues in consideration of H.R. 4211 which names a postal facility in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, the Judge Richard B. Allsbrook Post Office.

H.R. 4211 was introduced by Representative BUTTERFIELD of North Carolina on November 15, 2007. It was reported from the House Oversight Committee on December 12, 2007 by voice vote. This measure has been co-sponsored by 12 Members and has support of the entire North Carolina congressional delegation.

I am asking the House to join me in honoring Judge Richard B. Allsbrook, a dedicated civil servant, who passed away in October 2007.

Judge Allsbrook served his country as a second lieutenant in the United States Navy before becoming an attorney in North Carolina at a family law firm. In 1978, Judge Allsbrook was appointed resident superior court judge for the Sixth Judicial District, from which he retired in September 2000. In addition, he served as a mediator in the North Carolina judicial system, and was sitting president of the Roanoke Rapids Chamber of Commerce.

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The community was deeply touched by his efforts. Madam Speaker, I urge swift passage of this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SHAYS. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge passage of this bill honoring the late Honorable Judge Richard B. Allsbrook with the naming of the Judge Richard B. Allsbrook Post Office located at 725 Roanoke Avenue, in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina. Described as a "meticulous, fair and compassionate" jurist, Allsbrook served as the Superior Court Judge for the Sixth Judicial District in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, for 22 years before retiring in 2000.

A native of Halifax, and son of the late State Senator Julian Allsbrook, Judge Allsbrook earned his undergraduate degree and his juris doctorate from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

After spending 4 years as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, Allsbrook spent 20 years practicing law with his father in the practice of Allsbrook, Benton and Knott.

Judge Allsbrook was also an active member of the community, serving as the president of the Roanoke Rapids Kiwanis Club and the president of the Roanoke Rapids Chamber of Commerce. He also received awards for his service to the community, including the Boy Scouts of America's Distinguished Citizen Award.

A dedicated father and grandfather, distinguished public servant, and valuable member of the community, Judge Allsbrook touched many lives and, fittingly, his life deserves to be recognized with the naming of the Judge Richard B. Allsbrook Post Office in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, in his honor.

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

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4211.

The question was taken.

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

Ms. NORTON. Madam 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.

ESTABLISHING NATIONAL TUNNEL INSPECTION STANDARDS

Mr. DEFAZIO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 409) to amend title 23, United States Code, to inspect highway tunnels, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 409

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

SECTION 1. NATIONAL TUNNEL INSPECTION PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title 23, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 149 the following:

"§ 150. National tunnel inspection program

"(a) NATIONAL TUNNEL INSPECTION STANDARDS.—The Secretary, in consultation with State transportation departments and interested and knowledgeable private organizations and individuals, shall establish national tunnel inspection standards for the proper safety inspection and evaluation of all highway tunnels. The standards established under this subsection shall be designed to ensure uniformity among the States in the conduct of such inspections and evaluations.

"(b) MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR INSPECTION STANDARDS.—The standards established under subsection (a) shall, at a minimum—

"(1) specify, in detail, the method by which highway tunnel inspections shall be carried out by the States;

"(2) establish the maximum time period between the inspections based on a risk-management approach;

"(3) establish the qualifications for those charged with carrying out the inspections;

"(4) require each State to maintain and make available to the Secretary upon request—

"(A) written reports on the results of the inspections together with notations of any action taken pursuant to the findings of the inspections; and

"(B) current inventory data for all highway tunnels located in the State reflecting the findings of the most recent highway tunnel inspections conducted;

"(5) establish procedures for national certification of highway tunnel inspectors;

"(6) establish procedures for conducting annual compliance reviews of State inspections and State implementation of quality control and quality assurance procedures; and

"(7) establish standards for State tunnel management systems to improve the tunnel inspection process and the quality of data collected and reported by the States to the Secretary for inclusion in the national tunnel inventory to be established under this section.

"(c) TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR TUNNEL INSPECTORS.—The Secretary, in cooperation with State transportation departments, shall establish a program designed to ensure that all individuals carrying out highway tunnel inspections receive appropriate training and certification. Such program shall be revised from time to time to take into account new and improved techniques.

"(d) NATIONAL TUNNEL INVENTORY.—The Secretary shall establish a national inventory of highway tunnels reflecting the findings of the most recent highway tunnel inspections conducted by States under this section.

"(e) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—To carry out this section, the Secretary may use funds made available pursuant to the provisions of sections 104(a) and 502."

(b) SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM.—Section 133(b)(1) of such title is amended by inserting "tunnels that are eligible for assistance under this title (including safety inspection of such tunnels)," after "highways)".

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The analysis for chapter 1 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 149 the following:

"150. National tunnel inspection 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. Madam 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 material on H.R. 409.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Madam Speaker, this legislation will fill a gap in the national inspection regime and in public safety, one that was brought to our attention by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. CAPUANO). Obviously, a failing infrastructure is very much on the minds of the public, given the collapse in Minnesota this last year, but, unfortunately, the Minnesota instance is not unique and it points to the need for constant vigilance and inspection of the critical infrastructure to avoid tragic accidents. And in this case, the gentleman from Massachusetts has pointed out that we do not have a regular regime of tunnel inspection, nor do we have standards which are set nationally for tunnel safety and inspection, nor do we have certified tunnel inspectors. All of that would be rectified by this legislation, so I'm very supportive of the legislation.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I would like to voice my strong support for H.R. 409, and I would also like to commend Chairman DEFAZIO and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. CAPUANO) for bringing this bill to the floor at this time.

On August 2, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee passed an earlier version of this bill on a voice vote. I believe that the entire committee agreed with the main objective of this bill, to ensure that our Nation's highway tunnels are safe. But some members had concerns about the new tunnel inspections directly competing with ongoing bridge inspections. This substitute bill addresses these concerns.

This bill requires the Federal Highway Administration to establish a new national highway tunnel inspection program in consultation with State DOTs and other knowledgeable organizations. The new tunnel inspection program is modeled directly on the existing highway bridge inspection program and addresses three major areas: One, it establishes national highway tunnel inspection standards to ensure tunnel inspection uniformity. Secondly, this establishes a national tunnel inventory