

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BOUCHER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 2146, as amended.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 406, nays 0, not voting 27, as follows:

[Roll No. 413]

YEAS—406

Abercrombie	Costello	Herseth Sandlin
Aderholt	Courtney	Hill
Akin	Cramer	Hinchey
Alexander	Crenshaw	Hirono
Allen	Crowley	Hobson
Altmire	Cuellar	Hodes
Andrews	Culberson	Hoekstra
Arcuri	Cummings	Holden
Baca	Davis (AL)	Holt
Bachmann	Davis (CA)	Honda
Bachus	Davis (IL)	Hooley
Baird	Davis (KY)	Hoyer
Baldwin	Davis, David	Hunter
Barrett (SC)	Davis, Lincoln	Inglis (SC)
Barrow	Deal (GA)	Inslee
Bartlett (MD)	DeFazio	Israel
Barton (TX)	DeGette	Issa
Bean	Delahunt	Jackson (IL)
Becerra	DeLauro	Jackson-Lee
Berkley	Dent	(TX)
Berman	Diaz-Balart, L.	Jefferson
Berry	Diaz-Balart, M.	Johnson (GA)
Biggert	Dicks	Johnson (IL)
Bilbray	Dingell	Johnson, E. B.
Bilirakis	Doggett	Johnson, Sam
Bishop (GA)	Donnelly	Jones (NC)
Bishop (NY)	Doolittle	Jones (OH)
Bishop (UT)	Doyle	Jordan
Blackburn	Drake	Kagan
Blumenauer	Dreier	Kanjorski
Blunt	Duncan	Kaptur
Boehner	Ehlers	Keller
Bonner	Ellison	Kennedy
Bono Mack	Ellsworth	Kildee
Boozman	Emanuel	Kilpatrick
Boren	Emerson	King (IA)
Boswell	Engel	King (NY)
Boucher	English (PA)	Kingston
Boustany	Eshoo	Kirk
Boyd (FL)	Etheridge	Kline (MN)
Boyd (KS)	Everett	Knollenberg
Brady (PA)	Fallin	Kucinich
Brady (TX)	Farr	Kuhl (NY)
Broun (GA)	Fattah	Lamborn
Brown (SC)	Feeney	Lampson
Brown, Corrine	Filner	Langevin
Brown-Waite,	Forbes	Larsen (WA)
Ginny	Fortenberry	Larson (CT)
Buchanan	Fossella	Latham
Burton (IN)	Foster	LaTourette
Butterfield	Fox	Latta
Calvert	Frank (MA)	Lee
Camp (MI)	Franks (AZ)	Levin
Campbell (CA)	Frelinghuysen	Lewis (CA)
Cannon	Galleghy	Lewis (GA)
Cantor	Garrett (NJ)	Lewis (KY)
Capito	Gerlach	Linder
Capps	Giffords	Lipinski
Capuano	Gilchrest	LoBiondo
Cardoza	Gillibrand	Lofgren, Zoe
Carnahan	Gingrey	Lowe
Carney	Gohmert	Lucas
Carson	Goode	Lungren, Daniel
Carter	Goodlatte	E.
Castle	Gordon	Lynch
Castor	Granger	Mack
Cazayoux	Graves	Maloney (NY)
Chabot	Green, Al	Manzullo
Chandler	Green, Gene	Marchant
Childers	Grijalva	Markey
Clarke	Gutierrez	Marshall
Clay	Hall (NY)	Matheson
Cleaver	Hall (TX)	Matsui
Clyburn	Hare	McCarthy (CA)
Coble	Harman	McCarthy (NY)
Cohen	Hastings (FL)	McCauley (TX)
Cole (OK)	Hastings (WA)	McCollum (MN)
Conaway	Hayes	McCotter
Conyers	Heller	McDermott
Cooper	Hensarling	McGovern
Costa	Herger	McHenry

McHugh	Ramstad	Space
McIntyre	Rangel	Speier
McKeon	Regula	Spratt
McMorris	Rehberg	Stark
Rodgers	Reichert	Stearns
McNerney	Renzi	Stupak
McNulty	Reyes	Sullivan
Meek (FL)	Reynolds	Sutton
Meeks (NY)	Richardson	Tanner
Melancon	Rodriguez	Tauscher
Mica	Rogers (AL)	Taylor
Michaud	Rogers (KY)	Terry
Miller (FL)	Rohrabacher	Thompson (CA)
Miller (MI)	Ros-Lehtinen	Thompson (MS)
Miller (NC)	Roskam	Thornberry
Miller, Gary	Ross	Tiahrt
Miller, George	Rothman	Tiberi
Mitchell	Roybal-Allard	Tierney
Mollohan	Royce	Towns
Moore (KS)	Ruppersberger	Tsongas
Moore (WI)	Ryan (OH)	Turner
Moran (VA)	Ryan (WI)	Udall (CO)
Murphy (CT)	Salazar	Udall (NM)
Murphy, Patrick	Sali	Upton
Murphy, Tim	Sánchez, Linda	Van Hollen
Murtha	T.	Velázquez
Musgrave	Sanchez, Loretta	Visclosky
Myrick	Sarbanes	Walberg
Nadler	Saxton	Walden (OR)
Napolitano	Scalise	Walsh (NY)
Neal (MA)	Schakowsky	Walz (MN)
Neugebauer	Schiff	Wamp
Nunes	Schmidt	Wasserman
Oberstar	Schwartz	Schultz
Obey	Scott (GA)	Waters
Oliver	Scott (VA)	Watson
Pallone	Sensenbrenner	Watt
Pascarella	Serrano	Waxman
Pastor	Sessions	Weiner
Payne	Sestak	Welch (VT)
Pearce	Shadegg	Weldon (FL)
Pence	Shays	Weller
Perlmutter	Shea-Porter	Westmoreland
Peterson (MN)	Sherman	Wexler
Peterson (PA)	Shuler	Whitfield (KY)
Petri	Shuster	Wilson (NM)
Pickering	Simpson	Wilson (OH)
Pitts	Sires	Wilson (SC)
Platts	Skelton	Wittman (VA)
Poe	Slaughter	Wolf
Pomeroy	Smith (NE)	Woolsey
Porter	Smith (NJ)	Wu
Price (GA)	Smith (TX)	Yarmuth
Price (NC)	Smith (WA)	Young (AK)
Putnam	Snyder	Young (FL)
Radanovich	Solis	
Rahall	Souder	

NOT VOTING—27

Ackerman	Gonzalez	McCrery
Braley (IA)	Higgins	Moran (KS)
Burgess	Hinojosa	Ortiz
Buyer	Hulshof	Paul
Cubin	Kind	Pryce (OH)
Davis, Tom	Klein (FL)	Rogers (MI)
Edwards	LaHood	Rush
Ferguson	Loebbeck	Shimkus
Flake	Mahoney (FL)	Tancred

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Two minutes are remaining in this vote.

□ 1450

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill, as amended, was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, June 12, 2008 I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall No. 413.

Mr. MAHONEY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, June 12, 2008 I was unavoidably detained. Had I been able to vote, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 413.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. BLUNT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend from Maryland, the majority leader, to tell us about next week's schedule.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the Republican whip for yielding.

On Monday, the House is not in session. On Tuesday, the House will meet at 12:30 p.m. for morning hour and 2 p.m. for legislative business with votes postponed until 6:30 p.m. On Wednesday and Thursday, the House will meet at 10 a.m. for legislative business. On Friday, the House will meet at 9 a.m. for legislative business.

We will consider several bills under suspension of the rules. The final list of suspension bills will be announced by the close of business tomorrow.

We will take any pending votes on H.R. 6063, the NASA Authorization Act of 2008, which we will debate later today after this colloquy; and we will consider H.R. 5781, the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2008. We will also consider H.R. 5876, Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act of 2008; and we hope to consider and I expect to consider the Iraq-Afghanistan supplemental appropriations bill.

I yield back.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for that.

On that last topic, I believe this is the third week straight that we said we hope to have the supplemental on the floor next week. My understanding is that if that supplemental is not completed, that our troops will begin to work without pay in July and civilian employees of the military would be laid off in July. We have next week and the week after that. I really have two questions here. One is do you think there will be a bill next week? And two, are we expecting a bill that will be vetoed or a bill that will be signed?

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

He observes that I said we hope to have it on the floor. I want to reiterate that I hoped each one of those weeks that we would have it on the floor, and I hope that we will have it on the floor next week.

I would say to my friend that I hope we have a bill on the floor next week, pass it through the House and pass it through the Senate and that the President will sign that bill. Obviously, one of the reasons that we have not gotten the bill on the floor as quickly as I had hoped is that there have been very, very substantial discussions between the House and the Senate, between the House and the White House, and the Senate and the White House about what their thoughts are with respect to various aspects of the supplemental bill and what they would or would not consider a signable bill.

So I think there have been extensive discussions on that. I am hopeful that

when we finally pass something to the President he will sign it and we will have that bill done. As the gentleman indicated, we are aware of the fact that it is timely that we pass this bill certainly within the next 2 weeks. And when I say pass it, not just pass it but have it signed by the President so we have a law in effect that gives the President and the Department of Defense the funds they need to continue the deployment that currently exists. That does not adopt the policy of the appropriateness of that, but it does recognize the reality of the fact that we have men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman.

The bill that we talked about, the portion of the bill that would require furlough notices to go out, that portion of the bill has been here in the Congress for over a year now. I do hope we can deal with this before not only any members of the Armed Forces are asked to work without pay, but before civilian employees that run things like day care centers and things that work with families in the military are having to be notified that those efforts will stop because the Congress hasn't appropriated the money to provide those services.

I would yield.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

As the gentleman will recall, we had a bill on this House to make those funds available. It did not pass. It did not pass as you recall because many of our Members voted present. I think they would have supported it, and many of our Members did not support that funding. They want to see the policies changed. I agree with them on the policies.

The fact is that we now have that funding passed from the Senate in the supplemental to us and we are trying to resolve as you know the differences. But there is a desire to get that bill done in a timely fashion so that the problems that you portray, which I believe are accurate, do not occur.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for that.

This week we voted twice, including one vote yesterday and one vote today, on an unemployment insurance bill. I think the unemployment rate nationwide had gone up one-half of 1 percent. As the gentleman knows, a lot of our concern was that it was widely targeted, instead of States that had a significant unemployment problem. The Speaker said last week that "America's families and workers can wait no longer, neither will the Congress. This bill will come to the floor of the House," and it did; and it did again.

With a 75 percent increase in the price of gasoline during this Congress, Republicans have been arguing that we need to have an energy bill that would produce more energy on the House floor. Will the Democrats work with us to schedule that legislation that allows for more energy to be produced in the country.

I would yield.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

As I said last week, with respect to more drilling in various parts of the country, whether it is in Alaska, in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge or on the Outer Continental Shelf, I would like to reiterate the information I referred to last week, but before I do that let me say that we are very supportive of any legislation that will lead this country towards energy independence within the framework of what we think is necessary and needed. Now I say it in this context. I support and I think we support on this side a diversified clean energy portfolio. We think that is critically important for our country.

In the area of supporting energy supply, I hope the Senate will return the tax extender bill which invests in alternative energy sources which can be put online so we can be more energy independent and not dependent upon the producers of petroleum, many of whom are not friendly to us, and others of whom are not as reliable as we would like.

I have listened for some period of time in the last few weeks that all we need to do to solve this problem is more drilling. We don't believe that is the case. In fact, as I said to the gentleman last week, we have nearly a whole refinery's worth of capacity idle right now.

□ 1500

What I mean by that, Mr. Whip, is that our refineries were operating, at the end of last week, at 89 percent capacity. That is the lowest operational capacity of refineries in our country in the last 10 years at this time of year. So our refineries still have another 8 to 9 percent capacity. 8 to 9 percent is a very significant portion.

Now, we've introduced two bills today to make oil companies use their existing leases. Before we go to new leases, before we go to the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge or the Outer Continental Shelf, which is very controversial on both sides of the aisle, we believe that oil and gas companies should use the present leases they have. They hold nearly 68 million acres of Federal land and waters on which they are not producing oil and gas. These 68 million acres of leased but currently inactive land and waters could produce, I tell my friend, an additional 4.8 million barrels of oil and 44.7 billion cubic feet of natural gas each day. So that when we talk about looking for new spots to drill, we first ought to look at those spots. Vast acreage, millions of acres have already been authorized.

If we took those actions, I tell my friend, the information I have is that it would nearly double total U.S. oil production and increase domestic national gas production by 75 percent. That is on existing leaseholds.

It would also cut U.S. oil imports by more than a third, if all we did was use

existing leaseholds. It would be more than six times the estimated peak production from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

In other words, using existing leases that have already been authorized, would produce six times what the projections are, and the most optimistic projections are for the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge.

Let me say that we also introduced two bills today to look at and study the investments in oil futures, in petroleum futures. We're very concerned that that is having an impact on price, not because of supply and demand, but because of speculation. Mr. DINGELL and Mr. BARTON, as you know, have cosponsored legislation, and I've cosponsored it myself with them.

So I'm hopeful that we will move ahead vigorously, as I know the gentleman from Missouri wants to do, to see what can be done to make our country more energy efficient, to utilize the energy sources which are already authorized.

I would say one additional thing in terms of refineries. There's been some discussion about refineries. There's been one application for a new refinery in the last 30 years. One application. It was approved. That refinery has not been built, notwithstanding the fact that the application was approved.

And obviously, with refinery capacity not being at the capacity it's been at in the last 10 years, it would seem that a new refinery was not built because the oil companies made a determination that it was not needed because, at this critical time when demand is so high, they're not operating at peak performance.

So let me just reiterate that we all want to work together to try to have our country be energy independent. We think that's important for our national security, our economic security. And indeed, we think that going to alternative energies is critically important for the health of our global climate.

I yield back.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend for that information. There are really two topics there I want to talk about just briefly. One is the refinery capacity itself. I think there's probably more reason than capacity that there's only been one permit in 30 years for refineries.

But refineries are really a separate issue from whether the oil is available or not. In fact, you could argue, we'd have more refinery use if we had more oil available.

I do know that we imported gas last year. I think importing oil is bad. I think importing gas and paying somebody to take that raw material of oil and turn it into gas is a worse idea. It's hard for me to believe that people that run refineries would be doing that if the refineries were the problem.

In terms of the leases, clearly, in the last 7 years, the amount of leased public lands has almost doubled. Most of that drilling has been for gas. In fact,

our natural gas numbers are quite a bit better than they were before that started.

Secondly, I think something like 52 percent of the exploration produces no product. It's a 10-year lease. Most of those leases are now beginning to get into the middle of that 10-year period of time. I certainly hope that we're encouraging, without doing anything that violates what we've already agreed to, that we're encouraging that to be done.

And I think, frankly, I personally think, and have for a long time, that drilling in the ANWR in the area that was set aside for drilling by President Carter and the Congress in 1980, is part of the solution. But it's only part of the solution. And wherever we have those resources, we're the only country in the world where coastal drilling is possible that doesn't allow it to happen. I think we need to revisit that. And I think the American people are at the point that they want to revisit that as well.

But this discussion is exactly the discussion we hope to have, a discussion that leads to more production and looking for the future.

My good friend said that many on our side think that drilling's the only solution. I haven't heard that. What I've heard is many on our side think it's part of an immediate, short-term solution. But in the last Congress and the Republican Congresses before that, there was lots of legislation that encouraged alternatives, renewables. We want to still do that. Most of that requires a lot of transition in the economy and will take a while.

Announcing that we were going to go vigorously after our own resources, I, at least, believe would have impact on that last topic you brought up, the futures market. If we announced we were going after substantial resources that we have, in fact, resources that are now believed to be significantly more substantial than they were 5 or 10 years ago, that would have impact on the futures market. And we should be looking at that market and see what's driving that and what we could do about it, in addition to thinking we're going to just simply regulate a worldwide market from the United States of America.

I would yield.

Mr. HOYER. I thank my friend for yielding.

My friend mentioned the Outer Continental Shelf, and I agree with him. But the facts I have are this. Four times more natural gas is available in areas already open to drilling. Let me reiterate that. In areas already approved and open for drilling, four times more natural gas is available than in OCS waters protected by the moratorium.

In other words, that which is protected has only 25 percent perceived to be available than does the already approved available Outer Continental Shelf areas. So if we started vigorously

pursuing exploration and drilling in those areas, we'd get 75 percent more than we get now.

In fact, the figure is that we are using only 18 percent of the 7,740 active leases currently available on the Outer Continental Shelf, only 1,655 are in production; so that when we talk about the problem is that the Democrats are not allowing us to drill and explore and to recover resources that are in our Outer Continental Shelf or on our lower 48, that is not, I think, accurate. I think it's not accurate because of the extraordinarily high percentage of currently approved leaseholds that are not being utilized in this very day.

Now, I'm sure that the oil companies, very frankly, want to increase supply and see prices come down. I say that somewhat with tongue in cheek. If perhaps we were finding more supply, utilizing those leaseholds, perhaps the price would not be quite as high and the profits wouldn't be either.

But I will tell you that Americans are, at \$4 a gallon, seeing the companies that are selling them oil receiving extraordinarily high profits. God bless them for getting profits. They have invested, they've worked hard. They put their capital at risk. I'm for that.

But at the same time, when they are failing to use leaseholds that would bring more supply, that would presumably then bring down the price, I think the American public have a right to ask, why are we only using 18 percent of the currently available leaseholds on the Outer Continental Shelf and about one-quarter or a little less than one-quarter of what's available on the mainland?

I yield back to my friend.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend for yielding.

I was actually pleased to hear two things there. One is I heard my good friend use the word "drilling" in a positive sense, and that's good news.

Mr. HOYER. I have an automobile.

Mr. BLUNT. And two is the numbers I see for the deep water drilling of natural gas indicate that there is an 18-year supply in the deep water. If you're right, and there's four times that supply on public lands that could be drilled on, I suppose that means we have almost a 100-year supply of natural gas if we just go after it. We should find out whatever it takes to go after that, and insist that that happen.

My view is both, and wherever the infrastructure is most amenable to getting that natural gas and oil into the energy system the quickest, that's where we should be drilling the quickest. If we've got a leasehold that's 500 miles away from the nearest place you can hook it up to a line, that's probably less appealing than a leasehold somewhere in the deep water or other places that's near a current way to get that gas or that oil into the system.

I do know in the 181 area that we opened in 2006 in the gulf, opened for a brief period of time, that there's one 2-

acre platform there, at least I'm told there's a 2-acre platform there that's producing roughly 10 percent of all the natural gas that we're producing in the United States of America.

I do believe that these resources are greater than we thought they were 5 or 10 years ago. I think we ought to be pursuing that on all fronts.

I saw where one of our colleagues in the Senate, the senior Senator from New York, said that if we had a million barrels more of oil every day, that that would reduce pump prices by 50 cents a gallon. I'm not sure how he calculates that, but I'm prepared to accept that.

A million barrels is what we'd be getting from ANWR today if we'd started drilling there 12 years ago, or any of the other times that the Republican House sent a bill to the Senate that would have allowed that. There may be other million-barrel locations, as my friend has just suggested there were, that we should vigorously be pursuing, and we are eager to have that discussion on the House floor, see it had on the Senate floor, see something get on the President's desk that encourages American use of American resources for America's future.

I yield.

Mr. HOYER. My friend, at the beginning of his last comments, said "on public lands." I want to make it very clear that the implication, perhaps that we're not allowing that on public lands, there are, as I said, 80 percent of the already authorized spots on public land not being utilized today; so that this is not a question of where we have not authorized drilling. We're for that. We want to find more product.

What we are saying is that we have now got the majority of authorized spots being unutilized. Now, why that is so, when the product is getting the highest price it's ever gotten, which ought to be incentive, in and of itself, to look for new product and to explore and to drill and to get new product to the market, which would then bring the price down.

I hope that nobody is controlling supply simply to escalate price. We know that when demand goes up and supply is constrained, that prices inevitably rise. The American public is paying the price for that. Great profits are being made. But it is adversely affecting our economy and our families. And we share your view that we want to address this problem.

But I want to say, we talk about today. Unfortunately, for too long, I'm old enough to have experienced the gas lines of the late seventies where you waited hours to get gasoline in your car. Hopefully that won't reoccur.

But had we, Democrats and Republicans, Americans all, focused in a disciplined way on looking for, developing more efficient automobiles, more efficient refrigerators and other electric utilities, focused on conservation, focused on alternative sources of energy, we would be far ahead of the game.

□ 1515

In the final analysis, we cannot get distracted, in my opinion. We need to go down both paths, making sure today we have the most efficient process possible but that tomorrow we're energy independent, because in the final analysis, that will be the only way in which we will continue to keep our economy moving, our national security intact, and our environment clean and healthy.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend.

I believe for those things that look toward better solutions for the future, better conservation now, we all should be focused there. We also should be focused on using American resources, and frankly asking every question why they haven't been used. Again, I will just conclude my remarks by saying I know that these leases have been almost doubled in the last 7 years. And how long it takes to develop, some of them issued only in the last 1 or 2 years for 10 years at a time, I don't know what the planning is on that, but I am absolutely committed to the most efficient and effective use of America's resources for America's future, and I would like to see this Congress work together to get there.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

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

There was no objection.

HOURLY OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 10 a.m. tomorrow; and further, that when the House adjourns on that day, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 17, for morning-hour debate.

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

There was no objection.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GORDON of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill, H.R. 6063.

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

There was no objection.

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION AU- THORIZATION ACT OF 2008

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1257 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 6063.

□ 1517

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 6063) to authorize the programs of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and for other purposes, with Ms. BORDALLO in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. GORDON) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HALL) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. GORDON of Tennessee. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. GORDON of Tennessee asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GORDON of Tennessee. Madam Chairman, today I am asking my colleagues in the House to ensure this country's leadership in space and aeronautics program by passing H.R. 6063, the NASA Authorization Act of 2008.

First, I want to thank and commend Chairman UDALL of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics on his leadership in introducing this bill and for taking a clear bipartisan approach to the development of H.R. 6063. I was pleased to be original cosponsor, but I was even more pleased that ranking minority member of our Committee on Science and Technology, Mr. HALL of Texas, and ranking minority member of our Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics, Mr. FEENEY of Florida, were also original cosponsors.

Madam Chairman, their actions show that the importance of NASA's future in space and aeronautics is truly a bipartisan concern. And I want to thank them for their full support.

In that regard, I also would like to thank Ed Feddeman, Ken Monroe, Katy Crooks, and Lee Arnold of the minority staff for their help on this legislation. I also want to thank and acknowledge the hard work of our majority staff involved in the development of the bill, Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee staff director Dick Obermann, Allen Li, Pam Whitney, Devin Bryant, and John Piazza.

This bill passed the subcommittee and the full committee unanimously. And I think that record is in no small part due to the hard work that both sides of the aisle put into this legislation.

Madam Chairman, as we look to the transition to the new administration

next year, it's important that Congress send a strong message on the best future course for our Nation's space and aeronautics program. The bipartisan consensus we have reached on H.R. 6063 signals that Congress believes a balanced NASA program of science, aeronautics, and human spaceflight, and exploration is important and worthy of the Nation's support. Yet I want to emphasize that H.R. 6063 takes a fiscally responsible approach to providing this support.

The baseline authorization represents a 2.8 percent increase, which is inflationary at best, over the level of the authorization of fiscal year 2008. The bill also includes a special funding augmentation to accelerate the development of the crew exploration vehicle and thus minimize the human spaceflight gap that will make us dependent on the Russians to get our astronauts to and from the International Space Station until the CEV is operational.

I don't think any of us wants to or looks forward to the day when we must rely on another Nation to launch U.S. astronauts into space, but that is what we face. I want to minimize that dependency as much as possible.

However, even including that augmentation, the total funding authorization will only get us back to NASA's fiscal year 1992 funding level in terms of purchasing power.

H.R. 6063's baseline authorization also reflects the importance of NASA to the Nation's innovation agenda. NASA science and technology activities contribute much to our national competitiveness initiative, and I think we need to recognize NASA's role in that regard. NASA was included in last year's America COMPETES Act, but we didn't include an authorization then since we knew we would be reauthorizing NASA this year.

H.R. 6063 does that providing by providing a baseline authorization for NASA that includes a rate of increase over the fiscal year 2008 appropriated level that is consistent with the rate of increase proposed for agencies included under the America COMPETES Act.

Madam Chairman, this bill includes many provisions that are critical to ensuring the future strength of our Nation, including both the future health of our aviation system and our ability to better understand and respond to climate change and other challenges facing the earth's system.

It isn't always recognized that NASA counts for some three-fifths of the Nation's climate research funding. And it's a critical part of the Nation's climate research efforts. In addition, H.R. 6063 demonstrates that a properly structured human spaceflight and exploration program can provide benefits of technological, scientific, and geopolitical significance that are worthy of our Nation's investment.

This bill also includes provisions that will ensure a productive return on the Nation's investment in developing and