

teacher at Hinsdale South High School in Illinois.

As a former school board member for Hinsdale District 86, as well as a member of the Education and Science Committee, I have seen how important STEM education is in preparing our students to succeed in the 21st century. And I also know how special it is to have a great teacher who can inspire our students to get excited about a future in science, physics, math, and engineering.

Mr. Bonner should be very proud to join the ranks of only 97 teachers from across the country who have been selected for this award by a panel of distinguished scientists, mathematicians, and educators. He is a very important asset to our community, our children, and our future; and I wish him the best of luck in the future.

READ THE LAW

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, during the debate on the health care reform act, the Affordable Care Act, we continued to hear cries of "read the bill, read the bill, read the bill," as if those of us who had supported the bill had not read it. As a matter of fact, I, among many, had read it; and we were astounded at the misrepresentations that were out in the public, foisted by our Republican opponents.

Well, I'm going to be generous today and assume that they just hadn't read that bill. But now that bill is unquestionably the law of the land. So I implore my Republican colleagues, before they continue to mislead and confuse their constituents, read the law. Read the law. Read the law.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5856, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2013; PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 6020, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2013; AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4348, MOVING AHEAD FOR PROGRESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

Mr. WEBSTER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 717 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 717

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5856) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All

points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. Points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI are waived except for section 8121. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the chair of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. When the committee rises and reports the bill back to the House with a recommendation that the bill do pass, the previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. At any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 6020) making appropriations for financial services and general government for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. Points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI are waived except as follows: beginning with "Provided" on page 95, line 9, through "level" on page 95, line 11. Where points of order are waived against part of a paragraph, points of order against a provision in another part of such paragraph may be made only against such provision and not against the entire paragraph. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the chair of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. When the committee rises and reports the bill back to the House with a recommendation that the bill do pass, the previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 3. Upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 4348) to provide an extension of Federal-aid highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund pending enactment of a multiyear law reauthorizing such programs, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the conference report to its adoption without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate; and (2) one motion to recommit if applicable.

SEC. 4. It shall be in order at any time on the legislative day of June 29, 2012, for the

Speaker to entertain motions that the House suspend the rules, as though under clause 1(c) of rule XV, relating to the following: (a) measures addressing expiring provisions of law; and (b) a concurrent resolution correcting the enrollment of H.R. 4348.

SEC. 5. The requirement of clause 6(a) of rule XIII for a two-thirds vote to consider a report from the Committee on Rules on the same day it is presented to the House is waived with respect to any resolution reported on the legislative day of June 29, 2012, providing for consideration or disposition of the following: (a) measures addressing expiring provisions of law; and (b) a concurrent resolution correcting the enrollment of H.R. 4348.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SCHOCK). The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 1 hour.

□ 0920

Mr. WEBSTER. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WEBSTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WEBSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this rule and the underlying bills.

House Resolution 717 provides for a standard conference report rule for the consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 4348, the Surface Transportation Extension Act of 2012, Part II, also known simply as the "highway bill." The conference report for the highway bill represents a bipartisan and bicameral effort to address our aging national infrastructure and chronic unemployment with a 2-year authorization.

This long-term transportation bill, agreed to by both Houses and by both parties in this conference report, provides much-needed certainty. It provides certainty not only to States and to State governments but also to the transportation and construction industries and to those Americans whose livelihoods depend on them. Rather than another short-term extension measuring mere weeks or months, this bill authorizes transportation funding for 2 full years and allows businesses to plan ahead, hire workers, and grow.

The conference report ensures taxpayer dollars are spent on high-priority infrastructure projects that support jobs and economic activity. The conference report also contains significant reforms: it streamlines the lengthy bureaucratic approval process with reforms aimed at cutting the permitting process in half; it consolidates and eliminates duplicative Federal programs; and it embraces increased private sector involvement by leveraging

Federal, State, and local dollars with private sector funding. As importantly, it does all of this without any earmarks and without any spending increases.

The conference report also extends the current student loan rate of 3.4 percent for student loans for another year. This ensures that young Americans have certainty when it comes to the terms of their student loans for the coming year; and because it is paid for, the conference report ensures that no further debt will be heaped upon the American taxpayer.

Finally, the conference report reforms and reauthorizes for 5 additional years the Federal Flood Insurance Program. This program is depended upon by so many in times of natural disaster.

House Resolution 717 also provides for an open rule both for the Department of Defense Appropriations Act of 2013 and the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Act of 2013.

The Department of Defense Appropriations Act of 2013 includes funding for critical national security needs, and it provides the resources needed to continue the Nation's military efforts abroad. In addition, the bill provides essential funding for health and quality-of-life programs for the brave men and women of our Armed Forces and their families.

The Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Act of 2013 has jurisdiction over agencies responsible for regulating the financial and telecommunications industries; collecting taxes and providing taxpayer assistance; supporting the operations of the White House, the Federal judiciary, and the District of Columbia; managing Federal buildings; and overseeing Federal workers. The activities of these agencies impact nearly every American and are an integral part of the operations of our government.

So, once again, Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule and the underlying bills. I encourage my colleagues to vote "yes" on the rule.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague for yielding the time, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise to express my disappointment, not necessarily in this measure, but in how it has come about. We are here considering a rule for five unrelated measures the day before we recess for the 4th of July. Once again, we are rushing to the floor with vital legislation that most Members have hardly had the chance to read. This rule is the very embodiment of congressional dysfunction.

While my colleagues are busy playing political games, our Nation's infrastructure is crumbling, and we all know that. Tuition costs are rising, and we all know that. The economy is struggling. Perhaps, if my Republican

friends weren't so preoccupied with appeasing their base, we wouldn't find ourselves in this position yet again.

We could have taken care of student loans back in March when the House first considered a measure to keep current rates. However, instead of paying for it in a way that was amenable to both sides of the aisle, the Republican leadership chose to pay for it by cutting much-needed preventative health funding. The President said he would veto the bill in this form, yet Republicans still chose to waste this body's time and defer to the Senate to come up with an affordable pay-for.

The transportation bill we are considering has been an even longer time in coming—over 3 years to be exact. While the conference report is not perfect, it is clear that we must pass a long-term reauthorization so that construction projects all across the country can move forward with repairing and improving our Nation's aging transportation system and infrastructure. Yet, once again, we find ourselves racing against the clock.

Without a long-term bill, opportunities to truly invest in our Nation's infrastructure and economy will continue passing us by. Without a long-term bill, construction projects all across the country could shut down. Without a long-term bill, 3 million Americans will be faced with not having a job after Saturday. We should not have to pass nine extensions over 3 years' time to get to this point, and we would be better served than this 27th-month extension if we did a 4- or a 5-year bill.

Infrastructure investments are essential to our Nation's economic growth and prosperity. This reauthorization should never have been held hostage by political gamesmanship. There is simply too much at stake. Short-term extensions put millions of jobs and the safety of our Nation at risk by casting great uncertainty on long-term transportation and infrastructure projects. This is unacceptable.

□ 0930

While I'm not happy about every provision in the flood insurance portion of this conference report, after 10 years since its last reauthorization and countless short-term extensions, it's about time that we get a long-term extension.

The National Flood Insurance Program insures 5.6 million properties across every State in the Nation. Yet, one Senator from Kentucky refused to allow the bill to go forward on the most specious of reasons, a vote on abortion. I have yet to hear the Senator explain what abortion has to do with flood insurance or why he would threaten the security of the homes of all those Americans just to make a political point. I guess I shouldn't be too surprised. Last night, I read where he said just because two or more persons at the Supreme Court make a decision, that doesn't mean that it's constitu-

tional. I hope this guy goes back to law school, if he ever went.

Finally, on today's underlying appropriations measures, I can only say: here we go again. Once again, the Republicans refuse to provide the necessary funds to reach the hardest-hit Americans. Once again, the Republicans kowtow to corporate power rather than provide the resources to keep rampant excesses at bay. And once again, my friends on the other side of the aisle choose to undermine the long-term priorities of this Nation in favor of partisan posturing.

I've said before and I maintain again and now that the Republicans are living in a world of let's pretend. In "Alice in Wonderland," Alice said that "if she had a world of her own, everything would be nonsense." In the Republican world, as Alice said, "Nothing is what it is, because everything is what it isn't." In the Republican world, Mr. Speaker, the best way to rein in the most corrupt practices of Wall Street is to underfund the SEC; the best way to close a \$400 billion tax gap is to force the IRS to fire thousands of taxpayer support employees; and the best way to ensure our national defense is to continue to pump in billions and billions of dollars into nuclear weapons that serve no earthly purpose but to destroy our Earth. What part of "we have enough nuclear weapons to destroy every human being 25 times" do we not understand?

In this world, increasing unemployment somehow improves our economy; defunding essential government programs somehow helps the hardest-hit Americans; and cutting domestic programs in health care, education, infrastructure, and economic development while increasing Defense Department funding somehow serves the long-term needs of this country. Well, it doesn't. For months we've known that student loan rates were set to rise; for months we've known that the highway bill was going to expire; and for months we've done nothing but use the House floor as a political playground.

Mr. Speaker, our country cannot prosper if every major piece of legislation is held hostage to partisan interests. As Alice said—again referring to "Alice in Wonderland"—"of all the silly nonsense, this is the stupidest tea party I've ever been to in all my life."

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased at this time to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Sacramento, California, a former member of the Rules Committee, my good friend, Ms. MATSUI.

Ms. MATSUI. I thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report includes a transportation bill that will help put Americans back to work and rebuild our infrastructure. It will also

ensure that students will not see an interest rate hike on their loans. This package also includes a much-needed 5-year extension of the National Flood Insurance Program. This comes after 17 short-term extensions.

Mr. Speaker, I represent Sacramento, which is the most at-risk metropolitan area for major flooding, as it lies at the confluence of the American and the Sacramento Rivers.

Since Hurricane Katrina, more than 25,000 homeowners in my district have been remapped, and flood insurance is now mandatory for them. The average homeowner in Sacramento that has been remapped currently pays about \$350 for a PRP policy. That's a preferred-rate policy. Beginning in 2013, they were set to pay \$1,350 once the PRP rate expired. However, that is no longer the case.

This bill contains a number of important provisions, including a flood insurance phase-in amendment offered during debate on the House NFIP bill last July. Instead of overnight sticker shock for homeowners, the provision allows for the price of flood insurance to be phased in at 20 percent per year over 5 years to the full policy price, when preferred-risk policies are no longer available in their community.

Specifically, it will effectively allow homeowners next year, in 2013, residing in Sacramento and the rest of the country, to pay close to if not the same amount they're currently paying. Each year after that, the price of flood insurance will continue to be both affordable and predictable, only rising by 20 percent until it reaches full price in year five. This provision will save the average policyholder in a remapped area hundreds of dollars, if not a few thousand, over the next 5 years.

Mr. Speaker, this provision offers real savings, especially in these trying economic times, whether it's for a senior citizen on a fixed income or a family struggling to make ends meet.

Finally, I would like to commend Chairwoman BIGGERT and Ranking Member WATERS for working with me, for their continuous efforts to preserve this amendment and work towards achieving this 5-year extension.

Mr. WEBSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to my good friend from Georgia (Mr. WOODALL).

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Florida for yielding.

It's not often that I find agreement with both of my friends from Florida at the same time. When I listened to my friend from Florida, my Democratic colleague on the Rules Committee, in his opening statement, he's absolutely right. We're bringing five completely unrelated provisions to the floor in this conference report today, and we're bringing it in a rushed fashion so folks can get out of here and go home for the 4th of July week.

I agree with my friend from the Republican side of the aisle, my freshman colleague, who says this is just a standard conference report rule. That's abso-

lutely right. All of these things that the gentleman from Florida, my Democratic colleague, finds troubling are just part of the standard conference report process.

I've been watching this process for a long time. I may be a freshman, but I've been watching it for a long time. And it's just the way things go around here. We've done better. To be fair to this House leadership, over the 18 months that I've been here in Congress, we've done better. We've made a commitment to bring one idea to the floor at a time, and 99 percent of the bills I've voted on have been 10 pages or less, and I could read them. I didn't have to staff it out. I could do it myself.

But something happens when we get to this conference report time. Mr. Speaker, the question goes to our colleagues. I suspect if we put the question to our colleagues—my friend from Florida knows it's true: Would you rather rush these five unrelated bills to the floor today and get home for all the commitments you've made over the weekend, or would you rather stretch this thing out and do it right?

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. WOODALL. I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. You can't really believe that it should be standard procedure for us to do a 600-page bill that CBO has not scored until 10 minutes ago.

Mr. WOODALL. Reclaiming my time, I absolutely do not believe it should be standard procedure, but it is. It has been the entire time my friend from Florida has been serving here in this House.

Again, we've done better. To the credit of my freshmen colleagues, we've done better over these last 18 months, and we will continue to do better. But Chief Justice Roberts had it right yesterday: elections have consequences. The American people are responsible for what goes on here. Mr. Speaker, we keep this calendar for a reason. We do it out of a need for service. You and I both have commitments to constituents starting at dawn tomorrow morning.

□ 0940

We have commitments to constituents to keep transportation bills going, to work with student loans, to reauthorize flood insurance, on and on and on. We have competing commitments to our constituents. I would just hope, Mr. Speaker, that if you were asking your constituents, that they would say, You know what; I would rather you cancel on me this weekend and stay up there and get it right than rush it through.

Now, with that said, it has not been partisan politics that's kept us from getting it here until this point. We've been working hard on this. To the credit of the folks on the transportation conferee committee, they have been working hard. And this was just the

best they could do, getting it done today, for whatever reason. This town only operates in crisis.

I say to my friend, if we can work towards regular order, I would love to see regular order come to this institution. We have done better. Eighteen months on the job since I have been here, you and I. We have done better. My colleague from Florida and I. We have done better. But we can still do better. But we're only going to do better if the constituents demand it.

The Supreme Court had it right. You can throw out the folks who aren't doing it right. Mr. Speaker, I encourage you to encourage all voters to look at what we do, see when we're getting it right and tell us, and see when we're getting it wrong and ask us to do better. We can do better. We will do better.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 2 minutes to my very good friend from the Virgin Islands, Dr. CHRISTENSEN.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

After 20 years of being fully and fairly included in the surface transportation bills, what is being voted on today cuts funding to the smaller territories by \$10 million. And while I am glad our sister territory of Puerto Rico as well as the States and District of Columbia are level-funded, it just seems grossly unfair that only the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Marianas are singled out for cuts.

Why cut \$10 million? Or it could have been spread out across the entire bill and not raised a blip in the 50 States, the District, or Puerto Rico. But for us small economies, it's a big blow.

That being said, it could have been worse. This body would have made our funding discretionary and, therefore, not secure. So while I decry the cuts, I have to thank the Senate for hearing our pleas and keeping our funding in the trust fund.

After all of the time, though, that we have waited for even this 2-year, 3-month infrastructure and job-creating transportation bill and knowing the need to keep college affordable and reauthorize flood insurance, I cannot, in good conscience, oppose the bill before us today.

But what is being done to the territories is unfair and discriminatory. And since it makes so little difference in the overall bill, it seems deliberately and unnecessarily punitive to us loyal Americans who serve and shed our blood just like every other in the defense and love of this, our country. Fairness would demand that it be restored.

Mr. WEBSTER. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased at this time to yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman, my good friend from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in permitting me to speak on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, there's no small amount of irony that we are having this discussion today. It's on the anniversary of President Eisenhower signing into law the National Defense Highway Act. This weekend will be the 150th anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad Act, signed into law by Abraham Lincoln. There was an era when Republicans believed in infrastructure and development.

In fact, for most of our history, actually, infrastructure has not been partisan. It's been something that people on this House floor could come together to work on. There would be differences, to be sure. But for the 20 years that I've been involved with this issue, we've been working to broaden our view of how to make transportation work better, involve citizens, more flexibility, make the dollars stretch. This came crashing to a halt with this Congress.

Now the bill that's going to come before us, I will very reluctantly vote in favor of it in part because of what's not in it. Remember, our Republican colleagues tried to force through a bill which, for the first time in history, had never had bipartisan work that came out of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, that came out of Ways and Means. In fact, it never even had a full committee hearing, rush-to-work session. Mercifully, it collapsed before it came to the floor.

And one of the reasons I'll vote for this bill is because what the Republicans wanted has been rejected. Remember, they wanted to take away all the funding guarantees for transit. Working with the Senate, we were able to resist that effort. They wanted to gut environmental protections.

And while you're going to find that there are some problems with this legislation, at least it's not as bad as what our Republican colleagues wanted. They wanted to completely eliminate the guarantees for transportation enhancements, for bikes and pedestrians. They were even going to eliminate the wildly popular Safe Routes to School bill. Well, most of that has been retained, although they were successful in gutting the provisions, for some reason, for Safe Routes to School.

We have a bill that actually is a little higher in terms of the funding level than what the Republicans wanted, and it is at least going to be guaranteed for 2 years. It has some provisions that are important to those of us who have rural schools, Oregon among them. It's going to make a big difference. Putting this extraneous provision in is going to help. A little help in terms of student loans. And we worked in the finance title to be able to have the money come from something that's actually going to make it more likely that we stabilize some private pension programs.

So it's not without merit. There are important things here. But the main

reason to vote for it is because we've been able, working with the Senate, to resist what the Republicans attempted to inflict on the House and the American people.

But make no mistake, it is not a bill to be proud of. As I mentioned, it dramatically reduces the funding for the transportation enhancements. There is no rail title. There will be reductions in citizen opportunities for environmental protection and participation.

It is, sadly, a missed opportunity that didn't need to happen. They could have allowed the Senate bill, in its entirety, to be voted on, and I'm confident that would have passed. Or wonder of wonders, they actually could have worked, like we used to do, in a bipartisan fashion. The last transportation bill under Republican control passed with 412 votes.

Well, we've missed an opportunity. At precisely the time when America needs more investment in renewing and rebuilding, for transit, for roads, for rail, for water and sewer, there are a whole range of things that we should be coming together to work on.

I hope that the American public looks very closely at what was attempted here in the last 6 months, they look at what we managed to stagger through, and that it is a wake-up call for people to be engaged.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I have worked for 5 years with a broad coalition of stakeholders that's not partisan, that are committed to working together on a vision for how we're going to rebuild and renew the country, how we're going to revitalize the economy, and how we make our communities more livable, our families safer, healthier, and more economically secure.

If we're able to use this flawed process and sadly inadequate bill as a springboard, maybe in some ways it will have been worth it.

Mr. WEBSTER. Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind everyone again, as I said in my opening remarks, this bill has no earmarks. Yes, we know how they did it in the past, with 6,000, 7,000, 8,000 earmarks, and certainly there would be a lot of support among individual Members if that were the case. This bill has no earmarks. It's good policy.

□ 0950

The Federal Government says: We know all. We know everything that's needed in every single community, and we can stamp out one of our famed cookie-cutter approaches to funding transportation, as we used to do, so that every single dollar has a little teeny category and every State is brought into spending within those little teeny categories.

Yes, we could have done that, but that's the old way of doing it. We did it a different way. We actually had a con-

ference, no earmarks, and we gave States flexibility. We sent to the States the opportunity to decide. Did we take out any of those things that were mentioned? Absolutely not. They're all options. So every single dollar we send to the State, the State has an opportunity to say, Maybe we don't want to do a sound barrier, whatever it is that's there. No, we can take the flexibility that's given to us, we can use it. We can use it to our benefit far better to build transportation from the ground up rather than to build it from the top down, Washington, D.C. cookie-cutter style.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT).

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues today to support this bipartisan compromise to enact three of our top economic priorities.

Some people have said, Well, we don't like the bundling; we don't like putting three bills together. But I think this is the art of compromise, and this is the art of the possible. Because all three of these bills are very important to all of us, I think, and to have this bipartisan way to do this, I think this is the way that we should go.

I started out with the flood insurance bill. And before we even had a bill, we did a draft so that every group could look at it and be a part of it and to have what they thought was necessary or to talk about what they didn't think was necessary. So we came up with a bill that came out of my Financial Services Subcommittee by voice vote, but out of the Financial Services Committee last June, 54-0. And people said, How did that happen? Well, it happened because we got together and worked before we really just said, Vote for my bill. And I think it's so important that we do this and get back together to be able to work in a bipartisan way. The gentlelady from California was my co-sponsor. And everybody joined together.

So I think it's really important. Actually, the student loan bill is also my bill. So I really care about what is going on this morning and that we can really get together and pass these. And the transportation bill is so important to all of us. Several of us in Illinois had real concerns about how the transit part of that bill was going to be in it and really wanted to do something like what the Senate had done and include that in the trust fund.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. WEBSTER. I yield the gentlewoman an additional 15 seconds.

Mrs. BIGGERT. So I really thank the gentleman, and I think that it took a lot of compromise on both sides of the aisle. But this agreement safeguards the things in all of the bills such as the suburban transit options and funds critical road and bridge projects. So it's been a long time, but I encourage

my colleagues to look at the big picture and lend this agreement their strong support.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage my colleagues to support this bipartisan compromise to enact three of our top economic priorities: an extension of lower student loan rates, reform of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), and a long-term transportation bill.

All three face tight statutory deadlines. And this agreement gives us the momentum to get all three over the finish line.

Reforming the NFIP will restore financial security to the flood program, which yields savings for taxpayers and stability in the housing market.

And extending affordable loan rates for our students will ensure that our young graduates don't have to pay the price for gridlock in Washington. Already, half of recent graduates are either unemployed or underemployed, and now is not the time to burden them with more debt and higher education costs.

Both of these proposals began here in the House with legislation I sponsored. And both passed in the House with bipartisan support. Today, we can send them to the President alongside a third critical economic priority—a long-term transportation bill.

This agreement includes a two-year extension of federal transportation funding, avoiding the need for another short-term bill.

In my home State of Illinois, transportation managers need a long-term bill to invest in the road and rail projects that will keep commerce and traffic moving—not to mention create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, it took a lot of compromise—on both sides of the aisle—but this agreement safeguards suburban transit options and funds critical road and bridge projects.

It's been a long, tough fight, but I encourage my colleagues to look at the big picture and lend this agreement their strong support.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, would you be kind enough to tell me the time remaining for both sides.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) has 13½ minutes, and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEBSTER) has 18¾ minutes.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I am very pleased at this time to yield 4 minutes to my good friend, the distinguished gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Let me thank the distinguished gentleman from Florida for his courtesies and his friendship. We've known each other a long time, and his service has been one of great commendation, and the manager as well.

We've gathered here on the floor this morning, and I want to acknowledge that the legislative process is not always pretty, but there are lives embedded in this legislation today. And though I have concerns, I am more pointed toward this House doing things to improve the quality of life for Americans who stand by the wayside and the highways of despair waiting for us to provide jobs to improve the conditions of infrastructure and their lives.

Over the past 2 years, we have seen tornadoes. We've even seen an earthquake here in Washington, D.C. We've seen hurricanes on the coastline where I come from in Texas. And in Florida, just recently, Hurricane Debby has pierced the infrastructure. Obviously, this legislation points to some of those needs.

As I stand here today, I do want to take note of a comment made by a person in the other body and suggest to Attorney General Holder: Do not resign. We have better things to do than to speak to a Cabinet officer who is a commended public servant. So I want to make sure that that does not occur.

But as I discuss this legislation, I think it is important to note several things. One, there are young people that are facing the uphill battle of getting a college education. Now we'll have a refuge. I held a town hall meeting, and to hear the stories of \$37,000, \$50,000, \$90,000 in debt that these young people have. And they are first and second year. They are sophomores and juniors. Or maybe the veteran who does not fall into the schedule of veterans benefits with college and that person has an enormous amount of debt.

And so I'm grateful that we have frozen that interest rate; and we should say loudly to the students who are now studying that America cares about them and this House will care about them.

Now, I am concerned. And I am reading language that indicates while there's been significant progress regarding MWBEs—and this bill has \$13 billion in it for surface transportation and highways—there is concern expressed in this report that we have not really met our goals to help small businesses and minority-owned businesses and women-owned businesses. And in actuality, they have an outreach goal of 10 percent. Do we realize that there are some that are receiving Federal funds that don't even meet that goal? And I'm going to cite Houston Metro, because I was proud to have this body provide \$900 million to Houston Metro; but I'm disappointed in their lack of commitment to MWBEs.

And so this is an important statement. As I read the language, it is adding women to this to create jobs. And we want to work together. We don't want to be fighting against each other. But we create jobs and we help small businesses. And that is crucial. Mass transit has been helped. But I want to note the jobs that President Obama and Democrats have been speaking of are now focused in this bill. Because as we begin to fix the crumbling infrastructure and the \$13 billion that we've committed to mass transit, the highways, to the construction of infrastructure and bridges that are crumbling and those that have now been the subject of tornadoes, as I indicated, of hurricanes, deteriorating infrastructure, it can now be revitalized and rebuilt.

So, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleagues, yes, I will be voting on this

conference report and acknowledge the work that has been done. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge that legislation sometimes, when you have to pull things from people who are desperate, may not be a process that one says is the ordinary process. But I like the fact that ordinary people have done extraordinary things. And this is an extraordinary legislative initiative with its problems, but with \$13 billion going to the people of the United States and protecting our young people and doing the business of the American people, as opposed to other direction. I hope that we will move forward in serving the American people.

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Mr. WEBSTER. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time, and if I could ask the gentleman how many more speakers he has.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Two more, possibly three, but we're moving rapidly.

I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS).

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

Mr. ANDREWS. I thank my friend for yielding.

The seeds of this bipartisan agreement were sown in the other body 3 or 4 months ago; and, frankly, I wish these agreements had been brought to this floor a lot sooner. They would have done a lot more good, but I'm glad that these agreements are here today.

This is a bill that will help create jobs in the transportation sector. It's overdue. It's a bill that will help our real estate industry by resolving matters about the national flood insurance program. That is overdue. And it's a bill that will avoid a dramatic doubling of student loan interest rates on Sunday, which is long overdue, so it's worth supporting.

I want to commend the negotiators on both sides for another provision regarding pension law that helps offset and pay for the provisions in this bill because it, I believe, will represent a significant investment by businesses around the country in job creation and purchasing of equipment and capital goods.

Under the terms of the pension payor in this bill, American employers will have about \$28 billion for the next year to spend on something other than pension plan contributions. Now their pensions will be safe and secure, but this is \$28 billion that will be available to these companies—private money—to hire people, to buy equipment, to invest in their companies and to help their businesses grow. This is businesses as large as some of the major companies in our country and businesses that are quite small.

So one of the reasons to support this legislation is, in fact, it includes for

this year alone a \$28 billion opportunity for the private sector to help put Americans back to work. This is a good idea. It was advanced by both Republicans and Democrats in this body and the other body, and I hope that we receive a “yes” vote for it here today.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased at this time to yield 2 minutes to my good friend, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. RICHARDSON).

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report on H.R. 4348, the Surface Transportation Extension Act, which provides funding for the Federal-aid highway program through fiscal year 2014 at current funding levels.

Among other things, the conference report makes key investments in our Nation's infrastructure critical to goods movement, which is specifically very important to me in my district, and the additional \$500 million that is there for projects of national and regional significance.

The conference report also calls for a national freight strategic plan, and it encourages States to develop State freight plans to incentivize those States to invest in freight projects, policies, and to make sure that we can make progress in that area that has long avoided us.

In recent days, some Members have come down and expressed a desire for the Federal Government to adopt a national freight policy. As a member of the Transportation Committee representing the 37th Congressional District, I represent a very transportation-intensive district, and that's why last March I introduced a bill, H.R. 1122, the Freight Focus Act. That particular legislation was supported very much across the aisle and included support of the American Association of Port Authorities, the American Trucking Association, Operating Engineers, and many more.

My Freight Focus Act was to establish an office of freight planning within the office of the new assistant secretary, and many of those ideas have been incorporated.

As we look forward at this bill, it certainly is not what we had hoped for. We had hoped for something more like a 5-year reauthorization. That would be helpful, but at this point, given our limitations, the key thing I would like to see us focus on is to ensure that there is a strong freight plan, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to make sure that's implemented.

Further, my legislation created a goods movement trust fund. That is something that is not addressed in this legislation but should be considered as we go forward.

As you can see, there are sound freight policies. I have been a leader of that in working with Chairman MICA and others, and I look forward to us

bringing forward not only this bill, but many more to come which will put Americans back to work.

Mr. WEBSTER. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time to close.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, it's a shame that we are here today considering this hodgepodge measure. For too long, my Republican colleagues have used this House to further their partisan agenda rather than the interests of the Nation.

So it is no surprise that, once again, we are rushing to the floor to take care of business that should have been taken care of months ago. Time and again, when given the choice between reasonable, bipartisan measures and blatantly partisan policies, Republicans have chosen to pander to the extreme wing of their conference. They have passed bills they know will be dead on arrival in the Senate, pursued legislation with no hope of being signed into law, and attached controversial measures to otherwise innocuous matters.

While Republicans are busy playing politics, Americans have been wondering how they're going to get a job, put a roof over their heads, or afford to pay for college or food.

Though I'm glad these measures are finally being brought to the floor, our constituents deserve better. On this measure, 600 pages, the dead of night last night, five measures put together under one, and we received a CBO score just a few minutes ago. Most Members in this body don't have any idea what's in this bill or how much it costs.

This Republican tactic of saying “no” to everything is dragging down our Nation, slowing our recovery, and threatening the survival of important and necessary government programs. There's serious work to do here in the House of Representatives, and my and your constituents can't afford to sit around and watch this spectacle.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WEBSTER. Mr. Speaker, as I have said during previous debates on short-term transportation extensions, our national infrastructure is aging, stable construction jobs are lacking, unemployment lingers about 8 percent nationally and a little over 9 percent in Florida. Regrettably, that remains the case today, many short-term extensions later. However, unlike the past, the House and Senate have come together to offer a glimmer of certainty to try to address these problems.

A long-term, multiyear highway reauthorization is critical to rebuilding our Nation's infrastructure, reforming antiquated and inefficient transportation programs, strengthening our economy, and creating jobs. A long-term authorization also provides for certainty and stability necessary for the transportation industry to contain costs through long-term planning.

This agreement, while not perfect, is long overdue. It will begin to chip away at the bloated bureaucracy which de-

finer our Federal transportation system. It will create jobs and it will promote economic activity in our local communities, all without adding to the deficit. For these reasons, I ask my colleagues to join me in favor of this rule.

I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. 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, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

RAISING A QUESTION OF THE PRIVILEGES OF THE HOUSE

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I now rise to a question of the privileges of the House and offer the resolution previously noticed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the resolution.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 718

Whereas the chair of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has interfered with the work of an independent agency and pressured an administrative law judge of the National Labor Relations Board by compelling the production of documents related to an ongoing case, something independent experts said “could seriously undermine the authority of those charged with enforcing the nation's labor laws” and which the House Ethics Manual discourages by noting that “Federal courts have nullified administrative decisions on grounds of due process and fairness towards all of the parties when congressional interference with ongoing administrative proceedings may have unduly influenced the outcome”;

Whereas the chair of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has politicized investigations by rolling back longstanding bipartisan precedents, including by authorizing subpoenas without the concurrence of the ranking member or a committee vote, by refusing to share documents and other information with the ranking member, and restricting the minority's right to call witnesses at hearings;

Whereas the chair of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has jeopardized an ongoing criminal investigation by publicly releasing documents that his own staff has admitted were under court seal;

Whereas the chair of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has unilaterally subpoenaed a witness who was expected to testify at an upcoming Federal trial, despite longstanding precedent and objections from the Department of Justice that such a step could cause complications at a trial and potentially jeopardize a criminal conviction;

Whereas the chair of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has engaged in a witch hunt, through the use of repeated incorrect and uncorroborated statements in the committee's “Fast and Furious” investigation; and