



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 160

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 2014

No. 106

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BENTIVOLIO).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

July 9, 2014.

I hereby appoint the Honorable KERRY L. BENTIVOLIO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2014, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, we have an unusual prospect tomorrow where a proposal to raise money for the highway trust fund is opposed by the very interests strongly identified with the need for more transportation funding.

How did we get to this point? Why do we need the money? And why would the very interests that seem to benefit be opposed?

This is the latest chapter in the strange saga of congressional irresponsibility on transportation funding that started when the last Congress refused to meaningfully address the funding crisis. You see, the funding has fallen in the highway trust fund that is based on gallons of fuel consumed, but the need continues.

The United States is now spending far less on infrastructure than our competing countries, and the vital Federal partnership, which can be a third or more of the funding in our States, is falling further and further behind.

But Congress put its head in the sand. There has not even been a hearing on the needs of transportation finance by the Ways and Means Committee, which is the House committee with primary jurisdiction. I am afraid my friend DAVE CAMP, the chair of that committee, has it exactly wrong. He is proposing a short-term fix tomorrow, saying it is time for the committees of the entire House and Senate to have the influence they deserve by kicking it into the next Congress. Well, wait a minute, by refusing to have a hearing for 3½ years on transportation financing, this has produced the backroom maneuvering with no public discussion that he says he is opposed to.

Now the results of the last Congress' failure to deal meaningfully are coming sharply into focus. The already inadequate highway trust fund will not even last through the end of the 27-month extension, which expires September 30. By draining every last dime out of the highway trust fund, they have lost the capacity to manage it, and the Federal Government is preparing to cut back. That means State and local projects will be on hold later this summer.

This pending crisis has finally sparked action, but because we have never bothered to listen to the businesses and labor unions—Pete Ruane of Road Builders, Terry O'Sullivan of the

Laborers', Tom Donohue of the U.S. Chamber, Rich Trumka of the AFL-CIO, Bill Graves of the American Trucking Assoc.—these are people who could have told Congress why it actually could be even worse than allowing the trust fund to temporarily go dry. That would be to punt this into the next Congress.

We have a long-term funding crisis. To kick this can to the next Congress makes it a virtual certainty we will continue to wrestle far beyond the next 2 years. Remember, in the next Congress, the Senate will be more evenly divided no matter who is in charge; we will be in the middle of a heated Presidential campaign, which seems like it has already started and half the Members of the other body are running for President. There is no realistic opportunity for the meaningful help America needs. It will be put on hold until another Presidential election is past and, hopefully, a stronger Congress elected. But that is 3 years or more. America deserves better.

That is why, almost without exception, the people who care the most and know the most, simply want a solution that gets us past the summer shutdown, enough money to tide us towards the end of the next year so this Congress can act. Then this Congress can take action that is sustainable with dedicated funding and that is robust enough to have a 6-year transportation bill that America needs.

There was a time when transportation and infrastructure brought America together to produce the finest roads, bridges, transit, and railroads in the world. We can do this again. It is time to start down this path.

I have been working with these stakeholders for years. We are open to solutions to the transportation problems. Let's listen to the needs that others have. Let's reject a proposal to punt to the next Congress. Let's get down to business and not adjourn this

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

H5879

year until this Congress has met its responsibilities.

BORDER ENFORCEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BROOKS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, sometimes the gap between political hype and reality is so great it demands a rebuttal. The Obama administration's border security hype is a case in point.

In February 2013, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano proclaimed, "the border is secure." Rarely has the gap between hype and reality been so great.

Similarly, my Democrat friends and their media allies repeatedly boast about Obama's border security prowess. For example, PBS recently ran a fluff piece boasting:

In one term, the Obama administration has deported roughly 80 percent the number of immigrants the George W. Bush administration deported in two.

PBS failed to mention that deportations are only half the border enforcement picture. The other half is "catch and returns," whereby Border Patrol catches illegal aliens at the border and promptly escorts them back without the time-consuming and costly deportation process.

So, how does the Obama administration stack up if the full picture is examined?

According to Homeland Security data, in 2012, President Obama's catch and return record was way below average, with Border Patrol catching and immediately returning 230,000 illegal aliens. In contrast, in 2008, the Bush administration caught and immediately returned 811,000 illegal aliens, almost four times more than Obama in 2012. Similarly, in 1993, the Clinton administration caught and immediately returned 1.2 million illegal aliens, more than five times than Obama in 2012.

Why are Obama's catch and return numbers so bad?

A Border Patrol agent told me on Capitol Hill that Obama pushes catch and return illegal aliens into the much slower and far costlier deportation process to inflate Obama's deportation numbers to artificially make Obama's border security record look better.

The best indicator of a President's border enforcement record is the whole picture: deportations plus catch and returns. In 2012, the Obama administration deported or caught and returned 649,000 illegal aliens. In contrast, in 2008, the Bush administration deported or caught and returned 1.2 million illegal aliens, 80 percent more than President Obama in 2012. Similarly, in 1993, the Clinton administration deported or caught and returned 1.3 million illegal aliens, 98 percent more than the Obama administration in 2012.

According to Department of Homeland Security data, and contrary to what my Democrat friends and their

media allies would have the public believe, Obama's border security enforcement record is the worst in more than two decades.

But there is more. President Obama repeatedly promises amnesty to illegal aliens. As 1986's failed amnesty experiment proves, amnesty begets more illegal immigration. Mr. Speaker, amnesty promises must stop because they make things worse, not better.

Further, this administration must stop paying foreigners to illegally cross our borders. This is a no-brainer. America cannot give free food, free clothing, free shelter, free health care, free transportation, and billions of dollars a year in fraudulent tax returns and refunds to illegal aliens and then wonder why we have an illegal alien crisis.

These failings contribute to America's poorest borders and produce millions of illegal aliens competing for American jobs, thereby creating income inequality via wage suppression and lost job opportunities for American citizens.

Mr. Speaker, to solve the immigration problem, America must vigorously enforce immigration laws, stop promising illegal aliens amnesty, and stop giving illegal aliens stuff paid for with tax dollars forcefully taken from struggling American families. If America will be smart and do these things, there will be no immigration crisis, there won't be illegal aliens competing with Americans for jobs, and American families can better participate in the American Dream.

HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I intend to talk about transportation, but I must say to my friend who just spoke, there is a more humane and enlightened approach to comprehensive immigration reform that would address the issues he says he is concerned about. Railing against people because of their status when there are 11 million people who are here without documentation, a problem that hardly initiated with this administration, I don't think is helpful. It may rile up one's base, but it doesn't solve problems; and it is not the best of America, especially as we celebrate our Independence Day.

The urgency for Congress, Mr. Speaker, to address the shortfall in the highway trust fund grows with every passing day. Road and, eventually, mass transit improvements in every State are at risk of grinding to a halt in a matter of weeks in the heart of the summer construction time. Secretary Foxx notified all States last week that their Federal funding will drop by an average of 28 percent starting next month.

In my home State of Virginia, nearly every mode of transportation will be negatively affected. More than half of

next year's road and transit projects were supposed to be funded with Federal dollars. If we don't replenish the trust fund, just in Virginia alone, 149 bridge replacements will be put on hold, 175 aging buses and train cars will not be replaced, 44 smaller transit systems will not be able to maintain service, and 350 transportation projects will grind to a halt.

When I hear my friends on the other side of the aisle say, "No, no, we are concerned about jobs," well, 43,000 jobs in Virginia alone will be lost if we do not replenish the trust fund.

In addition, many States have advanced projects based solely on the Federal Government's participation, including private activity bonds used to finance such projects. If that money dries up, States would have to put projects on hold or redirect other precious State resources to cover the debt service or risk default.

I was relieved when my House Republican friends backed away from their reckless proposal to hold the highway trust fund hostage unless their demands were met to eliminate Saturday mail delivery service by the Postal Service. Set aside for a moment that paying for an on-budget transfer into the trust fund with off-budget cuts to the Postal Service violates both PAYGO and CutGo budget rules here in the House, that fundamentally flawed, nongermane proposal would have undermined a trillion-dollar American mailing industry that supports more than 8 million jobs and represents 7 percent of our GDP. There is simply no nexus between funding transportation and the Postal Service, despite the efforts of Republican leadership to suggest otherwise.

□ 1015

While the focus now has shifted to finding a short-term funding fix, I would argue that simply patching it over will not help our State DOTs, which need much more certainty as they do long-range planning. Transportation is not a short-term proposition. It is long-term planning and long-term investment streams that are needed.

The Federal Government historically has been a key partner in funding our Nation's infrastructure, but that level of investment has eroded over time. Just look at the recent Transportation Appropriations bill. It provides less funding for highway and transit construction than last year, and far less than the administration proposed for a 21st century transportation system in America. Public spending on infrastructure as a share of GDP now is half what it was in the sixties and seventies. No great country can walk away from infrastructure investment and stay great.

I commend Senators MURPHY and CORKER for tabling a bipartisan proposal to increase the gas tax by 12 cents over 2 years and then index it to inflation. It has been more than 20 years since the Federal gas tax was