

broken, and the solution was overwhelmingly approved by Members of both parties.

Well, now, we are facing yet another impasse, one that has haunted us far longer than a decade, transportation funding. The authority to spend for surface transportation programs expires May 31.

Just as I predicted last summer, the stopgap approach that we approved then would put us right back in the same spot this spring, cutting badly needed transportation projects this summer and the jobs that go with them.

America is falling apart and falling behind in part because you cannot pay for 2015 transportation needs with 1993 dollars, which was the last time we raised the gas tax. Thirty-two short-term funding extensions are evidence of a bipartisan failure for these 22 years to deal with the gas tax, and there is no meaningful alternative for transportation resources on the horizon.

Ironically, the solution is clear, thoroughly studied and broadly supported: raise the gas tax for the first time since 1993. The House Republican leadership doesn't have to do anything extraordinary, just allow the Ways and Means Committee to follow regular order. Let's listen to the experts; invite the stakeholders that build, maintain, and use our transportation system.

Listen to the heads of the AFL-CIO, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, leaders in transit, truckers, AAA, bicyclists, all of whom agree with President Eisenhower, who used the gas tax to start the highway trust fund and the interstate freeway system, and President Ronald Reagan, who increased gas tax a nickel, more than doubling it in 1992.

In fact, we can invite legislators from today. Six red Republican States have raised the gas tax already this year: Nebraska, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Utah, and South Dakota. State Senator Michael Vehle comes to mind.

The key is to have real hearings, like Congress used to conduct. Have a full week devoted to solving the transportation funding crisis. Bring in the witnesses, grill them, test their thoughts and theories, discuss real solutions, not gimmicks or ideologically driven fantasies.

Let's have serious work sessions and a markup. President Obama could help by establishing a marker that he will approve no further extensions past September 31.

It will not be less complex, expensive, or easier politically in 2016, 2017, or 2018. If this slides until 2016, which is the approach evidently favored by the Republican leadership, we will be struggling with this in the next Congress and the next administration.

This does not have to be an exercise in futility. We are seeing the leadership exhibited all across the country with 20 States that have stepped up, and as I mentioned, six red States already this year.

Now is the time for Congress to do its job. In fact, if we do our job, taking the solution that has been thoroughly vetted, studied, and widely supported by interest groups across the political spectrum, we are going to be able to solve this funding conundrum.

We will be able to rebuild and renew America, putting hundreds of thousands of people to work at family-wage jobs, while Congress helps make our families safer, healthier, and more economically secure.

I strongly urge that the House reject the approach that would simply dodge this problem for 2 more months, then slide to the end of the year and beyond. We should call the question now, establish the parameters.

This is something that is long overdue, that all of us can embrace, and America will be the better for it.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HOLDING) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOLDING. Mr. Speaker, the challenges we face today are different from the challenges we faced when Mental Health Awareness Month began decades ago, but now, it is more important than ever that we take time out of our busy schedules to speak about the prevalence of mental illness and understand the importance, as friends, as family members, and as a community, of discussing the common signs of mental illness.

Mr. Speaker, you may be surprised to learn, as I was, that 1 in 5 adults experience mental health problems each year; and, while each illness is unique, there are some common signs that you or a loved one could be suffering from mental illness, like difficulty concentrating or experiencing a change in sleeping habits.

As parents, we must make an effort to talk to our children about their emotions and their mental health, just as we care for our children's physical health, by encouraging them to eat well, get enough sleep, and exercise frequently.

Without a doubt, Mr. Speaker, America is one of the most blessed countries in the world. We are all offered the opportunities for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Raising healthy families, both physically and mentally, is one of the responsibilities that comes with those freedoms.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the more voices we have speaking up about mental health, the better we can eliminate stigma surrounding mental health conditions. The National Alliance on Mental Illness of North Carolina is asking individuals in my home State, North Carolina, to see the person and not the illness and pledge to be stigma-free.

It is time to end the silence and stigma often linked with mental health conditions, and I join them happily in this effort.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF B.B. KING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DAVID SCOTT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, ladies and gentlemen, B.B. King, a musical genius, has passed away.

When B.B. King was just a little boy down in Indianola, Mississippi, he stood up in the middle of a cotton field, and he said:

One day, somebody is going to stand up and sing about me and play the guitar about me.

Then he said:

You know, I reckon it will be myself. Yeah, I reckon it will be me.

B.B. King went on to become a worldwide icon of music; and people all over the world, regardless of race, creed, or color, appreciated and loved B.B. King. B.B. King influenced all the great ones, from Frank Sinatra to Elvis Presley; and Elvis Presley loved B.B. King.

Aretha Franklin, Sam Cook, Eric Clapton, Mick Jagger, even the Beatles and Muddy Waters, Bo Diddley, all of these musical legends were influenced by B.B. King.

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B.B. King sung about the deep things of life. He sung about love—love lost and love gained. B.B. King sang, and he played the blues. A unique American cultural, musical genre, B.B. King.

Ladies and gentlemen, you know, B.B. King would say:

Trouble in mind, I'm blue
But I won't be blue always
'Cause I know the sun's gonna shine in my
back door someday
I am all alone at midnight, and the lights are
burning low
But the sun's gonna shine in my back door
someday.

Mr. Speaker, the great classic of so many classics that he wrote and he sang was "The Thrill is Gone." As he would say, "The thrill is gone away." But, Mr. Speaker, the thrill of B.B. King and his life and his music and his great contributions as a genuine American hero will live on and on for generations to come. B.B. King's music will live on, and Lucille, his guitar, will live on.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, we thank God, Jehovah God Almighty, for sending B.B. King our way.

IRAN

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

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, a large and respected Iranian expatriate community has settled in California, and it has been my privilege to get to know some of them in recent years. They are part of an international diaspora of 5 million people who fled Iran after it fell to Islamic fascism 36 years

ago. The stories they tell are blood-curdling.

One woman told of her cousin who had been rounded up in an antigovernment demonstration and taken to prison. After several years, the families were informed that their loved ones were to be released in the town square. When the excited families arrived for their long-awaited reunion, their sons were hanged before their eyes.

A doctor told me of his college days in Paris. He called home to tell his brother in Tehran of an anti-Khomeini demonstration. His brother was promptly arrested, tortured, and imprisoned for simply listening.

Now, a few months ago, after many years of silence, the brother in America received a call from his brother in Iran who wanted to tell him of the simmering unrest going on throughout that country. The American brother told him to shut up, to remember what happened the last time they had spoken so candidly. His brother in Tehran said: "I don't care anymore. They can't arrest all of us."

All of the Iranian expatriates I spoke with tell me the same thing: the economic sanctions and international isolation of the regime were bringing Iran to the brink of revolution.

And this brings us to the President's negotiation with Iran's fascist Islamic regime. Any agreement between Iran's leaders and the United States is meaningless because Iran's leaders' word is meaningless. Iran's government is a notoriously untrustworthy rogue state that has made it unmistakably clear that it intends to acquire nuclear weapons and, once acquired, to use them. The only way to avert this nightmare, short of war, is for the regime to collapse from within.

Over the last several years, the Iranian opposition has grown dramatically for two reasons: there is a strong and growing perception among the Iranian people that the Iranian dictatorship is a pariah in the international community, and the resulting international economic sanctions have created conditions that make the regime's overthrow imperative.

At precisely this moment in history, Barack Obama did incalculable damage by initiating these negotiations. By engaging this rogue state, President Obama has given it international recognition and legitimacy at just that moment when it had lost legitimacy in the eyes of its own people. Worse, by promising relief from economic sanctions, he has removed the most compelling reason the organized Iranian resistance had to justify the regime's overthrow.

It is not the outcome of the negotiations that matters because any agreement with Iran's conniving leaders is meaningless. It is the negotiations, themselves, that have greatly strengthened the regime, just when it was most vulnerable from growing opposition among its own people.

Now, the House just passed H.R. 1191 that purports to restore congressional oversight to these talks. I believe it completely missed the point.

First, our Constitution requires that any treaty be approved by two-thirds of the Senate. Well, that wasn't going to happen, so Mr. Obama simply redefined the prospective treaty as an agreement between leaders, an agreement with no force of law and no legal standing.

I fear the Congress has just changed this equation by establishing a wholly extra-constitutional process that lends the imprimatur of Congress to these negotiations with no practical way to stop the lifting of sanctions. Instead of two-thirds of the Senate having to approve a treaty, as the Constitution requires, this agreement takes effect automatically unless two-thirds of both Houses reject it—a complete sham.

But worse, I fear this bill gives tacit approval to extremely harmful negotiations that Congress, instead, ought to vigorously condemn and unambiguously repudiate.

We can only hope that in the days ahead what Churchill called "the parliamentary democracies" will regain the national leadership required to prevent these negotiations from producing what amounts to the Munich accords for the Middle East. That will require treating the Iranian dictatorship as the international pariah that it is, and it will require providing every ounce of moral and material support to the Iranian opposition that they need to rid their Nation of this fascist Islamic dictatorship, to restore their proud heritage, and to retake their place among the civilized nations of the world.

POSITIVE TRAIN CONTROL

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, Mark Twain once said that "action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often."

Since last week's tragic Amtrak accident, we have heard plenty of words about the need for stronger rail safety measures and investments in our infrastructure, but it is time for Congress to back up these words with action. It is time for Congress to put its money where its mouth is.

We know how to prevent tragic accidents like the one that happened on Amtrak last week. We even mandated new technology called positive train control that would have prevented it. But what Congress has refused to do is to pay to actually get it done.

Positive train control is a game-changer for rail safety. The technology would have likely prevented 140 train accidents that have caused more than 280 deaths and \$300 million in property damage since 1969. But this safety technology is also incredibly complex and expensive to implement. We have man-

dated technology that is expected to cost billions, and we are forcing the Nation's railroads to foot the entire bill.

Much of this last week's focus has been on Amtrak, but despite last week's accident, Amtrak is actually on target to implement positive train control by the end of the year.

For the already cash-strapped commuter railroads around the country, it is a completely different story. For them, Congress' refusal to fund positive train control has pretty much stopped implementation in its tracks. Expected to cost commuter railroads nearly \$3.5 billion, it is no wonder that over 70 percent of commuter railroads won't achieve positive train control implementation before this year's deadline.

Our commuter railroads are integral to the daily commute of millions of Americans. In fact, Amtrak's annual ridership pales in comparison to our Nation's commuter railroads. While Amtrak carries 30 million riders a year, commuter railroads carry close to 500 million.

In the Chicago area alone, Metra's ridership last year was over 80 million. With numbers like that, how can Congress justify mandating a policy that they know commuter railroads simply cannot afford while providing very little funding to help them do it?

This unfunded mandate is forcing commuter rails to sacrifice other investments that are crucial to railroad safety and efficiency. Fifty percent of commuter railroads are currently deferring other capital investments to implement positive train control.

And what happens when the commuters aren't able to implement this technology before the end of this year? They get penalized—fined. Instead of giving money to the commuters to pay for PTC, the Federal Government is actually going to end up collecting money from them for not being able to afford to do so.

For good reason, Congress mandated incredibly important and incredibly expensive new technology. But it has amounted to a lot of words and very little action.

The same 2008 law that mandated PTC also authorized \$50 million a year in rail safety technology grants to help Amtrak and commuter railroads pay for this implementation, but in the 7 years since the law was passed, Congress has only appropriated funding once.

Mr. Speaker, \$50 million a year wasn't enough then, and it is sure not enough now. That is why I introduced a bill with the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI) in March to reauthorize PTC funding at \$200 million a year.

It is time for Congress to finish what it started. It is time for Congress to get serious about investing in our Nation's transportation infrastructure. And it is time for Congress to help our commuter railroads implement positive train control and prevent the kind of