I would like to be able to go home now, Mr. Speaker, and say to them that we are concerned and considerate about those tragic losses. Therefore, in supporting the Care for Police Survivors Act, in addition to cash benefits, we would have, as this program includes, counseling available to these families.

Under current law, there is a cap on the amount that can be spent for such counseling. The demand for counseling services is greater than can be met under the cap, and so this bill lifts the cap.

There is already sufficient money in the Department of Justice budget to pay for counseling for all affected families, so this bill will not require any additional appropriations. The bill is supported by the Department of Justice as well as by the National Association of Police Officers, which represents nearly 300,000 police officers, and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, which represents more than 100,000 local correctional officers.

These brave men and women put their lives at risk to protect the rest of us, and the benefits provided under this program are the least we can do in return.

Just a couple weeks ago, one of our deputy sheriffs, a woman, lost her life. A few weeks ago as well, Officer Higgins was shot and was down. She survived, but she is now in a rehabilitation process. I would like to think that this bill would help her and her family go through the next couple of months of her rehabilitation and, yes, her coming back into full force, full activity, and a good quality of life. We must recognize those and those left behind.

So, therefore, I commend the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MCCOLLUM) the chairman, and the gentleman from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the ranking member, for their sponsorship of this bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3565. This bill would amend a very important and valuable program that pays benefits to the families of public safety officers who are killed or totally disabled in the line of duty.

In addition to cash benefits, this program makes counseling available to these families—however, under current law, there is a cap on the amount that can be spent for such counseling. The demand for counseling services is greater than can be met under the cap, and so this bill lifts the cap. There is already sufficient money in the Department of Justice budget to pay for counseling for all affected families, so this bill will not require any additional appropriations.

The bill is supported by the Department of Justice, as well as by the National Association of Police Officers, which represents nearly 300,000 police officers, and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which represents more than 100,000 local correctional officers. These brave men and women put their lives at risk to protect the rest of us, and the benefits provided under this program are the least we can do in return.

I commend Chairman MCCOLLUM and ranking member SCHUMER for their sponsorship of this bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I simply want to acknowledge what the gentlewoman has said about listing the strong support the police officer organizations have for this bill. I think the one she did not mention that I want to add to the list, maybe it is a neglect on your list there, is the Fraternal Order of Police. They also have strongly endorsed this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further request for time.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me simply say that I am glad that the gentleman from Florida added the Fraternal Order of Police. I think we are safe to say that this bill is supported by a multitude of police and law enforcement agencies and certainly our local communities.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this important legislation that will benefit the survivors of public safety officers who have been killed in the line of duty.

Sadly, my state of North Carolina has experienced a rash of violence against our brave men and women in law enforcement. In recent months, five officers have been killed in and around my Second Congressional District. These tragic crimes have occurred in our smallest towns and in our biggest cities. It is an outrage that those whose service keeps our streets and communities safe and protects our citizens must pay the ultimate price in the line of duty.

To honor their sacrifices and assist their families, last year I established the North Carolina Law Enforcement Survivors Scholarship Fund to assist the families of my state's officers who fall in service to the people. I strongly opposed the Congressional pay raise this House passed last year, and I donated the raise I would have received to create this fund. The scholarship will help cover costs such as books and room and board for higher education for the children and spouses of these local heroes who make the ultimate sacrifice. This scholarship is the least we can do to honor their memories.

H.R. 3565 represents an appropriate action by Congress to assist the families of public safety officers who have been killed in the line of duty. This bill authorizes the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to spend no less than $150,000 each year to provide counseling and peer support programs for victims' families. The measure also permits BJA to use funds in its mandatory appropriation to administer the appeals of claims for benefits by the family members of slain officers. I urge the House to pass H.R. 3565.

Mr. Speaker, law enforcement officers put their lives on the line each and every day to provide us with safe streets and communities. Our values demand that we tend to the families of those heroes who sacrifice so much for the greater good.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am happy to yield back the balance of my time.

☐ 1430

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MCCOLLUM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3565.

The question was taken.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, on that, I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5, rule I, and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION ACT OF 1998

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3528) to amend title 28, United States Code, with respect to the use of alternative dispute resolution processes in United States district courts, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3528

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 1998''.

SEC. 2. ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESSES TO BE AUTHORIZED IN ALL DISTRICT COURTS.

Section 651 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 651. Authorization of alternative dispute resolution

''(a) DEFINITION.—For purposes of this chapter, an alternative dispute resolution process includes any process or procedure, other than an adjudication by a presiding judge, in which a neutral third party participates to assist in the resolution of issues in controversy, through processes such as early neutral evaluation, mediation, minitrial, and arbitration as provided in sections 654 through 658.

''(b) AUTHORITY.—Each United States district court shall authorize, by local rule adopted under section 2071(b), the use of alternative dispute resolution processes in all civil actions, including adversary proceedings in bankruptcy, in accordance with this chapter, except that the use of arbitration may be authorized only as provided in section 654. Each United States district court shall devise and implement its own alternative dispute resolution program, by local rule adopted under section 2071(b), to encourage and promote the use of alternative dispute resolution in its district.

''(c) EXISTING ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROGRAMS.—In those courts where an alternative dispute resolution program is in place on the date of the enactment of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 1998, the court shall examine the effectiveness of that program and adopt such improvements to the program as are consistent with the provisions and purposes of this chapter.

''(d) ADMINISTRATION OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROGRAMS.—Each United States district court shall designate an employee, or a judicial officer, who is knowledgeable in alternative dispute resolution

practices and processes to implement, administer, oversee, and evaluate the court's alternative dispute resolution program. Such person may also be responsible for recruiting, screening, and training attorneys to serve as neutrals and arbitrators in the court's alternative dispute resolution program.

''(e) TITLE 9 NOT AFFECTED.—This chapter shall not affect title 9.

''(f) PROGRAM SUPPORT.—The Federal Judicial Center and the Administrative Office of the United States Courts are authorized to assist the district courts in the establishment and improvement of alternative dispute resolution programs by identifying particular practices employed in successful programs and providing additional assistance as needed and appropriate.''.

SEC. 3. JURISDICTION.

Section 652 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 652. Jurisdiction

''(a) CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION IN APPROPRIATE CASES.—Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary and except as provided in subsections (b) and (c), each district court shall, by local rule adopted under section 2071(b), require that litigants in all civil cases consider the use of an alternative dispute resolution process at an appropriate stage in the litigation. Each district court shall provide litigants in all civil cases with at least one alternative dispute resolution process, including, but not limited to, mediation, early neutral evaluation, minitrial, and arbitration as authorized in sections 654 through 658. Any district court that elects to require the use of alternative dispute resolution in certain cases may do so only with respect to mediation, early neutral evaluation, and, if the parties consent, arbitration.

''(b) ACTIONS EXEMPTED FROM CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION.—Each district court may exempt from the requirements of this section specific cases or categories of cases in which use of alternative dispute resolution would not be appropriate. In defining these exemptions, each district court shall consult with members of the bar, including the United States Attorney for that district.

''(c) AUTHORITY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.—Nothing in this section shall alter or conflict with the authority of the Attorney General to conduct litigation on behalf of the United States, with the authority of any Federal agency authorized to conduct litigation in the United States courts, or with any delegation of litigation authority by the Attorney General.

''(d) CONFIDENTIALITY PROVISIONS.—Until such time as rules are adopted under chapter 131 of this title providing for the confidentiality of alternative dispute resolution processes under this chapter, each district court shall, by local rule adopted under section 2071(b), provide for the confidentiality of the alternative dispute resolution processes and to prohibit disclosure of confidential dispute resolution communications.''.

SEC. 4. MEDIATORS AND NEUTRAL EVALUATORS.

Section 653 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 653. Neutrals

''(a) PANEL OF NEUTRALS.—Each district court that authorizes the use of alternative dispute resolution processes shall adopt appropriate processes for making neutrals available for use by the parties for each category of process offered. Each district court shall promulgate its own procedures and criteria for the selection of neutrals on its panels.

''(b) QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING.—Each person serving as a neutral in an alternative dispute resolution process should be qualified and trained to serve as a neutral in the appropriate alternative dispute resolution process. For this purpose, the district court may use, among others, magistrate judges who have been trained to serve as neutrals in alternative dispute resolution processes, professional neutrals from the private sector, and persons who have been trained to serve as neutrals in alternative dispute resolution processes. Until such time as rules are adopted under chapter 131 of this title relating to the disqualification of neutrals, each district court shall issue rules under section 2071(b) relating to the disqualification of neutrals (including, where appropriate, disqualification under section 455 of this title, other applicable law, and professional responsibility standards).''.

SEC. 5. ACTIONS REFERRED TO ARBITRATION.

Section 654 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 654. Arbitration

''(a) REFERRAL OF ACTIONS TO ARBITRATION.—Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary and except as provided in subsections (b) and (c) of section 652 and subsection (d) of this section, a district court may allow the referral to arbitration of any civil action (including any adversary proceeding in bankruptcy) pending before it, except that referral to arbitration may not be made where—

''(1) the action is based on an alleged violation of a right secured by the Constitution of the United States;

''(2) jurisdiction is based in whole or in part on section 1343 of this title; or

''(3) the relief sought consists of money damages in an amount greater than $150,000.

''(b) SAFEGUARDS IN CONSENT CASES.—Until such time as rules are adopted under chapter 131 of this title relating to procedures described in this subsection, the district court shall, by local rule adopted under section 2071(b), establish procedures to ensure that any civil action in which arbitration by consent is allowed under subsection (a)—

''(1) consent to arbitration is freely and knowingly obtained; and

''(2) no party or attorney is prejudiced for refusing to participate in arbitration.

''(c) PRESUMPTIONS.—For purposes of subsection (a)(3), a district court may presume damages are not in excess of $150,000 unless counsel certifies that damages exceed such amount.

''(d) EXISTING PROGRAMS.—Nothing in this section is deemed to affect any action in which arbitration is conducted pursuant to section 906 of the Judicial Improvements and Access to Justice Act (Public Law 100–102), as in effect prior to the date of its repeal.''.

SEC. 6. ARBITRATORS.

Section 655 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 655. Arbitrators

''(a) POWERS OF ARBITRATORS.—An arbitrator to whom an action is referred under section 654 shall have the power, within the judicial district of the district court which referred the action to arbitration—

''(1) to conduct arbitration hearings;

''(2) to administer oaths and affirmations; and

''(3) to make awards.

''(b) STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATION.—Each district court that authorizes arbitration shall establish standards for the certification of arbitrators and shall certify arbitrators to perform services in accordance with such standards and this chapter. The standards shall include provisions requiring that any arbitrator—

''(1) shall take the oath or affirmation described in section 453; and

''(2) shall be subject to the disqualification rules under section 455.

''(c) IMMUNITY.—All individuals serving as arbitrators in an alternative dispute resolution program under this chapter are performing quasi-judicial functions and are entitled to the immunities and protections that the law accords to persons serving in such capacity.''.

SEC. 7. SUBPOENAS.

Section 656 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 656. Subpoenas

''Rule 45 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (relating to subpoenas) applies to subpoenas for the attendance of witnesses and the production of documentary evidence at an arbitration hearing under this chapter.''.

SEC. 8. ARBITRATION AWARD AND JUDGMENT.

Section 657 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 657. Arbitration award and judgment

''(a) FILING AND EFFECT OF ARBITRATION AWARD.—An arbitration award made by an arbitrator under this chapter, along with proof of service of such award on the other party by the prevailing party or by the plaintiff, shall be filed promptly after the arbitration hearing is concluded with the clerk of the district court that referred the case to arbitration. Such award shall be entered as the judgment of the court after the time has expired for requesting a trial de novo. The judgment so entered shall be subject to the same provisions of law and shall have the same force and effect as a judgment of the court in a civil action, except that the judgment shall not be subject to review in any other court by appeal or otherwise.

''(b) SEALING OF ARBITRATION AWARD.—The district court shall provide, by local rule adopted under section 2071(b), that the contents of any arbitration award made under this chapter shall not be made known to any judge who might be assigned to the case until the district court has entered final judgment in the action or the action has otherwise terminated.

''(c) TRIAL DE NOVO OF ARBITRATION AWARDS.—

''(1) TIME FOR FILING DEMAND.—Within 30 days after the filing of an arbitration award with a district court under subsection (a), any party may file a written demand for a trial de novo in the district court.

''(2) ACTION RESTORED TO COURT DOCKET.—Upon a demand for a trial de novo, the action shall be restored to the docket of the court and treated for all purposes as if it had not been referred to arbitration.

''(3) EXCLUSION OF EVIDENCE OF ARBITRATION.—The court shall not admit at the trial de novo any evidence that there has been an arbitration proceeding, the nature or amount of any award, or any other matter concerning the conduct of the arbitration proceeding, unless—

''(A) the evidence would otherwise be admissible in the court under the Federal Rules of Evidence; or

''(B) the parties have otherwise stipulated.''.

SEC. 9. COMPENSATION OF ARBITRATORS AND NEUTRALS.

Section 658 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 658. Compensation of arbitrators and neutrals

''(a) COMPENSATION.—The district court shall, subject to regulations approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States, establish the amount of compensation, if any, that each arbitrator or neutral shall receive for services rendered in each case under this chapter.

''(b) TRANSPORTATION ALLOWANCES.—Under regulations prescribed by the Director of the

Administrative Office of the United States Courts, a district court may reimburse arbitrators for actual transportation expenses necessarily incurred in the performance of duties under this chapter.''.

SEC. 10. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated for each fiscal year such sums as may be necessary to carry out chapter 44 of title 28, United States Code, as amended by this Act.

SEC. 11. CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.

(a) LIMITATION ON MONEY DAMAGES.—Section 901 of the Judicial Improvements and Access to Justice Act (28 U.S.C. 652 note) is amended by striking subsection (c).

(b) OTHER CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—(1) The chapter heading for chapter 44 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''CHAPTER 44—ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION''.

(2) The table of contents for chapter 44 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''Sec.
''651. Authorization of alternative dispute resolution.
''652. Jurisdiction.
''653. Neutrals.
''654. Arbitration.
''655. Arbitrators.
''656. Subpoenas.
''657. Arbitration award and judgment.
''658. Compensation of arbitrators and neutrals.''.

(3) The item relating to chapter 44 in the table of chapters for Part III of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''44. Alternative Dispute Resolution ... 651''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3528 is designed to address the problem of high case loads burdening the Federal courts. This legislation will provide a quicker, more efficient method by which to resolve some Federal cases when the parties or the courts so choose.

H.R. 3528 directs each Federal trial court to establish some form of alternative dispute resolution, popularly referred to as ADR, which could include arbitration, mediation, mini trials, early neutral evaluation, or some combination of those for certain civil cases. The bill also provides for the confidentiality of the alternative dispute resolution process and prohibits the disclosure of such confidential communications. The version considered today furthermore includes several noncontroversial technical amendments which are supported by the Judicial Conference as well as the Department of Justice.

This legislation will provide the Federal courts with the tools necessary to present quality alternatives to expensive Federal litigation. In sum, this is a good bill, Mr. Speaker, that will offer our citizens a reasonable and cost-effective alternative to expensive Federal litigation while still guaranteeing their right to have their day in court.

I want to thank at this time, Mr. Speaker, the cooperation of the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. BARNEY FRANK), the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Courts and Intellectual Property.

And let me say this as well, Mr. Speaker: The high numbers reflected by the numerous backlogs represent far more than faceless statistics. They represent citizens, real people anxiously awaiting their day in court.

I urge my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, to pass H.R. 3528.

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

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me first of all thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) for his leadership. These are extremely important issues, and I would like to rise on behalf of my Democratic colleagues and certainly our ranking member, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), on these issues, and particularly to emphasize that we in the Committee on the Judiciary should be at the highlight, if my colleagues will, of emphasizing or making sure that justice is facilitated.

I rise in support of H.R. 3528, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 1998. And as I stated, I commend the chairman, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), again of the Subcommittee on Courts and Intellectual Property of the House Committee on the Judiciary, for their work in getting this important legislation to the floor of the House today.

Alternative dispute resolution, whether mediation, neutral evaluation, arbitration, mini trial, or any other fair procedure that the courts can oversee which makes litigation less burdensome to both the participants and the system, is in my view welcome and something that we should support.

As a former municipal court judge, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE), who was on the bench on that night court, if my colleagues have ever seen that, hours from 4 to 12 midnight with maybe 300 cases per docket, I am well aware of the importance, one, of justice even at the local municipal court level, but also the importance of ensuring that people find their way into the court system in a fair and honest manner.

I am also very much in support of, as a former member and director of the State Bar of Texas, of the value of alternative dispute resolution. So I hope that my colleagues will take the words that I offer in addition to support of this legislation, and certainly might engage the chairman in his concern for these issues, as well.

But I do believe that, as a member of the House Committee on the Judiciary, it is extremely important that we concern ourselves with the lack of the processing of appointments to the judiciary that we are facing in this Congress, this 105th Congress. It is extremely important in the State of Texas where the Fifth Circuit has remained vacant, the Southern District has a vacancy, and we are extremely backlogged. The kinds of, if I might say, shenanigans that are going on in the other body with respect to judicial appointments is something that we have a responsibility to address.

Certainly the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 1998 that has our overwhelming support will help to, if my colleagues will, bring some sort of calm and some sort of movement on cases, but I do believe we are long overdue in moving the log jam of appointments as offered by the White House.

Let me proceed by saying that in doing this legislation I want to commend my colleagues on the Committee on the Judiciary for reporting out a bill that brings about the appropriate standards for Federal courts throughout the Nation to continue to develop workable alternative dispute resolution methods, and I am pleased that the members of the committee have worked with the Judicial Conference and the Department of Justice to craft legislation which is not objected to by those important institutions.

Just a year ago we funeralized Judge Black in the Southern District. He was a strong supporter of alternative dispute resolution, which gives me certainly the comfort that we are doing the right thing in engaging the Judicial Conference and working with them.

So I do support the legislation before us. I urge my colleagues to do the same so that I can and we can work together to continue to try to improve access to our nation's courts, lower the cost of litigation, and expedite the process for all. And in so doing, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly ask that we give due consideration to moving the unfortunate log jam that does not allow us to move the appointments so aptly appointed and judge-qualified to fill the many vacancies throughout this Nation. It certainly changes the course of justice without that.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3528, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 1998, and commend Chairman COBLE and ranking member FRANK of the Courts and Intellectual Property Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee for their work in getting this important legislation to the floor of the House today.

Alternative dispute resolution, whether mediation, neutral evaluation, arbitration, mini trial, or any other fair procedure that the courts can

oversee which make litigation less burdensome to both the participants and the system, is in my view welcome and something that we should support.

I commend my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee for reporting out a bill which provides the appropriate standards for Federal courts throughout the Nation to continue to develop workable alternative dispute resolution methods, and I am pleased that the members of the committee have worked with the Judicial Conference and the Department of Justice to craft legislation which is not objected to by those important institutions.

I support the legislation before us. I urge my colleagues to do the same, so that we can work together to continue to try to improve access to our Nation's courts, lower the costs of litigation, and expedite the process for all.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, before I yield back, I failed to mention this earlier. About five or six days ago I received a detailed letter from my chief judge in the Middle District of North Carolina, and I will not read it in its entirety, but I will allude to what he said about ADR.

He wrote to me: ''This has been a significant benefit to litigants and the public and has been met with approval by the bar. You indicate,'' referring to me, ''that you are a big supporter of ADR programs. We have had a very successful ADR program in this district for several years.''

Now the Middle District of North Carolina of course does not have a corner on that market. Many districts have practiced the ADR exercise for some time, but this would just swing wide the gate and bring all districts in, and I know what Judge Bullock wrote to me would be echoed by district court judges across the land.

Mr. Speaker, I said before it is a good bill, I urge its passage, and I ask the gentlewoman from Texas if she is prepared to yield back.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Texas for yielding this time to me, and I thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE), the chairman, and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), the ranking member, for their work on this bill.

I rise today in support of H.R. 3528, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 1998. Because I have seen firsthand the successful use of alternative dispute resolution in my own County of San Diego, California, I am a diehard fan of ADR, as we often call it.

Let me share with my colleagues the wildly successful example of the San Diego Mediation Center. This service has grown from humble beginnings in the community of Golden Hill in my congressional district to a county-wide service offering mediation, arbitration, facilitation, training, credentialing, internships and a speakers bureau to the citizens of San Diego County.

Since 1983 the San Diego Mediation Center has provided a voluntary and peaceful process for resolving disputes. Alternative dispute resolution is available for neighbors, businesses, private citizens, courts, the legal community, municipalities, government agencies, schools, professional groups, homeowner associations, churches and families.

With an agreement rate of 80 percent and a compliance rate of 85 percent the agreements forged through the mediation process have promoted goodwill in the community, reduced the load on the courts, and in some cases prevented violence.

More than 10,000 volunteer hours are donated to the service each year by the 200 volunteer mediators who receive intensive mediation training from the center. There is an extensive waiting list of potential volunteers who are hoping for the opportunity to receive training and to become mediators. Public trainings in dispute resolution are also given several times each year by the training staff of the mediation center.

The work of the mediation center is well received and highly respected in San Diego. Recently recognized by the San Diego County Taxpayers Association with its Golden Watchdog Award, the mediation center has saved the taxpayers of San Diego $3.7 million by cutting direct costs to the San Diego Small Claims, Municipal and Superior Courts.

Mr. Speaker, the work of the San Diego Mediation Center and hundreds of other alternative dispute resolution services throughout the country reduces judiciary case loads and offers disputants an inexpensive and more satisfying way to resolve disputes rather than litigation. For that reason, I applaud H.R. 3528, that will extend this option to litigants in district court civil cases.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am prepared to yield back after I make one closing comment, and I do want this to be particularly acknowledged, I say to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE), that I recognize the hard work that has been put into this bill.

My plea is particularly parallel to this legislation. It certainly does not take away from my very strong support of this legislation. But again I raise up the very deep concern that I believe that the judicial appointments that proceed through the other body have been held hostage. I call to this body's attention a nominee by the name of Judge Massiah-Jackson. Several other nominees for the bench have been held in absolute and outrageous hostage situations.

I believe that the alternative dispute resolution system is excellent and is needed in this legislation, is something of great importance to the Nation, but we will not do the job that we are supposed to do if we do not proceed filling the vacancies that are so crucial to the justice system in this country.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I applaud the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE), and I certainly applaud the ranking member, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), for their wisdom and vision on this legislation.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her generous comments and for her help on this.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3528, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, on that, I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5, rule I, and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1445

NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 1998

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2691) to reauthorize and improve the operations of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2691

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Reauthorization Act of 1998''.

SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATIONS OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACTIVITIES.—Section 30104 of title 49, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 30104. Authorization of appropriations

''There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary $81,200,000 for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to carry out this part in each fiscal year beginning in fiscal year 1999 and ending in fiscal year 2001.''.

(b) MOTOR VEHICLE INFORMATION ACTIVITIES.—Section 32102 of title 49, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 32102. Authorization of appropriations

''There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary $6,200,000 for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to carry out this part in each fiscal year beginning in fiscal year 1999 and ending in fiscal year 2001.''.

SEC. 3. RESTRICTIONS ON LOBBYING ACTIVITIES.

(a) AMENDMENT.—Subchapter I of chapter 301 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following: