

Wolf	Wu	Young (AK)
Woolsey	Wynn	Young (FL)
NAYS—9		
Baird	Costello	Kaptur
Barton	DeFazio	Miller, George
Capuano	Ford	Visclosky
NOT VOTING—28		
Bonilla	Greenwood	Owens
Campbell	Hastings (FL)	Peterson (PA)
Chenoweth-Hage	Klink	Shadegg
Collins	Largent	Slaughter
Combest	Lazio	Stupak
Danner	Maloney (CT)	Talent
Delahunt	McCollum	Waxman
Engel	McIntosh	Wise
Fossella	Meeks (NY)	
Franks (NJ)	Mica	

□ 1656

So the joint resolution was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and could not vote on rollcalls Nos. 544 through 552. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" for each of these measures.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON S. 835, ESTUARIES AND CLEAN WATERS ACT OF 2000

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 648 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 648

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (S. 835) to encourage the restoration of estuary habitat through more efficient project financing and enhanced coordination of Federal and non-Federal restoration 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 SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The gentleman from Florida (Mr. GOSS) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY), my friend, the ranking member of the Committee on Rules; pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume.

□ 1700

During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 648 provides for consideration of the conference report to accompany S. 835, the Estuaries and Clean Waters Act of 2000. The rule waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration. The rule also provides that the conference report shall be considered as read. This is a standard rule for

this type of conference report. And I believe it is totally without controversy. I strongly urge my colleagues to support it.

Before we get a chance to vote, Mr. Speaker, S. 835 is an excellent piece of environmental legislation and yet another addition to the fine environmental legacy of the 106th Congress. S. 835 encourages partnerships between Federal, State, and local interests for estuary habitat restoration. Of even greater importance is that the bill supports the development and implementation of comprehensive management plans for the National Estuary Program. This is of particular importance to me because of the Charlotte Harbor NEP, which is located in my district in southwest Florida. I worked hard with our local community to secure the NEP designation for Charlotte Harbor, and I am pleased this legislation will ensure a comprehensive management plan goes forward from the process.

Another key issue for my home State of Florida is title VI of the bill, which authorizes a pilot program to allow States to explore alternate water supply solutions to meet critical needs. We have always had water wars in Florida, but given the increase in population and the attendant demand for water, we will surely reach a crisis point unless we take immediate action now. The alternate water source provisions in this bill will help in that effort, and I want to thank my colleague and good friend, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER), for her hard work in particular on this issue.

S. 835 also includes other critical restoration efforts for areas such as Lake Pontchartrain and the Tijuana River Valley. I am extremely disappointed to note the Senate refused to accept a provision passed by the House that would have established an EPA grant program to improve water quality in the Florida Keys. I am not aware of any substantive problem on this issue, and I remain hopeful we can adopt this program perhaps through another legislative vehicle.

Even so, this bill is a remarkable piece of legislation, and I commend the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) and his Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for their hard work in the area and the successful result. In short, Mr. Speaker, this is a good rule, it is a good bill, and I encourage my colleagues to support both. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, my dear friend from Florida (Mr. GOSS), for yielding me the customary time; and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule for the bipartisan conference report. America's estuaries are in trouble. According to the national water quality inventory, 44 percent of our estuaries are not meeting their designated uses, whether they are fishing, swimming, or supporting aquatic life.

This bill attempts to do something about that by authorizing \$275 million over the next 5 years to help the Corps of Engineers restore estuary habitats.

These funds will be available, Mr. Speaker, for projects to improve degraded estuaries and estuary habitats and get them to the point that they are self-sufficient ecosystems.

Mr. Speaker, estuaries are areas where the current of a river meets the tide of the sea; and because such a wide variety of life thrives there, they are the beginning of the food chain. Estuaries provide the nursing grounds for fisheries, support numerous endangered and threatened species, and host almost half of the migratory birds in the United States.

But, Mr. Speaker, estuaries are very fragile and are suffering from increasing human and environmental pressures. In response to those pressures, this bill includes a number of individual bills that passed the House overwhelmingly. The conference report passed the Senate by unanimous consent and is supported by State and local governments and the business community and the entire environmental community. I urge my colleagues to support this rule and this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY).

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for yielding me this time, the honorable dean of the Massachusetts delegation; and I wish to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their support of this rule that makes in order this very important piece of legislation, the Estuary Habitat Restoration Improvement Act.

For those of my colleagues who are familiar with my State of Rhode Island, we are practically one big estuary. The Narragansett Bay runs right through my State. It is a very important part of our whole economy; and so, therefore, this bill represents an important step forward for our State and also for our Nation in preserving these fragile estuaries.

My State, as my colleagues know, has had a long history of trying to work to preserve its Narragansett Bay. It goes to the importance of fishing in our State, sailing, swimming, and our number one industry, the tourism economy. Of course this has a major impact on our tourism economy. So for all of these reasons, this Habitat and Estuary Restoration Act is very important for our State's economy.

It is not only the case in Rhode Island but it is also the case nationally that our waters have not always been treated with the respect and care that they deserve. Estuaries are very valuable ecosystems in our overall environment. They nourish a wide variety of animal and plant life, as the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY) pointed out. They also serve to help filter pollution that comes in in the

form of so much runoff from farms, to oil spills, to wastewater overflow. Estuaries help in that very important part of preserving this environment by acting as a buffer.

Recently, I read an article in our own newspaper, the Providence Journal, where Curt Spalding, our executive director of Save the Bay in Rhode Island, said that we in Rhode Island have lost over half of our salt marshes in our State. Over 1,000 acres of eelgrass, for example, in our State, that we once possessed, only about 1/100th of that still remains, depriving countless marine life from its ability to find a source of primary food. And he writes that the damming of these rivers and streams has had a totally detrimental impact on countless fish habitat as well as other marine life.

So without immediate action on legislation such as this, we might pass the point of no return, and that is why acting on this legislation right away is so very important. That is why I urge my colleagues to pass this Estuary Habitat Restoration Act, making the provision of \$275 million funding for local projects that will incent the saving of our estuaries. I urge all of my colleagues to support this very valuable and important piece of legislation to all of our coastal ways, and especially to our coastal ways in the Northeast, like my State of Rhode Island.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN).

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

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the bill, especially because it contains some very strong protection and preservation measures for the Long Island Sound.

I also wish good luck to the New York Mets, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 835, the Estuary Habitat Restoration and Improvement Act Conference Report. This measure authorizes \$1.6 billion over five years for various estuary conservation and restoration activities, including the Long Island Sound.

Preservation of the Long Island Sound is not a parochial issue, but a national one. By its inclusion as a charter member in the National Estuaries Program, the Sound has been designated as one of only 28 estuaries of national significance. Congress recognized the national importance of the Sound by creating the Long Island Sound Study (LISS), which involved Federal, state, and local entities as well as private groups. The result of this study was the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). This report has detailed the many challenges which Long Island Sound faces including floating garbage, biological contamination, and industrial waste—in short, all the things which plague our modern society.

The time to act is now. The \$200 million over 5 years which is authorized under this agreement, will be used to provide grants to implement remedial efforts to clean up the Long Island Sound as part of the CCMP.

I am proud to represent an area that borders the Long Island Sound. The Sound is one of our nation's natural treasures with important environmental, recreational, and commercial benefits. Its value as an essential habitat for one of the most diverse ecosystems of the Northeast cannot be understated. Residents and vacationers alike enjoy the Sound for swimming and boating. And the approximately \$5 billion in revenue generated by commerce relating to the Sound is vital to the region and to individuals who base their livelihood on the benefits of the Sound.

Unfortunately, the effects of millions of people on the shore and in the Sound are evidenced in the deteriorated water quality. Over the last several years, Long Island Sound has suffered from numerous forms of pollution. This pollution is now threatening the Sound's multibillion dollar a year fishing industry. The most recent and devastating example is the unexplained and widespread lobster die-off. We must supply adequate resources to address this lobster die-off and to examine possible problems in the water that could have caused this crisis. I am confident that this legislation will have a significant impact on the ongoing efforts to improve the quality of the Sound.

For the past seven years I have sponsored legislation to provide funding for clean up and pollution control programs for the Long Island Sound. I am very pleased that today we see legislation that will protect our beautiful Long Island Sound, along with other important bodies of water in our nation. I would like to thank Mr. SHUSTER and Mr. OBERSTAR for their leadership on this legislation and their commitment to preserving our national estuaries. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of my colleagues who represent areas along Long Island Sound. Therefore, I ask my colleagues to join with me today in supporting this conference report.

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

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I believe the gentleman from New York also endorsed the rule, at least I hope he did. I did not hear any controversy on the rule.

I think this is yet another accomplishment of the do-something 106th Congress. I see nothing except a good debate ahead and a strong approval.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GOSS. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I join my colleague on the rule as well as the bill.

Mr. GOSS. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, I thank my distinguished friend, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 648, I call up the conference report on the Senate bill (S. 835) to encourage the restoration of estuary habitat through more efficient project financing and en-

hanced coordination of Federal and non-Federal restoration programs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 648, the conference report is considered as having been read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of October 24, 2000, at page H10537.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER).

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

Mr. Speaker, this legislation, this conference report, includes several bills which have already passed the House. It includes the Estuaries Restoration Act authored by the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST); it includes the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Act, which was guided through the House by our late colleague, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BATEMAN); it includes the bill of the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) to reauthorize the National Estuary Program; the bill of the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO), the Long Island Sound Restoration Act; it includes the bill of the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JEFFERSON), the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Act; the Alternate Water Sources Act authored by the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER); the bill of the gentleman from New York (Mr. SWEENEY) to reauthorize the Clean Lakes Program; and the Tijuana River Valley Estuary and Beach Sewage Cleanup Act of 2000, authored by the gentleman from California (Mr. BILBRAY) and the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

This legislation meets environmental restoration needs by encouraging cooperative efforts at the local, state and Federal levels and fostering public-private partnerships to identify and address water quality problems. I would like to assure my colleagues that this legislation does not create any new regulatory authorities and requires full public participation. In particular, the estuary habitat restoration strategy to be developed under section 106 of the act must be developed following public notice and a meaningful opportunity for comment. I expect the Estuary Habitat Restoration Council established under section 105 to provide a period of at least 90 days to allow the public to comment on the proposed strategy, or any subsequent revisions. This legislation is supported by state and local government, the business community and the environmental community. Every Member of Congress should be proud to support it.

I would like to thank the sponsors of the bills included in this conference report, the

House conferees, and all the members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. I would particularly like to thank Ranking Member OBERSTAR, Subcommittee Chairman BOEHLERT and Subcommittee Ranking Member BORSKI, for their hard work on bringing this legislation to the floor. Let me also congratulate and thank the Senate conferees, in particular Chairman SMITH and Ranking Member BAUCUS of the Environment and Public Works Committee, for their cooperation.

This conference report is also the result of a lot of hard work by House and Senate staff. Special thanks go to Susan Bodine, Carrie Jelsma, Donna Campbell, Ben Grumbles, Ken Kopocis, Ryan Seiger, Pam Keller, John Rayfield, and David Jansen of the House staff and Ann Klee, John Pemberton, Suzanne Matwyshen, Ann Loomis, Jo-Ellen Darcy and Peter Washburn of the Senate staff. I urge all Members to support this comprehensive package of critically needed environmental bills.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to give my thanks to the chairman for this great work. This is, in fact, a major step forward for environmental protection and estuary enhancement. So I would like to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) and the other conferees on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for their great work on this bill.

The section of the bill that, of course, I authored, H.R. 1237, allows the authorized funding of \$35 million annually through 2005. These Federal funds can be used for implementation, in addition to the development of comprehensive management plans in estuarine areas.

Congress recognized the importance of preserving and enhancing coastal environments with the establishment of the National Estuary Program, NEP, in 1987. The NEP's purpose is to facilitate State and local governments' preparation of comprehensive management plans for threatened and impaired estuaries.

In support of this effort, the EPA is authorized to make grants to States to develop CCMPs for 30 designated estuaries across the country. My own State of New Jersey has three approved sites in the NEP, one of which is Barnegat Bay, which lies mostly in my district. The bay is a watershed which drains land for approximately 550 square miles. Over 450,000 people live in the Barnegat Bay watershed and the population doubles there in the summer.

Nonpoint source pollution, while diffuse, is cumulatively the most important issue in addressing adverse impacts on water quality and the health of living resources in the bay. The final CCMP for Barnegat Bay is complete, but without the additional funding of this program, as well as explicitly permitting NEP to use Federal funds for the implementation of the program, the Federal Government would have absolved itself of the responsibility as a partner with the States in protecting and enhancing the Nation's most endangered habitats.

Therefore, I would like to thank my colleagues, in particular the chairman, for expeditiously moving this bill.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman and the ranking member for doing such a fine job in bringing us this conference report. I would like to speak on one part of this conference report, a part that is a win-win solution for the people in San Diego, California, and all those areas which border the country of Mexico.

We have been dealing with the problem of Mexican sewage flowing into our area for many decades.

□ 1715

The gentleman from California (Mr. BILBRAY) and I introduced the legislation that has the provisions in this conference report. What we intended to do, Mr. Speaker, is to provide a comprehensive solution to the problem of Mexican sewage flowing into the United States in our waters.

We have a unique problem, the gentleman from California (Mr. BILBRAY) and I. I want to thank him for working so closely with me and for our staffs that worked so closely together. I do not think any other two Members of Congress can say that we have raw sewage flowing through our districts from another country onto our beaches and onto our riverbeds. And we, I know, jointly thank the chairman of our committee, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER); the ranking member, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR); and their staffs, especially Ken Kopocis, Ryan Sieger, and David Heinsfeld because they worked very hard through some problems that we had between us and with the Senate. But once everyone realized the magnitude of the problem and, if I may say so, the historic opportunity to provide a comprehensive solution to it, these fine staff members and our leadership fought diligently to craft legislation on which all parties could agree. And the people of southern San Diego owe a great deal to the chairman and the ranking member, and I want to thank them so much on their behalf for their support.

We will advance, through this legislation, a common sense solution to the problem of international sewage, the treatment of Mexican sewage in Mexico. Before the gentleman from California (Mr. BILBRAY) and I introduced our legislation, plans called for treating less than half of the sewage that fouls our beaches and estuaries.

It has taken bureaucracies 10 years to prepare a secondary treatment farm of the International Wastewater Treatment Plant. In that time, the sewage flows have more than doubled. Yet, the plans have persisted for a so-called solution that will really not solve the problem but will only take us back 10 years ago. This legislation seizes the momentum for solving the problem and fixes the problem now and comprehensively.

My colleague from San Diego and I have been working, are working on this problem combined for probably 35 to 40 years. When we started this, 25 million gallons a day of sewage from Mexico needed to be treated to protect our water and land. Now it has reached 55 to 75 million gallons of sewage. Our residents and particularly our children need to be protected from this public health nightmare.

Private investors have come forward with an innovative public-private partnership to treat all of the sewage and treat it in Mexico. Mexico has generated the sewage and under a treaty has the right to the treated water. So it makes the most sense not only to treat the sewage that we have now but to treat it where it is generated and can be reused by that country's agricultural and industrial interest.

This is a win for the U.S. environment. It is a win for our children's health. It is a win for international relations and a win for recycling a precious resource.

So I urge support for this comprehensive solution. It is an innovative way to approach the issue. It is a long-standing health and environmental problem. And it most certainly has its own very needed place in the Estuaries and Clean Water Act of 2000.

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

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT), the distinguished chairman of our subcommittee.

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

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a supporter of the conference report on S. 835, the Estuaries and Clean Water Act of 2000.

As my colleagues before me have stated very eloquently, the chairman and the gentleman from California (Mr. Filner) and others who will be addressing some specifics of this bill, it is good legislation; and it deserves to be passed.

I am particularly pleased with the final package because it includes a reauthorization and an expansion of the Long Island Sound Program. I want to give particular praise to my colleagues, the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO) and the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON). They and their colleagues have worked tenaciously on this legislation.

Let me tell my colleagues, in my capacity as chairman of the subcommittee, I was summoned to the office of the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO) several months ago; and thus began a partnership with the gentleman and the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON). We worked literally hundreds of hours to put together this package.

I want to praise Governor Rowland of Connecticut and Governor Pataki of my home State of New York. They

have been real leaders. This just does not happen overnight. This required a lot of hard work on the part of a lot of people with vision. Let me say that the vision of the Lazio-Johnson team has been something very special.

There is a lot more in this bill that is very good, and I will let my colleagues address that. But let me say that this is probably the last major bill of the Shuster chairmanship of the Committee on Transportation. And let me say, as someone who has been in this institution for many years as a staff member and as a Member of Congress in my own right, that the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman SHUSTER) has proven by performance that he has been the most effective chairman this Congress has seen in many, many years.

He has assembled a very able, very capable, very professional team; and he has provided leadership for that team. And he has worked on a bipartisan basis. Every member of this committee, which is the largest committee in the history of the Congress, feels that they are part of the historic legislation, TEA-21, AIR-21; and we have laid the foundation for Water-21.

This does not just happen by accident. We have to have a leader. And the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman SHUSTER) has provided that leadership. We have to have a very capable staff, and he has exercised the sound judgment to assemble a team second to none.

So as we look back on these 6 years, and incidentally, I think the idea of term limiting chairmen is crazy. I think the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) had it right when he said it is a dumbing down of Congress. If we have good people in positions of major responsibility, we ought to keep them there. I might add, I am going to be a big beneficiary of term limits. But that is another story for another day.

But let me say in conclusion, this is a good bill. It came from a very productive committee that has had very able leadership. And I, for one, want to salute our very distinguished chairman as he brings this conference report to the floor for our consideration.

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

Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and many other Members in this body. He has spent hours and hours learning about the issues in other parts of the country and my part of the world. In San Diego, California, I know how much time he has spent. He has asked his staff to make sure they understand the problem. He had legitimate questions and concerns, but he ended up fighting with us and for us to achieve this goal. And I thank him from the bottom of my heart.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 7 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), the distinguished ranking Democratic member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

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

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time, and I appreciate the kind words of the gentleman.

But, Mr. Speaker, no one has been more persistent or vigorous in pursuit of a goal than has the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER). He has doggedly pursued with the determination and with copious documentation the goal that we achieve today on this floor, and I compliment the gentleman on his extremely able representation of the people of his district. And I appreciate the partnership that has resulted also with the gentleman from California (Mr. BILBRAY) in equally pursuing. Practically the first issue that he discussed with me after his swearing into the Congress a few years ago was this very issue, and I have not forgotten.

I concur in the remarks of the able chairman of the Subcommittee on Water Resources. Our distinguished full committee chairman, on many occasions I have referred to his extraordinary leadership and record of accomplishment. But I am just a little puzzled. This should not be the last bill that the chairman brings to the House floor. We are hopeful that there will be another that will be a fitting cap to the chairman's distinguished career in the House and we finally act on the Water Resources Development Act.

I also want to pay deserved tribute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BORSKI) who has devoted an enormous amount of time to this legislation, of course to the gentleman from New York (Chairman BOEHLERT) for his pursuit of environmental protection on our committee. I appreciate the partnership that we have had and the leadership that he has given, Mr. Speaker.

The primary focus of this legislation is restoration of estuaries. In the Nation's ocean coastal regions, the estuary is the great meeting place of salt and fresh water, the great meeting place where new forms of life are created.

All through the world, there are about a handful of truly extraordinary great resources, estuaries. The Chesapeake Bay is one of those. There are others that we address today in this legislation. And the reason that we focus our attention on this legislation is that whatever drains into the estuary from the land, wherever the ocean meets that fresh water, either we are doing good for the generation of new species or the maintenance of existing species or we are doing irreparable harm.

The legislation that we act on today moves us in the direction of doing right by the fish and the wildlife in these vital transition areas between fresh and salt water.

In the most recent national water quality inventory, States reported that 44 percent of the Nation's assessed es-

tuaries do not meet their designated use, fishing, swimming, supporting aquatic life.

In the Great Lakes, it is even more troubling; a matter that I spent a great deal of time on over my service in the Congress as a Member and previously as a member of the staff. The data on the Great Lakes are troubling. Ninety-six percent of the assessed shoreline miles of the Great Lakes do not meet one or more designated uses.

As expressed in one of the most important indicators of quality of water, fish consumption advisors, if we live anywhere in America, we have five parts per billion PCBs in our body. If we live within 25 miles of one of the Great Lakes and eat fish once a week, we have up to 440 parts per billion PCBs in our body.

We need to clean those estuaries. We need to remove the sediment on the bottom. We need to take those permanent toxins out of the bottom where they have been deposited over decades and remove them so that we can restore the health of the fishery and the health of the people who depend upon that beneficiary.

This bill does not address that issue, nor do I raise an issue about that. I just make the point that there is much more work for us to be done.

The \$275 million over the next 5 years authorized under this bill will enable the Secretary of the Army and the Corps of Engineers to restore estuarine habitat. The cost will be shared with local sponsors to improve degraded estuaries and estuarine habitat, the goal of building a self-sustaining system integrated into the landscape surrounding the estuaries.

One important aspect of this program is the participation of nonprofit entities as local sponsors. The conference report allows nongovernmental organizations to act as local sponsors of estuary restoration projects after consultation and coordination with the appropriate State and local officials. Unlike the House-passed version of the bill, the conference report does not require the approval of the governor of a State before a nongovernmental organization can act as the non-Federal cosponsor.

I want to express to the chairman my great appreciation for his cooperation in working this matter out. It was very important to me and to the regions that I represent of Minnesota and those throughout the Great Lakes to have come to this accommodation, and I appreciate the chairman's assistance.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST).

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, as previous speakers have said, I would like to also add my comments and praise and respect to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman SHUSTER) of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

It has been my experience in dealing with the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman SHUSTER) that we have had for a number of years an honorable, professional relationship. The chairman has helped with this package of restoration bills to restore a number of problems throughout this Nation, and I want to thank him for that.

□ 1730

We are here to pass the conference report that will do a great deal as far as restoring America's estuaries and other problems throughout our coastal regions and the Great Lakes of the United States. We are here because our approach to these problems has not been the best in the past. Our approach to deal with the Nation's estuaries and the Great Lakes have been the responsibility of, for example, the Corps of Engineers, Fish and Wildlife, Department of Agriculture, EPA, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and the list goes on and on; and each of those Federal entities has been responsible for a certain piece of the whole.

Now, they have also been responsible for things like dredging, which degrade estuaries; bulldozing; the building of dams; draining; paving; sewage discharge. The list goes on there as well.

Each of those areas, draining, bulldozing, sewage discharge, dredging, damming, air pollution, all of those things has a degrading, fragmenting effect on our estuaries. And each of the Federal agencies has approached each of those entities as something distinct and separate.

What this legislation does is it brings all of those Federal agencies and their appropriate counterparts on the State level, the local level, and the private sector and it sees the estuaries as a whole. The entire ecosystem not only will be researched and studied, but will be restored. The grasses will be replanted. The oysters, instead of oyster bars, will have oyster reefs. The migrating songbirds will have a place to rest on the way to South America. The migrating Canada geese or the snowgeese or the shad or any other fish species that we can think of will come back because the ecosystem, instead of being fragmented, will begin to become whole.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "aye" on the conference report. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER), chairman of the committee, once again for his help with this legislation.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN), my good friend.

Mrs. THURMAN. Mr. Speaker, the love fest that is going on around here obviously makes us all feel very good about what this committee has accomplished over the last couple of years in transportation and in water issues, and so I give my congratulations to all of my colleagues for the work that they

have done. I do not serve on the committee, so I am expressing great gratitude to all members who have worked over the last several years with me.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, will the gentlewoman yield?

Mrs. THURMAN. I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, she may not serve on this committee, but she has been so persistent in pursuit of the issues that she and the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER) have both coordinated on, that this is a better bill because of the gentlewoman's persistence.

Mrs. THURMAN. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman for those kind words.

I have to say that I am very excited about the Alternative Water Sources Act being put into this conference report. For 20 years in various capacities, whether on the city council or in the State Senate, I have worked on alternative water sources because of some particular problems in the State of Florida. Those problems sometimes are issues where in counties that I live and represent, we have an abundance of water and to the south of me, there is not as much water. So there is always this opportunity or problem going on of trying to come in and pipe water down to other areas.

So what we have tried to really do in this piece of legislation is to work with the technology that is available across this country for providing alternative water sources, because we are finding that States and other places are actually having to hunt for this water for drinking and agriculture and industrial and commercial uses.

What the bill represents is the beginning of a long-term, sustained effort to meet our future water needs. Over the years, Congress has adopted many water programs; some deal with quality and others deal with quantity. But the Alternative Water Sources Act will help States meet ever-expanding demands for water. This bill establishes a 3-year, \$75 million program to fund water projects that conserve, reclaim, and reuse precious water resources in an environmentally sustainable manner.

As a result of innovative technology, such as deep-well infusion, new methods of reusing and enhancing area water supplies can be applied today. And if we use or improve this technology in one part of the country, it will help other parts of the country because it will reduce pressure to move water from one region to another.

A quote from the Christian Science Monitor on April 14 said, "Whether it is desalinization, capturing rainwater, water-saving farming methods, or water pricing structures that impel greater conservation, humanity should use every tool available to safeguard this most basic natural resource."

Alternative water projects provide an important tool to safeguard this to safeguard these resources. And I realize

that water reuse alone will not solve coming water problems. But I do believe that a real national water policy, that actually the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and I talked about on this floor, must include improved conservation programs. I think this is a great first step.

Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to the road that we travel next year in the 107th Congress. The only thing that I will miss is the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER), who has been steadfast, as always with tenacity, in helping us move this legislation along and her friendship, and her confidence in this piece of legislation is deeply appreciated. I will miss the gentlewoman, and I know she will be with us working right alongside of us anyway.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER).

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in strong support of the conference report on S. 835, the Estuaries and Clean Waters Act of 2000. This bill is a combination of eight important water-related pieces of legislation, and it does represent the true bipartisanship of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

I do also want to add my commendations to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman SHUSTER) to those of my colleagues for his tireless efforts on this important legislation and his effectiveness as chairman, because it has been a real pleasure and an honor for me to serve on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and as a subcommittee chairman under his leadership for the past 6 years.

I would also like to thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT), the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST), and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BORSKI) for their work on this important piece of legislation and all of their assistance that they provided in getting us to this point.

Mr. Speaker, I have worked on title VI of this bill, the Alternative Water Sources Act, with my colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN), and she has worked tirelessly on this, and she is a true friend. This measure will create a pilot program providing Federal matching funds under the Clean Water Act to assist eligible States with the development of alternative water sources projects to meet the projected water supply demand for urban development, industrial, agricultural, and environmental needs.

Many will say our existing water supply is sufficient, but our children could have an uncertain future when they turn on the faucet. There are many States, including Florida and New York, where the increase in population growth has put a significant strain on their water supply. That is why we need to encourage States to be forward

thinking when it comes to water supply and alternative sources. A new Federal partnership is needed to avoid a crisis, a partnership that will ensure our water supply will keep pace with population growth and protect this natural resource.

So, I again want to thank the leadership of this committee for all of their hard work on this, and I encourage my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN).

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

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, let me start by commending the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), chairman and the ranking member of the committee. I have to say, while I have not always agreed with the chairman and the ranking member, I have the greatest respect for them and I think they have been the most effective team in the time that I have spent in the House. And quite frankly, they have been a model for how this House ought to operate, and so I commend both of them, particularly the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman SHUSTER), as well as the chairman and ranking member of the subcommittee.

I have had the opportunity to work with them on a number of pieces of legislation, even though I do not sit on the committee; and both the full and subcommittee chair and ranking members have always been helpful. If a Member has a good idea, they are willing to listen and work with them.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the conference report on S. 835, the Estuaries and Clean Water Act. I want to commend our colleague, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCREST), for his work on this, and in particular on the National Estuary Act of which he is an original sponsor and I am one of the cosponsors. This bill is tremendously important to restore all of our national estuaries, including Galveston Bay, which borders my district in Texas.

Galveston Bay produces two-thirds of Texas' oyster harvest, one-third of Texas' bay shrimp catch, and one-quarter of Texas' blue crab catch. Galveston Bay's watershed is heavily industrialized and densely populated. Since the 1950s, 30,000 acres of wetlands have been lost in this estuary. Wastewater discharges into Galveston Bay account for half of Texas' total wastewater discharges every year. Like many of America's beloved bays and estuaries, the productivity of Galveston Bay has declined. Local community response, however, which is necessary, is facilitated by this act.

The report authorizes \$275 million over 5 years in a matching grant for lo-

cally developed estuary habitat restoration projects. The goal of this money is the restoration of a million acres of estuary over the next 10 years. Only with our help will estuaries continue producing food, water quality, employment, and recreation benefits along America's coastlines.

I am also pleased that the conference report authorizes an additional \$175 million for the National Estuary Program. These funds will be used to develop and implement comprehensive programs in estuaries of national significance, including Galveston Bay.

As proof of the ability of local communities and organizations to take on estuary restoration, I would like to share this about Galveston Bay. The Galveston Bay Foundation was created under the National Estuary Program, and they have undertaken the ambitious program of restoring 24,000 of the 30,000 estuary acres lost, habitat acres lost in Galveston Bay. Assisted by the National Estuary Program, the foundation also monitors water quality by training volunteers in distributing monitoring equipment.

In addition, I would add that the Galveston Bay Foundation has been the catalyst for developing an environmentally sensitive approach to the deepening and widening of the Houston ship channel, which was authorized under WRDA 1996 bill. So I think from Galveston Bay, and this is true with the other bays around the Nation, the Galveston Bay Foundation has proved that the National Estuary Program works and that the National Estuary Act can work as well.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the chairman, ranking member, and the subcommittee chairman and ranking member for having the foresight to move this bill; the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCREST) for authoring it; and I hope the other body will pass it and the President will sign it.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New Orleans, Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Mr. VITTER. Mr. Speaker, I too rise in strong support of this conference report on the Estuaries and Clean Water Act of 2000. I speak with personal knowledge of the importance of this effort, because of Lake Pontchartrain, a lake that lies largely within my congressional district. It is vital to the health of the entire region. It is vital to the quality of life, to the economic health of the region, and so too with the other estuaries we address in this bill.

It is not a case of people versus the environment somehow. It is people and the environment, hand in hand. Lake Pontchartrain is a good example; 5,000 square miles in the Pontchartrain Basin that encompasses 16 parishes in Louisiana as well as four counties in Mississippi, one of the largest estuaries in the United States. In the middle of it, Lake Pontchartrain, 630 square miles, the second largest lake in the

United States after the Great Lakes. The population center, of course, for Louisiana, being surrounded by 1.5 million residents.

But we have had problems in that estuary system over the last 60 years. Wetlands loss, human activities, natural forces have all had adverse impact on the basin. Wetlands around the basin have been drained, dredged, and filled and channeled for oil and gas development. Storm water discharges, inadequate wastewater treatment, agricultural activities, all of these activities have significantly degraded water quality.

Loss of wetlands due to subsidence, salt water intrusion, and hurricanes have also harmed the basin wildlife population so that 13 species are actually on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's threatened or endangered list. And today, swimming is still not allowed on the south shore due to high levels of pollution.

□ 1745

As a result of this, I introduced last September the Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Act, and that is included in this conference report. It will create a coordinated, technically sound program that will truly bring restoration of the basin to the next level.

I want to thank everyone who was so helpful in passing this legislation in the conference report, certainly including the chairman, the ranking member of the full committee and the subcommittee and the subcommittee staff.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN), a great member of our committee and a great advocate for the people of Florida.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor to express my strong support for the conference report. This bill is important to the citizens of the State of Florida and it contains provisions that would improve quality of life and contribute to the cleanup of Lake Apopka, Florida's second largest but most polluted lake.

For months I have worked with Senator BOB GRAHAM and the ranking member, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), along with Members of the local community, such as Commissioner Bob Freeman of Orlando and Friends of Lake Apopka seeking to get Federal help in tackling this problem of Lake Apopka.

Before the Second World War, Lake Apopka was a nationally known bass fishing and vacation spot. This 31,000 acre water body supported over two dozen fish camps as well as numerous hotels, restaurants and other businesses. This authorization is a well-deserved effort that includes Lake Apopka in a priority demonstration program under Clean Lakes administration by the EPA.

Regarding alternate water, I would like to congratulate also the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN) and the conferees for their determination in getting a new grant program

within EPA for alternate water sources.

I was proud to cosponsor this bill when it was introduced in the House, and I am very delighted it is included in this conference report. We must address the critical water resource needs of our expanding communities, especially in my home State, which so happens to be the fourth largest State and growing rapidly.

Mr. Speaker, the Water Infrastructure Network released a comprehensive report at the Conference of Mayors' press conference recently here at the Capitol on the crisis facing the Nation's waste water and drinking water systems. The report concluded that there is an "increasing gap between the Nation's water infrastructure needs and the Federal Government's financial commitment to safe and clean water."

This bill is a good start, and I want to commend the parties involved.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON).

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding me time, and I want to commend the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman SHUSTER) for his outstanding leadership of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure in these 6 years of his chairmanship and thank him and the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT) for their thorough and careful negotiating of this bill with the Senate and my colleague, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST), who was so instrumental in writing this estuary bill which will restore 1 million acres of estuary habitat over the next 10 years through a voluntary incentive-based program. I believe it is going to serve the Nation admirably and enable us to do something we have long needed to do, which is better protect our estuaries.

In this bill is the Long Island Sound bill that the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO), with Republican and Democrat backing from New York, and I, with the same broad backing from Connecticut, spearheaded. It will provide Connecticut and New York with the help they need to restore the Long Island Sound to full health so that all of our constituents can enjoy its beaches, its seafood and the products that come through its ports.

As important, this bill's provisions in regard to the Long Island Sound provide Connecticut and New York with the flexibility that they need to develop innovative approaches to cleaning the Sound, while reducing costs for small communities and impoverished cities.

Indeed, we cannot do things in the future in exactly the same way we have done them in the past. We must achieve the same goals, but we must do it in a way that does not destroy the taxpaying base of our small rural com-

munities with their rather set tax capability or harm our impoverished cities.

So this bill provides flexibility to allow States like Connecticut and New York to develop the kind of innovative and cost-effective approaches using the most modern technologies to address the problems of Long Island Sound and restore it to its health.

I thank the chairman for his leadership and his support.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. HORN).

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, the Estuary Restoration Act is good for the Nation and thus good for California. I commend the leadership of the House and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for their hard work to bring this conference report before us.

This act demonstrates congressional commitment to restoring one million acres of estuaries over the next decade, while promoting a constructive partnership among all levels of government and the private sector.

This conference report directs the Secretary of the Army to give priority consideration to the Los Cerritos wetlands, located in the district that I represent. Restoration of these wetlands will help retain natural habitat in Los Angeles County and improve the quality of life for residents throughout the area. Los Angeles County has lost more than 93 percent of its coastal wetlands. Los Cerritos represents one of only three sizable areas remaining that could be restored and could include nearly 400 acres when completed.

The Estuary Restoration Act provides critical help to our Nation's environment, and I strongly urge support for this vital legislation.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. BILBRAY).

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the chairman for not only this bill, for including my bill into this package, but also all of the work that he has done to help us with the Tijuana sewage problem in San Diego Imperial Beach area. I want to thank the ranking member for his sensitivity to it. I know we have been discussing this a long time.

This bill that the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and I have been working on that has been included in this package is actually one that goes back to a recognition that 20 years ago the Federal Government of the United States decided that the Tijuana estuarine area was so important environmentally that 50 percent of the City of Imperial Beach, my hometown, had to be taken by condemnation to be able to preserve it for future generations.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that from the month that that designation of estuarine preserve was given by the

Federal Government, the estuary has been polluted by foreign sources of sewage. I want to commend the chairman and the ranking member, because in this bill, it is the first comprehensive, long-term strategy to address that pollution problem that has existed for all too long.

I think it recognizes the fact that if the Federal Government thinks that the Tijuana estuary is so important to preserve by taking it in possession, it is also important enough to make sure it is not polluted and destroyed by a foreign government's adverse activity through the introduction of sewage. This bill will finally have that comprehensive approach and do it in a way that is not only not piecemeal, but actually binational as we work into it.

I think again, as we have said before, the fact is that this bill will include a prototype that I would ask my colleagues to look at, that will not only work in Imperial Beach and San Diego and the Tijuana estuary, but I think will be the vanguard of environmental strategies around the world, and that is paying for a service done, rather than a project built; paying for the environment to be cleaned up, not for a plan or a project that hopefully will clean up the problem.

This is not the end, but it is definitely the beginning of the end of addressing a problem that some of us have worked on for over 20 years and spent many years working on.

I want to thank everyone involved, and the estuary and the people that live around the estuary will thank you for this for years to come.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New York (Mr. SWEENEY).

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege and the pleasure of serving on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for the past 2 years. The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman SHUSTER) and the ranking member, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), have disproven an old thought or an old perception that you cannot have it both ways, you cannot rebuild America's infrastructure and at the same time improve the environmental conditions here, and this is one of the best examples of that. I want to thank them for all of their hard work.

Earlier this year, this House passed the Clean Lakes Act by an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 420 to 5. I introduced the Clean Lakes bill because I have a strong belief that we can make a difference in preserving the environment for future generations. I am pleased to see the Clean Lakes bill included as amendment to S. 835, and I am proud of the hard work that went into the conference report, and strongly support its passage today.

This single bill encompasses eight excellent programs that will advance clean water initiatives across the country and will benefit the generations to

come by cleaning up and restoring many of our estuaries, sounds, beaches, bays, basins, keys and lakes.

I just want to take a moment to focus specifically on the Clean Lakes Program. Where I am from, which includes the Catskill and Adirondack mountain ranges in upstate New York, the very lives of our lakes are threatened. This bill forwards a number of initiatives that will allow us and give us the resources to fight the fight that we need to, to ensure that their pristine nature and the way of life that many of my constituents know today can be preserved.

Again I want to thank both the chairman and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) for their terrific work.

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

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, again I want to thank the chairman and his staff, particularly Carrie Jelsma, was very helpful to us and worked so hard; the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and his staff, they worked overtime to help the people I know in my area; and I am sure throughout the Nation. I want to thank the staff of the gentleman from California (Mr. BILBRAY), Dave Schroeder, and my own staff member, Mary Niez, who worked tirelessly on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, thanks from many parts of the Nation.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, while we are hopeful that we might have legislation to bring to this floor in the waning days of the Congress, that may well not be the case, so this could well be the last legislation that we will have before the body during my stewardship over the past 6 years as chairman of Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, the largest committee of the Congress, 75 members, as well as the most productive.

I want to thank all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their tremendous support in working to pass as much legislation as we have indeed passed to build America. The extraordinary bipartisanship of our committee is the reason why we were able to be so productive.

My dear friend, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), and I have worked shoulder to shoulder with all the members on both sides of the aisle. Over these past 6 years, this committee has passed through this House 265 bills, of which 109 pieces of legislation have been signed into law, an unparalleled record. Indeed, not only have there been a large number of bills come through our committee, but, as a result of the bipartisan effort in the committee and in this House, historic legislation as well.

We have put finally, after many years of battle, trust back into the transportation trust funds, in TEA-21,

a \$218 billion transportation to rebuild America, the largest transportation bill in the history not only of the United States but of the world, and yet no tax increase, because we simply unlocked the trust fund so the money the American people pay into that trust fund for transportation could be used.

Likewise, with AIR-21, a \$40 billion bill to not only invest in building our aviation system, but to reform it as well. And, goodness knows, we need that investment and that reform in our aviation system. AIR-21 takes effect October 1, so it has just been in effect for a few weeks now. But in the months and years ahead, I am sure the American people will see the positive impact of that legislation.

We passed major environmental legislation to clean up our lakes and our waters, our water and sewer systems. We passed economic development legislation to create jobs and stimulate the economy. The committee indeed is the building committee of the Congress, and that is what that committee has been about for the past 6 years, on a totally bipartisan basis.

□ 1800

Mr. Speaker, I insert for the RECORD a report entitled "Building a Transportation and Infrastructure Legacy, Accomplishments of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure in the 104th, 105th, and 106th Congresses."

BUILDING A TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE LEGACY, ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE, 104TH, 105TH, 106TH CONGRESSES

INTRODUCTION

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has been a Committee of accomplishment. During the past six years, under the bipartisan leadership of Chairman Bud Shuster (R-PA) and Ranking Members Norm Mineta (D-CA) and James Oberstar (D-MN), the Committee has been a driving force in renewing America's commitment to building assets and promoting safety in all modes of transportation and key aspects of environmental protection. The T&I Committee succeeded in restoring integrity to the Highway and Aviation Trust Funds after nearly three decades of fiscal abuse, enabling us to make much-needed improvements to our roads, bridges, transit systems, airports, and air traffic control system in a fiscally responsible manner and without increasing taxes. In the spirit of Teddy Roosevelt's leadership on the Panama Canal and Dwight Eisenhower's on the Interstate Highway System, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has renewed the country's commitment to our national transportation network as the cornerstone of a strong economy. It is a legacy that will last well into the 21st Century.

Whether it be a renewed investment in highways and transit systems contained in the "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century" ("TEA 21"), a commitment to modernization and expanding our aviation system found in the "Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century" ("AIR 21"), a reform package to help the financially troubled national passenger railroad Amtrak achieve solvency, changes to our international ocean shipping regulations to en-

courage competition and increase U.S. exports, or assistance for water and wastewater infrastructure and hazardous waste cleanup, the T&I Committee has worked in a bipartisan fashion to address the needs of America's communities.

In addition, the Committee has worked hard to make sure that—both through proper investment and appropriate federal oversight—the public safety is protected in all modes of transportation. Through its six subcommittees—Aviation; Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation; Economic Development, Public Buildings, Hazardous Materials, and Pipeline Safety; Ground Transportation; Water Resources and Environment; and Oversight, Investigations and Emergency Management—significant time was devoted to safety oversight of aviation, railroads, motor carrier and truck safety, pipelines, commercial vessel and recreational boating safety, and public buildings, including increased federal security in the wake of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

An equally important Committee responsibility is that of protecting our environment. The Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment has led the effort to increase assistance for community water infrastructure systems and to protect and restore degraded or threatened waters and watersheds. The results have been landmark laws, such as Water Resource Development Acts, other bipartisan, broadly supported bills as well as probing oversight hearings that have ushered in significant administrative reforms for controversial Superfund and Clean Water programs. The Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee also developed legislation to help the Coast Guard improve the enforcement of Federal laws protecting the marine environment, including the reduction of solid waste pollution and oil spills from vessels. The Subcommittee also conducted extensive oversight hearings on marine environmental protection.

During the six years that the T&I Committee was led by Chairman Shuster, it grew from a 61-Member panel to a 75-Member panel—the largest in the history of Congress. To carry out its broad responsibilities, the Committee held 314 hearings, passed 265 bills through the House, of which 109 have been enacted into law to date.

RESTORING TRUST TO THE TRANSPORTATION TRUST FUNDS

When the Highway Trust Fund was established in 1956, the principle was simple: motorists would pay a tax that would be put into a Trust Fund dedicated to improving the nation's roadways. In 1970, the same framework was applied to the establishment of the Aviation Trust Fund. Unfortunately, the principle was compromised. For three decades, more money was collected than was actually spent on road improvements. Each year, the unified budget "borrowed" money from the trust fund to offset other federal spending. In 1995, the Highway, Aviation and two smaller water infrastructure trust funds had a combined balance of about \$30 billion that, under the Administration's proposal, was expected to balloon to \$77 billion by 2002.

Under Chairman Shuster's leadership, the T&I Committee launched a successful campaign that released billions of dollars in highway, transit and aviation funds and established permanent budget reforms that restored integrity to the Highway and Aviation Trust Funds and provided a precedent for unlocking the water trust funds.

Beginning with the introduction of H.R. 842, the "Truth in Budgeting Act" in the 104th Congress, which had 224 cosponsors and passed the House by an overwhelming vote of 284-143, and a subsequent amendment to the

FY 1998 Budget Resolution that again demonstrated the strong support for unlocking the trust funds, the foundation was paved for passage of critical budget reforms in the 105th Congress with the enactment of TEA 21 (Public Law 105-178). This landmark legislation reauthorized the nation's highway and transit programs and changed the budget treatment of the Highway Trust Fund, thereby permanently protecting it from budgetary abuse.

In the 106th Congress, the Committee focused its effort on unlocking the Aviation Trust Fund. Again, budget reforms were instituted as part of the AIR 21 (Public Law 106-181), that are just now resulting in significant increases in funding for much-needed airport expansion and air traffic control system modernization.

INVESTING IN AMERICA AND OUR COMMUNITIES

One of the oldest responsibilities of the federal government is the establishment and maintenance of our transportation and infrastructure system. Beginning with ocean ports and waterways, then later roads, railways, and airports, the government made the necessary investments and the nation prospered. In today's increasingly global marketplace, the need for an efficient transportation network is more important than ever before. Moreover, assuring modern environmental and water infrastructure is both a quality of life issue and, for many communities, an economic necessity.

The T&I Committee's flagship achievement was the 1998 enactment of TEA 21, which reauthorized the nation's highway, transit, motor carrier, and highway safety programs for fiscal years 1998-2003. This historic legislation created, for the first time, a statutory link between highway and transit investment and the fuel excise taxes paid by motorists and deposited into the Highway Trust Fund.

TEA 21 puts the financial resources of the Highway Trust Fund to work rebuilding and improving the nation's infrastructure, which had suffered from anemic under-funding during the past several decades. The overall authorized levels of \$218 billion represents a 43 percent increase in funding for roads, bridges, and transit systems nationwide. These increases were accomplished without increasing taxes by simply unlocking the money already being collected from system users. Moreover, the budget reforms mean that, if Trust Fund receipts increase in the future, the amount available to maintain and improve our roads and transit systems will increase. It also included a greatly expanded, \$3.5 billion rail infrastructure revolving loan program to help communities address serious transportation choke points at major port, transloading facilities, passenger terminals and other intermodal facilities.

TEA 21 directly addressed equity concerns of "donor" states by ensuring a fair return on each state's Highway Trust Fund contributions. On an average annual basis, each state will receive more in real dollars than it did in ISTEA. TEA 21's predecessor, and each state will receive a "Minimum Guarantee" of 90.5 percent return on what its motorists contributed. The minimum guarantee replaces the myriad equity programs that existed under ISTEA. TEA 21 also eliminated the donor state "penalty" that counted allocations of discretionary grants against the state's return.

In response to a growing concern over our aviation system's ability to handle the increased demand for air travel since deregulation of the airline industry, the Aviation Subcommittee sponsored and the House passed H.R. 2276, "The Aviation Revitalization Act," to help the Federal Aviation Ad-

ministration address some of the barriers to system improvements. These include changes to cumbersome personnel rules so the agency can move its most experienced air traffic controllers to areas of greatest needs and a simplification of procurement requirements in order to more quickly acquire advanced technology. The most significant of these reforms were ultimately enacted in the DOT appropriations bill.

In H.R. 3539, the "Federal Aviation Authorization Act" (Public Law 104-264), the Committee went further, increasing funding to enable FAA to hire and train additional maintenance and flight inspectors to achieve a higher level of safety for the flying public. It was in this legislation that Congress established the National Civil Aviation Review Commission to make recommendations on long-term actions to address increased demand.

In 1997, the National Civil Aviation Review Commission's report said that, "Without prompt action, the United States' aviation system is headed toward gridlock shortly after the turn of the century. If this gridlock is allowed to happen, it will result in a deterioration of aviation safety, harm the efficiency and growth of our domestic economy, and hurt our position in the global marketplace. Lives may be endangered; the profitability and strength of the aviation sector could disappear; and jobs and business opportunities far beyond aviation could be foregone."

In response to these findings and ever-growing frustration on the part of passengers across the country, the Committee successfully passed the AIR 21. Significant increases in funding for air traffic control modernization and airport expansion are just now being realized as a result of this landmark legislation. While the effects will not be immediate, FAA will now have the resources to modernize the air traffic control system and expand airport capacity, thereby reducing chronic delays, which have crippled the aviation system and frustrated passengers.

The T&I Committee continued to champion the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), both founded in 1965 to address the chronic poverty in economically distressed regions of the country. Through highway and safe drinking water investments, as well as investments in technical and vocational schools and health care facilities, the Appalachian region has seen its poverty rates cut in half and its employment rate and number of high school graduates double. It is a dramatic example of how investment in roads and other public infrastructure can spur economic growth and reduce poverty. The 105th Congress reauthorized these programs (Public Law 105-393), providing \$1.8 billion over 5 years to EDA and \$207 million for three years to ARC. In the case of EDA, it was the first time in seventeen years that the agency's mission was formally reauthorized, so agency reforms were also instituted to better direct its activities to the most distressed communities.

The T&I Committee also maintains jurisdiction over the nation's water infrastructure, including ports, inland waterways, drinking and wastewater infrastructure, and dams and other water management infrastructure developed by the Army Corps of Engineers. The Committee has sought to provide significant increases in funding for this infrastructure to help communities meet their ever-growing needs.

The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1996 (Public Law 104-303), authorizing \$5.4 billion in various Corps of Engineers projects and programs, successfully returned Congress and the nation to the two-year cycle for enacting water projects and

policy changes. On a bipartisan basis, the Committee authorized 44 major projects for navigation, flood control, shore protection, environmental restoration, hydropower production, water supply, and recreation, as well as scores of other projects and project modifications. WRDA of 1999 (Public Law 106-53), authorizing \$6.1 billion in various Corps projects and programs, signified yet another bipartisan success in meeting the nation's water resource needs on a timely basis. Among the highlights: 45 major project authorizations, including a controversial flood control project for the American River in California, a new program for flood control and ecosystem restoration, and modified or additional authorities for critical projects and regional programs for environmental restoration and related infrastructure. WRDA 2000 authorized the Army Corps of Engineers to begin an historic 20-year project to restore the natural water flow in the Florida Everglades as well as authorizing \$5.1 billion in flood control, navigation improvements, environmental protection and restoration, and other national water infrastructure projects. The House passed WRDA 2000 on October 19, 2000, by a vote of 394-14.

In addition, the Committee has also approved 200 survey resolutions since 1995, directing the Corps of Engineers to study potential solutions to water-related infrastructure problems throughout the country, as well as four "small watershed program" projects directing the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly the Soil Conservation Service, to construct projects in rural areas for flood control, water supply, and environmental restoration.

The "Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996" (Public Law 104-182) included key provisions championed by the T&I Committee. It established a new \$1 billion per year state revolving fund (SRF) for drinking water assistance, modeled on and integrated with the Clean Water Act's existing SRF, and included a new \$350 million authorization for grants to States for drinking water infrastructure and watershed protection. It also included financial and technical assistance for the District of Columbia's drinking water treatment system and for sanitation needs in Alaska and along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Clean Water infrastructure also has been a major focus of the Committee over the last 6 years, including the development and passage of comprehensive legislation, over a dozen legislative and oversight hearings, and countless discussions with appropriators and members of the Executive Branch. The Committee has consistently sought to help communities and state and local water officials in their campaign to win more funding for core programs under the Clean Water Act, such as the SRF, and for grants to hardship communities, rural areas, and states for wastewater treatment, combined sewer and sanitary sewer overflows, and nonpoint source pollution. For example, the House-passed Clean Water Amendments of 1995 authorized over \$11 billion for the SRF and \$1 billion for nonpoint source grants.

In the 106th Congress, the Committee successfully moved important regional and national infrastructure and water quality bills through the House. For example, the "Estuaries and Clean Waters Act of 2000" authorized approximately \$1.6 billion for various coastal and inland projects and infrastructure programs for the country. The House passed the conference report on this legislation (S. 835) on October 25, 2000, clearing the bill for the President.

PROMOTING TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

A key Committee responsibility is oversight of our Federal programs that protect the safety of the traveling public and our communities. The Committee took a number of steps to improve the public safety on board aircraft and marine vessels, and on our nation's roads, railroads, and pipeline transportation network.

Aviation safety played a prominent role during the past six years. In response to National Transportation Safety Board recommendations and at least seven accidents where pilot error was the cause and the pilot had a previous record of poor performance, Aviation Subcommittee Chairman Duncan sponsored the "Airline Pilot Hiring and Safety Act." The legislation, enacted as part of the Federal Aviation Reauthorization Act of 1996, requires airlines to request and receive records of an individual's performance as a pilot before hiring that individual as a commercial pilot. In the 1995 reauthorization of the National Transportation Safety Board (Public Law 104-291), the Committee made changes to facilitate voluntary reporting of safety data. In this year's NTSB reauthorization, the Committee clarified the role of the Safety Board in accident investigations and strengthened the protection of information obtained from voice and flight data recorders.

The Aviation Subcommittee also responded to reports that more people die from heart attacks aboard aircraft than die as a result of aircraft accidents. The Committee enacted the "Aviation Medical Assistance Act" (Public Law 105-170) directing the Federal Aviation Administration to gather data and develop a rule to require that defibrillators be installed on aircraft. Since then, airlines have begun installing defibrillators and many lives have been saved.

Promoting safety of motor carrier operations on our Nation's highways has always been one of the Committee's top priorities. In 1999, in an effort to ensure that motor carrier safety issues were given their due attention and funding with the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Ground Transportation Subcommittee held a series of four hearings to examine the effectiveness of the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) oversight of this ever-expanding industry. The Committee found that motor carrier safety functions were hampered by competition for resources at FHWA.

The Motor Carrier Safety Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-159) transferred motor carrier safety functions and oversight of the motor carrier safety program (MCSAP) out of FHWA and created a new Administration to take over those responsibilities. The Act also equipped the new Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration with an increase in funding for the MCSAP program and tighter, more demanding commercial drivers' licensing requirements.

In April 1995, a home-made bomb exploded outside the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people, including several preschool children enrolled in the building's child care center, and causing \$500 million in damages to 320 buildings in the vicinity. This tragedy illustrated the vulnerability of federal employees and facilities to random acts of violence. The Committee responded by calling on the General Services Administration to undertake an assessment of security at all federal buildings. In July 1995, the Administration submitted its security assessment and requested over \$240 million for upgrades at the nation's federal buildings. For FY 1997, the Committee approved \$40 million to ensure that all newly authorized federal buildings, courthouses,

and border stations received these security enhancements. The Committee also sponsored the House-passed Baylee's Law, requiring GSA to notify parents enrolling children in child care centers in federal buildings of the current federal agencies occupying the building and the level of security of the building.

To address one of our nation's most dire public health problems, the nation's failure to reduce illegal drug use among America's youth, the Committee moved to tighten the noose around illegal narcotics smugglers. While the Administration has relied on programs to treat and retreat hard-core drug addicts, the T&I Committee has consistently supported Coast Guard drug interdiction efforts, which raise the street price of illegal drugs to deter casual drug users, especially teenagers. The "Western Hemisphere Drug Elimination Act" (Public Law 105-277), represented a bold move by Congress to address the increase in illicit drug use by teenagers over the last eight years. It provided the Coast Guard with an additional \$151 million annually to expand its drug interdiction efforts. In addition, the House-passed "Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1999" provides \$550 million in additional funding for Coast Guard drug interdiction above the level requested by the President for fiscal year 2001.

In order to strengthen and improve our nation's efforts to combat drunk driving, the T&I Committee adopted a number of broad programs in TEA 21 to reduce drunk driving and accidents and fatalities. These included: a \$500 million incentive grant program for states which enact .08 Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) laws; increased funding of \$219 million for the impaired driving grant program along with programmatic reforms to include performance-based factors and to target those drunk drivers who pose the highest risk on the roads; and provisions to encourage states to enact open container laws and minimum penalties for repeat offenders.

The T&I Committee has sought, through a number of vehicles, to improve maritime safety. The "Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998," (enacted as part of Public Law 105-178) increased state funding for recreational boating safety programs. The Coast Guard Authorization Acts of 1996, 1998, and 2000 included provisions to improve maritime drug and alcohol testing programs, provide penalties for interfering with the safe operation of a vessel, and require a more prompt development of the Coast Guard's new National Distress and Response System. The Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee held numerous oversight hearings that highlighted the importance of safety in the maritime environment, including the Coast Guard's vessel traffic systems, commercial vessel safety mission, search and rescue mission, and icebreaking mission, as well as cruise ship safety, and recreational boating safety.

Lastly, the Committee has continued its oversight of the Pipeline Safety Program administered by the Department of Transportation. In the 104th Congress, the Committee reauthorized the pipeline safety program for a four-year term, introducing reform into the burdensome regulatory framework. In the 106th Congress, the Committee again sought to reauthorize the program, as well as address specific concerns raised by serious pipeline incident, which occurred in Bellingham, Washington, and Carlsbad, New Mexico. Towards this end, Chairman SHUSTER brought to the House for consideration S. 2438, a strong, bipartisan pipeline safety bill that passed the Senate 99-0. While the legislation received the support of a majority of House Members, it failed to gain the 2/3 vote required under "suspension," with only 51 Democrats supporting the bill. Some of the

major reforms sought by this comprehensive bill included: mandates for periodic testing of pipelines and for training and evaluating safety personnel; significantly increased penalties for safety violators; a lower reporting threshold to require reporting of smaller hazardous liquid spills; an increased state role in the oversight of interstate pipelines; and increased funding for safety efforts. The legislation also included a number of provisions on "right to know" to broaden public access to information on pipeline operations and hazards, whistle blower protection, and establishment of a formal research and development program to develop pipeline inspection and safety technology. It is hoped that Congress will revisit this issue early in the next Congress.

MAKING TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY

The T&I Committee has jurisdiction over federal agencies that regulate transportation. In 1995, the Committee began looking at ways to make many of the federal regulatory functions perform better. Two early efforts were the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), which had economic oversight over the trucking and railroad industries, and the Federal Maritime Commission, which had oversight over ocean shipping. These two agencies, both envisioned as small entities charged with preventing monopolistic practices in their respective industries, had failed to evolve with the changing marketplace.

In the case of the ICC, established more than a century ago to oversee the railroad industry at the start of the industrial revolution, it had become archaic in the modern, global economy. The Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act (Public Law 104-88) addressed these problems by eliminating the ICC and transferring nearly all of the remaining motor carrier regulatory oversight functions to the Federal Highway Administration. The remaining rail functions were transferred to a 3-member autonomous Surface Transportation Board within DOT. The legislation saved taxpayers money and established a regulatory framework that better ensures competition and smooth functioning of our \$320 billion surface transportation industry.

The Federal Maritime Commission was subject to similar criticisms, where tariff filing requirements had saddled shippers and vessel operators with enormous administrative costs and strengthened foreign shipping cartels by providing them with access to the private shipping agreements of their U.S. competitors. In the 104th Congress, the T&I Committee put forward sweeping legislation to provide U.S. shippers and vessel operators with a level playing field in the global shipping industry. The legislation, H.R. 2149, received strong House support. Although the Senate failed to act on that legislation in the 104th Congress, it put forward compromise legislation in the 105th that incorporated many key elements of H.R. 2149. The House accepted the Senate's version and enacted the "Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 1998 (OSRA)" (Public Law 105-258). The most important provision of OSRA allows for "confidential contracts" for ocean transportation. At an oversight hearing a year after enactment, witnesses from the Federal Maritime Commission, international ocean carriers, U.S. shippers, and U.S. labor all reported that the new system was a success. The new system has increased competition in the international ocean shipping markets while allowing individual shippers and carriers to pursue private contracts that provide for the most efficient international ocean transportation arrangements.

The National Highway Designation Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-59) approved the designation of 160,000 miles of U.S. roadway as

the National Highway System, and provided \$13 billion in Interstate Maintenance and NHS highway funds to the states in 1996-97. The legislation also eliminated a number of federal sanctions that had been imposed on the states in the past, including penalties for states that fail to enforce a national maximum speed limit or compulsory motorcycle helmet laws, and streamlined the delivery of highway and transit programs.

In TEA 21, the Committee remained committed to making Federal highway and transit programs more efficient, working to streamline program delivery and cut red tape. The bill contained a landmark provision to streamline environmental reviews for highway and transit projects, which was backed by the Administration, state and local government groups and environmental constituencies.

Following the ValuJet and TWA airplane crashes in 1996, families who lost loved ones complained about their ill treatment at the hands of both government and airline officials. The Aviation Subcommittee held hearings that resulted in the introduction of the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act, which was included in the Federal Aviation Reauthorization Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-264). The law requires airlines to develop plans to handle these situations in the future and gives the National Transportation Safety Board responsibility for coordinating these efforts. As a result, more recent crashes have not given rise to the sort of complaints experienced in 1996. In 1999, the Committee sought to apply a similar framework to rail accidents in the Rail Passenger Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1999, which passed the House but was not enacted.

Under T&I Committee leadership, the 105th Congress enacted the Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act (Public Law 105-134). The bipartisan reforms contained in the Act remove Amtrak from a crippling statutory straight jacket. At the time, Amtrak was headed toward bankruptcy. Similar to legislation the T&I Committee successfully passed through the House in the 104th Congress but which the Senate declined to consider, this Act gave Amtrak the opportunity to operate in a more business-like fashion. Significantly, the Act allowed Amtrak for the first time to contract work (other than food service) with third parties and to evaluate routes based upon profitability rather than a congressionally determined route structure. It also eliminated statutory labor protections that required Amtrak to pay displaced workers a year of severance for each year of service (maximum of six years). Finally, the Act established a new, seven-member Reform Board filled with qualified professionals to provide a much-needed fresh start for Amtrak.

While the reform law provided Amtrak with many new tools, in addition to authorizing vastly increased funding, it did not and could not guarantee a successful outcome. The T&I Committee continues to conduct oversight of Amtrak operations and Reform Board actions. Recent reports from the General Accounting Office and the DOT Inspector General are that Amtrak is not taking advantage of the new law. The decisions it makes in the coming months will determine whether the goals of the reform law are realized.

In the 106th Congress, the T&I Committee worked with railroad labor groups and management to craft a reform package for the financially ailing Railroad Retirement program. The "Railroad Retirement and Survivors Improvement Act" provided long-term solvency to the federally-managed railroad pension fund by allowing limited trust fund resources to be privately invested. It also improved employee benefits by lowering

the retirement age to 60 (with 30 years of service), increasing benefits for widows, and reducing the vesting period from 10 to 5 years.

Finally, the T&I Committee introduced and passed as part of AIR 21, an amendment to the "Death on the High Seas Act." The Act ensures that families will be treated the same regardless of whether an aircraft crashes on land or at sea. Prior to the enactment of this legislation, families were unable to recover damages for the death of a child as a result of an aircraft accident on the high seas.

ENSURING A CLEAN, SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Over the last five years, the Committee has led the debate on innovative and effective environmental protection for the 21st Century. Legislative achievements and oversight initiatives have translated into cleaner, safer communities, more deference to state and local decision making, and greater emphasis on cost-effective, science-based regulations.

The Committee's bipartisan "Clean Water Act Amendments of 1995," strongly supported by state and local officials, offered a comprehensive, commonsense approach to reauthorization and reform of the Clean Water Act. The House-passed legislation has served as a catalyst for regulatory reform in many ways including: more flexibility for water quality standards to reflect regional and seasonal variations; greater flexibility in the pretreatment and stormwater programs; increased focus on watershed-based effluent trading; greater emphasis on federal-state funding partnerships; increased funding for voluntary approaches to managing agricultural runoff and pilot projects to allow companies and communities regulatory flexibility to achieve environmental goals in more cost-effective ways.

The "Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000" authorized \$150 million for EPA assistance to states to establish monitoring programs to provide the public with information about the quality of coastal recreational waters. This act also strengthens the science behind and effectiveness of water quality standards for coastal recreational waters. Comparable legislation had been pending, and languishing, in Congress for almost a decade. The "Estuaries and Clean Water Act of 2000," comprising 10 separate House-passed bills, authorized \$1.6 billion in non-regulatory, federal assistance for Clean Water Act and related programs. Such efforts will help restore and protect estuaries, coastal waters and publicly owned lakes.

Efforts in the 104th and 105th Congresses to enact Superfund reform and address brownfields highlighted the glaring deficiencies of the Superfund toxic waste program: cleanups that are costly, delayed, and ineffective and a liability system that rewards litigation and rejects fairness. The "Reform of Superfund Act," the "Superfund Acceleration, Fairness, and Efficiency Act," and Committee hearings helped push the Administration towards modest reforms to make Superfund cleanups "faster, fairer, and more effective."

In 1996 and 1998, in the annual Department of Defense Authorization bills, the Committee participated in the development of language to encourage the redevelopment of closed bases. Also in the FY 1997 Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations bill, the Committee participated in the development of language to protect lenders from Superfund liability.

The push for administrative reform and legislative overhaul of Superfund continued in the 106th Congress. In an historic vote of 69 to 2, the Committee approved the "Recy-

cle America's Land Act of 1999," reforming key aspects of Superfund liability and revitalizing brownfields. The legislation, which included liability for small businesses and incentives for voluntary cleanups, helped to initiate another round of modest administrative reforms.

With the enactment of the "National Invasive Species Act of 1996" (Public Law 104-332), the Committee expanded and improved efforts to combat problems from invasive, non-indigenous aquatic species (such as zebra mussels), including ballast water exchange procedures and Federal research and demonstration projects. Resulting efforts have benefited municipal, industrial and agricultural water supplies, maritime transportation, and the environment.

Finally, the National Parks Air Tour Management Act, sponsored by Aviation Subcommittee Chairman Duncan, helps minimize aircraft noise over national parks. The legislation, enacted as part of AIR 21, requires the FAA Administrator to prescribe operating conditions and limitations for each commercial air tour operator and, in cooperation with the Director of the National Park Service (NPS), develop a plan before air tours can be conducted over national parks.

Mr. Speaker, indeed, in closing, I want to give my heartfelt thanks to all my colleagues for their tremendous support, because without that support we would not have any accomplishments to insert in the RECORD today or, more importantly, to provide to the American people in the years ahead.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SHUSTER. I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, just briefly, although I have commented many times in committee and on the several bills that we have had, since the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman SHUSTER) is sounding a note this may, indeed, may be our last major bill on the floor, I just want to emphasize for our colleagues that in an era of rancor and divisiveness publicly in the body politic and between the parties and between the two bodies of Congress, this Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has stood as a model of legislative achievement, as an example of how we can advance the commonweal of the Nation by working together in a relationship of trust and of understanding and of mutual respect.

Mr. Speaker, that is the bond that draws us together and the bond of respect that I hold for the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER), our chairman, and for his leadership, steadfast throughout these 6 years of holding an ideal and working to achieve it.

Together we have accomplished something of lasting value for America, and I compliment the chairman on his leadership, his distinguished contribution to America. That will stand for all time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), my dear friend, and the key word, I think, is together. We have stood together,

and so it is with heartfelt thanks that I thank the gentleman, the ranking member of the committee, as well as all of my colleagues for their tremendous support so that our stewardship of this committee could indeed be one in which we could be proud.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, the decline of estuary habitats—especially in the San Francisco Bay estuary—has been well-documented in the scientific and resource management literature for over 30 years. Tragically, San Francisco Bay has lost over 95% of its tidal wetlands and continues to be besieged by invasive and aquatic nuisance species.

Fortunately, S. 835, the Estuaries and Clean Water Act, will provide a reasonable, balanced approach to both preserve remaining estuarine habitats and to facilitate effective, locally-driven estuary restoration in estuaries like San Pablo Bay and Suisun Bay in my district.

I am particularly pleased that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will be eligible to participate in this new program. NGOs, such as Save the Bay and The Bay Institute in the Bay Area, embody the locally driven focus of this legislation and provide local expertise and support.

Amendments agreed to in conference also enhance the role of the Estuary Habitat Restoration Council in the selection of projects and the delegation of oversight responsibilities for project implementation. This will bring additional expertise and provide direct ties to other successful Federal-State partnership programs for protecting the estuaries, such as the National Estuary Program, the National Estuarine Research Reserve Program, and the National Marine Fisheries Service's Fishery Habitat Restoration program.

This conference report is good environmental legislation and I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support its passage.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the Conference Report on Estuaries and Clean Waters Act. This bill provides critical relief to the Long Island Sound and estuaries across the country.

Estuaries are an integral part of our environment, as well as our economy. They give life to and provide a habitat for many important species, they naturally cleanse our water, they provide protection against floods and storm damage, and serve as a playground for children and families during the summer months. The health of our nation's estuaries are critical to the protection of our natural heritage, and to those who make their lives off these waters.

The Long Island Sound, in particular, is one of the most complex estuaries in the country—10 percent of the U.S. population lives within 50 miles of the Sound and millions more flock to it for recreation every year. It brings in more than \$5 billion annually to the regional economy from various activities—all of which require clean water.

However, these natural jewels are in danger of being lost forever. Estuaries are suffering from severe water quality problems, declining habitat quality, and, in some areas, total habitat loss. More than 50 percent of wetlands in coastal states have been destroyed—an amount equal in size to six Grand Canyons.

If you don't want to take my word on how important an estuary can be to our communities and our economy, I invite you to visit

with the lobstermen in my district. Walk the docks with them, and listen to their stories. We are suffering a massive lobster die-off in the Long Island Sounds that has virtually wiped out an industry. While we are still searching for the specific cause of the die-off, we do know that a safer, cleaner Sound would mean that incidents like this would be less likely to occur in the future.

This bill provides a sensible approach to a problem that has plagued efforts to clean up our estuaries—the lack of a reliable, steady funding source for implementing conservation and management plans. Cleaning up estuaries cannot be piecemeal effort. This conference report takes a step in the right direction by authorizing the Long Island Sound Program at \$200 million over five years—a significant increase over the \$3 million a year it currently receives. It takes a comprehensive approach to fix such a complex problem.

That is why I have fought alongside Nita Lowey to pass the Water Pollution Control and Estuary Restoration Act, which we first introduced nearly eight years ago, and which we fought for again in the current Congress. I want to thank all of my colleagues that have supported this effort over the years, especially my colleagues from Connecticut and New York, who have worked together to bring relief to the Sound. Thank you for working together on a bipartisan approach to fixing a non-partisan problem.

We have an obligation to protect and preserve the Sound for future generations. It is the right thing to do for our children and for our economy, and for men and women—like the Long Island Sound's lobstermen that are still struggling to stay afloat. I urge the House to pass this important legislation.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 835, the Estuary Habitat and Chesapeake Bay Restoration Act.

I would like to thank Mr. GILCHREST for all his efforts in bringing this bill forward.

I am thrilled that we are recognizing the critical importance of estuaries—the diverse, thriving habitats where fresh and salt water mix—and that this legislation will strengthen the all-important partnerships between federal, state, and local interests for estuary habitat restoration.

As a co-chair with NITA LOWEY of the Long Island Sound Caucus, I am particularly pleased that this legislation includes a title on Long Island Sound Restoration.

All of us who live in the Long Island Sound region owe a debt of gratitude to NANCY JOHNSON, and RICK LAZIO for their sponsorship and stewardship of the Long Island Sound Restoration Act.

Republicans and Democrats alike have worked for years on the ongoing local-state-federal effort to restore the Sound, and know just how important this important body of water is.

The Sound contributed over \$5.5 billion to our regions economy in 1994—and obviously contributes even more today—through water-dependent activities such as commercial and recreational fishing, boating, and tourism.

The \$40 million annual authorization for the Sound in this legislation will make it possible to continue the progress begun six years ago when New York and Connecticut first signed the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for Long Island Sound, which in itself was the culmination of 10 years of effort.

Since the implementation of the CCMP, our states have spent an extraordinary amount on Long Island Sound. The federal government has played a small, though vital role.

Today we have the opportunity to back up the promise of the CCMP with a commitment to fund Long Island Sound restoration in line with the Sound's place as the center of a watershed region encompassing 8 million people, with over 15 million living within 50 miles of the Sound's shores.

This is truly an estuary of national significance and one which deserves the support of this body. I urge my colleague to vote for this excellent bill.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the conference report.

The previous question was ordered.

The conference report was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report on S. 835.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OSE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

FEDERAL COURTS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2000

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the Senate bill (S. 2915) to make improvements in the operation and administration of the Federal courts, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

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

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I would ask the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) to explain the procedure and what he is offering.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SCOTT. I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the request is to take S. 2915, which improves the Federal Court System by improving its administration and procedures, eliminating operational inefficiencies, and reducing operating expenses, and not to pass the whole bill but to offer an amendment which will make technical corrections, strike section 103, and make modifications to section 309.