PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, May 21, 2003, I was unavoidably detained, and therefore unable to cast my floor vote on rollcall Nos. 201 through 204. The votes I missed include rollcall vote 201 on the procedural vote of ordering the previous question; rollcall vote 202 on Agreeing to H. Res. 245 on Agreeing to the Resolution providing consideration of H.R. 1588; rollcall vote 202 on the Motion to Suspend the rules and pass H.R. 1170; and rollcall vote 203 on the Motion to Suspend the rules and pass H.R. 1911.

Had I been present for the votes, I would have voted ''aye'' on rollcall votes 203 and 204, and ''nay'' on roll call votes 201 and 202.

RECOGNITION OF JOHN NELSON COWEN

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to recognize John Nelson Cowen of Jefferson County, IL. John was recently inducted into the Senior Saints Hall of Fame of Jefferson County.

John received this honor for his lifelong service to others. Throughout his life John raised a family, sang for community events with the Barbershop Chorus, annually served at the Kiwanis Pancake and Sausage Breakfast, provided inexpensive housing to low income families, and contributed to the education of underprivileged children. He is still actively involved as a Sunday School teacher at Park Avenue Baptist Church where he has taught for 70 years. John also loves his country so much he chose to not draw Social Security so that others in need can benefit from it.

I want to congratulate and thank John for all he has done and will continue to do for the people in his community. He is a saint to all who know him and is deserving of this prestigious honor.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. ROGERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to highlight the benefits that competition in the telecommunications industry has bestowed upon this nation.

In the seven years since the passage of the Telecommunications Act, millions of consumers and thousands of businesses have been given choices and enjoyed savings never before experienced during more than a century of monopoly control. In fact, it is estimated that if telecom competition were allowed to flourish across the nation, our citizens could save more than $9 billion a year on their telephone bills.

Take, for example, LDMI Telecommunications, a competitive telecom provider who offers services in Michigan. LDMI's President & CEO, Patrick O'Leary, has files full of letters from customers who are grateful to have a choice among providers and are able to save a significant amount of money in the process.

Here's what some of LDMI's customers have to say:

''When long distance was a monopoly we could only afford five inside sales reps due to the high cost of phone calls. Thanks to the lowest phone rates we've ever enjoyed, we now have sixteen inside sales reps and our market is now the continental United States. Our sales are over five million dollars. None of this growth would have been possible without competition in the telecommunications industry.''—a supplier of paper rolls for business machines in New Hudson, Michigan

''Since we became an LDMI customer in August, 1994, we have enjoyed not only excellent rates and saving, but have also experienced extremely courteous and overly competent customer service and technical support. To say that we are satisfied with the high quality of service and incredible savings would have to be considered an understatement.''—a law firm in Saginaw, Michigan

These reactions are extremely common among the millions of customers who are relying on competitive telecommunications providers for their voice and data communications services. LDMI, and many other small competitive companies who offer the same quality and cost-effective services to consumers and small businesses, would not exist but for the rules that require the Bell companies to provide competitors access to the public switched telephone network at reasonable, non-discriminatory rates.

Telecom competition serves as an economic catalyst, as well. As you can see from these customer testimonials, consumers and business owners have a great incentive to re-invest the savings on their telephone bills into new equipment or services. Moreover, the economy is bolstered by the spending of competitors and the Bell companies themselves on new technology, new networks, and innovative service packages. In fact, studies show that since passage of the 1996 Act, alternative telecom service providers have generated more than $100 billion in capital expenditures on state-of-the art infrastructure, while the Bells have accounted for another $50 billion in spending as a direct result of competition in their markets.

We must work to ensure that consumer benefits and economic stimulus are not stifled by government actions over voice and broadband services. The FCC is poised to issue an order that would preserve competition through the use of the Unbundled Network Element Platform—or UNE-P. The Commission should be thorough in its consideration of the details of the rules it is about to issue to ensure that competition remains viable, consumer choice is protected and technological innovation is allowed to blossom.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 2210, THE SCHOOL READINESS ACT OF 2003

HON. JOHN A. BOEHNER

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker I am pleased to have the opportunity to congratulate the Gentleman from Delaware, Mr. CASTLE, on the introduction of the School Readiness Act of 2003, which reauthorizes the Head Start program. This legislation demonstrates a tremendous commitment to strengthening Head Start. It represents a great accomplishment not only for Mr. CASTLE, but for disadvantaged children and their families from across this nation.

As many of you know, President Bush's biggest domestic priority has consistently been education reform. In his State of the Union address in January 2002 the President outlined his plan (known as the Good Start, Grow Smart initiative) for ensuring that children are prepared to read and succeed in school. This proposal focused on strengthening Head Start, increasing partnerships with States, and providing information to teachers, caregivers and parents. The Bush Administration's proposal laid the foundation for many of the reforms in this legislation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank President Bush for his leadership on this issue.

I think we all recognize that Head Start is a great program that has helped millions of low-income children access the resources they need in order to help them succeed in school and later in life. I was troubled to learn, however, that while children in Head Start show improvement when compared to other disadvantaged children who are not enrolled in the program those same children are still far behind their more advantaged peers when it comes time to enter school. The School Readiness Act of 2003 will address this ''readiness gap'' in much the same way that the No Child Left Behind Act addressed the ''achievement gap'' between low income and middle class students.

I am particularly pleased that this legislation increases Head Start's emphasis on school readiness allows us to align the goals of Head Start with recent reforms of K–12 education, while continuing to maintain the comprehensive services that are provided by the program. The No Child Left Behind Act made it clear that children should be reading successfully by the end of the 3rd grade. The School Readiness Act of 2003 makes it clear that Head Start should be providing economically disadvantaged children with the opportunity to enter school with the literacy, pre-reading, and pre-math skills that are essential for success in school.

I am also pleased that the School Readiness Act of 2003 focuses on improving teacher quality in Head Start. Research has demonstrated that having a well qualified teacher in the classroom is one of the best predictors of student success. This is why the School Readiness Act of 2003 requires 100 percent of all new Head Start teachers to have at least an Associates Degree in early childhood education or a related field within three years. The legislation also requires 50 percent of Head Start teachers nationwide to hold at least a Bachelors Degree in early childhood education or a related field by 2008.