years our Nation's passenger railroad has been treated as an unwanted stepchild. Year after year, Congress has shortchanged Amtrak. Even in the area of security, while we have enacted legislation protecting airlines from the threat of terrorist attacks, we have done virtually nothing to protect our railroad infrastructure and those who rely on it.

Amtrak has survived despite a severe lack of funding and an annual threat of elimination, which has conditioned Amtrak to focus on survival. Railroads throughout the world receive some government support to supplement the revenues paid by passengers. The Administration has not accepted this and every year proposes inadequate or no funding. A period of uncertainty follows, at the end of which Congress usually provides more than the Administration has requested, but sometimes less than Amtrak needs. I challenge anyone in this Congress to name one company who can develop and implement a 5-year capital and operating plan without knowing if they'll have any money for it the following year. That company would fail. That's not an option for Amtrak. It's our responsibility to ensure that Amtrak survives.

Without Amtrak, millions of passengers—many of who cannot afford to buy a plane ticket or for whom driving is impracticable—would be stranded. Without Amtrak, millions of travelers would be added to already congested roads and airports. Amtrak's 20,000 workers would be out on the streets looking for new jobs. Local economies and businesses that have benefited from Amtrak's service would suffer. States already under tight budget constraints would be forced to figure out how to pay for new service.

Without Amtrak, the Railroad Retirement and Unemployment programs, which cover employees of all railroads—freight and passenger—would be in dire straights. According to the Railroad Retirement Board, without the participation of Amtrak, employer and employee payroll taxes would need to be increased from the current 16 percent to 27 percent in 2027. Those tax increases, however, would ultimately be insufficient and serious cash flow problems for Railroad Retirement would begin in 2031.

Without Amtrak, cash reserves for the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account would be exhausted by 2006, and nearly $297 million would have to be borrowed from the Railroad Retirement account to make up for losses. The Board informs me that ultimately Amtrak's unemployment benefit costs would be borne by other railroads.

Without Amtrak, the commuter operations that serve millions of passengers along the Northeast Corridor, Chicago, and the West Coast would halt. These operations, which include SEPTA in Philadelphia and New Jersey Transit, require the use of Amtrak infrastructure, such as catenaries. They also require the continuation of Amtrak's dispatching system.

Yet despite chronic underfunding, Amtrak has had its successes. Under David Gunn's leadership, Amtrak has improved operations in some markets and increased ridership to over 25 million passengers in 2004: an increase of one million passengers from 2003 and a new Amtrak record.

Ridership on short-distance routes in the West is up 11.7 percent. The Pacific Surfliner, serving Southern California, showed the largest increase in ridership, with a gain of 26.3 percent. Midwest trains experienced the next largest increase in passengers.

Amtrak has also made significant progress in rebuilding infrastructure and rolling stock after years of deferred maintenance. In Fiscal Years 2003 and 2004, 256,000 concrete ties were laid; 2,755 bridge ties were replaced; 266 miles of continuous welded rail were installed; 34 miles of signal cable were replaced; and 19 stations and 37 substations were improved.

Amtrak's mechanical department plowed full steam ahead. In 2004, it remanufactured 180 passenger cars; rebuilt 51 wrecked cars and locomotives; and made seven Superliner baggage modifications in passenger cars.

Excess equipment was sold, unprofitable services were eliminated, fares were lowered on long-distance routes to increase ridership, and a $71 million maintenance facility was opened in a joint partnership between Amtrak and the State of California.

In short, Amtrak is making progress, even under a starvation budget. All of this progress would halt under the Administration's radical so-called "reform" schemes.

Our Nation's high-speed rail program is also on the Administration's chopping block. If the United States is serious about maintaining our status as the world's leader in transportation then we must tap into the potential of our rail system. Even with continuing investments in our highway and aviation systems, we can't depend on our highways and airports alone. We must strengthen our rail system by expanding its capacity and improving reliability for freight and passenger services.

I thank my colleagues, Chairman YOUNG, Subcommittee Chairman LATOURETTE and Ranking Member BROWN, for their dedication to rail and I look forward to working with them in moving these bills through the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee toward final passage.

CONGRATULATING MS. LINDA JONES ON RECEIPT OF THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE TEACHING

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 14, 2005

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and pleasure that I rise to honor Ms. Linda Jones on the occasion of her being honored with the 2004 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

This award, established in 1983, recognizes outstanding science and mathematics teachers in grades K–12 in all fifty states and each of the four U.S. jurisdictions. This White House award is currently recognized as the nation's highest commendation for elementary and secondary math and science teachers. During this year's nomination process, 600 applications were submitted for this honor. Out of that tremendous number of nominations, Linda Jones was one of only 95 winners nationwide and one of only two from the state of Alabama.

Linda has been a distinguished member of the Baldwin County, Alabama, school system for over 30 years. A native of Louisiana, she graduated with a bachelor's degree from the University of Southern Mississippi, and went on to earn a master's degree at the University of South Alabama. Additionally, she received an educational administration certificate from Alabama State University. During the course of her teaching career, she earned her National Board certification and in 2001 was awarded with Baldwin County's Teacher of the Year Award.

In an article which ran in the Mobile Register acknowledging this award, students and colleagues were interviewed and asked about the impact Linda has made in their lives and in the life of her school. To a person, each singled out her ability to challenge their limits and to achieve more than they could have possibly imagined. Moreover, she was recognized for going outside of the limits of her normal job description and work day to provide as many opportunities for her students as possible.

Mr. Speaker, there are few individuals more important to the development of our young men and women in this country than those who commit themselves to educating these children. Ms. Linda Jones is an outstanding example of the quality individuals who have devoted their lives to the field of education, and I ask my colleagues to join with me in congratulating her on this remarkable achievement. I know her colleagues, her family, and her friends join with me in praising her accomplishments and extending thanks for her many efforts on behalf of the schoolchildren of Baldwin County and the state of Alabama.

HONORING EARL WARREN MIDDLE SCHOOL AND TWIN OAKS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR BEING RECOGNIZED AS NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS

HON. RANDY "DUKE" CUNNINGHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 14, 2005

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to recognize that two blue ribbon schools in my 50th Congressional District of California are being honored as National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2004. These schools are:

Earl Warren Middle School, Solana Beach, CA. The principal is Dr. Jeanne Jones, and the superintendent of the San Dieguito Unified School District is Dr. Peggy Lynch.

Twin Oaks Elementary School, San Marcos, CA. The principal is Mrs. Carol Hayward, and the superintendent of the San Marcos Unified School District is Mr. Larry Maw.

There are over 100,000 public and private schools in the United States and only 300 are able to be recognized as a "National Blue Ribbon School" by the U.S. Department of Education, including the two above in California's 50th Congressional District, and 39 in the State of California. The No Child Left Behind—Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private K–12 schools that either demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement or are academically superior in their states. It recognizes schools that have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that dramatically improve student performance in accordance with