Mike's work. Mike is well known to colleagues in the Senate and the House, among authorizers and appropriators, both on and off the Hill for his detailed knowledge of NIST, its programs and its problems. His work on NIST programs could be a perfect case study for any young Committee staffer trying to understand how to work with an agency.

Mike played a key role in crafting many pieces of legislation relating to standards, technology development, and competitiveness. I want to mention just two specifically. I am particularly indebted to Mike because he drafted the first bill I had signed into law as Chairman of the Committee on Science and Technology: the Methamphetamine Remediation Research Act of 2007. Secondly, Mike Quear was at the heart of the America COMPETES Act—taking the lead on all the technology provisions in that landmark legislation.

Mike has been a model staffer: creative, smart, hard-working, and loyal. While the Committee will miss his dedicated services, I am confident that he will retire to his farm in Pennsylvania and apply those same gifts to his passions of raising horses, driving buggies, and gardening. I want to thank him for his selfless professionalism and congratulate him on his hard earned retirement. We will miss you and cannot replace you.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4173, DODD-FRANK WALL STREET REFORM AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 30, 2010

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report on H.R. 4173, the Dodd-Frank Act of 2010.

We have already seen what happens to Main Street when Wall Street abuses run rampant. Over the past decade, Wall Street's protectors looked the other way while Wall Street fat cats gambled with our future and ran our economy into the ditch, and the North Carolina families I hear from every day paid the price. We have seen what that means for Main Street: 8 million jobs lost, $17 trillion in hard-earned family savings—savings for retirement, college, or home buying—all wiped out overnight. Today we have the opportunity to say, "enough." We have had enough of the abuses, enough of risky speculation, enough of taxpayer-funded bailouts. It is time to put in place common sense rules of the road to protect Main Street and American taxpayers. This bill does just that. H.R. 4173 delivers a comprehensive set of financial regulations that increase accountability and oversight for Wall Street and America's financial sector.

H.R. 4173 addresses the "too big to fail" syndrome, and ends taxpayer funded bailouts. This bill makes sure the taxpayer is not responsible for bailing out such firms, by establishing a process for dismantling failing financial institutions like AIG or Lehman Brothers. With this reform, these large Wall Street firms will be in charge of paying the cost for the risks they create instead of taxpayers paying the tab. In addition, a Financial Stability Council will be created to identify and regulate financial institutions that are so large or interconnected that they pose a system risk to the economy as a whole. While I hope that the dissolution measures are never necessary, it just makes sense to have an orderly way to wind down failing institutions as an insurance policy. This process will punish the corporate executives who are to blame for a failed bank, rather than the American taxpayer.

For years, I have called for an end to the wild west of speculation in derivatives markets. I am pleased that this bill includes my proposal to strengthen derivatives market oversight. For the first time ever, over-the-counter derivatives market for transactions between dealers and major swap participants will be required to be reported. This transparency means that regulators can monitor this trillion dollar market, and make sure that companies like AIG only make trades when they have enough capital to back them up. Unregulated speculation may well be responsible for wide swings and increases in the price of energy for consumers and feed for farms. This provision will help prevent entities from driving up the cost of commodities and products and manufacturing risk in the larger economy.

H.R. 4173 also takes a major step forward in consumer protection by creating the Consumer Financial Protection Agency (CFPA). This agency would make sure brokers tell folks what they are buying, clearly and honestly. It would be devoted to stopping unfair practices and preventing abusive financial products from entering the marketplace. The CFPA would impose effective consumer protections for subprime mortgages, overdraft fees, credit card practices, and other financial products, not just at banks but wherever these products are purchased.

This bill includes other critical provisions for oversight and streamlining of the financial system. It creates a Federal Insurance Office, reforms the credit ratings agencies that failed to assess the value of the many financial products in our economy, and cleans up abusive practices in the mortgage lending industry that contributed to the collapse of the housing market. This regulation is long overdue and will benefit all Americans and businesses that depend on our financial institutions.

We need to take action to put the interests of average Americans ahead of corporate special interests. Today we have an opportunity to clean up the mess on Wall Street, hold wrongdoers accountable for their actions and stand up for taxpayers. I call on my colleagues to put Main Street before Wall Street, and to join me in support of the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4173, DODD-FRANK WALL STREET REFORM AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 30, 2010

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4173, "the Restoring American Financial Stability Act of 2010", also known as "the Dodd-Frank Act." This historic bill will go a long way to address a variety of defects and shortcomings currently seen in our financial services system. It is a major step towards meaningful "measured" government regulation to protect the interests of consumers, investors and everyday working Americans. After years of consumer mistreatment, fraud, and abuse, this bill represents the first principled effort to bring financial fairness to all Americans and to ensure that financial transactions be both honest and transparent.

One of the strongest provisions designed to protect the consumer in this legislation is the formation of an independent Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, CFPB, empowered to write rules for most consumer financial transactions. Existing consumer-protection authority is currently scattered and largely ignored by existing financial regulators. This Act will consolidate these authorities in the CFPB, and give the bureau teeth in exerting its power to enforce these protections. With this newly defined power, the creation of the CFPB will usher in a new era of oversight. I urge Congress to stand tall and create a society where unfair practices are stopped before they become pervasive, where the average consumer is protected from fraud and abuse, and where big bank bailouts are prevented before they come at the expense of taxpayers.

Another major provision in this bill is the establishment of broad statutory protections against abusive mortgages. These provisions include; requiring lenders to evaluate borrowers' ability to repay loans before and after teaser rates have expired; banning prepayment penalties that lock borrowers into high-cost loans; prohibiting incentives to steer borrowers into higher-cost loans that they don't even qualify for; limiting total fees for most loans; and banning mandatory arbitration clauses for mortgages.

In addition to these key provisions, this bill will also create a $1 billion emergency loan fund to help families at risk of losing their homes due to unemployment or illness. Because unemployment—9.7 percent is partly a direct result of the reckless lending and collapse of the housing and financial markets, this fund is especially important in reversing these negative economic effects and providing assistance to those who have been hurt by unfair practices. A recent Center for Responsible Lending, CRL, report found that, unfortunately, the foreclosure crisis is far from over. Foreclosures are likely to continue to climb and losses will continue to increase, further burdening our economy and financial services system, unless the government decides to intervene by passing this Act.

The bill also addresses bank interchange fees, the fees charged on debit card transactions. Under the bill, such fees would be reduced. While the banks and credit unions opposed any reduction in fees as embraced by the Durbin amendment, the arguments advanced by the retailers won the day. While I support credit unions, which are the backbone of many communities and have traditionally served the special needs of teachers, public service employees and the average government worker, about the use of the fees to cover many bad transactions related to their debit card business, the fees generated by the debit card transactions represent a major profit making activity for the banking industry. These fees are generally passed onto the consumer in the form of higher retail prices. Interchange