

and helps bring jobs home to the 10th District, which so desperately needs them.

That being said, there are several aspects about this bill that need to be resolved. One of my major areas of concern is that of the environment. Madam Speaker, the bill would open a portion of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, also referred to as ANWR, to oil and gas drilling. For over 50 years, the development of ANWR has been debated greatly. We have an obligation to be good stewards of our national treasures and fiscally responsible in funding our Nation's infrastructure. However, including the Arctic refuge drilling provision will greatly complicate the transportation bill moving forward and make agreement with the Senate far more difficult. ANWR should be the last resort, not the first one.

I'm also concerned with the future sustainability of transit funding. In the Chicagoland region, we depend on mass transit to lessen the congestion on our roads and to get people to and from work. We do this far more efficiently with mass transit. Fifty percent more people would be on area highways and interstates if it were not for mass transit.

So think about that. For the people back there that have driven through Chicago, if we were to add an additional 50 percent on the already congested roads, it would make life far more difficult for moving goods and services around and for getting people to and from work. This is not what we need. Mass transit is a vital program and one that we need to preserve. We need to have the certainty out there for funding. In Illinois, our State will face a \$137 million shortfall each and every year if this bill is enacted as it stands right now. This is unacceptable.

With all this being said, I believe that we have much to do, and we can work together to build a transportation bill that gives States the ability to plan for the long term and complete projects faster. But we do not need to do so at the detriment of mass transit or the environment. So let's work together and make this a better bill that we can all be proud of and move our country forward.

□ 1030

CRISIS OF POVERTY IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE of California. Madam Speaker, as a founder and cochair of the Congressional Out of Poverty Caucus, I rise again to sound the alarm about the crisis of poverty in America.

While many of us are encouraged by the recent improvements in the unemployment rate, which fell to 8.3 percent, the rate of unemployment continues to be unacceptably high, especially for communities of color. For African Americans, the unemployment

rate is 13.6 percent, and it's 10.5 percent for Latinos. The rate of unemployment for our youth is even more alarming, with over 23 percent of 16-19 year olds looking for a job. Without a job, Madam Speaker, how can we expect our youth, the future of this country, to develop the skills and experience they need to succeed and live out their American Dream.

Encouragingly, President Obama understands that we cannot speed up economic recovery without investments that create jobs. I was pleased to see in his 2013 budget proposal critical investments to create good jobs and job training programs for communities hardest hit by our struggling economy. By targeting economic assistance where it's most needed, the President's proposed budget goes a long way to level the playing field to give every American the opportunity to succeed.

There's a lot that my Republican colleagues can learn from the President's budget, especially this: that fighting poverty and reducing the deficit can be achieved together. But let me be clear. This budget is not perfect. There are cuts in this budget that would undermine some of the progress our economy is making. Cuts to safety net programs like the Community Services Block Grant, Low Income Heating Assistance, and affordable housing programs will hit already struggling families especially hard.

During these difficult times, we really do need to protect programs that are a lifeline for the most vulnerable. We need to increase funding for programs like SNAP and WIC which keep millions of American families out of poverty. But keeping people from suffering the worst effects of poverty is not enough to restore our economy. Even with the recent increases we have seen in job creation, long-term unemployment remains at record levels, with 5.5 million workers who have been out of work for 27 weeks or more. Until Republican leaders in the House can pass President Obama's American Jobs Act or put forth any kind of reasonable plan for job creation, we must ensure that the safety net is strong.

So, Madam Speaker, again I call for an immediate up-or-down vote on Congressman BOBBY SCOTT's and my bill, H.R. 589, which will give the millions of job seekers who continue to struggle to find a job just 14 more weeks of vital unemployment benefits. This would allow them to have just a little more time to find a good job and to support their family while our fragile economy continues to recover.

Also, Madam Speaker, this Congress has a lot of work to do. We are just a few days away from when unemployment benefits are set to expire for millions of Americans across the country. Low-income families were hardest hit during the recession, and they cannot afford another year of a Republican Congress that fails to focus on jobs, refuses to strengthen our middle class, and tries to end the Medicare guar-

antee for all of our seniors. It is incumbent upon this conference committee to ensure that the bridge is strong enough to deliver us all, even our most vulnerable, over these troubled waters.

Madam Speaker, let's put our Nation before our party. Americans really cannot wait, and neither should this Congress.

TRANSPORTATION EMPOWERMENT ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GRAVES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRAVES of Georgia. Madam Speaker, we're hearing a lot about transportation this week in the form of the transportation reauthorization bill. That causes us to maybe reflect back. Why are we reauthorizing something, and where did it originate, and what is our plan forward?

In fact, this comes from decades and decades and decades ago, and it's a chance when we can say to ourselves: Are we on the right path? Is this the right path for this Congress and the future of our Nation?

I think back to the last election cycle when the American people said we want to see things done just a little bit different, and I want to talk about that just a little bit this morning because today, when it comes to transportation, all States pay 18.4 cents per gallon for every gallon of gas they purchase. They send that to the Federal Government, and the Federal Government is distributing that out across the country.

Now, a lot of people would say that comes back to our States, doesn't it? Well, in fact, it does not. There are 28 States in this Nation that send money to the Federal Government and don't get it all back, Georgia being one of them, along with many others throughout the country. We're referred to as the donor States.

So, in addition to these 28 States not getting back all of their money, there are all of these mandates that occur to each and every one of these States. So as we can imagine, these 28 States, they want to get back all of their money. In fact, Georgia sent a resolution to Congress, and I want to read a section of it here and then submit it for the RECORD, because the Georgia General Assembly said that this body, meaning the Georgia General Assembly, urges the Federal Government to cease the collection of motor fuel taxes in Georgia so that the State can collect and distribute the taxes without the delay caused by the Federal collection and disbursement.

So Georgia and many other States are asking for changes. They're asking for the Federal Government to do something just a little different, but yet we're entering into this debate about reauthorization when maybe we just need to rethink the program altogether.

In Georgia, \$800 million was not received by the State of Georgia. It was

submitted by the taxpayers of Georgia, the hardworking Georgians sending money to the Federal Government, and \$800 million of it was sent somewhere else across the country in the last reauthorization. \$15 billion from other States was sent to States outside of their boundaries to be spent on other projects.

Now this program started in 1956. In 1956, when Congress was debating the interstate system, it was a great debate. As they debated it, they said, This will be a short-term tax that we're going to implement. It will be a tax that will be starting at 3 percent, will last for 15 years, build an interstate system, and had a great plan to do it. There was a debate about it. Well, what happens when we come to the end of that 15-year period? Well, here is part of an exchange that occurred in the Ways and Means Committee when they were debating this tax. It was in 1956, when Congressman Boggs of Louisiana and Congressman Fallon of Maryland, they were discussing what would happen during this expiration period. In that exchange, both Congressmen agreed that at the end of the 15-year authorization period, "The interstate system is built and paid for, and there is no obligation beyond the period of construction."

Yet here we are, 2012, so far removed from that debate, and not only are we at 3 cents per gallon, we are at 18.4 cents per gallon. At the end of that 15 years, it was actually supposed to go to 1.5 cents, but ever since it has always gone up. Yet here we debate about spending more and more and more money, and we've just learned from previous speakers that this isn't even going all to roads and bridges and highways; in fact, it's going to bike paths, planting flowers and bushes, walking trails, and other things. Shouldn't it be about moving people and freight? That's what it was always about.

So, as we consider the reauthorization, I hope we'll consider maybe a reflection of a new program, a new path forward. So I'm offering an amendment that changes all this, that says, You know what? It's complete. The interstate system has reached that point of completion, maybe let's devolve this back to the States. Let's empower the States to collect their taxes, as Georgia is asking to do, spend it on their priorities, not deal with the red tape of Washington or the exchange fee that's occurring, but in fact empower the States to collect their taxes at the rates that they choose and spend it on the priorities that are most important to them. Keep it back in the home States where they know where the needs are.

Instead, we're up here debating how they should spend their money and mandating all these hundreds of various program lines that they've got to spend it on.

So we'll be offering an amendment that just changes the debate a little bit and causes us to reflect and refocus on

where transportation should be as we are in the 21st century.

So, Madam Speaker, as I close and as we move into this debate on reauthorization, I hope there'll be a time when this Congress remembers what the American people said in 2010: Let's eliminate some of this government and devolve it back to the States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 750

By: Senators Pearson of the 51st, Mullis of the 53rd, Rogers of the 21st, Hill of the 32nd, Seay of the 34th and others

As passed:

A RESOLUTION

Urging the United States Department of Transportation to reconsider its mission and purpose; and for other purposes.

Whereas, the United States Department of Transportation was established by an act of Congress on October 15, 1966, and the department's first official day of operation was April 1, 1967; and

Whereas, the mission of the department is to "Serve the United States by ensuring a fast, safe, efficient, accessible and convenient transportation system that meets our vital national interests and enhances the quality of life of the American people, today and into the future,"; and

Whereas, the main mission of the department has largely been fulfilled by the completion of the federal interstate highway system; and

Whereas, state and local governments are faced with difficult decisions regarding local transportation needs on a continuing and ever-increasing basis; and

Whereas, the federal motor fuel taxes charged to the citizens of Georgia are needlessly sent to the federal government before being returned to the state government; and

Whereas, Georgia is a donor state and does not receive back as much motor fuel tax as it collects and sends to the federal government. Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the General Assembly of Georgia, That this body urges making the funds collected under the federal gas tax immediately available to individual states to fund their transportation needs; be it further

Resolved, That this body urges the federal government to cease the collection of motor fuel taxes in Georgia so that the state can collect and distribute the taxes without the delay caused by federal collection and disbursement; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution be delivered to the Commissioner of the United States Department of Transportation and to the congressional delegation of the State of Georgia.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO CAREER FUND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL. Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize the critical role of community colleges and the role that they play in economic recovery and the continued growth of our communities across the Seventh Congressional District of Alabama and this entire Nation.

In the Seventh Congressional District, the State of Alabama, and this country, the most important issue is job creation. In parts of the Seventh Congressional District that I am so privileged to represent, unemployment rates are as high as 16 percent.

This persistent, high unemployment number demonstrates the importance of career training and development. It also points to the critical role that our community colleges play in our Nation's growth. The junior colleges, our community college system, play a vital role in developing our Nation's greatest resource—our people.

A lasting partnership between the private sector and community colleges is key to creating an economy built to last. These partnerships ensure that future workers are being prepared to take advantage of every opportunity in the employment sector as we recover in this economy. In order to win the future, we must continue to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-compete our global competitors.

I want to commend the President on his recent release of a blueprint to train 2 million workers for high-demanding industries through our Community College to Career Fund.

□ 1040

The new \$8 billion Community College to Career Fund would promote the development of community college partnerships that would train skilled workers for unfilled jobs. What a great way to not only promote our community colleges but also help to train future workers.

As America regains its position as the world's preeminent innovator and developer, the need for a trained, skilled workforce becomes even greater. This proposed fund would support the training of workforce development all throughout our Nation. The Community College to Career Fund will also institute a "pay for performance" in job training. This new initiative will serve as an incentive to businesses that will provide and help them provide workforce training.

It will also help individuals find employment while encouraging businesses to assist workers in this endeavor. This is critically important, and it is not only enough to train our workers, but we must also ensure that they can find jobs right here in America.

In addition, through this job-training fund, State and local governments will be allowed to apply for grants that will help them recruit businesses to their States. This incentive to locate businesses right here in America will help create jobs, discourage outsourcing, and encourage insourcing. We have to start making things right here in America and promote that endeavor. We must create an environment that gives more Americans a fair shot at achieving the American Dream, a dream that the unemployed in my district and across this Nation are waiting to grasp. They just need opportunities and resources.

The Community College to Career Fund will inspire and train the next generation of entrepreneurs. These workers could be responsible for the next Google, the next Apple, Microsoft or other cutting-edge technology. It