

TRANSPORTATION EMPOWERMENT ACT—SENATOR CONNIE MACK, REPRESENTATIVE JOHN KASICH

SUMMARY

The Federal government collects about \$24 billion in dedicated transportation taxes, skims money off the top for demonstration projects, skims more of the top to fund the Washington highway bureaucracy, runs the remainder through a maze of formulas, and then returns gas taxes of the states. Understandably, states complain that this approach is needlessly complicated and denies them the funding flexibility and stability they deserve.

The Mack/Kasich bill re-empowers states in transportation financing and decision making. Our bill uses a two-year transition period to lower the Federal gas tax, eliminate most highway trust fund programs, relieve states of myriad federal restrictions and regulations, and remove federal roadblocks to infrastructure privatization. Each state would be free to replace the Federal gas tax and keep those dollars within the state.

The Mack/Kasich legislation retains federal oversight of the maintenance of the current interstate system. Federal programs also remain in place for Indian reservation roads, public lands, parkways and park roads, and emergency relief. The Mack/Kasich bill also creates an Infrastructure Special Assistance Fund for critical programs the Congress may elect to fund, including providing transitional assistance.

IMPLEMENTATION

This legislation provides a two year transition. During the transition period of fiscal years 1998 and 1999, this legislation keeps in place the current 14¢ gas tax dedicated to transportation purposes.

7¢ in 1998 and 2¢ in 1999 are dedicated to the remaining downsized federal program, to pay off existing obligations, and to fund the Infrastructure Special Assistance Fund.

The remainder of the gas tax (7¢ in 1998 and 12¢ in 1999) is returned to the states in a block grant based on their contributions to the trust fund. The block grant could be used for transportation purposes without restriction from Washington.

At the beginning of fiscal year 2000, the federal gas tax is reduced to 2¢.

This two-year transition gives states time to prepare to regain control over their highway program and raise their state gas taxes if they choose. Any money collected would stay within the state to be used as the state sees fit without restriction from Washington.

OTHER PROVISIONS

The Mack/Kasich legislation acknowledges that states will need to cooperate on many transportation issues. The bill authorizes states to establish multi-state "compacts" for planning, financing and establishing safety and construction standards.

The legislation will encourage innovative approaches on the part of the states, such as use of infrastructure banks and privatization. The bill repeals the requirement that states repay federal grants associated with transportation infrastructure which is slated for privatization.

This legislation only addresses gas taxes currently dedicated to transportation purposes. It does not address the 4.3¢ currently dedicated to deficit reduction.

Currently, other transportation funding "reform" proposals are being discussed on the Hill. Generally, these proposals seek to reform the highway program by increasing flexibility and revising current formula which returns gas tax dollars to the states. However, because gas taxes would continue

to be funneled through Washington, these formulas invite the re-emergence of Washington micro management and changes to the formulas in future authorizing legislation.

The Mack/Kasich bill permanently returns control over America's infrastructure to the states by phasing out much of the Federal program and reducing the gas tax. This greatly reduces the risk of Washington micro management in the future.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Thomas, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC-3454. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the rule entitled "Notice 96-37," received on July 16, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3455. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a rule entitled "Notice 96-39," received on July 16, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3456. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Bureau of the Public Debt, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Sale and Issue of Marketable Book-Entry Treasury Bills, Notes, and Bonds," received on July 11, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3457. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Bureau of the Public Debt, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Regulations Governing Payments by Banks and Other Financial Institutions of United States Savings Bonds and United States Savings Notes," received on July 17, 1996; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3458. A communication from the Comptroller General, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the financial statements of the Resolution Trust Corporation for the calendar years 1994 and 1995; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3459. A communication from the Acting Director of the Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a final rule entitled "Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska," received on July 17, 1996; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3460. A communication from the Acting Director of the Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska," received on July 17, 1996; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3461. A communication from the Acting Director of the Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a final rule entitled "Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska," received on July 17, 1996; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3462. A communication from the Acting Director of the Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a final rule entitled "Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska," received on July 17, 1996; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3463. A communication from the General Counsel, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Energy Conservation Program for Consumer Products: Procedures for Consideration of New or Revised Energy Conservation Standards for Consumer Products," (RIN1904-AA83) received on July 15, 1996; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3464. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the American Discovery Trail; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3465. A communication from the General Counsel, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Administrative Procedures and Sanctions," received on July 15, 1996; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3466. A communication from the Director of the Office of Regulatory Management and Information, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Dihydroazadirachtin," received on July 17, 1996; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3467. A communication from the Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "NRC Enforcement Manual," received on July 17, 1996; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3468. A communication from the Secretary of Transportation, transmitting, a draft of proposed legislation to amend the Act of May 13, 1954; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3469. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report regarding the rule entitled "Revenue Procedure 96-40," received on July 17, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3470. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report regarding the rule entitled "Action on Decision in Estate of Cristofani v. Commissioner," received on July 15, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3471. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report regarding the rule entitled "Action on Decision in Simon v. Commissioner," received on July 15, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3472. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report regarding the rule entitled "Action on Decision in Tele-Communications, Inc. v. Commissioner," received on July 15, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3473. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report regarding the rule entitled "Action on Decision in Estate of Clack v. Commissioner," received on July 15, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3474. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report regarding the rule entitled "Action on Decision in Lauckner v. United States," received on July 15, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3475. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report regarding the rule entitled "Action on Decision in Murphy v. Commissioner," received on July 15, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3476. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report regarding the rule entitled "Action on Decision in Fisher v. Commissioner," received on July 15, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3477. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report regarding the rule entitled "Revenue Ruling 96-36," received on July 3, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3478. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Branch, Customs Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Rules of Origin for Textile and Apparel Products," received on July 17, 1996; to the Committee on Finance.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. MACK, from the Committee on Appropriations, with amendments:

H.R. 3754. A bill making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1997, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 104-323).

By Mr. PRESSLER, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, without amendment:

S. 1831. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to authorize appropriations for fiscal years 1997, 1998, and 1999 for the National Transportation Safety Board, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 104-324).

By Mr. HATFIELD, from the Committee on Appropriations, with amendments:

H.R. 3675. A bill making appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1997, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 104-325).

By Mrs. KASSEBAUM, from the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 969. A bill to require that health plans provide coverage for a minimum hospital

stay for a mother and child following the birth of the child, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 104-326).

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second time by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. McCONNELL (for himself, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. KEMPTHORNE, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mr. COCHRAN):

S. 1975. A bill to amend the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act to provide increased emphasis on competitive grants to promote agricultural research projects regarding precision agriculture and to provide for the dissemination of the results of the research projects, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. D'AMATO:

S. 1976. A bill to authorize the President to enter into a trade agreement concerning Northern Ireland and certain Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. GRAHAM:

S. 1977. A bill to designate a United States courthouse located in Tampa, Florida, as the "Sam M. Gibbons United States Courthouse", and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. McCONNELL (for himself, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. KEMPTHORNE, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mr. COCHRAN):

S. 1975. A bill to amend the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act to provide increased emphasis on competitive grants to promote agricultural research projects regarding precision agriculture and to provide for the dissemination of the results of the research projects, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

THE PRECISION AGRICULTURE RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION ACT OF 1996

• Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today several colleagues and I are introducing the Precision Agriculture Research, Education, and Information Dissemination Act of 1996.

This legislation emphasizes research on precision agriculture technologies. These technologies are very existing and will enable the United States to maintain and augment our competitive edge in global agricultural markets. The legislation amends the Competitive, Special and Facilities Research Grant Act of 1965 by modifying the National Research Initiative [NRI] to give the Secretary of Agriculture authority to provide research, extension, and education competitive grants and programs that emphasize precision agriculture technologies and management practices.

This legislation represents a compromise between various interests. The bill is supported by the Fertilizer Insti-

tute, National Center for Resources Innovations, Experiment Station and Extension Service Directors, Lockheed Martin, and a consortium of other high tech companies.

An identical bill H.R. 3795 was introduced by Congressman LEWIS and Congressman CRAPO on July 11, 1996.

Precision agriculture technologies are rapidly advancing, and it is crucial that the agricultural community invest in this field of research so that all farmers will be able to benefit. This bill will not only increase the investment in precision agriculture, but it will also emphasize an educational process that will assist all farmers in adopting precision agriculture technologies and applications.

Emerging technologies in production agriculture are changing and improving the way farmers produce food and fiber in this country. New technologies such as global positioning satellites field mapping, georeference information systems, grid soil sampling, variable rate seeding and input applications, portable electronic pest scouting, on-the-go yield monitoring, and computerized field history and record keeping are just a few of the next generation technological tools in use today.

These technologies allow the agriculture producer to adjust hundreds of variables in the farm field, from soil pH to nutrient levels to crop yield, on a 2 foot by 2 foot grid that were previously far too costly to calculate for each field. Today, these technologies can map these variables and data instantaneously as an applicator or combine drives across the field. In short, each farm field using precision technology becomes a research pilot. And in the down months or winter season a farmer can collect the data from the previous growing season and adjust dozens of important agronomic variables to maximize the efficient use of all the farmers inputs: time, fuel, commercial inputs, seed rate, irrigation—the list goes on and on.

These precision farming tools are already proving to help farmers increase field productivity, improve input efficiency, protect the environment, maximize farm profitability and create computerized field histories that may help increase land values. Collectively, these and other emerging technologies are being used in a holistic, site-specific systems approach called precision agriculture. Progressive and production minded farmers are already using these technologies. In a decade, they may be as commonplace on the farm as air-conditioned tractor cabs and power steering.

Precision farming seems to offer great promise for improving production performance. Inherently, it just sounds very appealing to be able to evaluate production conditions on an individual square foot, yard, or acre basis rather than that of a whole field. It would seem that we should be able to treat any situation more appropriately the