Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this commonsense legislation. By passing H.R. 2779, Congress can act to enhance the competitiveness of American industry, protect small businesses, save thousands of union jobs from foreign competition, and save the American taxpayer money. I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BROWN of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise with mixed emotions on the bill H.R. 2779, the Savings in Construction Act. While I believe that the Science Committee's actions have improved H.R. 2779 substantially, I regret that we did not use this legislation to develop a more imaginative approach to measurement policy questions.

At the outset, I also want to make sure our colleague from Tennessee, Mr. TANNER receives credit for the pivotal role he played in the improvements in H.R. 2779. His March 5 letter to Under Secretary of Commerce Mary Good, which was co-signed by most of the other committee Democrats, began the chain of events which has permitted this bill to move forward. The end results of his efforts are a more favorable atmosphere within the administration for the concrete block and recessed lighting industries and the improved legislative language now before us. This bill is no longer harmful to the Federal procurement process, and its potential damage to our national policy of metric conversion has been limited.

H.R. 2779, as reported, does a credible job in solving $10,000 problems of a number of small businesses, but it lets a billion dollar national problem fester. As Congressman EHLERS so eloquently pointed out during Science Committee deliberations on this bill, our Nation's failure to adopt the metric system of measurement in a timely manner has cost U.S. companies billions of dollars in lost trade opportunities. This situation is ongoing and has the potential to get worse. The United States is the only industrialized nation to hold onto the English system of measurement. We can increasingly expect our trading partners to require American exports to their countries to be designed and manufactured using the internationally accepted metric system of measurement. If, as in this bill, we restate English measurements in metric terms rather than actually design and measure in metric, we will not fool anyone. American companies that are unwilling or unable to manufacture in rational metric units will lose out to foreign companies that will.

The case was made in our hearings on H.R. 2779 that some block manufacturers have difficulty bidding on construction projects which require their products to be dimensioned in rational metric. However, exempting these companies from metric usage is just one possible solution and one that represents a ''can't do'' rather than a ''can do'' attitude. With more time, we could have looked for ways to solve the block manufacturers problems while advancing the cause of metrication. We could have made sure that metric block molds are an allowable expense under Federal construction contracts. We could have funded research in the design of adjustable molds which could be used for making both metric and English-dimensioned block. As a minimum, we could have limited the duration of the metric block exemption and committed to finding a better solution to this problem during that time. I hope the Senate will take a closer look than we were able to do at alternative ways to help block manufacturers and at setting appropriate limits on the duration of this exemption.

Our solution for lighting industry metrication problems may turn out to be more appropriate. Our lighting industry is positioned to begin manufacturing metric lighting products; a number of the affected companies already have issued metric lighting catalogs. H.R. 2779, through its lighting standards trigger, will allow the exemption to be ignored when the reason for it no longer exists.

The ombudsman concept is a dramatic improvement over the procurement bureaucracy contained in section 4 of the introduced version of H.R. 2779, but the jury is still out on whether it is really necessary. The Government has built a dozen major buildings using metric measurement and only two industries have not been willing to go along. One would think if metric were a problem for other building subcontractors that the problem would have arisen by now.

The busiest time for the metric ombudsmen will probably be at the time of enactment when agencies must figure out what to do with the hundreds of metric-dimensioned construction projects which are in various stages of design and construction. H.R. 2779's silence on this point is likely to lead to problems of interpretation. I urge the Senate to come up with a set of principles to cover ongoing projects and urge the ombudsmen to use common sense in these cases.

In summary, my desire to see the concrete masonry industry get relief leads me not to oppose this bill, but I regret that we did not have more time to perfect our work product. Perhaps the Senate will have the time to make a conscious effort to improve the bill. Then we will be able to feel comfortable that the entire Congress did its best to meet the long-term needs of the companies we are all trying to help.

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HAYWORTH). Pursuant to the rule, the previous question is ordered on the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute and on the bill.

The question is on the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute.

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and (three-fifths having voted in favor thereof) the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2779.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the provisions of clause 5 of rule I, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 4 of rule XV.

Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken after debate has concluded on all motions to suspend the rules.

NATO ENLARGEMENT FACILITATION ACT OF 1996

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3564) to amend the NATO Participation Act of 1994 to expedite the transition to full membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization of emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3564

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''NATO Enlargement Facilitation Act of 1996''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Since 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has played an essential role in guaranteeing the security, freedom, and prosperity of the United States and its partners in the Alliance.

(2) The NATO Alliance is, and has been since its inception, purely defensive in character, and it poses no threat to any nation. The enlargement of the NATO Alliance to include as full and equal members emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe will serve to reinforce stability and security in Europe by fostering their integration into the structures which have created and sustained peace in Europe since 1945. Their admission to NATO will not threaten any nation. America's security, freedom, and prosperity remain linked to the security of the countries of Europe.

(3) The sustained commitment of the member countries of NATO to a mutual defense has made possible the democratic transformation of Central and Eastern Europe. Members of the Alliance can and should play a critical role in addressing the security challenges of the post-Cold War era and in creating the stable environment needed for those emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe to successfully complete political and economic transformation.

(4) The United States continues to regard the political independence and territorial integrity of all emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe as vital to European peace and security.

(5) NATO has enlarged its membership on 3 different occasions since 1949.

(6) Congress has sought to facilitate the further enlargement of NATO at an early date by enacting the NATO Participation