

CONGRATULATIONS TO SENIOR
AIRMAN ANDRE L. WALKER

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 22, 1998

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor for me to bring to the attention of the House of Representatives and the American public the distinguished honor of a fellow Missourian. Senior Airman Andre L. Walker, of St. Louis, was recently chosen as the Air National Guard Airman of the Year.

Senior Airman Andre L. Walker is a Satcom/Wideband Communications Specialist assigned to the 239th Combat Communications Squadron as a TRC-170 tactical communications terminal crew member, Missouri Air National Guard Base, Lambert Field, St. Louis, Missouri. He is 31 years old and was born in St. Louis, Missouri. He attended McCluer Senior High School and was a member of the school football team and the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA).

After graduation from high school, Airman Walker was locally employed while attending S. Louis Community College's Florissant Valley and Forest Park campuses. He graduated with honors from Forest Park Community College with an Associate of Arts degree in Business Administration. He then went on to continue his education at the University of Missouri, St. Louis campus.

In July 1995 Airman Walker enlisted in the Missouri Air National Guard, and was sent to Basic Military Training in September of the same year. He was selected as flight leader (Dorm Chief) and his flight had the overall highest score in intrasquadron competition. After completing BMT, Airman Walker attended Satcom/Wideband Specialist Training at Keesler AFB, Mississippi, where he was a student leader and member of the drill team in his squadron.

After graduating from technical school, he volunteered to assist a Civil Engineering squadron install fiber optics lines on Spangdahlem Air Base, Spangdahlem, Germany. Airman Walker was recognized as an outstanding performer for his efforts during the project. In August 1996 Airman Walker volunteered to serve in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in support of Operation Southern Watch. He received an Air Force Commendation Medal for his performance there.

Airman Walker returned home in January 1997 and assisted the 131st Fighter Wing in its Mobility Warehouse Reorganization Project in which he and his team completed the task in eighty percent of its estimated time. His team received recognition for its Superior Performance. He subsequently served as an augmentee for the 107th Air Control Squadron during their Operational Readiness Exercise, and afterward he returned to the Middle East for a second tour. Upon his return home in June 1997 he assisted his squadron in preparing for their upcoming Operational Readiness Exercise until August 1997. After the August Operational Readiness Exercise, he was recognized as a Superior Performer by his squadron for his efforts during the Operational Readiness Exercise. Airman Walker subsequently returned to Phoenix, Arizona, in Sep-

tember to assist the 107th Air Control Squadron in their Operational Readiness Inspection. While there, he and two others discovered and extinguished a brush fire on the Fort Huachuca Army Base, preventing potential injury to military personnel and equipment. Airman Walker was again recommended for the Air Force Commendation medal for his efforts there, confirmation of his decoration is pending.

His military awards include the Air Force Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Joint Forces Expeditionary Medal, and Air Force Overseas Short Ribbon.

Mr. Speaker, I am certain that the Members of the House will join me in congratulating Andre L. Walker as the Air National Guard's Airman of the Year.

FLOOR STATEMENT ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ACT

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 22, 1998

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the "Metropolitan Washington Regional Transportation Act" with my colleague, Senator CHUCK ROBB, to address the traffic congestion problems within the metropolitan Washington D.C. region. We now have the second longest average commuting time in the nation.

According to the Greater Washington Board of Trade, this increased commuting time and congestion costs each man, woman, and child in the region more than \$800 per year in lost time, wasted fuel, and environmental damage. Long commutes and traffic congestion have also become quality of life issues to area residents, robbing many families of the one commodity Washingtonians never seem to have enough of—time. Some drivers facing a longer commute have even become a safety hazard as they race recklessly to cut a precious few minutes from their daily commute. Last year's tragedies on I-95 and the George Washington Parkway are still fresh on everyone's mind. For those who lack cars, the distance between employment opportunities and affordable housing has grown more and more difficult to traverse. Our economic prosperity and quality of life hinge on improving our congestion problem.

Unfortunately, as we look to the future the traffic situation only grows worse. Even with increase in federal funds Virginia will receive under legislation reauthorizing federal surface transportation programs, this region will still fall seriously short of meeting the growing demand for transportation improvements. For the period of 1990 through 2020, this region can expect both a 43 percent increase in population and 43 percent increase in employment. This growth and increased dependency on the automobile is expected to increase by 79 percent the number of vehicle miles traveled in the region by 2020.

The Board of Trade estimates that transportation spending is expected to fall short of the

region's transportation needs by more than \$500 million annually. Any solution to current and future congestion demands strategic investment in both our road and mass transit system. It demands better land use and planning decisions and better interjurisdictional cooperation. And it also demands that this region come together and raise additional revenue to finance priority transportation projects that will provide immediate congestion relief.

It may not be a popular idea, but we have to do more, and we have to do it ourselves. Federal and state taxes levied on our citizens will always take a "haircut" on before spending any of the balance back in this region. It seems to me, that the only way to ensure that we get 100 percent of funds we need is to raise more ourselves and spend them locally. It is also a process that ensures that the money gets spent where we determine it is needed most. I think the key to public support is identifying a list of priority projects that could be completed on a fast track providing the public with the assurances that their additional tax dollars will buy specific congestion relief. A large number of urban communities have already established a dedicated funding source for their transit systems.

In the past, leaders from this region have shared a vision and worked successfully together to address important transportation needs, through such institutions as the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. We need a similar vision to carry us forward another 30 years.

The Metropolitan Washington Regional Transportation Act will help us craft this vision. The legislation we are introducing has five key elements: (1) It provides a new option to help the metropolitan Washington region more effectively address its transportation needs; (2) it empowers the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board to consult with the metropolitan Washington region jurisdictions and the public to achieve consensus on a list of critical transportation projects and a funding mechanism that are needed to address the growing congestion crisis in the region but cannot be funded within the current and forecasted federal, state and local funding levels for such projects; (3) it establishes a Corporation with the power to accept revenue and issue debt to provide short-term funding for projects that have been agreed to by the region; (4) it grants consent to the metropolitan Washington region jurisdictions to enter into an interstate compact or agreement that would help meet the region's long-term transportation needs; and (5) it provides \$60 million in matching federal grants as an incentive to encourage the creation of the federal corporation.

This legislation provides a framework under which a regional transportation needs could be addressed. It requires consultation with state and local officials at every level and in an effort to win state support, the legislation preciously guards state control of both the corporation and the authority through veto power.