Following the deregulation of the Staggers Act, a dramatic shift has occurred in the railroad industry in Kansas. Class I railroads have gone from operating over 6,500 miles of track in 1986 to 3,800 miles today. Short line carriers now have over 30% of the track in Kansas and make up an even greater percentage in the First Congressional District. Kansas still ranks fourth in the nation with over 5,500 miles of rail; however, we have lost nearly 700 miles of track through abandonments just since 1991.

These changes have left Kansas with fewer Class I carriers and back-to-back years where large harvests have crippled the grain transportation system in Kansas. While no single solution exists to cure all of the problems facing the industry, the federal role in regulating this industry can and should be improved.

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) is responsible for approving railroad mergers, approving abandonments, and mediating rate disputes. The agency is currently being considered for reauthorization. Earlier this year, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a series of hearings on the state of the railroad industry and the regulatory functions of the STB.

As a result of those hearings and my own experiences in dealing with the railroad situation in Kansas, I am introducing legislation aimed at improving the ability of the STB to address the critical transportation issues facing rural America.

Specifically, this legislation would:

Reduce the likelihood of additional abandonments by providing states an other small railroads an additional year to acquire an abandoned line;

Provide an expedited rate case procedure;

Provide direction to the STB to devote resources to promoting competition and reasonable rates; and

Direct the STB to place a priority on improving the economic viability of abandoned lines.

Maintaining an efficient transportation system has long been a key to the success of U.S. agriculture. As agriculture becomes more export dependent, rail transportation is more important than ever. As a member of the Railroad subcommittee of the House Transportation Committee, I am eager work to improve rail transportation.

The changes proposed in this bill would assist in solving the current rail transportation issues by quickly resolving shipper complaints and taking steps to ensure that over the long haul, rail transportation remains an option for America's agricultural producers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my fellow colleagues to support this legislation and urge its early consideration and passage.

CRIME DOES NOT PAY ACT

HON. TOM BLILEY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 6, 1998

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce the Crime Does Not Pay Act on behalf of Margie Nolan Cowles of Richmond, Virginia. Margie Nolan Cowles wrote a letter to the editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch decrying the fact that criminals were receiving payments from injuries received during the commission of a crime. I agreed and have introduced the Crime Does Not Pay Act to correct this injustice. This legislation prevents convicted felons from collecting damages for injuries incurred while committing the felony. It closes a loophole that permits criminals to get rich while committing a felony.

For example, in California, a jury awarded more than $100,000 to Brian Forrett, a career criminal who broke into a home and tied up the residents. He then fired at one of the residents and missed, and shot at the other resident, blinding him. Forrett was shot by police officers while trying to escape and is now receiving $26,183 from each of the four officers that fired on him while he serves a 32-year prison sentence for robbery.

It is not right that criminals can receive damages when they are injured in the commission of a felony. This is a travesty of justice and this bill will prevent such miscarriages of justice in the future. I look forward to earning the support of my colleagues and the American people for this legislation because Crime Does Not Pay and my legislation will correct this injustice.

DEPARTMENTS OF COMMERCE, JUSTICE, AND STATE, AND JUDICIARY, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4276) making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in opposition to the Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations bill.

There are many reasons for my opposition to this bill.

First and foremost, is the atrocity of this body's inability to pass the Mollohan amendment to restore full funding for a fair and accurate census.

At this time, however, I would like to address a matter which has not been discussed on the floor: The dramatic reduction in funding in the bill for the Small Business Administration.

The bill reduces funding for the Small Business Administration's *regular operating expenses* by 27 percent, or $75 million less than the President's request.

The Committee directs that reductions should come from ''overhead'' functions and primarily headquarters staff.

According to the SBA, this reduction ''would literally shut down the Agency.''

The cut is so extreme that, if enacted, it would result in the elimination of more than 1,200 Federal employees, or 40 percent of SBA's workforce.

But the situation gets worse!

The Committee Report language on the funding cuts prohibits staff reductions from SBA district offices.

However, of the approximately 3,000 Federal employees of the SBA, 2,000 are located in district offices.

In other words, even if the SBA eliminated every employee in its DC headquarters, it would still not generate the savings required under the legislation!

Thus, whether intended or not, this appropriations bill will de-fund the SBA.

Mr. Speaker, the many programs operated by the SBA are critical to the people of my district and I am sure, to those of every Member of this Congress.

The SBA helps to ensure that America's small business opportunities are available to the majority of Americans.

America's 22 million small businesses employ more than 50 percent of the private work force, generate more than half of the nation's gross domestic product, and are the principal source of new jobs.

In Maryland, SBA programs to encourage the establishment and growth of small businesses have proven invaluable:

In 1997, through its 7(a) program, the SBA made over 750 loans to Maryland small businesses, totaling over $145,000.

The SBA's Small Business Investment Company program financed over $19 million for Maryland small businesses in 1997, and

The SBA microloan program in Maryland financed over $190,000 for African American small businesses and $160,000 to 100% women-owned small businesses in 1997.

I hope that the Appropriations Committee did not actually intend to de-fund this vital agency and that this funding situation will be addressed in conference committee.

In addition to my concerns regarding the general operating budget, I am deeply troubled by the low funding levels for several key SBA programs.

Two of these programs, the National Women's Business Council and the Women's Development Projects, have been addressed by my colleagues Representatives MILLENDER-MCDONALD and SANDERS in two amendments which receive my full support. I thank my colleagues for their efforts.

However, there are at least two additional programs that were under-funded in this bill that are of particular concern to me and my constituents:

The 7(j) Minority Enterprise Development program, for which the President requested $9.5 million, was provided just $2.6 million; and

The HUB Zone program, enacted last year, for which the President requested $4 million, was provided only $2 million.

Just two weeks ago in Baltimore, Aida Alvarez, Administrator of the SBA, signed an agreement with the Maryland Minority Contractors Association reaffirming SBA's commitment to double the number of SBA-guaranteed loans to African Americans.

Alvarez joined Allan Stephenson, Baltimore SBA District Director, and Arnold Jolivet, President of the Maryland Minority Contractors Association in Baltimore, in the signing of a partnership agreement between the two groups.

The agreement represents each organization's commitment to work together to increase the participation of Maryland's minority contractors in SBA's financial and technical assistance programs.

I ask my colleagues, what purpose does it serve for SBA to promise to work more closely with the people of my district if there is no money in the programs for which my constituents apply?