than the majority leader or the minority leader as a question of the privileges of the House has immediate precedence only at a time designated by the Chair within 2 legislative days after the resolution is properly noticed.

Pending that designation, the form of the resolution noticed by the gentleman from Pennsylvania will appear in the RECORD at this point.

The Chair will not at this point determine whether the resolution constitutes a question of privilege. That determination will be made at the time designated for consideration of the resolution.

Mr. KLINK. Mr. Speaker, I would ask to be notified at the proper time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Pennsylvania will be notified at the proper time.

Mr. KLINK. I thank the Speaker for his courtesy.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2389, COUNTY SCHOOLS FUNDING REVITALIZATION ACT OF 1999

Ms. PRYCE. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 352 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 352

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2389) to restore stability and predictability to the annual payments made to States and counties containing National Forest System lands and public domain lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management for use by the counties for the benefit of public schools, roads, and other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Agriculture. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. In lieu of the amendment recommended by the Committee on Agriculture now printed in the bill, it shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in the Congressional Record and numbered 1 pursuant to clause 8 of rule XVIII, modified by the amendments printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. That amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. All points of order against that amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without intervening business, provided that the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be 15 minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the amendment in the nature of a substitute made in order as original text. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. PRYCE. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my good friend the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HALL), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 352 is an open rule providing for the consideration of H.R. 2389, the County Schools Funding Revitalization Act. Under the rule, 1 hour of general debate will be controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Agriculture. For the purpose of amendment, the rule makes in order as base text a substitute amendment which is printed and numbered 1 in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This substitute language, which will replace H.R. 2389, represents a bipartisan compromise brokered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE), the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT), and the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) to address the concerns of some environmental groups. The rule further amends this compromise language to make technical amendments and clarify a budgetary issue.

As my colleagues know, under an open rule any Member may offer any germane amendment to the bill, but under the rule priority recognition will be given to Members who have preprinted their amendments in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. And, of course, the rule offers the minority an additional opportunity to amend the bill through a motion to recommit, with or without instructions. During consideration of amendments, the Chair will have the flexibility to postpone votes and reduce voting time to 5 minutes, as long as the first vote in a series is 15 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, the goals of the County School Funding Revitalization Act are straightforward. The bill seeks to provide a temporary solution to a very real problem for counties that include Federal land. Since the enactment of two compacts, one in 1908 and the other in 1937, these counties have counted on revenue from the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to pay for public schools and roads. This revenue compensates the counties for the revenue they would have otherwise received had the land been sold or transferred into private ownership. However, in recent years these Federal revenue payments have plummeted as Federal timber sales have declined by 70 percent, leaving communities searching for the resources they need to educate their children and maintain basic infrastructure. This has been especially devastating for students who have seen their classes canceled, teachers laid off and extracurricular activities eliminated as budgets shrink.

Mr. Speaker, education reform has become a top national priority for both parties, and this bill plays a small yet meaningful role in enabling local communities to give their children a quality education. Specifically, the bill will stabilize payments to forest communities by providing for a 7-year safety net of guaranteed funding. The payments to States and counties with Federal land will be based on the average of the highest three payments received by States and counties between 1984 and 1999. However, the legislation is not without controversy. Because the Federal payments made to forest counties are linked to timber sales, some believe there is a perverse incentive to cut down more trees. These opponents advocate a decoupling of timber sales from the revenues. To address some of these concerns, this rule incorporates compromise language into the bill.

Under the compromise, revenues will still come from timber sales, but if this source of funding proves inadequate, dollars from the general fund may be used to pay forest communities. This effectively takes the pressure off the Forest Service to cut more trees. Further, counties that receive more than $100,000 through the Forest Service will be required to use 80 percent for schools and roads and the remaining 20 percent for local projects on Federal lands. These local projects will be designed to restore forest health for economic or recreational use and will be approved by a local committee representing a broad range of community interests. Additionally, the project must comply with all Federal laws, environmental and otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the payments that this legislation guarantees are meant only as a short-term safety net. The bill establishes a forest county payments committee that is tasked with developing a long-term policy to improve upon the current system of revenue sharing between the Federal Government and forest counties. Within 18 months, the committee will submit its recommendations to Congress for our consideration.

In summary, this legislation offers a balanced approach to ensure that the agreement the Federal Government made with States and counties that include Federal land within their borders

is honored. By providing these safety net payments, we will enable local communities to provide better educational opportunities to children, as well as maintain their socioeconomic infrastructures. The rule is balanced as well. It presents a compromise version of this legislation to the House for open debate and amendment.

I urge my colleagues to support this open rule as well as the communities who need our assistance to educate their children.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Ohio for yielding me the time, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This is an open rule. It will allow for full and fair consideration of H.R. 2389. As the gentlewoman from Ohio has explained, this rule will provide for 1 hour of debate to be equally divided between the majority and the minority, especially the members of the Committee on Agriculture. The rule permits germane amendments under the 5-minute rule, the normal amending process in the House, and all Members will have the opportunity to offer amendments.

Under current law, 25 percent of the revenues generated by timber sales, mining and oil and gas development in national forests goes to the counties where the national forests are located. The counties use the money for public schools and roads. This compensates for the loss of taxable property. In recent years, timber sales from national forests have fallen by 70 percent. This has caused a hardship on the rural public schools near the national forests that depend on the money.

In the State of Ohio, which the gentlewoman and I represent, although we do not represent the area where Wayne National Forest is, that generates funds for schools in some of the poorest counties in the State. This bill attempts to strike a compromise between environmental concerns and the needs of the rural public schools that benefit from the national forest payments. It will provide a stable source of funds for the schools. It also will establish a national advisory committee to develop long-term solutions to the funding problems of these schools.

Some environmentalists do have concerns about the bill because rural schools will still depend on dwindling timber sales in national forests. But this is an open rule, as I said. Members will have a chance to offer germane amendments and they will have the opportunity to improve the bill on the House floor. For that reason, I urge my colleagues to support this rule.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. VENTO).

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. I have other responsibilities today so I am not going to be able to stay on the floor for general debate but I wanted to voice my concerns about the general policy path that this measure puts in place. I think what we really need here is sort of a reality check in terms of what is going down with this bill.

I have no objections to the rule, I think it is a fair rule which permits amendments, but I do not think that this bill is going to be corrected by amendment. The underlying premise of the bill fundamentally is sound. I think that many of us could agree with such policy as counties and school districts that are dependent upon the 25 percent of total fund yielded from resource extraction in the national forests to support their basic governing structure, to support their schools. Such funds have become limited and cut back because of the reality of forest science and policies that have curtailed the harvest of timber and other activities. Most importantly, I think here, is the realization of new forestry and what is sustainable and what is not and what the impacts are and how those multiple uses of our national forests have come to conflict with one another so obviously in the last decade in terms of forest science timber harvest has been limited. So the reduction in dollars is significant to these communities.

I think I would stand with my colleagues to try and maintain some stable funding. This bill obviously does maintain stable funding by giving them the highest amount, their average for the highest 3-year period in terms of funding for their counties and their schools from 1985. While there are a lot of other programs around in terms of Impact Aid for military and other issues, I think we have tried to recognize nationally where we have significant lands like through the PILT program, payment in lieu of taxes program and other programs, some funding for communities where we have significant public ownership, Federal ownership of lands, and where that does impact, we have provided assistance in trying to stabilize that, in this case is a good thing to do. At the same time in terms of extending and authorizing the significant amounts of money in this bill Congress should also try and delink and reform the system to a greater extent. That means to try and establish once and for all that these communities should not be receiving the dollars based wholly on timber production, that we should delink that as we stabilize and assure stable funding. While there is a token attempt to do that in this bill, it totally fails in the final analysis to do that—to delink timber receipts from state/local funding.

□ 1300

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, one of the problems with this bill is that it provides for communities that do receive over $100,000, and in many other instances where they receive significant aid under this measure, to in fact establish dozens of different advisory committees which would then sit down and decide how in a local area and make recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture or Interior on how to expend 20 percent of the resources that they are provided under this bill's authority. I know the counties and school districts would just as well receive the money themselves, this sets up a big problem—in fact a grant program under cover of this measure.

First of all, it creates a lot more government than probably anyone need. We already have county boards and school boards that could make decisions on how to expend this money. Frankly, I think these advisory groups set up the potential and set up the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief of the Forest Service for a lot more controversy and conflict. Frankly, it is going to be up to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief of the Forest Service to make decisions to say no to a lot of local advisory groups in a very unpleasant way, delivering the bad news, that some of these proposals are not worthy.

It is up to the Secretary with such little details as requiring whether or not an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment is needed; and if it is needed, then the cost will go back to the local group to pay for writing. That's another unpopular decision, to say the least.

I just think it is going to create a lot more conflict. I do not see this as being helpful. I think that it is a step in the wrong direction, creating all this governing structure is not an improvement. It is not what America is demanding with regards to deal with this problem, quite the contrary. I think it expands the original problem, creating controversy and confusing the topic.

I have questions about whether all Federal laws are going to be complied with, such as enforcing the prevailing wage law. I have questions about the use of individuals in this that are put into a situation where they are forced to work in the county because they are under mandatory work-type requirements, both adults and juveniles. That provision is in the bill.

There are a lot of concerns that I have. But fundamentally I think the bill fails on the basis of not delinking the roller coaster ride of up-and-down timber revenues sharing that occur as the local receipts from our national forests to these local communities. In other words, it keeps that link in place; it creates all this governing structure, and I think it is going to create more conflict.

This is not an interim bill. It lasts for 7 or 8 years. The description of this as an interim bill is flawed on its surface and misleading. I urge the defeat of this measure.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 6 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Ohio

(Mr. REGULA), the dean of the Ohio delegation and the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior.

(Mr. REGULA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for the time.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to explain my vote on this because I am pro-education, but I think there are a couple of things I would bring to the attention of my colleagues here. It is temporary for 7 years. That is not exactly ''temporary'' as I would define it. But the real fundamental concern that I have is that the policy involved, we are establishing a policy that when Federal receipts are diminished, we, therefore, step in and fill the breach.

Now, in the case that is outlined in this bill, that may have some validity. But as a matter of precedent, what happens if offshore oil production goes down, because a portion of offshore oil revenues go to the States? Do we then make up the difference to the highest years for the States that are receiving offshore oil receipts? Or how about the States that are receiving revenues from on-shore oil, and you have in this case timber; but we produce a lot of other things on Federal lands. In most cases, 50 percent of those revenues are shared with the States.

Now, you can see that as these revenues diminish, and they may well, because our resources are not finite, that then we would be called on to make up the difference. I think that is a precedent that we ought to give serious consideration to today in establishing this as a policy of the Government.

I know it is temporary, if you define that by 7 years, but it seems to me if we are going to get into this kind of a policy change, we ought to have a long-term set of conditions that address this in the case of other types of revenues.

Also the question of where is it funded arises. The way it is established, it comes out of the Interior budget. I have, along with my colleagues on the subcommittee and all of us essentially, responsibility for the funding of parks and forests and fish and wildlife and Bureau of Land Management, about 30 percent of America's land; and if I would read this correctly, the money to fund it, which could grow as forest receipts are diminished, would have to come out of the Interior budget. That means, of course, there would be less for parks in the U.S. or less for other forms of responsibilities that we have in the committee, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the land agencies I mentioned, the cultural institutions here in the city.

While I understand the objective here, it seems to me that we may be getting into something that has greater ramifications than we think.

I also would point out that the national forests, while the amount of cut has been diminished, do provide revenues to communities through the recreation uses. People come in to hunt, fish, camp, and do a lot of other types of activities. Interestingly, and this is a little known fact, the forests of this Nation generate triple the visitor days of the Park Service, and the Bureau of Land Management lands generate double the visitor days of the Park Service.

We think of the parks as our recreation dimension, when in reality the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service collectively probably produce five to six times as many visitor days as the Park Service. I say this because as people visit these forests, as they visit BLM lands, they are spending money, for housing, for food, for fishing gear, you name it; and this in turn helps to support the local economy.

So for these reasons I think it is maybe premature to try to band-aid a problem that has a greater potential policy impact down the road. If we were to make legislation like this permanent, if we were to make it part of our responsibility, then I think there ought to be a separate source of funding, because I do not believe we should be penalizing the revenues that we have available to the appropriate committees for the parks and the recreation and the ecosystem of this Nation and the many responsibilities that go with the Department of Interior.

I understand this and I commend the Members that are supporting this. They are trying to help their school districts. But with the exception of about three big States in terms of forests, it primarily affects about three or four States, about 150 counties, out of the total in the United States. So I believe that we ought to move cautiously in establishing the precedent that is embodied in this legislation, and I hope my colleagues will give some thought to that as we make a judgment in voting for or against this bill.

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. UDALL).

(Mr. UDALL of Colorado asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule. I support the rule because it appropriately allows the House to consider amendments, including one that I will offer and I will describe in a moment. But I believe the bill is another story. I cannot support the bill in its present form because it is not addressing the real problem with the current law that links Federal assistance for schools and roads to the size of the annual timber harvest on Federal lands.

The real problem, if you look at it, is the link itself. This link needs to be broken, but this bill does not do that.

I strongly support Federal assistance to education. The need for this assistance is particularly important in areas that are undergoing economic or other stress. In Colorado, for example, the stress that we feel at this point is because of our rapid growth and urban sprawl. In other areas it has other causes, including changes in local economies that have depended on timber harvests.

But I think the Congress should provide assistance in ways that are most efficient and will have the fewest of side effects. In other words, if we are going to assist schools or provide help to local governments with funds for schools or fire fighting or whatever needs they may have, we should do so directly in a way as simple as possible to administer and in proportion to the needs.

The current law that links payments to timber harvests does not meet those tests of directness, simplicity, and proportionality. So we need to break the link, in other words, to decouple payments as some have described it. We should also break the link because it would free the captives, those captives at the local areas.

Local schools, roads or other vital functions of government should no longer be held financial hostage to the very contentious issues that surround the management of our forests. School boards and county commissioners should not be forced to argue that it is necessary to cut more trees in order to repair roofs or keep the roads plowed.

I do not mean to say that local officials do not have a legitimate interest in the management of our forests or that they should not speak out about them. I do mean that they and everyone else should be free to debate those issues on the basis of what is best for the lands themselves and for our society as a whole and not in terms of the financial needs of our schools or other institutions.

But this bill does not only break the link; it not only does not free the captives. I believe it would make things worse for these local people. The bill would impose a new Federal mandate on the very communities for whom this Federal assistance is most important. It says, for example, that if the local government gets more than $100,000 under the bill, 20 percent of the total payment must be set aside and used for projects on the Federal lands. To put it another way, the bill says that the hostages will have to help pay for things that otherwise would be funded from the budgets of the Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management.

Some of those things could be good things, like repairing trails or removing old logging roads that cause erosion. But suppose the local government has other priorities? What if they would rather spend all their Federal payment on schools or roads, rather than helping the Forest Service or BLM. Then what? Under current law it is their choice. They have that option. Under the bill, the way it is written, they would not.

I think that is just flat wrong. So at an appropriate time I will offer an

amendment that will return discretion to the local governments. My amendment would allow any local government to spend 20 percent of its Federal payment on Federal land projects, but it would not require that those monies are spent on Federal land projects.

Under my amendment, a local government could decide to use all this year's payment for schools and roads and then, next year, perhaps apply some of those monies to these Federal land projects. But in the end it would remove this potential Federal mandate and restore local discretion.

My amendment would not cure all the problems with the bill. I think the bill is fundamentally flawed because it does not break this link between Federal assistance and timber receipts. So, to be straight with this body, even if my amendment is adopted, I cannot support the bill. At least my amendment would mean that this bill, which is entitled the Community Self-Determination Act, would come a little closer to living up to its name.

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO).

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I wish that every day on the floor we had rules like this. This is an open rule. It will allow any Member of the House to offer an amendment, and I believe that is something that we should do much more often around here. So this will be a rare moment where I can support a rule for a bill. Too many times we are muzzled and not allowed to offer amendments that would improve or alter bills before us.

The bill that is before us is very different and did not go through a regular committee process; and for that reason, some Members may be puzzled as to exactly what the bill does, as are advocacy groups on both sides of the issue among the public; and I would like to take a couple of minutes to explain that.

I had a very different approach in mind when I introduced my legislation, which would be 100 percent guaranteed, very clean, complete decoupled. That bill garnered very, very little support; and a different bill passed in the Committee on Agriculture, the Boyd-Deal bill; and then, of course, we had a bill recommended on the Senate side by Senators who I do not think the rules of the House allow me to name. But, anyway, there were some Senators that introduced a bill over.

This bill is different than all of those bills, but it combines some of the most important aspects of all. First and foremost, this bill requires that anything and everything done under this legislation follow and absolutely comply with every environmental law, every environmental rule, every forest plan, every resource management plan that is currently on the books in the United States, that it fully follow the Endangered Species Act, and allow appeals.

□ 1315

All that is within the scope of this bill. Any projects which might occur under this bill, which are a small part of the bill, are subject to Secretarial discretion, in addition to having to follow all rules, laws, and regulations.

There will be much controversy over the projects. The projects were not my preferred alternative, but they have been altered in a way that makes them environmentally neutral, and potentially they could be projects that would be beneficial to local communities and areas.

They could be spent for road obliteration for problem roads, for watershed restoration, they could be spent for other revenue-generating activities on the forests that do not go to timber production. They could be spent on recreation.

The gentleman from Minnesota objected to a provision I had added which would allow them to be used for work camps; that is, to be allowed for a correctional facility for nonviolent offenders to work on the forest lands. I do not find that to be objectionable. I think that is very desirable, better than having them sit in jail and watch television. So I do not understand why the gentleman would object to that.

It could also be used at their initiative for reimbursing counties for the huge unmet costs of search and rescue on Federal lands. The bottom line is, my State is more than half owned by the Federal government. The Federal government has dramatically changed the laws and rules that pertain to timber harvests, as I believe many of those changes were necessary, because we were overharvesting.

The question is, since no other productive use that generates revenues for those counties, we cannot levy taxes in those lands can go forward, should the government pay something to those counties for their ongoing obligations to provide a road network through those lands, and to provide law enforcement services and the other things? I believe the answer is yes. I hope that a majority of the body here today decides that the answer is yes.

The gentleman before me, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. REGULA) said this creates a bad precedent. He talked about offshore oil drilling. That is not analogous. The analogy would be base closings. When the Federal government closes a military base, it admits there are huge impacts on the communities, it dumps a whole bunch of money into that community, it does retraining, does a whole host of other things, and ultimately it turns the lands over to those communities for future purposes.

I am not advocating these lands be turned back over to the States. I am absolutely and adamantly opposed to that. But in lieu of that, we are asking for a modest replacement of revenues that were formerly created off these lands, while there will be ongoing and perpetual obligations to the counties for law enforcement and infrastructure, roads and other activities on those lands.

These are vital payments that go to schools, that go to vital county services; as I already mentioned, law enforcement, road construction, reconstruction, and maintenance. Those funds will not exist if this legislation does not pass.

In the case of my counties, we have 3 more years of a guarantee under law, but after that, we fall off the cliff. For many other counties, they have already fallen off the cliff. They need this help to rebuild the social infrastructure of their communities and maintain vital county services.

I would urge people to keep an open mind in the debate today and realize, unfortunately, having not followed a regular process, my committee having decided not to take jurisdiction, the Committee on Resources, that this has not been before Members in its final form for very long. It is very different than what was proposed. I urge the Members to read the bill and ask questions of any of us who were involved in the writing.

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, there could be some problems with this bill, I am not sure. The most important thing as far as what we have right now is that the rule is open. It gives Members a chance to change this bill if they do not like it. For that reason we support the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, let me remind my colleagues, as my colleague, the gentleman from Ohio, just did, that this is an open rule. Not only does it provide for a completely open amendment process, it provides balance for the process by inserting compromise language into H.R. 2389 as well.

This bipartisan compromise has the support of the National Association of Counties, the National Education Association, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and some 800 rural education, government, business, and labor organizations from 37 States.

For any Member who still has concerns about the legislation, the rule allows any germane amendment to be debated and voted upon. I hope my colleagues will support this very fair, balanced, open rule.

More importantly, I urge my colleagues to support the children and the schools who will benefit from the needed assistance this bill will provide. This is a great opportunity to shore up public education in rural forest communities through a balanced, equitable approach. I hope Members can support this effort.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON H.R. 2990, QUALITY CARE FOR THE UNINSURED ACT OF 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KOLBE). Without objection, the Chair appoints the following conferees on the bill (H.R. 2990) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow individuals greater access to health insurance through a health care tax deduction, a long-term care deduction, and other health-related tax incentives, to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to provide access to and choice in health care through association health plans, to amend the Public Health Service Act to create new pooling opportunities for small employers to obtain greater access to health coverage through HealthMarts; to amend title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act, and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to protect consumers in managed care plans and other health coverage; and for other purposes:

From the Committee on Commerce, for consideration of the House bill, and the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference:

Messrs. BLILEY, BILIRAKIS, SHADEGG, DINGELL, and PALLONE.

From the Committee on Ways and Means, for consideration of the House bill, and the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference:

Mr. ARCHER and Mr. THOMAS, Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut, Mr. RANGEL and Mr. STARK, provided that Mr. MCCRERY is appointed in lieu of Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut for consideration of title XIV of the House bill and sections 102, 111(b) and 304 and title II of the Senate amendment.

From the Committee on Education and the Workforce for consideration of the House bill, and the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference:

Messrs. BOEHNER, TALENT, FLETCHER, CLAY, and ANDREWS.

As additional conferees from the Committee on Government Reform, for consideration of section 503 of the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference:

Messrs. BURTON of Indiana, SCARBOROUGH, and WAXMAN.

As additional conferees for consideration of the House bill, and the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference:

Mr. GOSS and Mr. BERRY.

There was no objection.

COUNTY SCHOOLS FUNDING REVITALIZATION ACT OF 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 352 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for consideration of the bill, H.R. 2389.

□ 1322

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2389) to restore stability and predictability to the annual payments made to States and counties containing National Forest System lands and public domain lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management for use by the counties for the benefit of public schools, roads, and other purposes, with Mr. KOLBE in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) will each control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE).

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, today the House considers H.R. 2389, a bill that has been under consideration in my subcommittee for several months, but whose time has been long in coming. Nearly 100 years ago the Federal Government, as a condition of managing our national forest lands, established a compact with forest-dependent communities in rural America. Under the terms of this compact, the government would own and manage the forests, not only for the long-term environmental benefit of the resource, but also for the long-term social and economic benefit of rural communities in and adjacent to the forest.

Recently, revenue-sharing payments with rural communities guaranteed under the compact have dropped in some communities by as much as 90 percent. Local administrator after local administrator told my subcommittee about the drastic and tragic measures their school systems have taken just to fight foreclosure. The compact is not working, and our rural schools cannot wait any longer.

A coalition of local school systems developed a set of principles which attempts to breath new life into their compact with the Federal Government. Their idea has been well received across the country. Their supporters top 800 grass roots organizations in 36 States, that range from school districts and administrators to the National Education Association, the National Association of Counties, the United States Chamber of Commerce, organized labor, and other groups.

Their principles are embodied in H.R. 2389, the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-determination Act of 1999. As we consider this legislation today, we, as Members of this House, are faced with one overriding question: Who knows better what needs to be done to help forest-dependent communities in rural America, rural America, or Washington?

This bill is representative government at its best. Local leaders recognize that the compacts of 1908 and 1937 need to be strengthened for the short term to immediately arrest the decline in and stabilize the revenues derived from Federal forest lands until permanent improvements to existing law can be made.

They crafted their solution, garnered support from all regions of the country, and entrusted us to do the right thing.

The challenges facing forest counties are so dramatic and so widespread that soon after the House Committee on Agriculture unanimously approved H.R. 2389, several Members expressed a strong interest in the bill. The legislation was introduced by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD), and I commend them for their initiative.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT) and the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) became actively engaged, and spent countless hours working with us to ensure the compacts between the Federal government and the forest counties are honored.

The bill we consider today is the product of the locally-crafted solution and our intense interest to promote the interests of forest counties. H.R. 2389 establishes a temporary national safety net which ensures a stable payment to forest communities for the short term, while giving local communities and educators a direct stake in crafting a long-term policy that will put schoolchildren in forest communities on equal footing with their peers in other parts of the country.

Despite the overwhelming support for this bill, we do expect a poison pill amendment to be offered. The expected amendment will be dressed up to appear as a county-friendly amendment. We have talked it through with the counties, and they oppose this and all amendments, and support H.R. 2389 as it is finally crafted.

Time is of the essence. Forest counties cannot wait any longer. Key Senators have agreed to take this bill and use it as their vehicle in the Senate. We must oppose this and any other amendment, for quick passage in both the House and Senate. H.R. 2389 is strongly supported by the National Education Association and the National Association of Counties, two longtime advocates of rural education. They also oppose any amendments.

I hope that we will be fully committed to helping all the proponents of H.R. 2389, the most important being the families and communities of rural America. This bill helps rural America achieve what they have set out to achieve. It revitalizes their compact with the Federal government in a way