A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1615

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 654

Mr. LAFALCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw my name as a cosponsor of H.R. 654.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

RE-REFERRAL OF H.R. 4975, FRANK R. LAUTENBERG POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE, TO COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 4975, and that H.R. 4975 be re-referred to the Committee on Government Reform.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WALDEN of Oregon). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON H.R. 4733, ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 4733) making appropriations for energy and water development for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes, with a Senate amendment thereto, disagree to the Senate amendment, and agree to the conference asked by the Senate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California? The Chair hears none and, without objection, appoints the following conferees: Messrs. PACKARD, ROGERS, KNOLLENBERG, FRELINGHUYSEN, CALLAHAN, LATHAM, WICKER, YOUNG of Florida, VISCLOSKY, EDWARDS, PASTOR, FORBES, and OBEY.

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON H.R. 4475, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 4475) making appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes, with a Senate amendment thereto, disagree to the Senate amendment, and agree to the conference asked by the Senate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT OFFERED BY MR. SABO

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to instruct conferees.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. SABO moves that the managers on the part of the House at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the bill, H.R. 4475, be instructed to insist on no less than $43,144,000, the amount provided in the Senate amendment, for the pipeline safety program.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) each will be recognized for 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO).

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

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this motion to instruct conferees is very straightforward. It is a motion to help make our communities safer and cleaner by providing increased resources to protect them from the dangers of and damage from pipeline explosions, failures, and leaks.

As the conference on the differences between the House and Senate versions of the fiscal 2001 transportation appropriations bill begins, we now have an opportunity to provide these additional resources to the Office of Pipeline Safety that the Office of Pipeline Safety needs.

For fiscal year 2001, the Secretary of Transportation has requested $47 million for pipeline safety activities, an increase of $10 million more than last year. And while neither the House nor the Senate transportation appropriations bills provide the full increase requested, we ought to get as close to that mark as we possibly can in the final conference agreement.

This motion to instruct directs the House conferees to agree to no less than $43 million that is included in the Senate amendment for the Office of Pipeline Safety. The Senate level would provide $3 million more than the House level of $40 million and $6 million more than last year. This is the minimum amount that we should provide.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL).

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

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, on a warm summer, predawn day on August 19 of this year, several families were sleeping at a campsite 20 miles south of Carlsbad, New Mexico. Without notice, a 30-inch diameter natural gas pipeline blasted through the earth, sprouting a 350-foot high fireball and causing a 20-foot-deep, 86-foot-long and 46-foot-wide blast crater.

This accident tragically killed a total of 12 people, including five children camped near the site of the explosion. Examination of the broken pipe determined that corrosion had eaten away one-half of the 50-year-old pipeline's wall in places.

Mr. Speaker, in order for Americans to be assured that the oil and gas pipeline industry is properly regulated and the communities have the opportunity to oversee these operations, we must fully fund the Office of Pipeline Safety. Fully funding of the Office of Pipeline Safety is a proper start to regulating an industry that has gone too far and too long without proper oversight.

The bill I have cosponsored with the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE), H.R. 4792, the Comprehensive Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2000, emphasizes increased pipeline inspections and public notification of where pipelines are located. It also would require stricter certification for pipeline operators and employees.

This issue is a matter of community and worker safety. We must be at the forefront of this topic by providing full funding for the Office of Pipeline Safety so that we can better protect our citizens from natural gas catastrophes.

I urge all Members to support the motion to instruct.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE).

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I stand here to say that our national oil and gas pipeline safety standards are a national disgrace. They are more like Swiss cheese than safety standards. And as a result of those wholesale failures to inspect pipelines, we had three young people die in Bellingham, Washington, and we have entire families being incinerated in New Mexico. And while these tragedies occur, indeed Congress fiddles.

For every one safety inspector in this country, we have almost 50,000 miles of pipeline. We have a wholesale failure to do these inspections. And this will take one step forward to increase probably 30 inspectors so we can move on with these inspections.

Let me say that giving resources to the Office of Pipeline Safety is not enough. It is not simply a matter of resources. It is a matter of will and statute. We have wholesale failure of having an adequate statute, as well.

We are calling upon this House in this Congress to adopt meaningful, aggressive, comprehensive revisions of our oil and gas pipeline standards. We have several bills pending in the House. We are calling for the leaders of the House of both parties in this Chamber to adopt a comprehensive inspection standard.

Let me advise the House there is a bill that has come from the other Chamber. It is woefully inadequate. It does not require inspections by statute. It again goes down that rose-colored path of giving discretion to the Office of Pipeline Safety. That is the path of