

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC
TRANSIT**HON. NICK J. RAHALL II**

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2002

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to submit a statement made by Mrs. Faye Thompson of Wayne County, West Virginia before the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, Subcommittee on Housing and Transportation, on the importance of public transit. Mrs. Thompson is a member of the Wayne County, West Virginia Community Service Organization, Inc. Board of Directors.

Public transit is a vital transportation link for people in rural areas, who do not own their own cars, or cannot find someone to drive them to medical appointments, etc.

In her testimony, Mrs. Thompson told how she went to work as a social worker for the Department of Health and Human Services after her three sons became old enough to go to school. Mrs. Thompson worked with low-income families and said that "one of the biggest obstacles of obtaining services was the lack of transportation." During those years, Wayne County had no public transportation.

At the time, Mrs. Thompson had her own car, and was able to drive anywhere she wanted to go, at any time.

Later in life, Mrs. Thompson's husband passed away. Then she was told she needed to have both knees replaced. Her two older sons live out of state, and her youngest son worked full-time, and was unable to drive her to physical therapy sessions.

Suddenly, Mrs. Thompson realized she was no longer independent and that she was now one of the people who need public transportation. But unlike the earlier years, when she worked to help low-income families who had no access to public transportation, Wayne County now offered public transportation.

As Mrs. Thompson said, "Thanks to public transportation, I was able to obtain the medical services that I needed."

Mrs. Thompson was able to look at how tough it was, years ago, for low-income families in Wayne County to be without public transit, and look at how much easier it was for her, while in rehabilitation, to receive physical therapy because she could rely on public transit.

Mrs. Thompson noted that "Wayne X-Press Public Transit System in Wayne, West Virginia provides transportation services to people for medical appointments, to jobs, job interviews, job training, social activities, senior citizen centers, Adult Day treatment programs, general education training, parenting classes, etc."

She described public transit as "the lifeline for the public."

As a Member of Congress representing the Third Congressional District of West Virginia, I have been working to help low-income, rural West Virginians to enhance their quality of life by providing transportation to medical care, educational facilities and jobs.

Public transit helps to create and build jobs, which is a boost to the economy. We must maintain and expand public transit programs. When we reauthorize the surface transportation legislation in the 108th Congress, I will

work to continue to strengthen and expand public transit programs, to ensure "the lifeline for the public" continues.

FORT GAY, WEST VIRGINIA

July 16, 2002

UNITED STATES SENATE,

*Banking, Housing, and Urban Development,
Subcommittee on Housing and Transportation,
Washington, DC.*

MR. CHAIRMAN AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS: It is an honor to be with you here today to talk about something that is dear to my heart. First, let me tell you something about myself. My late husband and I raised three sons, and that was an experience in itself. After my children got into school, my husband who was employed by the Norfolk and Western Railroad went to work and I started back to school to become an elementary school teacher in a one room schoolhouse in rural Appalachia, West Virginia.

I saw the many challenges of the rural Appalachian people, so I changed careers and became a Social Worker for the Department of Health and Human Resources in rural West Virginia. Throughout my career, I worked with low income families and one of the biggest obstacles of obtaining services was the lack of transportation. At that time there was no public transportation in Wayne County. Throughout my twenty-two years in my career there was always a need for individuals to access, services. Throughout my life I have been a very independent person as you can see, raising a family, starting not just one career but two in my life, and having the privilege of having my own transportation. Most of us take for granted picking up our car keys, going out of the house, and going anywhere we want to go.

Even though I have always recognized the need for rural transportation. I never thought that it would be something that I would need. After my husband passed away, I lived alone in my home. I then downsized to an apartment. I was still able to go to my homemaker meetings, church activities, Board Member meetings, volunteer work, and continued to meet my friends for lunch and social activities. My physician informed me that I was going to have to have both of my knees replaced. He stated that after my surgery and rehabilitation that I would need to go to physical therapy three times a week for several weeks. My two eldest sons both live out of state and my youngest son works full-time, therefore was unable to take me to my therapy sessions. I then realized that I was one of the people who needed transportation. I was no longer independent and this was quite a shock to me. Thanks to Public Transportation I was able to obtain the medical services that I needed.

Being a member of Wayne County Community Service Organization, Inc. Board of Directors, I can sit here today in front of you and let you know how important the Public Transit System is to the people. How it enables them to access needed services. Wayne X-Press Public Transit System in Wayne, West Virginia provides transportation services to people for medical appointments, to jobs, job interviews, job training, social activities, senior citizen centers, Adult Day treatment programs, general education training, parenting classes, etc. I'm here today to ask you distinguished ladies and gentlemen to continue funding for Public Transit Systems. Why, because it is the lifeline for the public. So I invite all of you to Wayne County, West Virginia to "hop aboard" the Wayne X-Press.

FAYE THOMPSON

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. MAXINE WATERS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 17, 2002

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1854) making appropriations for the legislative branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes:

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I rise to support the Capps amendment to prohibit the use of funds for new oil drilling on 36 leases off the coast of California.

Oil spills would devastate the sensitive marine environment of California's coast. The Santa Barbara oil spill in 1969 dumped over four million gallons of oil into the sea, killed thousands of animals, blackened beaches and decimated the local marine environment. The coast took years to recover.

California's economy depends upon the health of its coasts. Tourism brings in nearly \$30 billion a year to our state, and the fishing industry is also important to our economy. California cannot afford the risks of offshore oil drilling.

The people of California are strongly opposed to offshore oil drilling. Leases off the coasts of Florida, Alaska and North Carolina have already been terminated. It is time to terminate the California leases as well and respect the will of California's people.

I urge my colleagues to support the Capps amendment.

ARGENTINA MUST TAKE ACTION
AGAINST TERRORISTS WHO
CARRIED OUT THE 1994 AMIA BOMBING**TOM LANTOS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2002

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, eight years ago today—on July 18, 1994, a car bomb exploded at the AMIA Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, leaving eighty-five people dead and leveling the building. Now, eight years later, the trial of a handful of suspected accessories to the crime has only barely begun, and the masterminds behind the horrific attack are still unidentified and at-large.

While we recognize that Argentina is currently struggling with serious political and economic crises, the government of President Duhalde must remain focused on the investigation of the AMIA bombing and the trial of the accused. The resolution of this case is critical to demonstrate that Argentine society fully embraces the rule of law and is moving toward the fulfillment of justice. The AMIA case presents Argentina with the opportunity to send a message to the world that terrorism does not pay and that known terrorists will be prosecuted.

Mr. Speaker, the trial has been long in coming and has faced many obstacles, some of which Fernando de la Rúa and current President Eduardo Duhalde have addressed. There

is speculation about why the case was not tried and closed years ago.

First, fifteen of the twenty suspects are former Buenos Aires police officers who have been linked to a ring of automobile thieves. Although these are not the individuals who ordered and carried out the attacks, they may have supplied the vehicle used for the bombing, knowing that it was to be used in an attack on the Jewish Community Center. The most prominent of these suspects are former senior police commander Juan Jose Rebelli and local stolen-car dealer Alberto Telleldin. Both were formally charged with multiple homicides in July 1999 in connection to the bombing and are currently standing trial.

Second, the physical evidence from the bombing was handled extremely poorly. Most of the evidence from the crime scene, including personal identification and the remains of the victims, was stuffed haphazardly into bags and abandoned at an open dump for three years before being tossed into the Rio de la Plata. One investigator estimates that less than five percent of the material evidence remains today. Also, a renovation project to make the courtroom large enough to accommodate the anticipated press consumed many months.

After the public trial began on September 24, 2001, the prosecution's case has plodded through a seemingly interminable procession of witnesses. Over 1500 witnesses were called to testify in the trial. Yet, there still has been no clear identification of those responsible for the AMIA bombing. The main question of the trial remains whether the police who were involved with selling the vehicle knew that it would be used for the bombing. So far, the police have denied all charges of wrongdoing.

A number of other anti-Semitic incidents since the 1994 bombing indicate the importance of a prompt and decisive resolution in the AMIA bombing case. After the AMIA Jewish community center was rebuilt, several telephoned bomb threats against the new building, as well as against a Jewish country club and a Jewish theater, have been received. Once again, no one has claimed responsibility, no evidence has been found, and the Argentine authorities have not produced results from their formal investigations into these bomb threats. In August 1999, two Jewish families were threatened with unidentified bomb threats. One month later, unidentified individuals fired gun shots at a Jewish school. There have been no developments in the investigations of either of these cases as well.

Mr. Speaker, Argentina faces numerous challenges today, including pursuing both the domestic and international dimensions of the AMIA bombing case. Some of these investigative leads may take Argentine prosecutors to the highest reaches of their society and to state sponsors of terrorism in the Middle East. We in the United States Congress must continue to demonstrate our support for the efforts of non-governmental organizations, such as B'nai B'rith, which are actively working to bring complete closure to the AMIA bombing and other cases of anti-Semitism.

Mr. Speaker, resolution of the AMIA bombing is an integral part of our fight against terrorism. It is essential that the government of Argentina know and understand that the United States government continues to expect appropriate action against all of those who

were responsible for perpetrating this outrageous crime.

CONTINUING CRISIS IN FOSTER CARE

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2002

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, today the ACLU and several child advocacy groups brought a suit requesting the court to hold accountable those county and state officials responsible for oversight of California's foster care system. Plaintiffs charged that negligence, mismanagement, and abuse and neglect of children are routinely committed by the very state agency charged with protecting children and ensuring their safety and well-being.

In the following article in today's Los Angeles Times, one of the plaintiffs reports that the suit will demand all appropriate mental health services; multidisciplinary assessments of the needs of each child; case plans; and providers to ensure that no child will be neglected. Judging from recent news reports, this same lawsuit could be brought against most state child welfare agencies.

The federal child welfare law that I authored in 1980 requires States to comply with a number of core requirements intended to protect children placed in foster care as a condition of receiving Federal foster care funds. Yet twenty years after enactment of P.L. 96-272, many of the same shortcomings as prompted the passage of the law are affecting hundreds of thousands of children in foster care placements, raising serious questions about the diligence of the states and the federal government in enforcing the law and protecting the children.

The situation described in the Times article is not unique to California, which has had a very troubled history in foster care for decades. In Florida, in the District of Columbia, in New York, and in many other jurisdictions, allegations about inappropriate services, improper placements, inadequate staff training and compensation coupled with massive case-loads and staff turnover are commonplace. And yet the Congress has not taken a broad look at how best to assist in the improvement of accountability and services in the nation's foster care system.

The time has come for a broad review that brings together experts and practitioners and advocates to help shape a thoughtful critique of current practice and make recommendations for the federal, state and local governments. This is not only a family crisis and a children's crisis; it is a fiscal crisis, because we are spending billions of dollars a year on a system that, despite efforts at reform, continues to fail the children in its custody. The article follows:

[From the Los Angeles Times, July 18, 2002]

A FOSTER-CARE TRAGEDY WORTHY OF
DICKENS

(By Lew Hollman)

Los Angeles has a foster-care system driven by what is available, not what is needed. Children receive too few services too late. Thousands are shuttled to ineffective and expensive institutional care. They are poorly

monitored, with no consistent, individualized care. Not surprisingly, many deteriorate in county care, populating our jails, homeless shelters and mental wards after they "age out" of a failed system. Many never overcome the effects of the abuse or neglect they have suffered.

At a time when funds for children's services are ever more scarce, we are paying more for less in terms of healthy outcomes. Millions of federal dollars are at risk because of our inability to meet reasonable guidelines for stable placements—through family reunification, adoption or long-term foster care. More important, the children whom the system is intended to protect are being irreparably harmed.

This is not a problem that can be solved simply by changing the person at the top, as L.A. County has done twice in recent years. It requires a philosophical change at all levels—from a system based on what services are available to a system based on earlier intervention and individualized needs.

A suit will be filed today on behalf of foster children put at risk by a failed system. It will demand a wider array of mental health services available under Medi-Cal; multidisciplinary assessments of the needs of each child based on all relevant information; continuity in services and plans for each child; and the development of services and providers to ensure that no child will be rejected.

MacLaren Children's Center in El Monte, the county's emergency shelter for abused and neglected children, is an apt symbol of our failed system. Designated a short-term shelter, it has become instead the county's warehouse for the unwanted. Once a home for wayward girls, it retains its foreboding atmosphere. Such control as exists—in many instances, poor management has led to children being abused, often by other residents—is prison-like.

Some MacLaren residents languish for months beyond the ostensible 30-day limit. Many more are constantly "recycled" as foster homes reject them, adding to the trauma that brought the children to the county's care. One plaintiff, removed from her home as a result of sexual and physical abuse by her stepfather, was moved by the county 28 times between the ages of 9 and 13. Another is in a locked facility because of the healthy impulse to find a better life elsewhere. In less than three years, she was moved 25 times.

When Dickensian stories like these are related to the uninformed, they are greeted with incredulity. It is often assumed that lack of resources must be the problem. Of course, no one desires these rootless sojourns through impersonal care. And our society could, no doubt, better invest in the needs of its children. But lack of money is not at the root of these problems.

Inertia and lack of accountability are the culprits. The county has become increasingly defensive about releasing cost estimates.

According to a recently released Los Angeles Grand Jury report, however, costs during the 2001-2002 fiscal year at MacLaren approximated \$757 per day for each child—more than \$276,000 per year. Group-care facilities, recognized as contrary to the interests of most children, were estimated to cost about \$33,000 annually per child five years ago. By contrast, children at risk who can be assisted without removal from the home costs less than \$5,000 a year, and foster home and kinship placements less than \$10,000 a year.

Medi-Cal, through the early and periodic screening, diagnosis and treatment program and other federal programs, can pay for many of the intensive services that children need. True case management would ensure