

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2012

SPEECH OF

**HON. DAVID N. CICILLINE**

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 8, 2011*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2354) making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes:

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Chair, I submit these remarks in opposition to provisions in Title V of the Energy and Water Appropriations measure (H.R. 2354) that would rescind unobligated High Speed Rail funds.

Indeed the recent storms and flooding that have ravaged the Mississippi and Missouri River Basins warrant the immediate attention and relief provided by Emergency Supplemental Funding in Title V. And as a representative from Rhode Island, a state that itself suffered and continues to recover from record level flooding in 2010, I wholeheartedly recognize the importance of this funding, which will enable the Corps of Engineers to repair the damage done by these natural disasters.

However, as Ranking Members DICKS and VISCLOSKEY noted in their views on the underlying bill, H.R. 2354, I too am disappointed by the decision to offset this important disaster relief funding by rescinding unobligated High Speed Rail funds. Time and again Congress has rightly responded to natural disasters with the emergency funding that facilitates recovery in our communities and reconstruction of critical infrastructure. As a Congress, we must respond to natural disasters with the resources it takes, and we must responsibly reduce the deficit. Yet, we must also make the necessary investments that will create jobs now and guarantee the future strength of our economy.

The fact that our Nation's investment in High Speed Rail remains a target for the budget chopping block is not just disappointing—it is a threat to our economy. We have to commit to paying down our debt. But, we must also commit to putting people back to work, supporting our infrastructure, and ensuring our Nation's ability to compete in the global economy. Some estimates say that each month we spend approximately \$8 billion in Afghanistan—just think about that. In just 2 months worth of spending in Afghanistan, we exceed our Nation's entire investment in High Speed Rail. Each year, taxpayers dole out \$4 billion in subsidies to big oil companies who continue to enjoy record profits, and yet here we are, stripping communities of critically important infrastructure dollars.

High Speed Rail is not some far-fetched fantasy, or a transportation solution that should be considered more of a luxury than a national priority. High Speed Rail is a reality. And while we hesitate to get on board, our competitor nations are charging further and further ahead of us. We've seen it in the headlines time and again. China now has the world's fastest conventional high-speed trains and longest network of tracks. Next year, just 4 years after beginning its High Speed Rail service, China will have more track than all of the world's high speed lines combined.

High Speed Rail creates construction jobs in the maintenance and operations jobs in the long term, and indirect jobs by growing access to greater labor pools and driving new economic development. High Speed Rail reduces congestion on our highways and skyways. These are key investments to ensure that America has a fast, safe, and efficient transportation network. And at a time when press reports as recently as this morning indicate states like Rhode Island are experiencing a rise in gas prices again, High Speed Rail provides a logical alternative to our oil addiction.

For the First Congressional District in Rhode Island, the provisions of Title V will strip away \$3 million in High Speed Rail funds. For the state as a whole, it is estimated this Title will rescind more than \$28 million in rail funding. This rescission occurs less than 2½ months after the initial announcement of the allocation to the Ocean State. Not only is Rhode Island battling high rates of unemployment—some of the highest in New England—and a sluggish economic recovery, we now have to battle against the uncertainty and unpredictability created by unwarranted rescissions such as the one before us now in Title V. All told, it is estimated that this rescission will result in the loss of hundreds jobs in my state alone.

As a former Mayor, I know how detrimental this loss in High Speed Rail is for my district, the state of Rhode Island, the Northeast Corridor, and the Nation as a whole. For the city of Providence and the state of Rhode Island, High Speed Rail is a critically important component in efforts to attract the private investment that will help sustain and grow our economy; rebuild the infrastructure that will allow for efficient and timely transport of goods, people, and ideas; and place people in well-paying middle class jobs. Cities and states all across this country are relying on this investment to help improve their economies, relieve transportation congestion, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and compete in the global economy. Unfortunately, the offset contemplated in Title V will derail these efforts.

I strongly urge my colleagues to vote against this offset because we must not fall further behind as our competitors speed ahead in the global economy.

OPPOSING VOTER SUPPRESSION

**HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 14, 2011*

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this August will mark the 46th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. There are many who say there is no longer a need for the Voting Rights Act. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

It is true that we have made remarkable progress since 1965, including outlawing segregationist principles such as literacy tests, poll taxes and the grandfather clause. However, there is still much work to be done.

As we continue to observe during elections, minorities often face the uphill battle of misinformation distributed in black communities over how and when to vote, and purging of voter rolls and Election Day lines.

The Voting Rights Act was not and never will be about special rights. It is about equal

rights and ensuring that all Americans have the right to vote for their candidates of choice. The reality is that some people out there still want to suppress minority voting.

Recently, Texas passed legislation requiring picture identification in order to participate in the voting process. This systematic use of required voter identification cards will disproportionately impact voters that are elderly, minority, or disabled. Requiring individuals to produce picture identification will turn back the clock on voter rights and do little to prevent voter fraud.

Texas remains under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act due to a long history of discrimination of minority voters. I have strong concerns regarding the ability of minority, elderly and disabled voters to obtain a state identification card from the Texas Department of Public Safety. There is only one Department of Public Safety office in Dallas, and no offices in central Houston. For potential voters in Southwest Texas some would have to travel up to 200 miles to obtain a state identification card. While I am already working to ensure individuals have the transportation to obtain IDs, I believe many poor and minority voters simply will not have the means to obtain this required card. Putting undue burdens on a certain population of voters is not in line with requirements of the Voting Rights Act.

Our values, our freedom, and our democracy are based on the idea that every eligible American citizen has the right to vote. We cannot and must not give up until every American citizen has the access and opportunity to vote—regardless of their skin color, ethnicity, or language ability.

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SPEECH OF

**HON. STEVE COHEN**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 8, 2011*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2354) making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes:

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Chair, I am pleased to join with my colleagues on the House floor to oppose the Majority's efforts to cut funding for high-speed rail. As the Congressman from Memphis, a city that was damaged by historic floods this spring and a city in much need of disaster relief, I applaud the Majority for proposing more than one billion dollars in relief. However, I am disappointed that the Majority has decided to use high-speed rail funding to offset the cost.

I am disturbed by the Majority's decision to reach across jurisdictions and raid funding from the transportation sector, a sector in desperate need of investment. If an offset must be used then it should be from funds within the Energy and Water account. I also find it alarming that the Majority is cutting funds for high-speed rail, a program that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to fund relief for disasters that were exacerbated by climate