

Response to No. 6: All of the funds we are requesting can be obligated over the next 5 years.

7. What is the proposed schedule and status of work on the project?

Response to No. 7: The environmental clearance has been completed on this project. However, a reassessment may be necessary. Following completion of the environmental reassessment, right-of-way and design plans will be prepared and this takes approximately 2 years. Right-of-way acquisition will then take about 18 months to complete. Construction contracts should be ready for letting within 4 to 5 years.

8. Is the project included in the metropolitan and/or State Transportation Improvement Program(s), or the State long-range plan and, if so, is it scheduled for funding?

Response to No. 8: The right-of-way acquisition and utility relocations for one section of this project are currently on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program and funding is scheduled for these items. The entire project limit, however, is identified as one of the transportation improvement corridors in the Statewide Intermodal Transportation Plan (long range plan). Due to the high cost of this project and the State's limited funds, the remaining construction, right-of-way, and utility phases of this project are not currently scheduled.

9. Is the project considered by State and/or regional transportation officials as critical to their needs? Please provide a letter of support from these officials, and if you cannot, explain why not.

Response to No. 9: This project is considered critical to the economic growth of the eastern region of Oklahoma which generates a large amount of tourism in the Fort Gibson Lake and Tahlequah areas. The highway also serves as a major travel corridor and commuter route extending from the Tulsa Metropolitan area east to Broken Bow, Muskogee and the Arkansas State Line.

10. Does the project have national or regional significance?

Response to No. 10: This project is regionally significant because it provides access to the Tulsa metropolitan area, McClellan Kerr Navigational System, and several recreational areas in eastern Oklahoma. SH 51 is also nationally significant because it connects with I-44, I-244, the Muskogee Turnpike, US 412, and other major routes in the eastern section of Oklahoma.

11. Has the proposed project encountered, or is it likely to encounter, any significant opposition or other obstacles based on environmental or other types of concerns?

Response to No. 11: The environmental clearance has been completed on this project. However, a reassessment is likely. We do not anticipate any major opposition or other obstacles that will delay construction of this project.

12. Describe the economic, energy efficiency, environmental, congestion mitigation and safety benefits associated with completion of the project.

Response to No. 12: Widening SH 51 to a 4 lane highway will increase capacity, promote tourism and economic growth in the region, and improve the safety and congestion along this major highway serving the eastern region of Oklahoma.

13. Has the project received funding through the State's Federal-aid highway apportionment, or in the case of a transit project, through Federal Transit Administration funding? If no, why not?

Response to No. 13: During the past few years the State has expended in excess of \$34,000,000.00 to improve this corridor between I-44 in Tulsa and the Arkansas State Line. However, because the overall critical needs of the entire highway system far ex-

ceeds the limited funding levels, this project from Coweta to Wagoner has not received funding through the State's Federal-aid highway apportionments.

14. Is the authorization requested for the project an increase to an amount previously authorized or appropriated for it in federal statute (if so, please identify the statute, the amount provided, and the amount obligated to date), or would this be the first authorization for the project in federal statute? If the authorization requested is for a transit project, has it previously received appropriations and/or received a Letter of Intent or entered into a Full Funding Grant Agreement with the FTA?

Response to No. 14: This is the first authorization we have requested for this project.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, March 10, 1997.

Hon. BUD SHUSTER,
*Chairman, House Committee on Transportation,
Rayburn House Office Building.*

Hon. THOMAS PETRI,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, Rayburn House Office Building.

Hon. JIM OBERSTAR,
Ranking Democratic Member, House Committee on Transportation, Rayburn House Office Building.

Hon. NICK RAHALL,
Ranking Democratic Member, Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, Rayburn House Office Building.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN AND RANKING MEMBERS: On February 25, 1997, the North Carolina Delegation forwarded to your attention copies of the State of North Carolina's highway transportation project priorities.

Included in this package, there were two funding requests that are of particular concern to our districts, the Ninth and Twelfth Districts of North Carolina. These requests regarded funding for construction of the Eastern and Western Outer Loops in Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. The completion of the Outer Loop is the foremost road priority for our region during consideration of transportation funding this year. The purpose of this letter is to formally inform you of our strong support for this critical transportation need for the City of Charlotte.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact either of us if we can provide you with further information regarding the Outer Loop project.

Sincerely,

SUE MYRICK,
Member of Congress.
MELVIN WATT,
Member of Congress.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, August 20, 1997.

Chairman BUD SHUSTER,
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SHUSTER: We are writing to express our strong support for the I-40 cross bridge project, which was submitted to the Surface Transportation Subcommittee in February. This project is important not only to the State of Oklahoma, but also to the Nation.

The I-40 cross bridge is in a critical state of disrepair. There are serious safety concerns surrounding the continued use of this bridge. Due to these concerns Oklahoma inspects this particular bridge every six months; other bridges are inspected only once every two years.

It is critical to the State and to the Nation that this bridge remains open. Recently, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation de-

termined that approximately 102,000 cars cross this bridge every day. Furthermore, 61% of all the trucks that cross this bridge are out of state trucks. Clearly, this bridge is heavily traveled by more than just Oklahomans.

Both the Governor of Oklahoma and the Secretary of Transportation have endorsed this project and have made it the number one transportation priority for the State of Oklahoma. Unfortunately, due to the magnitude of the project, Oklahoma does not have the funds to tackle it at this time.

We are committed to working with our state officials to ensure that this project receive the attention and funding it needs. We would greatly appreciate your consideration of the merits of this project. The I-40 cross bridge is indeed vital to both Oklahoma and the overall interstate system. Please let us know if we can provide you with additional information.

Sincerely,

REP. J.C. WATTS, JR.
REP. ERNEST ISTOOK, JR.
REP. STEVE LARGENT.
REP. FRANK LUCAS.
REP. WES WATKINS.
REP. TOM COBURN.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CALVERT). The Chair will entertain 10 one-minutes on each side.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 981

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw my name as a cosponsor of H.R. 981.

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

There was no objection.

FAIRNESS FOR SMALL BUSINESS AND EMPLOYEES ACT

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, the Fairness for Small Business and Employees Act will be considered by the House today. Title I of this bill makes it clear that an employer does not have to hire someone who is not a bona fide applicant. In other words, a job applicant's primary purpose in seeking the job must be to work for the employer, not for someone else.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3246 was drafted after careful examination of the best way to protect employers, while not upsetting the principles of the National Labor Relations Act. It addresses the worst examples of salting in which people who have no intention of really working for an employer are simply filling jobs and filing charges to disrupt the employer's operation, resulting in lost productivity and thousands of dollars in legal fees to defend weak allegations.

This bill addresses the problems which occur when someone applies for

a job in a nonunion workplace for the primary purpose of disrupting the workplace and furthering the union agenda. I hope my colleagues will vote for H.R. 3246.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEREGULATION

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, just 3 years ago the Republican leaders and the Clinton administration touted all the benefits that would flow from telecommunications deregulation. Cable would compete with phone, phone with cable, lower rates, better service, new technology. Three years' experience has shown those promises to be hollow.

There is no competition between phone and cable. Cable rates have skyrocketed, local phone rates are going up, service has deteriorated. Then we get all those evening phone calls. This is not a consumer-friendly bill. But, all in all, it has delivered a golden egg for Wall Street and a few companies and a goose egg for Main Street consumers and small business.

Now the Clinton administration and the Republican leaders want to rush to deregulate our electric power. Lower rates, new technology, more competition. We have heard it before. Wall Street and a number of large energy companies are just slathering over the products. The results for consumers and small business will be the same as telecommunications, evening phone calls, higher rates, worse service.

SKY TAVERN JUNIOR SKI PROGRAM

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to birthdays or anniversaries, it does not matter whether we call it five decades, 50 years, or just half a century. No matter how we say it, the Sky Tavern Junior Ski Program in northern Nevada deserves our special recognition and congratulations.

Today, I rise with great pride to announce that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Sky Tavern Junior Ski Program. Since 1948, this program, maintained and run completely by volunteers, has taught thousands of young people in northern Nevada to ski.

The generosity and commitment of hundreds of volunteers and ski instructors have made it possible for these kids from all economic backgrounds to benefit from this program. But the Sky Tavern program provides these people with more than just skiing lessons. It also teaches them the value of a hard day's work and the importance of giving back to their community.

I am proud to represent a community with such outstanding people and such

a marvelous program. I am also equally proud to call myself an alumnus of the Sky Tavern Junior Ski Program. To all of them, congratulations, and we look forward to another half century of success and contribution to the children of Nevada.

REPUBLICANS' CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM BILL

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, it is Academy Award week, but the Republicans' campaign finance reform bill is not winning any Oscars this year. It is little wonder the Republican leadership pulled the bill from today's floor schedule, for the reviews are in and the critics have panned the GOP proposal.

Every credible campaign finance organization has sharply criticized this bill. The League of Women Voters says, "This bill would take a big step in the wrong direction." Common Cause's Anne McBride says, "This bill is a hoax. No one should be fooled by this cynical effort." Public Citizen's Joan Claybrook urges Members to "oppose the sham and repugnant House Oversight reform bill, a partisan bill that is the exact opposite of reform."

Democrats believe that campaign finance reform is essential to renewing America's faith in our democracy. Let us fight for real reform. Let us pass McCain-Feingold II and stop this sham with the Republican leadership's proposal.

CONGRESS NEEDS TO ASK MORE QUESTIONS

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I have some questions to ask today.

Is it not strange that this White House can find and release in a matter of hours a half-dozen private letters written years ago by a volunteer, but it takes months and even years to find official documents officially requested by official government agencies?

Is it not strange that the pundits and spin doctors representing Bill Clinton have so much to say when no one elected them, while the President continues to say nothing?

Is it not strange that the President invokes executive privilege to keep his aides from telling what they know when he says he has nothing to hide?

Is it not strange that every person who dares to speak up about Bill Clinton's behavior is smeared and slandered by the White House attack team?

I think we need to ask more questions.

SECURING BORDERS FOR AMERICAN PEOPLE

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, a classified U.S. Government report says that Mexico's military is allowing massive shipments of narcotics into America. Wow, what a surprise. Barney Fife even knows that, folks. Let us tell it like it is.

Mexico is the biggest drug pusher in the world, and Uncle Sam is the world's biggest junkie. Shame, Congress. It is time to stop this narcotic madness. Number one, Congress should absolutely repeal NAFTA; and number two, if Congress can ensure the securing of borders in Bosnia, Western Europe, the Mideast, and Korea, then, by God, Congress should be able to secure the borders for the American people.

Think about that. This narcotics business is not hard to figure out.

I yield back all the balance of overdoses in our cities throughout the country.

VIOLENCE IS PERVERSIVE IN OUR CULTURE

(Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, it is outrageous to me that the talking heads on the liberal news networks with all their expertise and social behavior have not figured out the cause of the Jonesboro, Arkansas, tragedy.

To listen to the evening and morning news and their take on the story, that it is because of Southerners with their obsession with guns and their hunting culture; in other words, Southerners, in their opinion, are a bunch of gun-crazy rednecks.

Mr. Speaker, being a Southerner, and along with many other Southerners that have felt the sadness of this tragedy and other tragedies, I am offended by that outrageous assumption. If we want to start placing blame for this and the other tragedies, why not start with the TV networks, where our children are exposed to assault, murder, rape, drug, sex, deviant lifestyles, cheating, stealing, and uncivilized gutter language.

Mr. Speaker, the tragedy is that violence is not confined to any one region or community in this Nation; it is pervasive in a culture that is obsessed with violence, sex, and self-gratification. The truth is, what goes in our children eventually comes out.

"SO-CALLED" FOREST RECOVERY BILL

(Ms. FURSE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. FURSE. Mr. Speaker, I am here to talk about the so-called forest recovery bill.

This bill is bad for the environment and it is bad for the economy. The