

employers and the State workforce investment system.

This agreement will not only provide the flexibility that States and local communities need to vastly improve their employment and training efforts, but it will provide individuals that are in need of these services with the information, choice, and resources that they need to become skilled and gainfully employed.

The skills of this Nation's workforce are more important today than ever before. This agreement will go far to help States and local communities to reform employment training and literacy programs that address the individual skill needs of their citizens. It will go far to empower individuals to break the cycle of dependency that has plagued our country for too long.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Members of our committee for their contributions in the development of this legislation; in particular, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman GOODLING), for his insight and leadership over the years on this issue; and the ranking member of the full committee, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY), and the Democrat on the post-secondary subcommittee, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE), with whom I have worked very closely in coming to this agreement. I want to thank them for their help and support.

In addition, I want to thank all of the Senate conferees for their efforts, especially Senator JEFFORDS, the chairman of the Labor and Human Resources Committee, and Senator DEWINE, chairman of the Employment and Training Subcommittee.

I would also like to thank the staff for their hard work on this conference agreement: Vic Klatt, Sally Lovejoy, Mary Gardner Claggett, D'Arcy Philps, Lynn Selmsier, Jeff Andrade, Andrea Weiss, and Brian Kennedy from the Democrat staff. I would also like to thank the administration for working with us to make this a bipartisan effort.

Finally, I am very pleased that the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Association of Counties are supporting this agreement, as well as leading national business operations. This is truly a good agreement that will help this country's workers gain the skills they need to succeed in today's workforce. I urge Members' strong support for this conference report.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, continuing under my reservation of objection, I yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE).

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to have been part of this bipartisan effort to streamline and reform our Nation's job training system. I have enjoyed working with my friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. BUCK MCKEON),

the chairman of the subcommittee, and I also appreciate the hard work and leadership of the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING), the Chairman, and the ranking member, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY) on this legislation.

The conference report we consider today represents a culmination of a 4-year effort to improve our job training system and eliminate the unnecessary duplication and bureaucracy.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 consolidates over 60 separate Federal job training programs into a single coordinated system. The legislation builds on President Clinton's proposed G.I. Bill for Workers by providing individual training accounts, so that those who seek assistance can choose the kind of training that best meets their needs.

The Workforce Investment Act also increases accountability by providing individuals seeking training with report cards on the quality of programs offered by eligible providers, and hold States and localities responsible for meeting high levels of performance. I am also pleased that the legislation protects funding for dislocated workers, and better targets programs for at-risk youth by setting aside a significant amount of dollars for funding out-of-school youth.

I am also pleased that the bill includes a strong summer jobs element, and the concentrated youth opportunity grant program developed by the President and Secretary Herman.

Mr. Speaker, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 is an example of what we in Congress can do when we put aside our partisan differences and work together to promote the interests of all Americans. Again, I am proud to have been a part of this process, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this conference report.

I would like to thank the staff members who have worked so hard on this: Mary Gardner Claggett, D'Arcy Philps, Vic Klatt, Brian Kennedy, Jennifer Maranzano of my own staff, and Mary Ellen Spenkel.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, continuing to reserve my right to object, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. MARTINEZ).

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

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Conference Report on the Workforce Investment Act, and urge everyone to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Conference Report on the Workforce Investment Act.

Trained skills are an essential ingredient not only for individual success, but also for the United States as a whole if we intend to remain competitive in this increasingly technological world.

In the near future this body will legislate to increase the number of immigrants to this country in an attempt to address the current shortage of skilled workers.

What we should be doing, and are attempting to do through this legislation, is increasing the skill level of our own workforce.

Although unemployment is currently at an all time low, there are still too many unemployed and underemployed Americans, and this number will only increase as the welfare reform act mandates those currently on the welfare rolls to enter the workforce.

That is why this bill, the Workforce Investment Act, is so essential.

This bill, which passed both the House and Senate earlier this year with overwhelming support, is, in my opinion, even better today thanks to the long hours and dedication of the conference committee and staff.

This bill consolidates the more than 60 existing Federal training programs, which have often been criticized as being too fragmented and duplicative.

It provides States with the flexibility necessary to implement programs that will best suit their particular needs while maintaining high standards and accountability.

It emphasizes one-stop centers that allow consumers to more easily access job training services. It also targets resources to those who need them most—youth, low-income, and displaced workers.

Last night the Senate passed this bipartisan conference report with unanimous consent. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the conference report is agreed to.

There was no objection.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

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

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I would inquire of the distinguished majority leader if he would outline the schedule for the remainder of the day and for next week.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. ARMEY. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that we have concluded legislative business for the week. The House will next meet on Monday, August 3rd, at 10:30 a.m. for morning hour, and at 12 o'clock noon for legislative business. We do not expect any recorded votes before 5 o'clock p.m. on Monday.

On Monday, August 3, we will also consider a number of bills under suspension of the rules, a list of which will be distributed to Members' offices this afternoon.

After suspensions, Mr. Speaker, the House will continue consideration of H.R. 2183, the Bipartisan Campaign Integrity Act of 1997. Following wrap-up

debate, we will vote on final passage of the Shays-Meehan substitute on Monday. Mr. Speaker, we also plan to continue consideration of H.R. 4276, the Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Act on Monday, August 3.

On Tuesday, August 4, the House will take up several bills under suspension of the rules. Following suspensions on Tuesday and throughout the balance of the week, the House will consider the following legislation: continuing consideration of H.R. 4276, the Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Act; H.R. 4274, the Department of Labor Appropriations Act of 1999; the District of Columbia Appropriations Act of 1999, and House Resolution 507, the Workforce Improvement and Protection Act of 1998.

Mr. Speaker, Members should be prepared to work late next week on these appropriations bills. We hope to conclude legislative business for the week by 2 o'clock p.m. on Friday, August 7.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

If the gentleman would entertain one question to him this afternoon, on several occasions the majority leader has repeated the commitment that the House will complete the campaign finance reform bill by the recess. As the gentleman knows, once we complete the vote, as the gentleman has indicated, on Monday on Shays-Meehan, we still have left in that bill 9 more substitutes, and an unlimited number of amendments to those substitutes.

My question to my friend, the gentleman from Texas, is since we only have 5 more days left before the recess, I want to make sure that the gentleman's commitment to finish this by the recess is firm, and that we will have this bill finished and back to the Senate so they can make a decision on what they want to do with it.

We are certainly hopeful that Shays-Meehan, on our side of the aisle, passes. We have sent it over there to defeat the other substitutes that are being offered, and we hope we get some action this year. But we know we cannot get any action out of the Congress unless we do this in a timely fashion.

Would the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) like to make a comment with respect to the commitment to finish by this recess?

Mr. ARMEY. If the gentleman will continue to yield, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman again for that inquiry. It is a matter of important concern. It weighs heavy on my heart.

Let me just encourage the gentleman from Michigan to understand that I do not know how, but we will have this completed before we leave town by 2 o'clock next Friday.

Mr. BONIOR. That means the bill?

Mr. ARMEY. I will get back with the gentleman later with the details, but we will have it done before we leave town; this bill, all consideration and final action on this bill will be done before 2 o'clock on Friday.

Mr. BONIOR. I thank my colleague for his reassurance.

Mr. DOOLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. DOOLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to address a question to the majority leader.

Yesterday in the Committee on Agriculture we had extensive hearings on the crisis that is occurring in many regions of the country as it is affecting farmers. Three weeks ago I joined with a bipartisan group of Members and the gentleman from Georgia (Speaker GINGRICH) on outlining some relief measures that we can move through Congress in order to address and minimize future damage to the agriculture sector.

On one of those which I think is most important to the agricultural sector, in fact, we have a coalition of 75 organizations that signed a letter supporting the funding of the International Monetary Fund. I did not hear, in the leader's identification of legislative action next week, any mention of the IMF.

I was hoping that the leader could shed some light on when we would consider funding of the IMF, in order that we might prepare and be able to assure the farmers that we are continuing to provide the export opportunities that are needed.

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Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for the inquiry. The gentleman may know, the consideration of the IMF is in the Foreign Operations appropriations bill. I understand that the committee has determined that they will take that bill up for full committee markup when we return from the August work recess period.

Mr. DOOLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, I would just hope that we would not delay any longer. Obviously, that is of critical importance to the ag sector, the funding of the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, let me reiterate one more time about finishing campaign finance by the end of next week. May I also ask the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), on Monday, what time do we expect to have the vote on Shays-Meehan? Will it be before the suspension votes are taken, or after?

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would again yield, the vote will be taken after the suspension votes, and I would guess that the vote on Shays-Meehan would be, if the gentleman will give me a large latitude on the "more or less," 8 o'clock, depending on how many votes are ordered.

Of course, the proponents on that bill want to have a little bit of time for wrapup debate. So, I would say probably between 8:00 and 9:00, is my best estimate.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for this information and for his courtesy.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). The Chair will entertain 1-minute speeches.

CONGRATULATIONS TO JOHN AND VERNA LESKERA ON THEIR 70TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to recognize two very special constituents of mine, John and Verna Leskera of Vandalia, Illinois, who will be celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary on August 7 of this year.

John Leskera married the former Verna Bitzer on August 2, 1928 in, Hoopeston, Illinois. They raised one son, Jack, currently of Collinsville, Illinois, and are the grandparents of three, and great-grandparents of six.

Verna, the former schoolteacher, and John, the former business owner, have continued to lead very active lives since their retirement. John, in fact, just learned to water ski at the tender age of 75.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to join the friends and family members of the Leskeras in wishing continued health and happiness as they celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary, and in the many years to come.

UNCERTAINTY AND WORRY IN "OLD BELT" TOBACCO MARKETS

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

Mr. GOODE. Mr. Speaker, next week the "Old Belt" flue-cured tobacco markets open in Southside, Virginia, and the farmers have never faced greater uncertainty. Over the course of the last year, the tobacco farmers in the Fifth District of Virginia, and across the southeastern part of the United States, have been tossed around like a political football.

The farmers were not included in the original settlement, but throughout the debate over the proposed settlement, people on all sides have indicated that they want to protect the tobacco growers. Yet, we see legislation proposed in Congress that will cripple and ruin the American grower. We must fight such proposals.

Mr. Speaker, I just hope that as various political agendas go forward, the hard-working growers and their families and their communities do not end up busted, bankrupt, and broken.

The annual opening of the tobacco markets historically have been a time of optimism and hope. But this year, as the markets open in Southside, Virginia, the optimism is replaced by uncertainty and worry.