TRAIN WHISTLES TO DISRUPT MILLIONS OF LIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to highlight a serious problem that all of America will soon experience. As early as next January, thousands of cities, towns, villages, and hamlets will be deafened by the wail of a train whistle. That is right, if the Federal Railroad Administration's proposed rule on the sounding of locomotive horns at every highway crossing goes into effect as planned, the earsplitting sounds of train whistles will wake people at night and generally disrupt people's lives.

Unfortunately, few Members of Congress know about the problem that confronts us. As mandated by the Swift Rail Act of 1994, the FRA came up with rules on train horns, and in January the FRA came out with a proposed rule.

While I understand that the rule is intended to save people's lives, the way in which the rule was written will severely impact millions of people in a negative way. For instance, although the FRA states that over 74,000 people in Illinois currently living near a crossing that does not allow whistle-blowing will be severely impacted by this rule, in reality, according to the Chicago Area Transportation Study, 2.5 million residents in Illinois live within one quarter mile of a crossing, and would be severely impacted.

This is a tremendous number of people that will be impacted by train whistles that range from 92 decibels to 144 decibels, an unhealthy level that rises above the threshold of pain.

So what can be done about this rule? I and other Members of the Illinois delegation could argue that Illinois, and specifically Chicago, should have an exception from the FRA's rule because Illinois has done a good job in reducing accidents at crossings.

In northeastern Illinois, injuries have declined by 70 percent and fatalities have declined by 65 percent since 1988. During the same period of time, the number of incidents dropped. Train traffic and average motor vehicle miles have both increased by 45 percent. Clearly, Illinois has been doing a good job with a tough assignment, and they should be allowed to continue with their rail safety program.

But what if this rule does go into effect? In order to avoid the disruption of the whistles, money is needed to implement alternatives to whistle blowing, money that local communities do not have. The FRA estimates costs of $116 million for whistle ban communities based on assumptions that every community will install the lowest-cost alternative to whistles.

The Chicago Area Transportation Study estimates the cost of reality-based alternatives to be between $440 million and $590 million for whistle ban communities across the Nation. This is a huge amount of money that our local communities simply do not have, and they will turn to their Congressmen to help them find the funding.

So I say to my colleagues, join me and others in finding a solution that is available to everyone. Let us work on this rule so crossings could be made safer and so people can go along with their lives in a livable manner.

At the very least, let us increase the amount of money going to grade crossings by passing my rail safety bill, H.R. 2060, that will double the amount of money that DOT gives to States for grade crossing safety. Because when next January rolls around, we had better be prepared for the train that is coming down the track for all of us.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. NORWOOD addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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THE NAVY'S MANIPULATIVE USE OF PREVAILING WAGES ON GUAM FOR THE PWC BOS CONTRACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Guam (Mr. UNDERWOOD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I speak again on the issue of the implementation of a commercial study, the A–76 program, which basically is designed to outsource a number of jobs in my home island of Guam.

I rise again to point out some very serious difficulties with this process, and point out to the Members and especially the Members of the Committee on Armed Services that these kinds of problems which we are experiencing in Guam will inevitably be experienced by everyone as they undergo this A–76 process.

Yesterday on Guam, Raytheon Technical Services commenced their contract with the U.S. Navy for base operation support functions. Approximately 800 Federal civil service workers were laid off, and most of them were immediately rehired by Raytheon under the so-called right of first refusal to perform the very same jobs as they did last week, only they will be paid a salary of 40 to 60 percent less.

The Navy has told us that the wages that the contractor is required to pay are based on a ''prevailing wage determination,'' as is calculated by the U.S. Department of Labor. These are calculated by a prevailing wage survey. This survey is a composite of job-specific wage rates by industry in a particular community. They do not, however, account for the price of local consumer goods and foodstuffs which must be purchased in order to survive in that community, so Federal jobs also include a cost-of-living allowance that makes up this difference.

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The private contractor is not required to pay this. In attempting to comprehend the situation on Guam between the high cost of consumables and the depressed prevailing wage rates, we spoke with the Prevailing Wage section of the Guam Department of Labor. We were informed that the Guam Department of Labor is responsible for the wage determination for foreign laborers under the H–2 program and is based on survey results done on Guam and reflective of local conditions.

Furthermore, the Guam Department of Labor noted that the wages established as a result of these surveys have complied with the requirements of the Davis-Bacon Act. The Guam Department of Labor is aware that the Navy contract with Raytheon is neither in line with Guam Department of Labor prevailing wage, nor mainland wage standards. Guam DOL has said that the wage survey for the Navy contract was not done on island and thus questions the survey's methodology.

Mr. Speaker, the question now begs where did the Navy get this wage data from? Well, one conclusion that we can draw from these depressed wages is that they pick the lowest possible salaries as determined from a whole range of areas of unofficial wage-study areas.

Now, I provide an example. We will use a real live Raytheon job offer against similar positions on Guam, using the Guam DOL prevailing wage survey, again a survey that is done under U.S. DOL supervision and is intended for foreign workers. For administration and accounting services, under the Navy service contract an accounting clerk is now being offered a wage of $5.80 an hour, compared with the Guam prevailing wage rate of $8.48 an hour. For a data entry operator, Raytheon has offered $11.86 an hour versus the Guam prevailing wage of $13.25 an hour.

Mr. Speaker, this is outrageous. Not only does it seem that the Navy was utilizing faulty data of an unknown source, but the Navy is taking advantage of the fact that the U.S. Department of Labor does not have sufficient oversight capabilities to enforce the requirements made on the Navy under the Services Contracting Act.

In fact, under the provisions of the Services Contracting Act, the Navy is required to request the U.S. Department of Labor to conduct a wage determination by filing a notice with the U.S. DOL for such a survey, and I believe that the U.S. Navy has violated this requirement and thus created an environment whereby wage busting could occur.

Let me just summarize here. What has happened on Guam has happened in other communities, perhaps unbeknownst to those communities, and will continue to happen, and that is if the Navy is allowed to compute their own prevailing wages apart from the actual wages in that community, they will continue to not only pay the people less than they would have under

civil service, they will continue to pay them less than even the prevailing wages in that community.

This has happened on Guam, and it is ironic that if one was a foreign worker coming to Guam, and this disincentive that is created under the Guam prevailing wage one would be getting more money today than they would under this Navy-induced contract with Raytheon. It is an outrage.

I call again upon the Department of the Navy and the Pentagon to halt this contract, to call for an Inspector General investigation, and I call for a congressional hearing on this matter.

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ANY PARTICIPATION IN MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS THAT AFFECTS THE INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY OF UNITED STATES IS WRONG AND SHOULD BE DISCONTINUED

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, many have asked me why I have cosponsored House Joint Resolution 90, which gives Members of this body the opportunity to vote on the United States continued participation in the World Trade Organization. A simple answer: I firmly believe that any participation in multilateral organizations that in any way affects the independence and sovereignty of these United States is wrong and should be discontinued.

Unfortunately, it has become obvious that the WTO will be able to remove jurisdiction over virtually any economic activity from Federal, State, and local governments. Global elitists have gravitated to the new centers of power, the transnational corporations, believing that we are evolving beyond the nation state. If that is the case, we are moving from a condition of rule under law, created by representative government, representing all the needs and interests of society, toward rule by unelected elites representing only the most powerful of interests, the only entities which have the power and reach across the world to really influence new international forms such as the WTO.

Corporate governance, in fact, is the newest concept being pressed forward at the WTO, the OECD, the IMF, and the World Bank. There has been little written on the topics outside the confines of independent governance organizations. The independent state is to be replaced with the corporate state; the concept of the people as sovereigns replaced by the notion of corporations as the new sovereigns.

The increasing centralization of industries, through monopoly mergers and acquisitions, has been given much of its global impetus through the mechanism of the WTO. This anti-competition evolution, when far enough along, will end any sense of free enterprise being the normal global market norm. Corporations are not good or evil, but corporate boards prioritize actions that increase the profitability and power of the corporation. Their officers increasingly speak and act as if they do not affiliate or identify with any one country or any one home.

Do the large transnational corporations have the same degree of concern for the defense of the United States as the average citizen? What about environmental standards which are the product of our system of governance, or hard-fought labor protections jeopardized by drastic wage and labor standard differentials between the United States and the Third World? What decisions will be made by the unelected, corporate-influenced members of the WTO in the long run?

Corporatism never implied a need for democracy. We hear about the WTO adhering to recognized international core labor standards, but we do not hear how little the wages of foreign workers have increased, how often they have fallen to new lows, just how little the standards of living have changed for the average citizens of these countries. The only way to protect American jobs from further disappearing to lesser developed countries is by foreign workers receiving higher wages. Lowering trade barriers is lowering standards, period.

When we read about the growing irrelevancy of national governments in dealing with the transnational corporations, we must ask where does that leave the citizens of our Nation? Every nation that is a free republic, based upon democratic principles, has a citizenry who are the sole sovereigns. If they are not sovereign, there is no true democracy. This is why the word sovereignty has real meaning. This is why this fight for the sovereignty of the United States, challenged by the emergence of the WTO, is a real fight for the constitutional rights of each and every American. Many believe the undemocratic WTO, ruling far from our homeland, can be reformed. I sincerely doubt this, and I ask, are we really willing to take that kind of a gamble with American independence, with the liberty that we aspire to for each citizen? I hope not.

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OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHIES ARE EXTENDED TO THE FAMILIES OF MAJOR GRUBER AND ALSO STAFF SERGEANT NELSON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I have been coming to the floor once a week for the last 2½ months to talk about our men and women in uniform that are on food stamps and how I think it is unacceptable that this Congress, and this government quite frankly, would ask anyone that would be willing to die for this Nation to be on food stamps; but tonight, Mr. Speaker, I am here on the floor because there was a tragedy on Saturday night. I think we all know that a V–22 Osprey on a training mission in Arizona went down and 19 Marines were killed. It so happens that two of those Marines were from eastern North Carolina.

Major Brooks Gruber was a pilot on the mission and also there was a Staff Sergeant William B. Nelson, who was stationed at New River Air Station in Onslow County, North Carolina.

I just started thinking, as I heard about the terrible tragedy, that many of us, not just talking about Members of Congress but those of us around this Nation, we do take our military for granted. I do not think we intend to do that, but it is just maybe because out of sight out of mind. But when we hear about a training accident where men and women are killed, in this case it was 19 men, that it does remind us that our freedoms are guaranteed by those who are willing to serve.

I just wanted to come to the floor tonight, and I am sure all Members of Congress would join me in extending our deepest sympathy to the families of Major Gruber and also Staff Sergeant Nelson, as well as the other 17 men that were killed on this training flight in Arizona.

I think that it is a reminder to all Americans that the members of the United States military make the ultimate sacrifice on a daily basis, whether it is here in this country or outside of the borders of the United States of America. It is a tragedy, because we think that our men and women in training are always going to be safe and protected, but it does not always happen that way. Certainly there is an investigation going on now. We will find out soon what happened to the V–22 that made it fail in the air and kill these wonderful, brave American military Marines, it happens to be in this case.

I am going to cut my remarks short tonight because, again, I sense the sadness from talking to the Marines in the liaison office today as I am saddened myself; and again I am sure each and every Member on the floor tonight is saddened. I do hope, as I close, after extending my deepest sympathy to the families of these 19 Marines, that those of us in the House will remember that we do have those on food stamps and that we will do something before this session of Congress ends to make sure that we do show those 7,000 men and women in uniform on food stamps that we care about them and we are going to do something to help them so they will not be so dependent on food stamps.

Mr. Speaker, I do again extend to the families of these 19 my deepest sympathies on behalf of my colleagues who serve on the floor of the United States, the House of Representatives, and in a very trivial way say thank you for giving that son to this country and may God be with you and God bless you through this time of sadness.