

so effectively to put together the packages before us.

Mr. CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Virginia [Mr. BLILEY] is recognized to close debate.

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Chairman, it is late. I want to commend our colleagues, particularly the ranking member, for his fine statement that he has just concluded. I also commend the ranking member of the Committee on the Judiciary, though we disagree on the policy. I want to commend the chairman of our subcommittee who has put in numerous hours to make this bill as balanced as we possibly can make it.

Mr. Chairman, I say to the White House who have not been involved with us that we welcome you to join us now as we prepare to go to conference. Bring us your concerns, sit down with us, and we will certainly consider any changes that you would suggest. Whether we will adopt them all, that is another matter. But we will certainly consider them, and I invite them to come forward.

Mr. Chairman, it has been an interesting debate, as the gentleman said, and I look forward to tomorrow when we will consider amendments to further perfect this bill, and then we will pass it and we will go to conference some time later this year. This is the way this process works. It is not a sprint, it is a marathon. We have had subcommittee, we have had full committee. We now are on the floor, and ultimately we will go to conference and we will come back with a conference report. That is the way it should be, Mr. Chairman, and I urge my colleagues to support his legislation and to help us craft it, make it even better as we go on with the process.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I rise in strong support of the landmark legislation which we are considering today, and I want to commend my colleagues on the committees of jurisdiction for their hard work on this bill. H.R. 1555 is the culmination of years of work to overhaul Federal telecommunications policy and position America as a world leader in the dawning information age.

While this bill contains many important provisions, I want to address one area in particular—the issue of telemedicine. As Chairman of the Commerce Health Subcommittee, I have a special interest in this subject.

Although it is subject to different interpretations, the term “telemedicine” generally refers to live, interactive audiovisual communication between physician and patient or between two physicians. Telemedicine can facilitate consultation between physicians and serve as a method of health care delivery in which physicians examine patients through the use of advanced telecommunications technology.

One of the most important uses of telemedicine is to allow rural communities and other medically under-served areas to obtain access to highly trained medical specialists. It also provides a access to medical care in circumstances when possibilities for travel are limited or unavailable.

Despite widespread support for telemedicine in concept, many critical policy questions remain unresolved. At the same time, the Federal Government is currently spending millions

of dollars on telemedicine demonstration projects with little or no congressional oversight. In particular, the Departments of Commerce and Health and Human Services have provided sizable grants for projects in a number of States.

Therefore, I drafted a provision which is included in the manager's amendment to require the Department of Commerce, in consultation with other appropriate agencies, to report annually to congress on the findings of any studies and Demonstrations on telemedicine which are funded by the Federal Government.

My amendment is designed to provide greater information for federal policymakers in the areas of patient safety, quality of services, and other legal, medical and economic issues related to telemedicine. Through adoption of this provision, I am hopeful that we can shed light on the potential benefits of telemedicine, as well as existing roadblocks to its use.

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to H.R. 1555, the Communications Act of 1995. Although I believe that our telecommunications laws are in need of reform, I have serious concerns about certain sections of this bill, and about the manner in which it has been brought to the floor.

This is an important bill, because it will affect every time he or she picks up a phone or turns on the TV. It is incumbent upon us to consider it carefully and thoughtfully. I am concerned that this bill has been brought to the floor in a rush, following a process which was none-too-open.

My primary concern revolves around provisions in the manager's amendment regarding entry of local telephone service providers into the long distance market and vice versa. I never expected that the long distance companies and the local telephone companies would ever completely agree on any bill. But to formulate a manager's amendment that is vehemently opposed by one of the parties forces Members to choose between the two. It is the responsibility of the leadership to do everything possible to reconcile the differences between those affected by this bill, and I do not believe this has been done.

I have other concerns, including the potential of the bill to concentrate media ownership in a few hands and the bill's effects on radio and television broadcasting audience reach limits.

I am also concerned about the effect of the bill on State authority to regulate the costs of certain long distance calls within States. Many States have already taken steps to liberate such rates, and the bill would negatively affect these efforts. I share the concerns of the Governor of Florida and several other governors about this issue.

Mr. Chairman, we need to reform our telecommunications laws so that we can enter the 21st century governed by laws appropriate to the technology and services available to us. But this bill is not the vehicle that will best accomplish those goals. I say let's go back to the drawing board and try again.

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Chairman, the House shortly will consider H.R. 1555, the Communications Act of 1995. Among other things, this bill and its Senate-passed companion, S. 652, aims to ensure competition in the cable television industry as it expands into interactive voice, data and video services.

I wanted to bring to the attention of my colleagues in both bodies a serious and poten-

tially dangerous situation that merits further study by Congress in the future, as it was not addressed by the legislation we are about to take up.

Currently, telephone systems provide a different sort of lightning or surge protection than is provided by the cable industry. Telephone companies have provided such protection through devices that instantaneously detect dangerous surges and direct them to ground. Cable companies do not have these devices and now only are required to ground their systems. As telephone companies branch out into broadband transmission services, they will continue to be required to protect the public from power surge and lightning hazards.

The National Electric Code does not require the cable industry to provide the same kind of surge protection to current and future cable users, even if cable companies will be providing the same kind of telephone service in the future that telephone companies now provide. I am told that the cable industry has made a commitment to do so if it does offer such telephone service, but it is an issue Congress should review.

I would urge my colleagues, particularly those in the Commerce Committee, to closely examine this potential problem and to hold hearings to make sure public safety will be adequately protected as our telecommunications industry goes through a period of unprecedented change.

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Chairman, with that, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HASTART) having assumed the chair, Mr. KOLBE, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1555), to promote competition and reduce regulation in order to lower prices and higher quality services for American telecommunications consumers and encourage the rapid deployment of new telecommunications technologies, had come to no resolution thereon.

#### PRINTING OF OMISSIONS FROM RECORD OF JULY 31, 1995

(Consideration of the following 3 bills, H.R. 714, H.R. 701 and H.R. 1874 are reprinted as follows containing omissions from the RECORD of Monday, July 31, 1995, beginning at page H7996.)

#### ILLINOIS LAND CONSERVATION ACT OF 1995

Mr. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on National Security and the Committee on Commerce be discharged from further consideration of the bill (H.R. 714), to establish the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in the State of Illinois, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.