get the Chair's attention, but I was not able to do so.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HULSOF). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONGRESS MUST REFORM THE NATION'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND REGAIN THE PUBLIC'S TRUST

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

Mr. COBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss a matter of grave concern to me and many of my colleagues. I am in great hope that the American public is paying attention to what I am about to say.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk about transportation dollars and budget authority and busting the budget. The transportation dollars that are being handled in this country are being handled in a way that I believe does not support the best interests of the American public nor support the quality of this institution.

Next week the House will be asked to vote on a transportation bill that could cost the American taxpayers $216 billion, money they have already paid into a taxpayers' fund. This will make this bill one of the largest public works bills in our history. The chairman of the Committee on the Budget has called the bill an ''abomination'' because it will bust the budget by at least $26 billion. That is $26 billion that we are going to pass on to our next generation. We have the assurances that this will be paid for in conference. Anybody that has been here for any length of time knows that that is not much in terms of assurance.

This Congress has made important steps toward reversing the fiscal irresponsibility of its recent past, and we must stay that course. We must not lose our bearings when we are so close to making significant strides towards reducing our $5.5 trillion debt.

I want to explain to the American people how transportation dollars are divided up in this country and where that process is corrupt and needs to be reformed. Every time Americans fill their cars up with gas, a few cents goes towards a massive Federal transportation fund. Congress has set up a committee to divide these funds. Each member of this committee exercises enormous influence over where these dollars are spent.

Every Member of Congress has the authority to request special projects, based on the needs of their district and the recommendations of their respective State's Department of Transportation. Money should be awarded to these projects based solely on their merit, but this is often not the case, as anyone who has observed this process recently will admit.

Instead of dividing transportation money according to the merit of projects, money is divided based on political favors and political expediency. Stories in today's Associated Press will help explain what I mean.

The AP reports North Dakota and South Dakota are similar in size and population, but when it comes to the House's highway bill, they are nothing alike. The bill earmarks $60 million in special projects for South Dakota, six times as much as its neighbor to the north.

Mr. Speaker, let me ask my colleagues and the American public a question. Is it likely that the projects in South Dakota have six times more merit as the projects in North Dakota, or is there some political motivation involved?

In Minnesota, one district out of the eight congressional districts in that State received $80 million of the $140 million earmarked for projects in that State. Does that one district have such a disproportionate need for highway funds, or is there some other reason for this imbalance in funding? Is it a coincidence that an inordinately high proportion of transportation funds are targeted to districts represented by members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure? Is it a coincidence that this bill sends outrageous sums of money to members in both parties who will face difficult reelections?

Also, if my colleagues examine this bill, they will find striking disparities in the amount of money one State receives over another, regardless of what they put into the trust fund.

Mr. Speaker, I invite the public and the press to examine this bill and decide for themselves whether this money is being divided according to merit or to politics. This bill includes over 1,400 special projects. In 1987, President Reagan vetoed a bill that had 150 such projects, which is just one-tenth the number in this bill.

We should ask ourselves what the typical American thinks of this process. I think we know. The public finds that it is sick, dirty, and corrupt, and a throwback to the system of ''good ol' boys'' that we came here in 1994 to end. We have $5.5 trillion worth of debt in this country. We cannot afford to play games with the public's money and more importantly we cannot afford to play games with the public's trust.

That is why I and several of my colleagues turned down funds in this year's highway transportation bill. I made a statement to the press that the committee had approached me in hopes of buying my vote. I stand by that statement.

But this is not an issue of one Member against another Member or one Member against a committee. This issue is about whether Congress will continue to look the other way on a system that encourages Members to do the inappropriate and wrong things. This system not only wastes the public's money, it degrades the public's trust in this institution. It is difficult to put a dollar value on trust because it is invaluable. As legislators, the public's trust is our most precious and scarce resource. Once that trust is lost, we all know it is hard to earn it back.

If this Congress and the class of 1994 is known for one thing, I hope it is for our unwavering crusade to regain the public trust. Without that trust, we are governed by suspicion, cynicism, and our society cannot be sustained for long with that foundation.

We can blame the spread of this acidic public cynicism on a variety of familiar culprits: the liberal media, a debased entertainment industry, voter apathy, and Presidential scandal. All of these factors have played a role, but we are wise to first seek improvement among the group we can most directly effect—ourselves. The Congress has lost the confidence of the public, and it is our duty to do what we can to win it back.

The typical American believes politicians are more concerned about preserving their position than the long-term consequences of their policies, and this system perpetuates that perception.

Reforming this system will be an important step in that process. We should let the states make decisions about transportation funding and get it out the hands of Washington.

We must do the right thing for the country on this issue before we throw away more of the public's money and trust.

Today, I believe the greatest temptation facing legislators in our party is to postpone doing the right thing for the country until our position as the majority party is more secure.

If we make this our practice, with every compromise, with every sellout, we will drain the lifeblood from the movement that brought us into Congress. Our souls will depart from us and we will become the hollow politicians the public expects us to be, but sent here to replace.

I urge my colleagues to do what is necessary to reform this system when the House takes up the transportation bill next week.

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

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

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

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

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

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

YOUTH FIREARM VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, 2 days the ago the Nation was shocked when two adolescent boys opened fire on the students at Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas, which killed four students and a teacher. Eleven others were wounded. One of the boys had told his friends that he had a lot of killing to do, according to the police.

Teacher Shannon Wright died trying to shield another student from the deadly fire. She was 32, the mother of a 2½ year old son. The police found a cache of guns at the site.

Just yesterday, a 14-year-old boy in Daly City, California tried to shoot his school principal, Matteo Rizzo, who had disciplined the boy last week for fighting with a schoolmate. The shot fortunately missed Rizzo and lodged in the wall behind him.

Today I have had a report from my home district of Indianapolis that a 7-year-old boy brought a loaded gun to school in his knapsack. When confronted by teachers, the boy said he had been threatened and brought the gun to school for his protection.

Last December, a boy opened fire on a student prayer circle at a high school in West Paducah, Kentucky, killing three students and wounding five. Two months earlier, two students died in a shooting in Pearl, Mississippi. And in December, a student wounded two students when he opened fire in a school in Stamps, Arkansas.

Mr. Speaker, we are facing a crisis when young kids can get guns easily and take them to school. Marion County, Indiana, a part of which I represent, has seen 115 children die by firearms in the last 5 years. Of these deaths, 33 were from handguns. Statewide in Indiana, some 40 children 19 and younger committed suicide with firearms in 1995. Four of these suicides were by children aged 10 to 14. Eighteen children died from firearm accidents in 1995.

Nationwide, more than 1,000 children aged 14 and younger committed suicide with firearms from 1986 to 1992, according to the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence. More than 1,700 were killed in accidents. An average of 14 teenagers and children are killed by guns each day.

Children committing acts of violence are not the only problem we have with children and guns. Adults carelessly leave guns around children and can be just as dangerous. Just this past Sunday in Indianapolis, a 3-year-old boy accidentally shot and critically wounded his mother's boyfriend. This man allowed a 3-year-old to hold his 9-millimeter handgun. Apparently the gun owner removed the ammunition clip but failed to remove the one round in the firing chamber. The boy pulled the trigger and the bullet struck the owner in the abdomen.

Two years ago, Michelle Miller of Indianapolis lost her 3-year-old son when a boyfriend let the child play with his gun. The gun went off, killing the child. As part of her sentence, Michelle is telling her story in public and urging families with guns to keep the weapons away from their children.

Mr. Speaker, what are 3-year-olds doing with guns? The Indianapolis Police Department responded to the most recent incident saying that gun owners should keep their weapons locked and out of the reach of children.

According to the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, half of all gun owners keep their firearms in an unlocked area. One fourth keep their firearms unlocked and loaded, leaving their guns very vulnerable to threat, accidental shooting, suicides, and homicides.

Fortunately, we in Congress can do something to increase the safety of guns that are kept in homes and to keep guns out of the hands of children. H.R. 1047 that requires that handguns come equipped with safety locks is one such measure. A safety lock fits over the trigger of the gun, disabling the weapon until it is removed. With safety locks, parents would be able to secure guns and prevent their use either by their children or someone who steals their guns. We cannot force parents to use safety locks, but we can make sure that they are provided with a safety lock which every gun should carry.

That bill that I referenced is a simple, commonsense solution that we should enact immediately, and that is to require that trigger locks be placed on unattended guns so that our children cannot just use them wantonly. Perhaps we could look at ways to lock guns when they are manufactured, and require manufacturers to implement trigger lock devices in the manufacturing of firearms. And yes, I know that gun lobbies across this country would be opposed to this, but we as Members of Congress must step up very boldly and responsibly and act accordingly to the sentiments of this country and to the protection of our children.

□ 2045

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time previously allotted to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA).

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

There was no objection.

ISTEA BILL

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

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about a very important topic to my colleagues tonight, and that deals with the very important transportation bill.

The fact is that this new transportation bill is one that has been worked out on both sides of the aisle. It is paid for out of Transportation Trust Fund money. It is paid for each time the motorists go to pay for their gasoline. Those funds are being used and generated back to protect the public.

This transportation bill is a good one. It means jobs across America. It means improved road safety. It means new and improved public transit systems. It means improved air quality because more people are riding on the trains, subways, and buses. This ISTEA bill is a bipartisan piece of legislation.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER), the chairman, and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), the ranking member, have worked over time with their staffs to make sure it is a positive piece of legislation in the fact it is fair to all States in its allocation and support of our Nation's governors, along with hundreds of other public service organizations.

We have reduced waste in this Congress. In the 104th Congress, we reduced spending by at least $53 billion. We continue reducing waste in the government by our own reexamination through the Results Caucus through our sunset procedures.

We have several bills, Mr. Speaker. As I am sure my colleagues are aware, we have bills that will make sure that