oversee which make litigation less burdensome to both the participants and the system, is in my view welcome and something that we should support.

I commend my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee for reporting out a bill which provides the appropriate standards for Federal courts throughout the Nation to continue to develop workable alternative dispute resolution methods, and I am pleased that the members of the committee have worked with the Judicial Conference and the Department of Justice to craft legislation which is not objected to by those important institutions.

I support the legislation before us. I urge my colleagues to do the same, so that we can work together to continue to try to improve access to our Nation's courts, lower the costs of litigation, and expedite the process for all.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, before I yield back, I failed to mention this earlier. About five or six days ago I received a detailed letter from my chief judge in the Middle District of North Carolina, and I will not read it in its entirety, but I will allude to what he said about ADR.

He wrote to me: ''This has been a significant benefit to litigants and the public and has been met with approval by the bar. You indicate,'' referring to me, ''that you are a big supporter of ADR programs. We have had a very successful ADR program in this district for several years.''

Now the Middle District of North Carolina of course does not have a corner on that market. Many districts have practiced the ADR exercise for some time, but this would just swing wide the gate and bring all districts in, and I know what Judge Bullock wrote to me would be echoed by district court judges across the land.

Mr. Speaker, I said before it is a good bill, I urge its passage, and I ask the gentlewoman from Texas if she is prepared to yield back.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Texas for yielding this time to me, and I thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE), the chairman, and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), the ranking member, for their work on this bill.

I rise today in support of H.R. 3528, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 1998. Because I have seen firsthand the successful use of alternative dispute resolution in my own County of San Diego, California, I am a diehard fan of ADR, as we often call it.

Let me share with my colleagues the wildly successful example of the San Diego Mediation Center. This service has grown from humble beginnings in the community of Golden Hill in my congressional district to a county-wide service offering mediation, arbitration, facilitation, training, credentialing, internships and a speakers bureau to the citizens of San Diego County.

Since 1983 the San Diego Mediation Center has provided a voluntary and peaceful process for resolving disputes. Alternative dispute resolution is available for neighbors, businesses, private citizens, courts, the legal community, municipalities, government agencies, schools, professional groups, homeowner associations, churches and families.

With an agreement rate of 80 percent and a compliance rate of 85 percent the agreements forged through the mediation process have promoted goodwill in the community, reduced the load on the courts, and in some cases prevented violence.

More than 10,000 volunteer hours are donated to the service each year by the 200 volunteer mediators who receive intensive mediation training from the center. There is an extensive waiting list of potential volunteers who are hoping for the opportunity to receive training and to become mediators. Public trainings in dispute resolution are also given several times each year by the training staff of the mediation center.

The work of the mediation center is well received and highly respected in San Diego. Recently recognized by the San Diego County Taxpayers Association with its Golden Watchdog Award, the mediation center has saved the taxpayers of San Diego $3.7 million by cutting direct costs to the San Diego Small Claims, Municipal and Superior Courts.

Mr. Speaker, the work of the San Diego Mediation Center and hundreds of other alternative dispute resolution services throughout the country reduces judiciary case loads and offers disputants an inexpensive and more satisfying way to resolve disputes rather than litigation. For that reason, I applaud H.R. 3528, that will extend this option to litigants in district court civil cases.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am prepared to yield back after I make one closing comment, and I do want this to be particularly acknowledged, I say to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE), that I recognize the hard work that has been put into this bill.

My plea is particularly parallel to this legislation. It certainly does not take away from my very strong support of this legislation. But again I raise up the very deep concern that I believe that the judicial appointments that proceed through the other body have been held hostage. I call to this body's attention a nominee by the name of Judge Massiah-Jackson. Several other nominees for the bench have been held in absolute and outrageous hostage situations.

I believe that the alternative dispute resolution system is excellent and is needed in this legislation, is something of great importance to the Nation, but we will not do the job that we are supposed to do if we do not proceed filling the vacancies that are so crucial to the justice system in this country.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I applaud the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE), and I certainly applaud the ranking member, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), for their wisdom and vision on this legislation.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her generous comments and for her help on this.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3528, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, on that, I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5, rule I, and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1445

NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 1998

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2691) to reauthorize and improve the operations of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2691

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Reauthorization Act of 1998''.

SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATIONS OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACTIVITIES.—Section 30104 of title 49, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 30104. Authorization of appropriations

''There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary $81,200,000 for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to carry out this part in each fiscal year beginning in fiscal year 1999 and ending in fiscal year 2001.''.

(b) MOTOR VEHICLE INFORMATION ACTIVITIES.—Section 32102 of title 49, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 32102. Authorization of appropriations

''There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary $6,200,000 for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to carry out this part in each fiscal year beginning in fiscal year 1999 and ending in fiscal year 2001.''.

SEC. 3. RESTRICTIONS ON LOBBYING ACTIVITIES.

(a) AMENDMENT.—Subchapter I of chapter 301 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"§ 30105. Restriction on lobbying activities

''No funds appropriated to the Secretary pursuant to section 30104 or 32102 may be available for any activity specifically designed to urge a State or local legislator to favor or oppose the adoption of any specific legislative proposal pending before any State or local legislature.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in subchapter I of chapter 301 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''30105. Restriction on lobbying activities.''.

SEC. 4. RISK AND BENEFIT DISCLOSURE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Within one year of the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Transportation shall communicate to the public information regarding the reasonable risks and benefits of any major device or element of design to be installed on or in a motor vehicle or motor vehicle equipment in compliance with a motor vehicle safety standard issued under section 30111 of title 49, United States Code, determined by the Secretary to be important to the protection of motor vehicle occupants.

(b) NOTICE AND COMMENT.—In carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary of Transportation shall provide notice that the Secretary is considering the means for carrying out subsection (a) and shall provide opportunity for comment on—

(1) the extent to which the information to be communicated under subsection (a) can be communicated in a manner which is scientifically objective and which relies upon scientific findings; and

(2) the extent to which such information can be made available to consumers in a clear and easily understandable format through the Internet, public libraries, and such other means as the Secretary may deem appropriate.

(c) NO REQUIREMENT.—Unless the Secretary of Transportation determines that it is essential to ensuring motor vehicle safety, the Secretary may not require a manufacturer or distributor to distribute any statement of reasonable risks and benefits which the Secretary is to communicate under subsection (a).

SEC. 5. OCCUPANT PROTECTION PREFERENCES.

Section 30111 of title 49, United States Code is amended by inserting after subsection (e) the following:

''(f) SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO OCCUPANT PROTECTION.—When prescribing or revising a motor vehicle safety standard under this section or section 30127 relating to the protection of motor vehicle occupants under this chapter, the Secretary shall, to the extent relevant and practicable, design such standard to protect improperly restrained and positioned occupants only to the extent that such a design would not substantially increase the risk of injury to properly restrained and positioned occupants.''.

SEC. 6. ODOMETERS.

(a) TRANSFERS OF NEW MOTOR VEHICLES.—Section 32705(a) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(4)(A) This subsection shall apply to all transfers of motor vehicles (unless otherwise exempted by the Secretary by regulation), except in the case of transfers of new motor vehicles from a vehicle manufacturer jointly to a dealer and a person engaged in the business of renting or leasing vehicles for a period of 30 days or less.

''(B) For purposes of subparagraph (A), the term 'new motor vehicle' means any motor vehicle driven with no more than the limited use necessary in moving, transporting, or road testing such vehicle prior to delivery from the vehicle manufacturer to a dealer, but in no event shall the odometer reading of such vehicle exceed 300 miles.''.

(b) EXEMPTED VEHICLES.—Section 32705(a) of title 49, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a), is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(5) The Secretary may exempt such classes or categories of vehicles as the Secretary deems appropriate from these requirements. Until such time as the Secretary amends or modifies the regulations set forth in 49 CFR 580.6, such regulations shall have full force and effect.''.

SEC. 7. INTERNATIONAL HARMONIZATION.

(a) AMENDMENT.—Subchapter III of chapter 301 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"§ 30148. International motor vehicle safety outreach

''(a) ACTIVITIES.—The Secretary is authorized, in consultation with the Secretaries of State and Commerce where appropriate, to engage in activities that improve worldwide motor vehicle safety through appropriate activities. Such activities may include—

''(1) promoting the adoption of international and national vehicle standards that are harmonized with, functionally equivalent to, or compatible with United States vehicle standards;

''(2) participating in efforts to foster an international acceptance of globally harmonized or functionally equivalent or compatible motor vehicle regulations and standards to otherwise improve international highway and motor vehicle safety;

''(3) promoting international cooperative programs for conducting research, development, demonstration projects, training, and other forms of technology transfer and exchange, including safety conferences, seminars, and expositions to enhance international motor vehicle safety; and

''(4) providing technical assistance to other countries relating to their adoption of United States vehicle regulations or standards functionally equivalent to United States vehicle standards.

''(b) COOPERATION.—The Secretary may carry out the authority granted by this section, in cooperation with appropriate United States Government agencies, any State or local agency, and any authority, association, institution, corporation (profit or nonprofit), foreign government, multinational institution, or any other organization or person.

''(c) CONSIDERATION.—When engaging in activities to improve worldwide motor vehicle safety, the Secretary shall ensure that these activities maintain or improve the level of safety of motor vehicles and motor vehicle equipment sold in the United States.

''(d) PUBLIC MEETINGS AND INFORMATION.—To ensure public awareness of, and opportunity to comment on, decision-making meetings concerning the adoption of a globally harmonized motor vehicle regulation or standard, described in subsection (a)(2), by an international body or representatives of any foreign nation the Secretary shall—

''(1) not less than quarterly, provide notice of, and hold a public meeting to receive comments on the subject matter of, any decision-making meetings scheduled to be held with an international body or representatives of any foreign nation before the next public meeting required to be held under this paragraph; and

''(2) make available to the public any relevant information and records, including any proposed text, concerning the matter of any decision-making meetings scheduled with an international body or representatives of any foreign nation as those materials become available.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in subchapter III of chapter 301 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''30148. International motor vehicle safety outreach.''.

SEC. 8. MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS.

(a) NOTIFICATION OF DEFECTS AND NONCOMPLIANCE.—Sections 30118(d) and 30120(h) of title 49, United States Code, are each amended by striking the second sentence.

(b) REMEDIES FOR DEFECTS AND NONCOMPLIANCE.—Section 30120(i)(1) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by inserting ''(including retailers of motor vehicle equipment)'' after ''dealer'' the first time it appears.

(c) TIRES.—Section 30123 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking subsections (a), (b), and (c) and by redesignating subsections (d), (e), and (f), as subsections (a), (b), and (c), respectively.

(d) AUTOMATIC OCCUPANT CRASH PROTECTION AND SEAT BELT USE.—Section 30127(g)(1) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking ''every 6 months'' and inserting ''annually''.

(e) MISCELLANEOUS.—

(1) DEFINITIONS.—

(A) COUNTRY OF ORIGIN.—Section 32304(a)(3)(B) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by inserting before the period the following: '', plus the assembly and labor costs incurred for the final assembly of such engines and transmissions''.

(B) FINAL ASSEMBLY PLACE.—Section 32304(a)(5) of title 49, United States Code, is amended is amended by adding at the end the following: ''Such term does not include facilities for engine and transmission fabrication and assembly and the facilities for fabrication of motor vehicle equipment component parts which are produced at the same final assembly place using forming processes such as stamping, machining, or molding processes.''.

(C) OUTSIDE SUPPLIER CONTENT REPORTING.—Section 32304(a)(9)(A) of title 49, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''(A) for an outside supplier—

''(i) the full purchase price of passenger motor vehicle equipment whose purchase price contains at least 70 percent value added in the United States and Canada; or

''(ii) that portion of the purchase price of passenger motor vehicle equipment containing less than 70 percent value added in the United States and Canada that is attributable to the percent value added in the United States and Canada when such percent is expressed to the nearest 5 percent; and''.

(2) COUNTRY OF ASSEMBLY.—Section 32304(d) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following; ''A manufacturer may add to the label required under subsection (b) a line stating the country in which vehicle assembly was completed.''.

(3) VEHICLE CONTENT PERCENTAGE BY ASSEMBLY PLANT.—Section 32304 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by redesignating subsections (c) through (f) as subsections (f) through (i), respectively, and by adding after subsection (b) the following:

''(c) VEHICLE CONTENT PERCENTAGE BY ASSEMBLY PLANT.—A manufacturer may display separately on the label required by subsection (b) the domestic content of a vehicle based on the assembly plant. Such display shall occur after the matter required to be in the label by subsection (b)(1)(A).''.

(4) SUPPLIERS FAILING TO REPORT.—Section 32304 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding after subsection (c), as added by paragraph (3), the following:

''(d) VALUE ADDED DETERMINATION.—If a manufacturer or allied supplier requests information in a timely manner from one or more of its outside suppliers concerning the U.S./Canadian content of particular equipment, but does not receive that information

despite a good faith effort to obtain it, the manufacturer or allied supplier may make its own good faith value added determinations, subject to the following:

''(1) The manufacturer or allied supplier shall make the same value added determinations as would be made by the outside supplier, that is, whether 70 percent or more of the value of equipment is added in the United States and/or Canada.

''(2) The manufacturer or allied supplier shall consider the amount of value added and the location in which the value was added for all of the stages that the outside supplier would be required to consider.

''(3) The manufacturer or allied supplier may determine that the value added in the United States and/or Canada is 70 percent or more only if it has a good faith basis to make that determination.

''(4) A manufacturer and its allied suppliers may, on a combined basis, make value added determinations for no more than 10 percent, by value, of a carline's total parts content from outside suppliers.

''(5) Value added determinations made by a manufacturer or allied supplier under this paragraph shall have the same effect as if they were made by the outside supplier.

''(6) This provision does not affect the obligation of outside suppliers to provide the requested information.''.

(5) ACCOUNTING FOR THE VALUE OF SMALL PARTS.—Section 32304 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding after subsection (d), as added by paragraph (4), the following:

''(e) SMALL PARTS.—The country of origin of nuts, bolts, clips, screws, pins, braces, gasoline, oil, blackout, phosphate rinse, windshield washer fluid, fasteners, tire assembly fluid, rivets, adhesives, and grommets, of any system, subassembly, or component installed in a vehicle shall be considered to be the country in which such parts were included in the final assembly of such vehicle.''.

(f) STUDY.—The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shall conduct a study of the benefits to motor vehicle drivers of a regulation to require the installation in a motor vehicle of an interior device to release the trunk lid. Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administration shall submit a report on the results of the study to the Committee on Commerce of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate.

SEC. 9. IMPORTATION OF MOTOR VEHICLE FOR SHOW OR DISPLAY.

(a) IMPORTATION OF NONCOMPLYING MOTOR VEHICLES.—Section 30114 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking ''or competitive racing events'' and inserting ''competitive racing events, show, or display''.

(b) TRANSITION RULE.—A person who is the owner of a motor vehicle located in the United States on the date of enactment of this Act may seek an exemption under section 30114 of title 49, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a) of this section, for a period of 6 months after the date regulations of the Secretary of Transportation promulgated in response to such amendment take effect.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KLINK) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY).

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

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

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in strong support of H.R. 2691, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Reauthorization Act. This legislation represents the Committee on Commerce's commitment to the regular business of reauthorizing the agencies within our jurisdiction. The legislation before the House has benefitted from the input of the administration, consumers groups, manufacturers and automobile dealers.

In our oversight of NHTSA, we discovered a number of agency operations that required Congressional action. This was particularly true with regard to air bags. All of us were concerned when the first stories about air bag injuries surfaced. After all, these safety devices were mandated by Congress. We learned that in almost every instance, people injured by air bags were either not wearing a seat belt or were seated too close to the air bag. The committee found that NHTSA could have made more information available to consumers sooner about the potential risk of injury from air bags. The bill includes a provision intended to provide consumers with more information about the safety equipment installed on motor vehicles.

We also found that the air bag safety standard may have put at risk those passengers who wear their seat belts. To encourage greater seat belt use, this legislation directs the Secretary to continue efforts to focus on injuries to both belted and unbelted passengers, but to ensure that belted passengers are not penalized for buckling up.

Second, as many of us know, the committee has obtained copies of contracts issued by the agency for the purpose of lobbying State legislators. Federal agencies should not be permitted to lobby State officials, any more than they should be permitted to lobby Members of Congress. Therefore, this legislation contains language requiring that the agency apply the same standard used in dealing with the Congress to its dealing with State and local legislators.

NHTSA will still be permitted to promote safety and testify at the State and local level, but it will be prohibited from actually asking State officials to vote in a particular way. This language was carefully crafted and reflects the serious consideration given to the issue.

Finally, the bill contains a number of other miscellaneous amendments to the agency's authorizing statutes. Chief among these is language providing the agency with authority to participate in international safety standard setting efforts. This provision, which was requested by the administration, ensures that any efforts to change U.S. safety standards will only result in safer and better vehicles for American consumers.

In the 7 years since NHTSA was last authorized, U.S. consumers have become increasingly conscious of the safety of their automobiles. Where automobile manufacturers once regarded safety as an afterthought, they now actively compete for customers on the basis of safety features. Our work as legislators must continue to encourage the market to innovate and build safer cars. I believe that this legislation meets that goal.

Before closing, I would like to acknowledge the work of several members of the committee. First, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. TAUZIN) the chairman of the subcommittee, deserves much of the credit for his work on this bill. This legislation reflects his desire to ensure that all groups have an opportunity to be heard on issues of importance.

The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) should also be commended for his fine work on the State lobbying provisions. Finally, my good friend the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) and his staff worked with us at every step. I appreciate the spirit of cooperation which led to this bill being reported by unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that H.R. 2691 will go a long way toward ensuring that safer vehicles travel on our Nation's highways. I urge my colleagues to support this well-balanced legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KLINK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to stand today to support the reauthorization of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, commonly referred to as NHTSA.

First of all, I would like to thank my colleagues, my good friends in the majority, the gentleman from Virginia (Chairman BLILEY) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Chairman TAUZIN), for all of their good work on this bill, and I want to commend them and their staffs for their willingness to listen to everyone in the process of writing this bill.

For those of you who do not know, Mr. Speaker, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is a branch of the Federal Government that has a very serious charge. They are charged with a mission of reducing traffic accidents and deaths and reducing injuries and economic losses resulting from those accidents by making sure the vehicles that we drive are in fact safe to drive.

Some of my colleagues on this side may have some questions about how a few specific provisions, such as the risk and benefit disclosure and the occupant protection preferences, will work in the real world of regulation. Nevertheless, these would represent good faith efforts to address the problems that we have discovered with air bag deployments.

I would like to thank my good friend, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY), for bringing his concerns about the

American Automobile Labeling Act before the committee. Congress passed the American Automobile Labeling Act to give American consumers information about where the parts that go into the vehicles that they purchased were actually made. Many have criticized how the labeling act actually calculates domestic contents.

After looking into the issue, I came to the conclusion that those complaints about the accuracy of the labeling act were a valid complaint, and that is why I offered, with the full support of my dear friend the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), an amendment in the committee markup to address those concerns by making the labeling act a more accurate reflection of domestic content, and I am pleased that the committee endorsed our approach.

Mr. Speaker, we last authorized NHTSA's part of ISTEA back in 1991. This is a straightforward and bipartisan reauthorization bill that deserves the support of the entire Congress, and I would urge its adoption.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL).

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2691, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Reauthorization Act 1998. The bill authorizes $87.4 million over the next three years so that NHTSA can continue promoting highway safety and reducing death and injuries from vehicular accidents.

At the outset I would like to thank and commend the chairman of both the committee and the subcommittee for the rare and welcome bipartisan way in which they have handled consideration of this legislation. Issues of concern raised by the Members on this side of the aisle have been addressed and the bill was reported by the committee by voice vote.

Concern was raised during the hearings that the bill's restrictions on lobbying were too tough and would prohibit NHTSA from providing important advice to State and local governments. As a result, provisions in this bill relating to lobbying have been modified so that NHTSA is now subject to the same restrictions at the State and local levels as it is at the Federal level.

The legislation also contains important provisions that allow foreign manufacturers to account more fully for U.S. content of parts used to produce automobiles sold in the United States. Under the bill, suppliers can report U.S. content to the nearest 5 percent rather than getting no credit if the part has less than 70 percent U.S. content. This provision was carefully crafted so as not to interfere with the accounting of U.S. auto parts under the U.S.-Japan auto agreement.

The bill also requires NHTSA to disclose to the public the risks and benefits of the equipment and design features required to be installed on motor vehicles pursuant to NHTSA regulations. It also authorizes NHTSA to promote adoption of U.S. safety standards by auto producers in other countries. It also allows NHTSA to design occupant protection standards to protect unbelted occupants only if such standards do not result in a substantial increase in the risk of injury to the properly restrained occupant.

Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the managers of the bill for their cooperation and fairness. I want to express my appreciation to the majority for their kindness in this matter. I believe this a good bill, it deserves the support of our colleagues, and I urge my colleagues to vote for the legislation.

Mr. KLINK. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2691, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2691, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. There being no further business for the moment, pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 5 p.m.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 56 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 5 p.m.

□ 1700

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. EMERSON) at 5 p.m.

PRIVATE CALENDAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This is Private Calendar day. The Clerk will call the bill on the Private Calendar.

RUTH HAIRSTON

The Clerk called the bill (H.R. 2729) for the private relief of Ruth Hairston by waiver of a filing deadline for appeal from a ruling relating to her application for a survivor annuity.

There being no objection, the Clerk read the bill as follows:

H.R. 2729

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. WAIVER OF DEADLINE FOR APPEAL.

For purposes of a petition by Mrs. Ruth Hairston for review of the final order issued October 31, 1995, by the Merit Systems Protection Board with respect to its docket number SF–0831–95–0754–I–1, the 30-day filing deadline in section 7703(b)(1) of title 5, United States Code, is waived.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2729, a Private Bill For the Relief of Ruth Hairston Relating to Her Application for a Survivor Annuity. I introduced this legislation in an attempt to provide relief for my constituent, Mrs. Ruth Hairston.

This legislation seeks a waiver of the 30-day period to file an appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals. Mrs. Hairston requested reconsideration from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on May 26, 1995 of their decision to deny her survivor annuity benefits under the Civil Service Retirement System as the ''former spouse'' of Paul Hairston. The Hairstons were married for more than 45 years when their marriage ended in divorce on March 16, 1987. Mr. Hairston had almost 35 years of civil service when he retired on June 11, 1990. When he retired, he selected a survivor annuity for Mrs. Hairston with a reduced annuity for himself.

Mrs. Hairston started to receive retirement annuity payments in 1988 but these payments were stopped after Mr. Hairston's death on February 22, 1995, because it was concluded that she was not entitled to benefits as a ''former spouse.'' When Mr. Hairston retired, there was no statutory provision which would have allowed Mrs. Hairston to receive a survivor annuity as a divorcee (former spouse). However, the Civil Service Retirement Spouse Act of 1985 changed this, and allowed Mr. Hairston to elect a survivor annuity within two years following the divorce.

Mr. Hairston did not make a formal request for Mrs. Hairston to receive a survivor annuity after the divorce (as a former spouse), neither did he make an annuity adjustment to stop Mrs. Hairston from receiving the larger portion of his retirement annuity which were due to her under community assets. He was informed that he was still being charged for a survivor annuity after his divorce and that he no longer had to allow Mrs. Hairston to have the larger portion of his annuity, yet he did not change this. The fact that Mr. Hairston did not change this annuity arrangement establishes an ''intent'' for Mrs. Hairston to received a survivor benefit after his death. Intent is one of the grounds to excuse the failure of Mr. Hairston to make a formal election (Valee versus Office of Personnel Management).

On October 31, 1995 the Merit Systems Protection Board upheld the OPM decision to deny Mrs. Hairston a survivor annuity. At the time, Mrs. Hairston was severely ill and under doctor's care and could not file a timely appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals. Mrs. Hairston remains in poor health and faces eviction from her home because of her inability to meet her financial obligations. She desperately needs