In addition to the fact that the basis for this opinion was premature, i.e., the fact that both Section 163 and H.R. 2989 are not law as yet, the Metro board held a meeting to change the language of its referendum ballot for Nov. 4 to further conform to these prohibitions that are not yet law. This ballot was then accepted by the Department of Transportation for compliance with federal regulations. Metro held 178 public and stakeholder meetings during its development of the Metro Solutions plan between December 2001 and July 2003.

The alternative plan backed by Metro Solutions opponents and formulated by the Houston-Galveston Area Council, the ''100 Percent Solution'' plan, is still in draft form and has not yet had specific public involvement for the additional 5,000 lane-miles on top of the already planned 5,600 lane-miles. In terms of economic benefits projected for Metro solutions, between $130 million and $200 million per year in regulatory costs will be saved to reduce pollution emissions.

The opponents of Metro solutions offer the 100 Percent plan as an alternative. However, it is not an alternative. First, unlike the Metro solutions plan, the 100 Percent plan is an unfinished study and not a plan at all. Secondly, Metro Solutions covers only a portion of the eight-county region, while the 100 Percent plan contemplates the incorporation of the Regional Transportation Plan, or RTP, which is a multimodal plan that covers the entire eight-county region. The RTP is not an alternative to Metro Solutions—it includes Metro Solutions. Also, unlike Metro Solutions, the 100 Percent plan is based on a wish list of regional road and transit projects that have no identified funding and would require significant amounts of right of way. The claim by Metro Solutions opponents that the 100 Percent solution plan can reduce congestion depends upon the sudden appearance of this wish list of projects that the federal government currently prohibits local officials from planning and programming, as they have no existing revenue streams to fund such projects.

In conclusion, there is no need to impede or to derail the Metro Solutions plan. Houston is the only city in the United States that was affected by funding restrictions of H.R. 2989. As a result, the city has been singled out and excluded from the 25 slices of a funding pie worth $1.2 billion federal dollars. Dallas is slated to receive $30 million under the act. The referendum vote on Nov. 4 will translate to more needed rail, more buses and more roads with no new taxes. Metro Solutions is a public transportation plan that will serve the public—therefore, the will of the community should supersede any federal special interests. I strongly urge a yes vote on the Metro referendum.

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

(Mr. PENCE 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 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. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California address the House. His remarks will appeared hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CHILD SAFETY

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

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to take a moment to thank the chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means, the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER), for calling a hearing yesterday to examine the failure of our system to protect our children. It was a very, very difficult hearing for those of us who attended to listen to the traumatic and heartbreaking story of four young men in a family, the Jackson family of New Jersey.

As someone who has worked on child protection for my career in the Congress and in the State legislature and as cochairman of the Congressional Missing and Exploited Children's Caucus, I was shocked to hear and to see the photos of these four young men who were suffering at the hands of their adoptive parents. What struck me even more, or at least made me more outrageous, was the fact that the Division of Youth and Family Services from New Jersey had visited the home of this family over 38 times in the past several years.

What did they fail to observe in these visits? For one, they failed to observe a 19-year-old boy who weighed just 45 pounds and was a mere 4 feet tall; a 14-year-old boy who was 3 feet in height and, I believe, less than 40 pounds. Where were they protecting these children?

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, most Americans treat their pets better than New Jersey cared for their children. We heard arguments, which we always do when there is a child tragedy, that, A, we lack resources and funding, we have too many caseloads. Those excuses and finger-pointing and blame-gaming must stop, because they are outrageous accusations suggesting money was at the root of the children's problems. The family received over $30,000 annually in a subsidy to care for these children from the Federal and State government. $30,000. There is no excuse that money, or shortage of money, was the reason these children were starved. Thirty-eight visits by a caseworker to this house indicates obviously that they had a routine appearance in the household.

What did they fail to observe? One thing they failed to observe is that there were locks on the doors to the kitchen, not allowing the children to come into this home, into their own kitchen to eat. When you look at the photos, and you have probably seen these photos if you have picked up any paper in this country because they have been blasted across the headlines of every newspaper in America, including both TV and print journalists.

We have to in this country get a handle on this problem because this is sickening to its core that children that would be in the hands of people would be allowed to be treated so miserably. And regrettably at yesterday's hearing a person, a man of the cloth from the church where the Jackson family attends, actually got up and defended the parents and started to blame the children, suggesting they had eating disorders, that they were violent children. We are talking about 19, 17 and younger than that. I would have accepted some of that argument from this reverend had the family sought medical attention or had the family chosen to return the children to foster care because they were too difficult to care for. But no, they did not do any of that. What they did was cash checks from the welfare system and then fail to feed the children.

Testimony from children's services indicate all of these boys have now had remarkable weight gain in the last several weeks. So the argument put forward by the reverend that these children were eating three square meals a day and they suffered from eating disorders is absolutely false and spurious when you look at the results of the care and feeding under Division of Youth Services of that State.

At the end of the day, and fortunately for the gentleman from California's leadership in calling this hearing, we may get to the bottom of some of these problems, but we must act quickly. We are not talking about overdue library books, we are talking about human life. We are talking about children who are allowed to starve, we are talking about a system that is run amuck, and we are talking about only getting a response when some politician's job is on the line.

It is time to get serious. It is time to get to the job of protecting our children. I only hope that there is never again an example like the Jackson family suffering at the hands of a State agency.

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

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, on October 14, the Supreme