

bipartisan reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act has had in increasing the health of our wild fishing stocks. I encourage my colleagues to vote “no” on this rule.

I yield back the balance of my time. Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I was listening very carefully to the gentleman from Colorado, and I accept his invitation to go trout fishing. I would love to do that. Fishing of all kind is great for everybody to do, and I appreciate his invitation.

The reason we have the problem we have today is not because the Federal Government knows how many fish are out there. It doesn't. Remember what I said earlier—this is a reef fish, and they don't sample for reef fish on reefs. So, if you don't sample for reef fish on reefs, you are not going to find the fish. Now, we know there are so many fish out there because we haven't been allowed to fish them and that snapper are not only eating other species but they are eating other snapper.

What our scientists have done is they have actually gone out there with submersible vehicles with high-def cameras, and they count the fish on the reef and sample them that way. They have a real number. They do a real sampling so they get accurate data, and these government scientists don't.

My friend said that we should go back to the drawing board. We have waited too long already. We should have done this last year so that we could have had a real snapper season this year. If we wait again, we won't have a snapper season next year, and that is not acceptable. We have enough fish out there—and the science from our region has proven it—to have a real snapper season. It is not just about snapper. We have these problems in other areas of the fishery that need to be taken care of and taken care of in a responsible way. No one is more environmentally conscious than someone who hunts and fishes, because that is where we get our enjoyment, and we want it to be there for us and for our children and, now that I have a grandson, for my grandchildren.

I have appreciated this debate today. I always welcome the opportunity to draw attention to some of the real issues which are affecting my constituents back on the Gulf Coast. To some people up here, this issue doesn't mean much. To some people, they only listen to the political talking points put out by lobbyists or by political parties or by environmental groups. But to the small restaurant employees in Gulf Shores or to the charter boat captain in Orange Beach or to the gas station in Foley or to the condo owners on Dauphin Island or to the thousands of families who spend time fishing on the Gulf Coast and all around our country, this bill is critically important. This bill is about getting the Federal Government off our backs so that we can fish.

Let's not fall back into another political debate. Let's come together on be-

half of our Nation's coastal communities. Let's get some real relief for our fishermen. I encourage my colleagues to support this rule and to support this commonsense bill and to support the people of America and their freedom to fish in our waters.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered. The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered. The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

□ 2000

HONORING THE LIFE OF CORPORAL SARA MEDINA

(Mr. FOSTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, today it is with great sorrow that I rise to mark the loss of one of Aurora's brightest lights. On May 12, 2015, while performing relief work following the Nepal earthquake, Corporal Sara Abigail Medina and five other marines tragically lost their lives in a helicopter crash.

Corporal Medina was from Aurora, Illinois, and graduated from East Aurora High School in 2010. While still in high school, she decided to serve her country by joining the Marines.

In the face of such a tragedy, we often ask why; and to paraphrase the President, whenever a disaster strikes, the world looks to America to lead because of our extraordinary people who rise to the challenge.

As a father, I know that no words that I say on this floor will be able to fill the hole in the hearts of all those who knew and loved Sara, but still we must speak because all should know that Corporal Sara Medina gave her last full measure of devotion in service to her country, helping those who needed it most.

For her sacrifice and for her family's terrible loss, we offer our condolences and thanks of a grateful nation.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NEWHOUSE). The Chair will entertain Special Order speeches without prejudice to the resumption of legislative business.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of Jan-

uary 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to join with my distinguished colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida, as we discuss an issue of great importance to my district and, quite frankly, to every Member of Congress: transportation infrastructure.

Last week our Nation endured a terrible tragedy as Amtrak Northeast Regional train 188 derailed in Philadelphia on its way to Trenton en route to New York. That accident killed eight Americans, including one of my constituents, injured more than 200, and disrupted service on the busiest rail corridor in the Nation for nearly a week.

In the days since the accident, investigators have indicated that high speeds may have played a significant role in the derailment, speeds that were more than double the limit in that stretch of the track. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have used those details to deflect attention away from discussing our Nation's investments, or the lack thereof, in rail and all of our other surface transportation infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, burying our heads in the sand and waiting until an accident indisputably caused by lack of funding or maintenance to discuss that funding is dangerous, irresponsible, and, frankly, unacceptable: dangerous because millions of Americans every day are driving across dilapidated bridges, riding on outdated trains, and stuck in endless traffic when traveling to work, to school, and medical care; irresponsible because news coverage and the looming highway trust fund depletion have made transportation infrastructure a national focus; unacceptable because transportation infrastructure has traditionally been a bipartisan issue that affects how every single one of our constituents gets where they need to go. Still we stand here today waiting for the House majority to bring forth a good-faith, comprehensive surface transportation reauthorization that makes investments to give us the transportation system—rail, car, air, and sea—that we need.

Transportation infrastructure is critical for the businesses and employers in our district that ship goods to consumers across the globe. Transportation infrastructure creates good-paying jobs here, jobs that can't be outsourced, and jobs that will actually

give working Americans a chance to climb into the middle class and beyond.

But like I mentioned earlier, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would rather have us wait until an accident that we can attribute to infrastructure decay to invest in our roads, our bridges, and our railways. In fact, a Los Angeles Times report recently noted that the last time Congress significantly increased Amtrak funding was 2008, following the 2008 Union Pacific-Metrolink crash in California that killed 25 people.

This year, the day following the Philadelphia crash, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle voted to cut Amtrak funding by one-fifth. That is wrong; it is just plain wrong. It is insane, and it is out of touch.

Earlier this year, my Congressional Progressive Caucus colleagues and I introduced the People's Budget, a budget that would fix our economy so that it will once again provide opportunity for everyday working class Americans. A key provision in the People's Budget was an investment of \$820 billion to close our Nation's infrastructure gap, funded by raising the gas tax by just 15 cents for the first time in more than two decades so that we can maintain and improve our Nation's infrastructure.

Unfortunately, instead of the People's Budget, Congress passed a far more dangerous Republican budget; and unfortunately, our infrastructure continues to crumble. Our roads are frequently congested, limiting productivity for millions of American workers; our airports appear run down compared to their competitors in Europe and Asia; and rail speeds around the world have long eclipsed even Amtrak's fastest trains.

Our bridges continue to deteriorate and present real safety hazards, and our ports are in terrible disrepair, having negative economic impact. In fact, a report last week in The New York Times noted that while the train that derailed was traveling well above the speed limit, at 106 miles per hour, its speed was about half of the average speed of a French train from Paris to Marseille.

Federal and State investments in infrastructure have plunged in recent years, even as economists have repeated over and over and over again that infrastructure spending would bring massive economic benefits and overhaul our transportation networks. This has to change before it is too late, Mr. Speaker.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus is here on the floor today to implore our colleagues to put transportation spending front and center. I know that the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) agrees with me. I want to thank her for her leadership as a member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER), who shares our

passion about the importance of funding a comprehensive transportation bill.

Mr. NADLER. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, for well over a decade we have failed to adequately invest in transportation infrastructure. According to DOT, there is an \$808 billion backlog of investment needs on highways and bridges, including \$480 billion in critical repair work. Public transit has an \$86 billion backlog of critical maintenance and repair needs, which increases by \$2.5 billion each year as bus and rail infrastructure ages.

The American Society of Civil Engineers has given U.S. infrastructure an overall grade of D-minus because 54 percent of our major roads are rated poor or mediocre. One out of every four bridges in the United States, or 147,000 bridges, is structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, and 45 percent of Americans do not have access to transit.

Federal land management agencies need over \$11 billion to address deferred maintenance needs on our roads and bridges. The Federal Highway Administration estimates that the cost of upgrading and repairing our deteriorating bridges is over \$106 billion. An investment of \$20 billion annually by all levels of government is needed through 2030 to draw down the backlog.

Bringing existing transit assets just up to a state of good repair will require an annualized investment level of \$18.5 billion through the year 2030, an amount far in excess of current funding levels. An additional \$4.3 billion over current spending levels from all levels of government is needed annually to eliminate the current backlog by 2030.

To accommodate future transit ridership growth and preserve transit systems, as much as \$24.5 billion per year would need to be invested compared to only \$14.2 billion currently invested, a gap of \$10 billion a year.

The cost to our economy of not meeting our infrastructure needs is great. According to the 2013 American Society of Civil Engineers report, 42 percent of America's major urban highways remain congested. Congestion costs commuters \$121 billion a year in wasted time and fuel, or an average of \$818 per commuter. I would guarantee you each commuter would rather spend the equivalent amount in taxes than waste that money sitting on a clogged highway.

In 2011, congestion caused urban Americans to travel 5.5 billion hours more and to purchase an extra 2.9 billion gallons of unnecessary fuel. Without existing transit services in place in 2011, travelers would have suffered an additional 865 million hours of delays and consumed 450 million more gallons of fuel.

Despite the condition of our infrastructure system caused by years of underinvestment, we are spending way too little today on roads, bridges, transit, and rail. The highway trust fund

currently collects about \$35 billion per year for the highway account and \$5 billion for the transit account. According to CBO, the highway trust fund faces a shortfall of about \$170 billion over the next 10 years. By 2020, the highway trust fund's purchasing power will have dropped by nearly half since 1990 because of inflation at a time when the country's population will have increased 30 percent.

We currently spend about \$50 billion a year on highways and transit, and most of the recent fights over revenue for the transportation bill have been merely to fill the gap to maintain current funding levels. The discussion should be much broader. It should be about how we can fund the program at a higher level to eliminate the backlog, increase capacity, meet a state of good repair, and eliminate the congestion in this country.

Today, this country spends about 1.7 percent of GDP of the entire economy on infrastructure. We used to spend almost 4 percent on infrastructure. Europe is spending 4 to 5 percent, and China is spending 9 percent. Who do you think, 30 years from now, is going to have a competitive economic system which depends on adequate up-to-date competitive transportation infrastructure and broadband?

In particular, for example, we have been underinvesting in our rail infrastructure as well. The passenger rail system needs at least \$52 billion, or \$2.5 billion per year for 20 years, just to meet ridership demands such as capacity improvements, such as tunnels to New York and to bring the system into a state of good repair. Of that amount, \$21 billion is necessary for the backlog of projects on the Northeast corridor.

The Northeast corridor serves 51 million people and is the major corridor for Amtrak in the country. The \$21 billion for the backlog of projects includes \$13.8 billion in major infrastructure project backlog and \$7.2 billion in basic infrastructure backlog.

□ 2015

Some of these major project needs include \$1.5 billion to replace the Baltimore and Potomac Tunnel, which dates back to 1873; \$950 million to replace the Gunpowder and Bush River Bridges; \$850 million to replace the Susquehanna River Bridge; \$350 million to replace the Highline Bridge and add a fourth track between Newark and New York; \$750 million to replace the Portal Bridge, which can stop the entire Northeast corridor if it should fail; \$1 billion for catenary, communication, and signal upgrades and bridge replacements near New Haven; \$2.8 billion in upgrades to other movable bridges; \$1.8 billion in additional catenary upgrades from Washington, D.C., to New York.

All this is basic backlog, just to make sure that the current system continues to operate and doesn't fail. Additional funding over and above the \$21 billion backlog, for a total of \$64

billion, is needed for service improvements and projected increases in capacity on the Northeast corridor; yet Amtrak gets just \$1.4 billion in the annual appropriations bill—or less than 2 percent of Federal transportation funding.

The Appropriations Committee recommended the other day that this be reduced to \$1.1 billion, with a \$64 billion backlog.

The fiscal year 2016 transportation appropriations bill, just marked up in committee the day after the accident north of Philadelphia, cuts capital funding for Amtrak by \$290 million, providing only \$1.1 billion in FY 2016, \$1 billion below the President's request.

The President's request for this year's budget includes \$5 billion for rail. Half of that is for Amtrak, to bring the system to a state of good repair, including \$550 billion for the Northeast corridor.

As we await the results of the full investigation, the tragedy of Amtrak train 188 shows the importance of a reliable rail system to the Northeast region of this country. We cannot continue the decades of neglect that have left our system desperately underfunded and resulted in a multibillion-dollar backlog to bring the system to a state of good repair.

It should not require a tragedy to spur action to address the glaring deficiencies in our transportation and infrastructure network. We should act before accidents occur.

Rail safety is not a luxury; it is of fundamental importance to our citizens and our economy. Thousands of businesses and commuters in the Northeast depend on the rail for commerce and transportation every day. Congress must finally provide the resources necessary for ensuring the safety and reliability of our transportation and infrastructure system.

While this Congress has failed to make transportation funding a priority, the administration has taken the lead and proposed a long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill.

The GROW AMERICA Act provides a total of \$478 billion over 6 years, a 45 percent increase for highways, bridges, public transportation, highway safety, and rail programs. It provides \$317 billion for programs under the Federal Highway Administration, an increase of 29 percent over current levels. It allocates \$18 billion for a new dedicated multimodal freight system. How is our economy supposed to operate without an efficient freight transportation system?

It provides \$115 billion for programs under the Federal Transit Administration, an increase of 76 percent over current levels, and significantly boosts New Starts funding.

It provides \$28 billion for programs under the Federal Railroad Administration, \$6 billion for vehicle safety programs under the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, \$4.7 bil-

lion for truck and bus safety programs, and \$16 billion for the Highway Safety Improvement Program.

It provides \$7.5 for TIGER grants and \$6 billion for TIFIA that could support \$60 billion in loans. It provides \$3.5 billion to leverage research and innovation to move people.

Several of the members of the Transportation Committee just introduced the GROW AMERICA Act in the House. Not all of us agree with everything in that bill.

For example, the Transportation Committee's Special Panel on Freight, which I was the ranking Democrat on, made several unanimous bipartisan recommendations, including providing dedicated guaranteed funding for projects of national and regional significance. Reauthorizing this program is a top priority for many of us on the committee and should be included in any final bill.

It is important to start moving a long-term bill, where we can have an opportunity to shape these policy provisions, and the GROW AMERICA Act would serve as a good starting point.

The last surface transportation bill, MAP-21, expired last fall. The President first proposed the GROW AMERICA Act last spring to provide an alternative for MAP-21 before it expired.

Unfortunately, we failed to reauthorize MAP-21 on time and passed an extension until the end of this month, to give us more time to work on a long-term bill. We just passed another 2-month extension, the 33rd extension, to take us to the end of July.

We have known for months that this day was coming; yet we have made no progress in finding a solution to funding highways, transit, and other important surface transportation programs.

MAP-21 itself was only a 2-year bill, breaking the tradition of Congress passing 5- or 6-year bills to provide the reliable funding necessary to complete long-term capital plans and projects that require a commitment beyond 1 fiscal year.

The last time we passed a long-term bill was 10 years ago, in 2005, in SAFETEA-LU. That bill was underfunded because of a resistance to raising the gasoline tax and identifying new revenue sources.

House and Senate leadership couldn't come up with the additional \$60 billion needed to fill the gap in the highway trust fund just to do a long-term bill at current levels, but this week, they put on the floor a tax extender that will cost \$182 billion over 10 years, completely unpaid for.

The priorities of this Congress are completely out of whack. Our infrastructure is crumbling around us, and the majority continues to spend hundreds of billions of dollars on tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, while leaving transportation funding to wither on the vine.

I am concerned we will be back here in July having this same conversation. We must demand now that this Con-

gress spend the next 2 months, once and for all, making transportation funding a priority.

We must realize that what we have based our transportation program on since 1955, the gasoline tax, is a wasting asset. It is down 30 percent since 1993 because of inflation, and every year, we use fewer gallons because of an intelligent policy of energy conservation, of higher mileage per gallon; but that means fewer gallons of gasoline. We must either raise the gasoline tax or bring in a new source of revenue or both.

Finally, let me say that interest rates are at negative rates now. When interest rates are at negative rates, when you can borrow money and pay it back more cheaply, that is the time to borrow money to invest so that our children inherit not a great debt, but inherit an efficiently functioning economy and an investment in the country that makes the economy function.

We have always known this. The Republican Party and their precursor, the Whigs, have always known this. They were the party in the 19th century of the American systems. What was the American system? Henry Clay's system to invest public funds in internal improvements in roads and canals and bridges and railroads, rather than the European system of letting the private sector do it.

Abraham Lincoln continued that tradition with the transcontinental railroad at a time of civil war, and Dwight Eisenhower did the Interstate Highway System, which we are still living with. These were Republican Party projects. I only wish the Republican Party wasn't completely turning its back on its own heritage.

We have, for the last century, a bipartisan heritage of funding our infrastructure so that the country can grow and the economy can prosper, but the Republican Party seems to have turned this back on this. I urge you to reconsider.

Stop turning your back. Join us in the Democratic Party in continuing our tradition of making this an economy that can function for all our people, where people can move and not waste their time sitting in traffic jams, where goods can move and the economy can function, businesses can flourish. That is what is at stake.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. NADLER, first of all, I want to thank you for your comprehensive information about transportation infrastructure.

In my home State of Florida, we bring many visitors to Florida through Amtrak through the Auto Train. We have colleagues on the other side that want to privatize that system, and I want to know how that will affect New York, privatizing that Northeast corridor.

Mr. NADLER. Well, you have to remember the reason why Amtrak was created in the first place. We didn't have public railroads in the 19th century. We didn't have public railroads in

the first half of the 20th century, but by 1960 and 1970, many of the freight railroads were going bankrupt, and certainly, the passenger lines could no longer pay for themselves. They were all going bankrupt.

Congress faced the reality in 1970 that if it didn't create something called Amtrak—it was named Amtrak—but something as a public corporation or publicly funded corporation, there would be no passenger rail in the United States.

The States did the same thing. What became various commuter rail agencies, like MTA in New York or SEPTA in Philadelphia and others, were created out of the bankrupt passenger operations of the private rail lines. No one could make money at it.

Amtrak has survived and has flourished in the sense of attracting more and more passengers, and it now has 77 percent of the market against the airlines in the Northeast corridor; and, thank God, it saves energy and time and congestion, despite the fact that it has been grossly underfunded by Congress.

The only section of Amtrak that makes money is the Northeast corridor from Washington to Boston. It subsidizes everything else. There would be no rail lines outside the Northeast corridor—not to Florida, not to Chicago, not to Denver, not to any place outside the Washington to Boston corridor—if they had to pay for themselves.

We, the Northeast corridor, subsidize the rest of Amtrak. From my point of view as a New Yorker, I would rather that weren't the case; but I am an American. I think everybody ought to have the ability to travel and the ability to have an economy that functions, and so we cross-subsidize.

It would be better if Congress put money in and other sections of the country could become self-sustaining in rail, but the fact is the history is that is very difficult.

I am not aware of any rail system or public transit system in the world that isn't publicly subsidized. We subsidize every transportation system in this country. We subsidize the highway; we subsidize the airlines with the air traffic control, and we do it because we know the country has to move.

If we want an economy that generates goods and services for people, it has to move. Freight has to move. It has to move by rail. It has to move by barge, by boat. We have to invest in it.

If Amtrak stops funding the line to Florida, that line wouldn't exist anymore; everything would be on the road. The roads would be more congested; people would waste more time. The one exception to that right now is the Northeast corridor. We are willing, because we are Americans, to participate in a national system, and the rest of the country should be willing, too.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. NADLER, when I travel to different countries, they always ask us about our freight rail. We are the caboose when it comes

to funding Amtrak, and we started the rail system, and they don't use cabooses any more.

I don't understand why it is that we, as Members of Congress, don't understand the importance of having a safe, efficient transportation system. Rail has to be a part of it.

When I think about Katrina and I think about over 3,000 people died because they couldn't move out of harm's way, that is a reason why we need a comprehensive transportation system in this country.

Our competition in Florida is not Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi—nothing personal to the people here from Georgia. We are competing with people from other countries, and we must develop an efficient rail system in conjunction with all of our other transportation needs.

Mr. NADLER. You are obviously completely right, and that is why I quoted the figures I did earlier in my remarks.

Prior to 1980, roughly, we used to spend about 4, 4½ percent of GDP on infrastructure. Now, we are spending 1.7 percent of GDP on infrastructure. Of course, we are underinvesting, and our infrastructure is decaying. By infrastructure, I mean roads, highway, bridges, rail, airports, broadband—you name it.

China is spending 9 percent of GDP on infrastructure. We are competing with China. We are competing with other countries. If they can move goods and people more efficiently, that means their economy is going to be more efficient; their economy is going to be more competitive; they are going to be able to sell things more cheaply, generate things more cheaply, and out-sell us.

We have to compete in a world economy. We can't be insulated. If we are going to compete in a world economy and have an economy that can generate the jobs, we can only compete if we have a transportation system. We also need an efficient energy system and other things, too, but an efficient transportation system. We are eating our seed corn. We benefited from prior generations' investment, and now, we are not doing that investment.

I hear rhetoric on this floor all the time that we shouldn't leave a debt. We have to have a balanced budget, and we shouldn't leave a debt to our children.

Frankly, I would rather leave a debt to our children if we use that debt to build up the investments in this country so that there are roads for our children to travel on, rails to ride on, airports to land in, schools to attend. That is an investment.

□ 2030

We have to make a distinction. It is one thing to waste money or spend it on something ephemeral. But to invest it so that our children inherit a country with a functioning economy and with assets that we give them that they can use to make a more functioning economy, that is worth it.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. I thank the gentleman for his contribution.

Mr. Speaker, Congresswoman WATSON COLEMAN, and Members of the House, it amazes me that the House practices what I call "Reverse Robin Hood." In other words, robbing from transportation to give tax breaks to their friends.

Recently, they passed close to \$300 billion for tax breaks. But, yet, we can't pass a comprehensive transportation bill that will put people to work.

Yesterday, in the House, we passed another extension of surface transportation programs, once again, failing in our duties to provide a world-class transportation system for our country.

Transportation programs are much too critical to our economy to be delayed any longer. Unfortunately, the Republican leadership in Washington continue its long-running failure to fund surface transportation infrastructure programs.

While our international competition is investing heavily in transportation and infrastructure to move people, goods, and services, the leadership of this House is passing tax cuts for their wealthy contributors, while Congress sticks their heads in the sand and passed another continuing resolution.

Just a few weeks ago, House Republicans passed a bill cutting taxes by \$269 billion for the richest 1 percent of Americans, with no offsets. But we have failed to pass a real transportation reauthorization bill since 2005 because they can't find the money.

Clearly, this Nation's transportation infrastructure is not a priority for the Republican leadership in this House.

Transportation infrastructure funding is absolutely critical to this Nation and, if properly funded, serves as a tremendous economic boost and job creator. In fact, the Department of Transportation statistics show that for every billion dollars that we invest in transportation infrastructure, it creates 44,000 permanent jobs, along with \$6.2 billion in economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, the traveling public is pleading with you to make transportation infrastructure a priority. When this happens, we can put millions of hard-working Americans back to work fixing our Nation's crumbling infrastructure, and preparing our country for the future.

In the words of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx: "All of us have a role to play in shaping our Nation's infrastructure."

And as we saw during the last tragic train derailment in Philadelphia, Congress urgently needs to increase funding for our Nation's passenger rail systems to make them safe for the traveling public and prevent future tragedies on our Nation's rail system.

Madam COLEMAN, I understand that the gentleman from New Jersey wants to join us. And as he joins us, I would like for him to answer that question, as he makes his remarks, How would prioritizing Amtrak affect New Jersey?

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Before the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) begins, I really think I want to share something that I think is very germane to where the gentleman may be going.

Both of us live on and travel the Northeast corridor on the train back and forth to New Jersey, and we depend upon an efficient and a safe train ride to get us back to our homes and to get us back down here to do the people's business.

I did mention that I lost a constituent because that train was on its way to Trenton, and it was letting off people in my district, and that train would have ultimately gone on up to Newark and then on to New York.

I know that the Congressman has been tremendously impacted by the tragedy that took place, and knowing how important it is for us to be able to move back and forth efficiently, effectively, and safely in the Northeast corridor. And I just wanted to sort of preface the introduction of your coming to the microphone with sort of remembering that this is really close to home for you and me.

I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE.)

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida and the gentlewoman from New Jersey for affording me this opportunity to discuss a tragedy, as the gentlewoman from New Jersey stated, that has hit very close to home.

And the reason I say that is, as stated by the gentlewoman from New Jersey, the Northeast corridor is the way we are able to travel back and forth from our home to Washington, D.C., to do the people's business. And so it is not uncommon that I could have been on train 188. I have taken it on numerous occasions.

My thoughts and prayers are with the victims of this horrific Amtrak train derailment and their families at this difficult time.

I am grateful for the first responders who put themselves in harm's way to rescue passengers, and I wish all those injured a full and speedy recovery.

This tragedy, as we stated, has hit so close to home. Sometimes weekly, I travel, as do many of my constituents and colleagues, on this rail line. I have taken Amtrak's 188 and had my wife and children on that specific train leaving here going back home.

As a Member of Congress, we have a responsibility to ensure and enhance the public safety.

The derailment of Amtrak train 188 serves as an important reminder that if we are to meet this responsibility, we need to invest in our infrastructure.

There is no doubt that our Nation's infrastructure is crumbling. The American Society of Civil Engineers has rated it as a D-plus

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know all of us find education important. If you were given a D-plus on the work that you do, on the quality of your service, what would that say?

There is no doubt that we are falling behind other nations in the quality of our infrastructure. Long-term investments in our Nation's infrastructure are essential for achieving economic growth and competitiveness throughout the world.

Yet, Republicans refuse to address this very real crisis. This only compounds the problem, costing American jobs and undermining our economy.

We don't need shortsighted thinking. We need to stay competitive, boost commerce, invest in economic growth and job creation, and protect our communities. These are the benefits of modernizing our Nation's infrastructure.

One day after the derailment of Amtrak train 188, my Republican colleagues voted to cut Amtrak funding. While the Amtrak investigation remains ongoing, we know that slashing funding will hamper safety improvements and upgrades.

We shouldn't stand in the way of this wise infrastructure investment. Let's commit to ensuring modern, safe, and reliable infrastructure that reflects the greatness of this Nation.

And as I go to my seat, I just want to, once again, thank the gentlewomen from Florida and New Jersey respectively for giving me the opportunity to have several moments to discuss what is an issue that impacts the safety, the productiveness, the competitiveness of our Nation and our infrastructure.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit more about Amtrak, because I am the past chair and ranking member of the Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee, and I think Amtrak is more and more important.

As more Americans are turning to rail as their preferred mode of transportation, Amtrak is building the infrastructure and organization to meet that demand.

Amtrak carried a record total of 31.6 million passengers in 2013. Their ridership has been growing across the system for over a decade, with last year's ridership being the largest in the history.

Currently, they serve more than 500 destinations in 46 States and provide the only public transportation option for millions of people in rural areas.

Let me repeat. Amtrak is the only mode of transportation for people in certain rural areas.

Amtrak has increased their revenue, reduced debt, has new passengers, improved their infrastructure, and purchased trains that are built 100 percent in America. That is where those parts are made, 100 percent in America.

Amtrak reduces congestion and improves our energy independence and plays a vital role in emergency preparation.

And I often talk about 9/11. Amtrak was moving. It was the only way people could move in this country. And Katrina.

So Amtrak plays a very important part in making sure that we can con-

tinue to move people, goods and services.

Madam, I want to thank you for your leadership in this area.

THIS IS OUR WATCH

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Before you close out, I want to mention something about veterans because we are getting ready to have a recess, and I have to thank all of the veterans for their service.

This morning at 9 a.m. we went over to the Women's Memorial Wall. And it is what we have done for 18 years to honor women veterans who have served in this country.

I want to thank all who have served America. We have the freedoms because of their service. I want to, once again, thank them.

But I must mention the fact that on the 24th of this month, if the House does not move, the project in Denver will shut down, and it will cost over \$20 million to shut down. In addition, it will be \$2 million a month. We are talking about the VA facility in Denver, Colorado.

Now, we want to blame the VA, but this is our watch. The Denver hospital has been a political hot potato for over 10 years; different secretaries, different administrations.

But the point is, this is our watch, and it is unacceptable that we shut down this project.

One of the slogans of the Army is, "Failure is not an option." We need to get it done.

□ 2045

We appreciate the service that the men and women have provided for our freedom, but we need to do our part in making sure that we take care of them.

I want to paraphrase the comments of the first President of the United States, George Washington. He said, No matter how justified we think a war may be, what is important is how we treat the veterans.

Now, this is our watch. This is our responsibility. And we have to make sure that we take care of the veterans.

With that, I want to thank the gentlewoman from New Jersey for her leadership and for providing this opportunity to discuss transportation infrastructure, Amtrak, and also to thank the veterans for their service.

A lot of us talk the talk, but we need to walk the walk and roll the roll for the veterans.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for everything that she has brought before us this evening. I thank my colleagues for raising the issues regarding the significance, the importance of, and the economic benefits, as well as the safety and security needs, of an efficient, effective, and safe transportation system.

I want to also thank the gentlewoman for reminding us that we are having our Memorial Day holiday, and it gives us an opportunity to thank those who have made the ultimate sacrifice to keep us safe and to keep the freedoms that we hold so dear.

And at the end of this, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to simply remind us that the transportation needs of our community both represent safety and security that we hold very sacred in our communities, but it also provides an economic benefit that we all can benefit from. Irrespective of Republican or Democrat, rural, urban, or suburban, there is a benefit to a transportation system that moves people, goods, and supplies where they are needed.

I yield back the balance of my time. Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues, Congresswoman BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN and Congresswoman CORRIE BROWN for organizing this Congressional Progressive Caucus Special Order Hour on Transportation Infrastructure Spending.

Last night, the House passed H.R. 2353 to extend the federal surface transportation programs for two months, through July 31st. If these programs had been allowed to expire, all federal transportation funding to states and local governments would have stopped on May 31st, and numerous construction jobs on highways, bridges and transit systems could have been cancelled. According to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, this needless crisis brought uncertainty to 6,000 critical construction projects across the country, and left 660,000 good-paying construction jobs hanging in the balance.

I voted for this bill, but I did so reluctantly because what we really need is a multi-year transportation bill that will bring our nation's transportation system into the 21st century. A multi-year transportation bill with robust funding for highway, bridge and transit construction will create thousands of good jobs and provide certainty to states and local governments.

Federal investment in our nation's transportation system is essential. The American Society of Civil Engineers gave the public infrastructure of the United States a grade of "D+" in 2013 and estimated that we will need to invest \$3.6 trillion by 2020 in order to improve the condition of our infrastructure.

Rebuilding our nation's transportation infrastructure creates jobs that are desperately needed throughout the country. The economy is still struggling to recover from the recession. The unemployment rate is 5.4 percent nationwide and is significantly higher in some minority and disadvantaged communities. Transportation funding is clearly good for the economy.

Congressional Republicans have had months to prepare a multi-year transportation bill. Unfortunately, all they did last night is punt the deadline two months deeper into the critical summer construction season. I urge my Republican colleagues to work with us over the next two months so we can finally pass a multi-year transportation bill before the July 31st deadline.

Congressional Republicans are further jeopardizing our nation's transportation system by slashing funding for TIGER. TIGER—formally known as Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery—is a nationwide competitive grant program that creates jobs by funding investments in transportation infrastructure by states, local governments, and transit agencies. TIGER funds innovative projects that generate economic development

and improve access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation alternatives.

Earlier this year, the President requested \$1.25 billion for TIGER in fiscal year 2016, as part of an expanded TIGER program that would provide \$7.5 billion for TIGER over 6 years. This expanded TIGER program will create jobs, encourage innovation, and modernize transportation infrastructure for the 21st century.

I sent a letter to the Appropriations Committee urging full funding of the President's \$1.25 billion request for TIGER in FY 2016, and a total of 146 Members of Congress signed my letter.

Nevertheless, the House Republicans' version of the FY 2016 Transportation and Housing Appropriations (THUD) bill provides only \$100 million for TIGER. That's an 80 percent cut from FY 2015 and a small fraction of the President's request. This kind of drastic cut in TIGER will needlessly cripple highway and transit construction plans that are already struggling due to the uncertainty surrounding the future of the transportation bill.

We need more federal investment in transportation infrastructure, and we need it now! That is why I am introducing the TIGER Grants for Job Creation Act. This bill will provide an emergency supplemental appropriation totaling \$7.5 billion dollars over the next six years for job creation through investments in transportation infrastructure. This emergency supplemental appropriation will fully fund the President's proposal for an expanded TIGER.

Passage of an emergency supplemental appropriation will provide funding for TIGER free from sequestration and without reducing funding for other important domestic priorities. It will also allow states, local governments, and transit agencies to begin immediately to plan projects and prepare grant applications. Thus, it will ensure an efficient use of funds and timely job creation.

I urge all of my colleagues to support the TIGER Grants for Job Creation Act and fully fund the President's request for TIGER, and I urge my colleagues to pass a multi-year transportation bill to bring our highways, bridges and public transit systems into the 21st century.

HR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia (during the Special Order of Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 10 a.m. tomorrow.

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

There was no objection.

REAPPOINTMENT OF MEMBER TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE CULTURE AND ARTS DEVELOPMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's reappointment, pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 4412, and the order of the House of January 6, 2015, of the following Member on the part of the House to the Board of Trustees of the Institute of Amer-

ican Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development:

Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN, New Mexico

APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUALS TO COMMISSION ON CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to section 202(a) of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146), and the order of the House of January 6, 2015, of the following individuals on the part of the House to the Commission on Care:

Mr. David P. Blom, Columbus, Ohio
Mr. Darin Selnick, Oceanside, California
Dr. Toby Cosgrove, Cleveland, Ohio

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO MEXICO-UNITED STATES INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276h and the order of the House of January 6, 2015, of the following Members on the part of the House to the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group:

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ, California
Mr. GENE GREEN, Texas
Mr. POLIS, Colorado
Ms. JACKSON LEE, Texas
Mrs. TORRES, California

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON) for 30 minutes.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I appear here tonight to talk about police and community relations throughout our country. The purpose of this Special Order is to talk about how the relationship between police and local communities can be repaired.

Over the last year, we have witnessed tensions rise between local law enforcement officers and local communities. The events we have witnessed across the country have highlighted the need for mending the strained relationships between police and communities across the country.

This week, the Judiciary Committee in the House held a hearing entitled, Policing Strategies for the 21st Century. The purpose of this hearing was to look at how law enforcement is trained and how it is received in our communities across the country.

The Senate also held a hearing this week. Their focus was on the use of body cameras.

I applaud my colleagues for holding hearings on criminal justice reform this week, but I hope that this is just the beginning and not the end of the hearings that need to be held on so many different and very important and fundamental issues on the topic of