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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 24, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN J. DUNCAN, Jr. to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

REBUILDING OUR NATION'S INFRASTRUCTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, there has been a flurry of activity regarding infrastructure funding in recent days. We had the first hearing in the Ways and Means Committee in the 55 months since my Republican friends took over to deal with transportation finance. There have been press conferences and proposals, and actually, a few other hearings have been scheduled.

Despite all the furor, there is only one solution which is broadly supported, which is easy to implement, and which does the job. That solution is raising the gas tax.

Now, we heard at the hearing on Ways and Means the three basic arguments that are offered against that: that it is not politically possible, that there is really no time to do this so we have to extend it to the end of the year, and that this would somehow be a burden on families.

Actually, that is not true. The notion that it is not politically possible is not remotely the case. There are 20 States in the last 2½ years that have stepped up to raise their gas taxes.

Ironically, information submitted by the American Road & Transportation Builders Association at our Ways and Means hearing pointed out that the legislators in those States who voted to increase the gas tax were reelected at an over 90 percent rate, and the legislators that voted for the gas tax in the States were reelected at a higher percentage than those who voted against it.

If anybody needs more proof, just look at what has happened already this year where six very red States—Idaho; Utah; South Dakota; Iowa; Nebraska, overriding a Governor's veto; and Georgia—have all met their responsibilities raising the gas tax. It absolutely is something that can be done with a little political courage.

The notion that somehow there is no time, that we have got to fuss around and it is going to take extensive hearings to come forward with the proposal—well, only if it is a complex, convoluted, untested, and controversial proposal. Raising the gas tax would take about 1 week's work, could be implemented quickly, and is the simplest and least expensive revenue measure to implement.

What about this notion that somehow it is a burden on American fami-

lies? Well, the proposal that I have introduced would cost less than 25 cents a day, and those families that would pay the increased user fees are suffering over \$350 a year damage to their vehicles from poorly maintained roads. The American Society of Civil Engineers suggests that that cost per family is going to be over a \$1,000 a year by 2020. And the American public is paying by being stuck in traffic, in congestion, costing \$120 billion a year. It costs money to them—money that could have been used for more productive purposes—and time away from their families.

Imagine if we just came back from our July recess and dedicated the week of July 13 to solving the infrastructure crisis in this country where America is falling apart and falling behind. The people who were experts at the hearing that weren't heard from could have answered all those questions.

Where else are we going to find something that is broadly supported by business and labor, by truckers and AAA, bicyclist, engineers, environmentalists, local governments? We would have all of those people before us supporting a solution to this important challenge. I can't think of any other issue that would bring all those people together and support congressional action.

We could stop the slide of America falling apart and falling behind. We could put hundreds of thousands of people to work at family-wage jobs all across America while we strengthen our communities, make them more livable, and provide an economic boost for the future.

Why don't we do that? Why can't we take "yes" for an answer, deal with the broadest coalition of support for any major issue, and have another victory like we did with the SGR? We can do it, and it is hard to think of something that would be more important.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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