The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, D.C.  August 2, 1999.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CLIFF STEARNS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT) for 5 minutes.

BETTER AMERICA BONDS, H.R. 2446

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, it has been said that the only means of conservation is innovation, and I believe that is what Vice President GORE had in mind in recommending an innovative proposal called Better America Bonds. I joined him back in January of this year over at the American Institute of Architects and the National Realty Committee because they support strong neighborhood planning and this program provides the means for communities to do just that. Communities and local governments are also supporting the Better America Bonds program because these bonds are much less costly to a local government for them to use than the traditional indebtedness for work to be done.

As Vice President GORE said earlier this year, “Plan well, and you have a community that nurtures commerce and private life. Plan badly, and you have what many of us suffer from first-hand: Gridlock, sprawl, and that uniquely modern evil of all, too little time.”

We incorporated this concept of Better America Bonds in the Democratic tax substitute. It received a substantial number of votes, and I hope that we can come together in a bipartisan effort to support Better America Bonds in the future. I believe that we must all be active participants in preserving our livable communities for our children and grandchildren. Through innovative conservation programs like Better America Bonds, we can make our communities more livable, and reinvigorate the economy in some of these areas.

My constituents back in central Texas have realized the importance of additional green space acquisition and of clean water by approving local bond initiatives through which the City of Austin has already purchased some 15,000 acres of land towards this objective. These new land purchases will protect our sensitive environment in central Texas and provide additional parks.

They have also provided a unique opportunity for some groups that have warred against each other to work together. In Austin, the Save Our Springs Alliance, the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce and the Real Estate Council were once opposing each other over some of the environmental efforts in the community. Now they have united in what is called a “Vast Open Spaces” project to acquire additional land and in the process of uniting over this issue, they have come to achieve some common ground on a number of other issues toward improving the quality of life in central Texas as well.

I believe that the Better America Bonds program, by supporting that kind of effort, will allow them to do an even better job, reach more parts of our communities, and provide more parks and green space, not only along Town Lake but throughout central Texas.

Mr. Speaker, I think the same kind of thing can happen around the country, whether it is along the Anacostia here in Washington, the Chattahoochee in Atlanta, or along the Los Angeles River, these bonds provide the opportunity to reinvigorate downtown areas, make them more livable, and reinvigorate the economy in some of these areas.

The Better America Bonds initiative has received support from the American Institute of Architects and the National Realty Committee because they support strong neighborhood planning and this program provides the means for communities to do just that. Communities and local governments are also supporting the Better America Bonds program because these bonds are much less costly to a local government for them to use than the traditional indebtedness for work to be done.

We incorporated this concept of Better America Bonds in the Democratic tax substitute. It received a substantial number of votes, and I hope that we can come together in a bipartisan effort to support Better America Bonds in the future. I believe that we must all be active participants in preserving our livable communities for our children and grandchildren. Through innovative conservation programs like Better America Bonds, we can make our communities more livable, and reinvigorate the economy in some of these areas.