In particular, I would like to thank the American Subcontractors Association which has, once again, headed the broad-based coalition to modernize the Miller Act for their hard work on this bill as well as that of the Associated General Contractors of America and the Surety Association of America, both of which played a critical role in the negotiations which led to this bill.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, finally I am very pleased to announce that the administration has recently said that it, too, supports the bill. This bill will bring about a common sense reform that will make a tremendous difference for construction subcontractors and their workers who do business with the Federal Government. It will not cost the taxpayers anything, and in fact it might lower the cost of projects.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this important bipartisan bill.

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

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

I just want to, in conclusion, note that the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER), the ranking minority member on the subcommittee, has been very helpful on this; and I mentioned earlier, I will mention again, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS) is a very distinguished legislator from Pennsylvania and a key person on the Committee on the Judiciary, and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) gave the waiver of this bill to the floor, and we are extremely grateful for that bipartisan, bi-committee cooperation.

But in closing, I want to say to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), who has just spoken, and to all who have worked on this is a case study in democracy. Everyone that is listening or hearing or watching this debate, I think, has learned something today.

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1219, as amended.

The Speaker pro tempore. Is there objection?

There was no objection.

The Speaker pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair’s prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1219, as amended.

The Speaker pro tempore. Is there objection?

There was no objection.

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1442) to amend the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 to continue and extend authority for transfers to State and local governments of certain property for law enforcement, public safety, and emergency response purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Government Waste, Fraud, and Error Reduction Act of 1999”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

(1) Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
(2) Sec. 2. Purposes.
(3) Sec. 3. Definition.
(4) Sec. 4. Application of Act.

SEC. 2. PURPOSES.

The purposes of this Act are the following:

(1) To reduce waste, fraud, and error in Federal programs.
(2) To focus Federal agency management attention on high-risk programs.
(3) To help to collect debts owed to the United States.
(4) To improve Federal payment systems.
(5) To improve reporting on Government accountability.

SEC. 3. DEFINITION.

As used in this Act, the term “nontax debt” means any debt (within the meaning of that term as used in chapter 37 of title 31, United States Code) other than a debt under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or the Tax Reform Act of 1993.

SEC. 4. APPLICATION OF ACT.

No provision of this Act shall apply to the Department of the Treasury or the Internal Revenue Service to the extent that such provision—

(1) involves the administration of the internal revenue laws; or
(2) conflicts with the Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or the Tax Reform Act of 1993.

TITLe I—GENERAL MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENTS

SEC. 101. IMPROVING FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT.

(a) Section 515 of title 31, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by striking “1997” and inserting “2000”;

(B) by inserting “Congress and” after “submit to”; and

(2) by striking subsections (e), (f), (g), and (h).

SEC. 102. IMPROVING TRAVEL MANAGEMENT.

(a) LIMITED EXCLUSION FROM REQUIREMENT REGARDING OCCUPATION OF QUARTERS.—Section 591(e) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: “The preceding sentence shall not apply with respect to lodging provided under chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, other than a debt under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or the Tax Reform Act of 1993.

TITLe II—IMPROVING FEDERAL DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES

Sec. 201. Miscellaneous corrections to subchapter II of chapter 37 of title 31, United States Code.


Sec. 203. Collection and compromise of nontax debts.

TITLe III—SALE OF NONTAX DEBTS OWED TO UNITED STATES

Sec. 301. Authority to sell nontax debts.

Sec. 302. Requirement to sell certain nontax debts.
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(2) PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION.—(A) The Administrator shall develop a plan regarding the implementation of this subsection and, after consultation with the heads of executive agencies, submit to Congress a report describing the steps to ensure that employees of executive agencies are not inappropriately charged State and local taxes on travel expenses, including transportation, lodging, automobile rental, and other miscellaneous travel expenses.

(2) PAYMENT OF STATE AND LOCAL TAXES ON TRAVEL EXPENSES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of General Services shall develop a mechanism to ensure that employees of executive agencies are not inappropriately charged State and local taxes on travel expenses, including transportation, lodging, automobile rental, and other miscellaneous travel expenses.

(2) REPORT.—Not later than March 31, 2000, the Administrator shall, after consultation with the heads of executive agencies, submit to Congress a report describing the steps taken, and proposed to be taken, to carry out this subsection.

TITLe I.—IMPROVING FEDERAL DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES

SEC. 201. MISCELLANEOUS CORRECTIONS TO SUBCHAPTER II OF CHAPTER 37 OF TITLE 31, UNITED STATES CODE

(a) CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT.—Section 3716(h)(3) of title 31, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

(3) The Secretary of the Treasury shall develop a mechanism to ensure that employees of executive agencies are not inappropriately charged State and local taxes on travel expenses, including transportation, lodging, automobile rental, and other miscellaneous travel expenses.

(b) D EBT SALES.—Section 3711 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking subsection (1).

(c) GAINSHARING.—Section 3720C(b)(2)(D) of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking “delinquent loans” and inserting “debts”.

(d) PROVISIONS RELATING TO PRIVATE COLLECTION CONTRACTORS.—

(1) COLLECTION BY SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.—Section 3711(g) of title 31, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(g) Collection by Secretary of the Treasury. The Secretary of the Treasury may not redelegate such authority under paragraph (2) only after such delinquency is resolved in accordance with those standards.

(2) The Federal benefits referred to in paragraph (1) are the following:

“(A) Financial assistance in the form of a loan (other than a disaster loan) or loan insurance or guarantee.

(B) Any Federal permit or Federal license required by law.

(2) PROVISIONS RELATING TO CREDIT REPORTS.—

(a) USE OF PRIVATE COLLECTION CONTRACTORS.—

(1) CONTRACTS FOR CREDIT REPORTS.—

(1) CONTRACTS FOR CREDIT REPORTS.—

(1) CONTRACTS FOR CREDIT REPORTS.—

(1) COLLECTION BY PROGRAM AGENCY.—Section 3718 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(h) In attempting to collect under this subsection through the use of garnishment or any other method, any delinquent debt owed to the United States by a private collection contractor shall not be included from verifying the current place of employment of the debtor, the location of the payroll office of the debtor’s current employer, the period the debtor has been employed by the current employer of the debtor, and the compensation received by the debtor from the current employer of the debtor.

“(1) In evaluating the performance of a contractor under any contract for the performance of debt collection services entered into by an executive, judicial, or legislative agency, the head of the agency shall consider the contractor’s gross collections net of commissions (as a percentage of account amounts placed with the contractor) under the contract. The existence and frequency of valid debtor complaints shall be considered in the evaluation criteria.

“(2) The Federal benefits referred to in paragraph (1) are the following:

“(A) Financial assistance in the form of a loan (other than a disaster loan) or loan insurance or guarantee.

(B) Any Federal permit or Federal license required by law.

(2) The head of an executive, judicial, or legislative agency may delegate the waiver authority under paragraph (1) to the chief financial officer or, in the case of any Federal performance-based organization, the chief operating officer of the agency.

(3) The Secretary of the Treasury may delegate the waiver authority under paragraph (1) only after such delinquency is resolved in accordance with those standards.

(3) CONSTRUCTION.—No amendment made by this section shall be construed as altering or superseding the provisions of title 11, United States Code, or section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

(e) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 3732B(a)(1) of title 31, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in beginning paragraph (3), by striking “Executive agency” each place it appears and inserting “executive, judicial, or legislative agency”;

(2) in subsection (d), by inserting “or in connection with any other Federal contract or subchapter II of chapter 33 of title 31, United States Code, or any regulations issued thereunder, shall apply to activities carried out pursuant to a law enacted to protect, operate, and administer any deposit insurance funds, including the resolution and liquidation of failed or failing insured depository institutions.”;

(f) INAPPLICABILITY OF ACT TO CERTAIN AGENCIES.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no provision in this Act, the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 (chapter 10 of title III of Public Law 104–134; 31 U.S.C. 3701 note; chapter 27 of subchapter II of chapter 33 of title 31, United States Code, or any amendments made by such Acts or any regulations issued thereunder, shall apply to activities carried out pursuant to a law enacted to protect, operate, and administer any deposit insurance funds, including the resolution and liquidation of failed or failing insured depository institutions.

(g) CONTRACTS FOR CREDIT REPORTS.—

(1) COLLECTION BY PROGRAM AGENCY.—Section 3718 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(h) In attempting to collect under this subsection through the use of garnishment or any other method, any delinquent debt owed to the United States by a private collection contractor shall not be included from verifying the current place of employment of the debtor, the location of the payroll office of the debtor’s current employer, the period the debtor has been employed by the current employer of the debtor, and the compensation received by the debtor from the current employer of the debtor.

“(1) In evaluating the performance of a contractor under any contract for the performance of debt collection services entered into by an executive, judicial, or legislative agency, the head of the agency shall consider the contractor’s gross collections net of commissions (as a percentage of account amounts placed with the contractor) under the contract. The existence and frequency of valid debtor complaints shall be considered in the evaluation criteria.

“(2) The Federal benefits referred to in paragraph (1) are the following:

“(A) Financial assistance in the form of a loan (other than a disaster loan) or loan insurance or guarantee.

(B) Any Federal permit or Federal license required by law.

(3) Construction.—No amendment made by this section shall be construed as altering or superseding the provisions of title 11, United States Code, or any Federal performance-based organization, the chief operating officer of the agency.

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(3) Construction.—No amendment made by this section shall be construed as altering or superseding the provisions of title 11, United States Code, or any Federal performance-based organization, the chief operating officer of the agency.
§ 5(a) Nontax debts referred or transferred under subsection (a) shall be serviced, collected, or compromised, or collection action thereon suspended or terminated, in accordance with otherwise applicable statutes, regulations, and authorities.

(b) The head of each executive agency that operates a debt collection center may enter into an agreement with the Secretary of the Treasury to carry out the purposes of this subsection.

(C) The Secretary of the Treasury shall—

(1) maintain a schedule of private collection contractors and debt collection centers operated by agencies that are eligible for referral of claims under this subsection; 

(2) maximize collections of delinquent nontax debts by referring delinquent nontax debts to private collection contractors promptly; 

(3) enter into an agreement with the Secretary that operates a debt collection center may maximize collections of delinquent nontax debts by referring delinquent nontax debts to private collection contractors; 

(iv) ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, that a private collection contractor to which a nontax debt is referred is responsible for any reasonable costs associated with the contract under which the referral is made.

(b) As used in this paragraph, the term ‘nontax debt’ means any debt other than a debt under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or the Tariff Act of 1930.

(c) LIMITATION ON DISCHARGE BEFORE USE OF PRIVATE COLLECTION CONTRACTOR OR DEBT COLLECTION CENTER.—Paragraph (9) of section 3711(g) of title 31, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subparagraphs (A) through (H) as clauses (i) through (viii); 

(2) by inserting ‘‘(A)’’ after ‘‘(9);’’ 

(3) in subparagraph (A) (as designated by paragraph (2) of this subsection) in the matter preceding clause (i) (as designated by paragraph (1) of this subsection), by inserting ‘‘and subject to subparagraph (B) after ‘‘as applicable’’; and 

(4) by adding at the end the following:

‘‘(B)(i) The head of an executive, judicial, or legislative agency may waive the application of clause (i) to any nontax debt, or class of nontax debts if the head of the agency determines that the waiver is in the best interest of the United States.

(ii) The head of an executive, judicial, or legislative agency may waive the application of clause (i) to any nontax debt, or class of nontax debts if the head of the agency determines that the waiver is in the best interest of the United States.

(iii) As used in this subparagraph, the term ‘nontax debt’ means any debt other than a debt under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or the Tariff Act of 1930.’’

TITLE III—SALE OF NONTAX DEBTS OWED TO UNITED STATES

SEC. 301. AUTHORITY TO SELL NONTAX DEBTS.

(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to provide that the head of each executive, judicial, or legislative agency shall establish a program to sell delinquent debt sales in order to—

(1) minimize the loan and nontax debt portfolios of the agency; 

(2) improve credit management while serving public needs; 

(3) reduce delinquent nontax debts held by the agency; 

(4) obtain the maximum value for loan and nontax debt management; 

(5) obtain valid data on the amount of the Federal subsidy inherent in loan programs conducted pursuant to the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990 (2 U.S.C. 6601(b)) and using competitive procedures, any nontax debt owed to the United States that is administrated by the agency.

(b) The agency incurs in selling nontax debt pursuant to this subsection may be deducted from the proceeds received from the sale. Such costs include—

(A) the costs of any contract for identification, billing, or collection services; 

(B) the costs of contractors assisting in the sale of nontax debt; 

(C) the fees of appraisers, auctioneers, and realty brokers; 

(D) the costs of advertising and surveying; and 

(E) other reasonable costs incurred by the agency, as determined by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

(c) notwithstanding the provisions of section 301, the Secretary of the Treasury, determines that a longer period is necessary to protect the financial interests of the United States. Sales under this paragraph shall be conducted under the authority in section 301.

(3) After terminating collection action, the Secretary of the Treasury, or the head of an executive, judicial, or legislative agency shall sell, using competitive procedures, any nontax debt or class of nontax debts owed to the United States unless the head of the agency, as determined by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and the Secretary of the Treasury, determines that the sale would interfere with the mission of the agency administering the program under which the loan was disbursed, or the head of the agency, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and the Secretary of the Treasury, determines that a longer period is necessary to protect the financial interests of the United States. Sales under this paragraph shall be conducted under the authority in section 301.

(4) The head of an executive, judicial, or legislative agency may exempt from sale under this subsection any class of nontax debts or loans if the head of the agency determines that the sale would interfere with the mission of the agency administering the program under which the indebtedness was incurred.

TITLE IV—TREATMENT OF HIGH VALUE NONTAX DEBTS

SEC. 401. ANNUAL REPORT ON HIGH VALUE NONTAX DEBTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the end of each fiscal year, the head of each agency that administers a program that gives rise to a delinquent high value nontax debt shall submit a report to Congress that lists each such debt.

(b) CONTENT.—A report under this section shall, for each debt listed in the report, include the following:

(1) The name of each person liable for the debt, including, for a person that is a company, cooperative, or partnership, the names of the principal policyholders.

(2) The amounts of principal, interest, and penalty comprising the debt.

(3) The actions the agency has taken to collect the debt, and prevent future losses.

(4) Specification of any portion of the debt that has been written-down administratively or due to a bankruptcy proceeding.

(5) An assessment of why the debtor defaulted.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this title:

(A) ‘‘agency’’ means an agency within chapter 37 of title 31, United States Code, as amended by this Act.

(B) ‘‘High value nontax debt’’ shall be for each fiscal year, the debt having an outstanding value (including principal, interest, and penalties) that exceeds $1,000,000.

REVIEW BY INSPECTORS GENERAL

The Inspector General of each agency shall review the applicable annual report to Congress required in section 401 and make such recommendations as necessary to improve the performance of the agency. The Inspector General shall periodically review and report to Congress on the agency’s nontax debt collection program. As part of such reviews, the Inspector General shall examine agency efforts to reduce the aggregate
amount of high value nontax debts that are unresolved and in part by compromise, default, or bankruptcy.

SEC. 403. REQUIREMENT TO SEEK SEIZURE AND FORFEITURE OF ASSETS SECURING NON-TAX DEBT.

The head of an agency authorized to collect a high value nontax debt that is delinquent shall, when appropriate, promptly seize and forfeit of assets pledged to the United States in any transaction giving rise to the nontax debt. When an agency determines that seizure or forfeiture is not appropriate, the agency shall include a justification for such determination in the report under section 401.

TITLE V—FEDERAL PAYMENTS

SEC. 501. TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY TO SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY WITH RESPECT TO PROMPT PAYMENT.

(a) DEFINITION.—Section 3901(a)(3) of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking "Director of the Office of Management and Budget" and inserting "Secretary of the Treasury".

(b) REQUIREMENT.—Section 3902(c)(3)(D) of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking "Director of the Office of Management and Budget" and inserting "Secretary of the Treasury".

(c) REGULATIONS.—Section 3905(a) of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking "Director of the Office of Management and Budget" and inserting "Secretary of the Treasury".

SEC. 502. PROMOTING ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS.

(a) EARLY RELEASE OF ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS.—Section 3711(g) of title 31, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by amending paragraph (1) to read as follows:

"(1) provide that the required payment date is—"

"(A) the date payment is due under the contract for the item of property or service provided; or"

"(B) no later than 30 days after a proper invoice for the amount due is received if a specific payment date is not established by contract;"

and

(2) by striking "and" after the semicolon in paragraph (1) and inserting "and";

and

(b) AUTHORITY TO ACCEPT ELECTRONIC PAYMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to an agreement between the head of an executive agency and the applicable financial institution or institutions based on terms acceptable to the Secretary of the Treasury, the head of such agency may accept an electronic payment, including debit and credit cards, to satisfy a nontax debt owed to the agency.

SEC. 503. DEBT SERVICES ACCOUNT.

(a) TRANSFER OF FUNDS TO DEBT SERVICES ACCOUNT.—The Secretary of the Treasury may transfer balances in accounts established under section 401 to the Debt Services Account established under subsection (b). The Debt Services Account under this section shall remain available until expended.

(b) ESTABLISHMENT OF DEBT SERVICES ACCOUNT.—Subsection (d) of section 3711 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking the second sentence and inserting the following: "Amounts paid to the Secretary of the Treasury as fees under this section shall be deposited into the Debt Services Account and shall remain available until expended."
Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT).

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support passage of this bill. H.R. 1442 will amend the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 to extend authority for transfers to State and local governments of certain property for law enforcement and emergency response purposes.

I introduced H.R. 1442, the Law Enforcement Public Safety Enhancement Act of 1999, to permanently extend the pilot program that has become an important tool for local law enforcement and public safety officials. Without the help, leadership and support of the gentleman from California (Mr. HORN), my good friend from California, chairman of the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information and Technology, this legislation would never have come to the House floor. I owe a debt of gratitude to him for helping to find the offsets necessary for this bill to conform to budgetary guidelines.

I would also like to thank the chairman of the Committee on Government Reform as well as the ranking members of the full committee and subcommittee for their efforts.

For example, certain performing loans are loans that were sold to the secondary market for about 50% of their face value. Loans that are sold in a competitive market could yield substantial proceeds, reduce administrative costs, and allow agencies to focus their limited resources on other programs. An agency with guidance from the Office of Management and Budget could exempt any class of debt from the sales provisions of this bill if it were determined that the sale would interfere with agencies, programs or mission.

For example, certain performing loans or surplus Federal property may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT), we will extend that worthwhile provision and make it permanent.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would allow the Department of Justice and FEMA to sponsor the use of excess Federal property for law enforcement and fire fighting and rescue training purposes. I expect this bill will move quickly through the legislative process and become law. Only last week the Senate successfully included a similar provision in the Commerce-Justice-State appropriations bill for fiscal year 2000.

There are currently at least 22 jurisdictions around the country who have submitted applications to acquire surplus Federal property for these purposes, and at least three of them have successfully acquired their property. We must not deny the remaining 19 the opportunity to complete their application process and to secure the property they need to make their communities safer.

Law enforcement and fire rescue services provide vital services for State and local governments, and it is critical that we allow them to acquire this Federal surplus property at a discount.

This legislation benefits police officers, fire fighters, and other emergency response officials across the country, and I commend the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT) for his hard work on this particular provision.

In addition, H.R. 1442, as amended, is designed to address problems with Federal debt collection and Federal credit management. In 1996 Congress passed the Debt Collection Improvement Act, which was designed to centralize management of Federal debt collection at the Department of Treasury and to enhance cooperation of Federal agencies in the collection of delinquent debt.

Within the past 2 years, the Federal Government centralized debt collection activities at the Financial Management Service have begun to work more efficiently. In fact, collections have grown from $1.7 billion in fiscal year 1997 to $2.5 billion in fiscal year 1999, after the Debt Collection Improvement Act enhanced the Treasury's offset authority.

Clearly there has been improvement in the government collection efforts. There are, however, many challenges that remain. According to the Department of Treasury, the Federal Government is owed approximately $50 billion in delinquent, non-taxed debt. Of this amount, $47 billion has both delinquency for more than 180 days. In addition, the Federal Government writes off about $10 billion in delinquent debts every year.

H.R. 1442 focuses management attention on high-risk programs and builds...
upon prior initiatives to improve Federal debt collection practices by providing Federal agencies with the additional tools they need to improve Federal debt collection. It is almost identical to H.R. 4857, a bill that passed the House of Representatives with overwhelming bipartisan support under suspension of the rules in the 105th Congress. We passed these provisions by a vote of 419 to 1 earlier this year.

I would like to commend the gentleman from California (Chairman HORN), who has done an outstanding job in leading to improve the Federal debt collection practices through his diligent legislative oversight activities. The gentleman has worked to assure that the taxpayers get every dollar they are entitled to and no more.

I also want to mention and commend the leadership of the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), who has continued her partnership with the gentleman from California (Chairman HORN) since the time she served in the position of ranking member of this subcommittee.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER), the ranking member. He had an excellent series of questions this morning of the Commissioner of Internal Revenue and the General Accounting Officer. The gentleman is deeply committed to an effective and efficient government, and especially to getting at the non-tax debt.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation. H.R. 1442, as amended, authorizes the President to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Federal debt collection and credit management. It would also assist State and local governments in their efforts to acquire much needed surplus property for law enforcement and emergency response. This legislation has broad bipartisan support, as was evident on the floor. The provisions are the result of a bipartisan effort between majority and minority on the Committee on Government Reform, working closely with the administration.

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1442, the Law Enforcement and Public Safety Enhancement Act of 1999. I am a co-sponsor of this legislation which makes permanent the General Services Administration authority to transfer federal surplus lands at no cost to state and local governments for the purpose of law enforcement and emergency response services.

H.R. 1442 will have a direct and immediate impact on my Congressional District as well as a number of other districts throughout the country. Currently, thirteen sites across the nation, one of which is in my District, are utilizing a temporary authorization allowing the Department of Justice (DOJ) to transfer excess federal property to local government entities for law enforcement and public safety purposes.

This temporary authority, which expires December 31, 1999, allows local law enforcement, fire services, and emergency management agencies the opportunity to receive federal surplus property through a "no-cost" transfer. This legislation aims to make permanent this temporary authority.

In my Congressional District, the Fifth District of Alabama, the City of Huntsville has applied for the transfer of a Naval Reserve Center to the City for use as a public safety training facility for our police officers, firefighters, and rescue personnel. This facility will allow Huntsville to provide excellent training to the men and women who safeguard our citizens. Currently, Huntsville's application is under review. Many projects that are currently underway or those pending applications for land transfers—like the one in my district—will be severely impacted by the quickly approaching sunset date of December 31, 1999. This legislation will permanently allow the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to sponsor the use of excess federal property for law enforcement, public safety, and emergency management purposes.

I would like to once again express my strong support for this legislation. We in Congress can and should do everything in our power to assist law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency management personnel in their efforts to improve public safety in our streets, in our schools, and in our neighborhoods.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, H.R. 1442, as amended, passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "To reduce waste, fraud, and error in Government programs by making improvements with respect to Federal management and debt collection practices, Federal payment systems, Federal benefit programs, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1442, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

SILK ROAD STRATEGY ACT OF 1999

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1152) to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to authorize assistance to support the economic and political independence of the countries of South Caucasus and Central Asia, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1152

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

TITLE I. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999."

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The ancient Silk Road, once the economic lifeline of Central Asia and the South Caucasus, traversed much of the territory now with the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

(2) Economic interdependence spurred mutual cooperation among the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

(3) The development of strong political, economic, and security ties among the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

(4) The development of open market economies and open democratic systems in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

(5) The countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia have been targeted for international private investment.

(6) The region of the South Caucasus and Central Asia could produce oil and gas in sufficient quantities to reduce the dependence of the United States on energy from the volatile Persian Gulf region.

(7) The United States foreign policy and international assistance should be narrowly targeted to support the economic and political independence of the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

SEC. 3. POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES.

It shall be the policy of the United States in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia—

(1) to promote and strengthen independence, sovereignty, democratic peoples and respect for human rights;

(2) to promote tolerance, pluralism, and understanding and counter racism and anti-Semitism;

(3) to assist actively in the resolution of regional conflicts and to facilitate the removal of impediments to cross-border commerce;

(4) to promote friendly relations and economic cooperation;

(5) to help support market-oriented principles and practices;

(6) to assist in the development of the infrastructure necessary for communications,