Mr. TOWNS and I are interested in all bipartisan suggestions for improvement and seek your support.

THE AMERICA'S PRIVATE INVESTMENT COMPANIES ACT

HON. JOHN J. LaFALCE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 5, 1999

Mr. LAFALCE. Mr. Speaker, today, on behalf of myself and a number of House Members, I plan to introduce the America's Private Investment Companies Act. This legislation, also known as APIC, is part of the Administration's broader New Markets Initiative, which includes separate legislation to provide tax credits for investments in APIC's and other community development entities, and to expand small business lending in low- and moderate-income communities.

After seven years of strong economic growth and job creation, the unfortunate truth is that many urban areas, mid-sized cities, and rural areas are not fully participating in our economic prosperity. Despite strong income and wage growth for many Americans, millions of Americans still don't have access to jobs which pay decent wages. APIC is designed to harness the private sector to revitalize distressed low-income communities, and to create jobs and economic opportunities for those individuals who are being left behind.

Under the bill, the Secretary of HUD is authorized to licensing a number of newly created America's Private Investment Companies [called APIC's] each year, and to guarantee debt for these APIC's. In turn, these newly created APIC's will be required to invest substantially all of the funds raised through such debt in businesses operating in low-income communities.

In order to be eligible for APIC certification and for federal loan guarantees, an applicant must be a for-profit community development entity, which must have a primary mission of serving or providing investment capital for low-income communities or low-income persons, and which must maintain accountability to residents of low-income communities. The applicant must have a minimum of $25 million in equity capital available to it. Finally, the applicant must have a statement of public purpose, with goals that at least include making qualified investments in low-income communities, creating jobs that pay decent wages to residents in low-income communities, and involving community-based organizations and residents.

Under the legislation, HUD is authorized to guarantee $1 billion in debt each year for the next five years for an estimated ten to fifteen new APIC's each year. For every $2 of debt that the government guarantees for an individual APIC, that APIC must have at least $1 in equity capital, which is at risk of loss ahead of the federal guarantee. As a result, at $7.5 billion in additional low-income community investments will be generated over the next five years. Yet, the cost of the combined credit subsidy and administrative cost is only $37 million a year.

Substantially all of the funds from guaranteed debt, plus required equity, must be used to make investments in "qualified low-income investments"—that is, in equity investments in or loans to "qualified active businesses" located in "low-income communities"

A "qualified active business" is a business or trade, of which at least 50% of gross income must come from activities in "low-income communities," of which a substantial portion of any tangible property must be in low-income communities, and of which a substantial portion of employee services must be performed in low-income communities"

Low-income communities are census tracts with either poverty rates of at least 20%, or with median family income that does not exceed 80% of the greater of the metropolitan area median family or the statewide median family income.

At a time when Congress seems eager to enact tax breaks and loan guarantees for a broad range of industries, it is not too to ask for limited resources targeted to corporations which invest in distressed communities and low-income individuals. I urge the House to hold hearings on this legislation, and to move towards its enactment.

FOREIGN TRUCK SAFETY ACT

HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 5, 1999

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight in opposition to NAFTA's provisions to expand Mexican trucking privileges into the United States, and to introduce the Foreign Truck Safety Act, legislation that will mandate inspection of all foreign trucks at our southern border.

When we debated NAFTA in 1993, supporters claimed that NAFTA would not harm workers here or in Mexico, and would not harm the environment. Unfortunately, they were wrong. This treaty has sent thousand of good American jobs south of the border. It has also subjected that border to increased pollution of the air, water and land.

These are the most prominent promises broken by NAFTA. But we are about to add to the list. This Administration, under terms of NAFTA, is considering opening up all of America to Mexican trucks as of January 1, 2000.

What will the entrance of Mexican trucks mean for America? It will generate more pollution and increase the loss of good paying jobs. Most seriously, it will threaten the lives of qualified American drivers who will be forced to share the road with unqualified foreign drivers, who, as evidence proves, are driving unsafe, pollution-belching trucks.

U.S. inspectors, some operating just during the weekday hours of 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, have found that almost 50% of inspected Mexican trucks have been ordered to undergo immediate service for safety problems. This is based on the results of the few inspections of foreign trucks already allowed to enter a commercial zone in the U.S. In reality, hordes of uninspected foreign trucks cross various border points after 5 pm, before 9 am, and on the weekends. Accordingly, the Department of Transportation's Inspector General has already concluded that the DOT does not have a consistent enforcement program to provide reasonable assurance of the safety of trucks entering the United States. How could this Administration suggest expanding border-trucking privileges when we cannot regulate the current privileges we offer?

Unsafe trucks are not only appearing in the four border-states. But as the map here shows, reports of dangerous trucks have come from at least 24 additional states. From Washington to Illinois to New York, the entire country is at risk. That is why I am introducing the Foreign Truck Safety Act, because it will require mandatory safety inspections on all trucks crossing into the U.S. from Mexico. As of January 2, 2000, the Foreign Truck Safety Act will authorize the border states to impose and collect fees on trucks to cover the cost of these inspections. By requiring all trucks to pass inspections before entering the United States, we can help to limit the risks these unsafe trucks pose to our citizens. This country entered into NAFTA in order to better the lives of our citizens. Without this legislation, we will simply put our citizens in more jeopardy.

I think people are more important than profit, and I am concerned about the thousands of unsafe Mexican trucks rumbling down our highways and byways. Average Americans are already fearful about driving next to large, safe U.S. trucks that pass inspections; imagine their fear when unsafe Mexican trucks hit our streets, roads, and superhighways.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to stand up for Americans. Therefore, I urge all of my colleagues to work with me to pass the Foreign Truck Safety Act so that Americans will never be afraid to drive down Main Street, U.S.A.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE WINS SMITHSONIAN AWARD

HON. JERRY F. COSTELLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 5, 1999

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues the accomplishment of the National Weather Service, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in receiving a Computerworld Smithsonian Award for outstanding work in new information technology systems. The Weather Service's Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS) recently received the award, which honors the use of information technology to create positive social and economic change. AWIPS was the only federal award winner: Most of the other nine categories were won by some of our nation's premier corporations.

The new AWIPS system, which is now in National Weather Service field offices throughout the country, has already paid big dividends, most recently in saving lives during the devastating tornado outbreak of May 3–4 of this year, which swept through portions of 5 states.