

□ 1856

So (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, due to the threat of Hurricane Floyd to South Florida I found it necessary to stay in my district to attend to the needs of my constituents. However, I wish to be recorded as a "yes" vote on the motion to close the conference on H.R. 2561, the Fiscal Year 2000 Defense Appropriations bill due to national security reasons. I also wish to be recorded as a "yes" vote on H. Con. Res. 184 and H.R. 658.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

ENHANCING INFRASTRUCTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, citizens chronically complain about the state of America's public capital, about dilapidated school buildings, condemned highway bridges, contaminated water supplies, and other shortcomings of the public infrastructure.

In addition to inflicting inconvenience and endangering health, the inadequacy of public infrastructure adversely affects productivity and the growth of our economy. Public investment, private investment, and productivity are intimately linked.

For more than two decades, Washington has retreated from public investment as the costs of entitlements and of the interest payable on rapidly rising debt have mounted.

State and local governments, albeit to a lesser extent, have also slowed investments. Their taxpayers were frequently reluctant to approve bond issues to finance the infrastructure.

Whereas, in the early 1970s, non-defense public investment accounted for 3.2 percent of GDP, it now accounts for only 2.5 percent. That is a huge loss. Widespread neglect of maintenance has contributed substantially to the failure of the stock of public capital assets to keep pace with the Nation's needs.

□ 1900

For instance, the real nondefense public capital stock expanded in the past two decades at a pace only half

that set earlier in the post-World War II period.

Evidence of failures to maintain and improve infrastructure is seen every day in such problems as unsafe bridges, urban decay, dilapidated and overcrowded schools, and inadequate airports. A General Accounting Office study finds that education is seriously handicapped by deteriorating school buildings and that an investment of \$110 billion is needed to bring them up to minimally acceptable.

The problems take a toll in less visible and perhaps even more important ways, in unsatisfactory gains in private sector productivity and a diminished rise in real income for the Nation at large. Seemingly endless traffic jams, disruptions to commuter service and backed-up airport runways, everyday experiences for Americans, spell waste and inefficiency for the economy at large. Congestion on the Nation's highways alone costs the Nation over \$100 billion a year according to the Competitiveness Policy Council estimate. That estimate does not include the cost of added pollution and the wear and tear on vehicles.

This legislation is designed to help the Nation take a significant step both toward overcoming its infrastructure debt and promoting the productivity needed to meet the competitive challenges of the 21st century.

The plan is fiscally sound. It follows the best accounting procedures of the private sector and is designed to recognize the statutes that mandate a balanced Federal budget. In salient ways, it advances sound fiscal operation. The plan would provide \$50 billion a year for mortgage loans to State and local governments for capital investment in types of projects specified by Congress and the President. These mortgage loans would be at zero interest. They would thereby cut the overall cost of projects about in half, depending on the prevailing interest rates, for State and local taxpayers.

We have a plan, the opportunity to rebuild and maintain our infrastructure for the 21st century. By using an innovative and logical approach to sound public financing without debt and without huge interest payments.

IMMIGRATION RESTRUCTURING AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to talk about the Immigration Restructuring and Accountability Act of 1999 that I have offered along with the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS), the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) and others.

Partly this discussion this evening is prompted by a very effective hearing, field hearing, that was held today that I just came from in Chicago, Illinois, called by the chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) and attended by the chairman of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH) and myself, the ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims of the House Committee on the Judiciary.

What I was most struck by is the consensus of all those who had gathered that this is a Nation of laws but it is also a Nation of immigrants. We all have come from somewhere. And we all stand willing and waiting, if you will, to be patriotic and to love this country if given the opportunity. In fact, one of the statements made by the witnesses was that many immigrants and most of them come to this land for a better way of life. We heard testimony from very outstanding members of the Illinois delegation, Democrats and Republicans, we heard testimony from district constituency workers of Members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans, and we heard testimony from the INS regional director. Sadly, however, much of the commentary was about the ills of the INS, the difficulties in getting service, the difficulties in getting the right answers, the difficulties in the timeliness of the responses, the long lines. I was very gratified to hear by the INS regional director, however, that he was struck by these complaints, and of course, had been working over the last couple of months to remedy the concerns that had been expressed. He offered on behalf of his staff a genuine interest to work with congressional offices but most importantly to do the taxpayers' business, and, that is, to do the very best task that he might be able to do.

I believe, however, that he needs additional assistance. And one of the points that was made is that we should not throw money, good money, if you will, after bad. We should not throw money at a problem and yet not be able to fix its very infrastructure. And so the Immigration Restructuring and Accountability Act of 1999, I believe, offers real reform.

Americans, I think, in their heart of hearts appreciate the fact that this is a Nation that welcomes immigrants in order to have a better way of life. We realize that we support and our Constitution and our laws support legal immigration, not illegal immigration. In order to do that, we must encourage those who seek to go through the processes, the legal processes, we must expedite that process, we must not penalize and be punitive, we must not be negative, we must not characterize immigrants as people who are taking and not giving, deadbeats who are not willing to contribute to this society. I