

WINNERS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL
CERTIFICATE OF MERIT

HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 9, 1999

Mrs. WILSON. Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring to your attention the following students from the First Congressional District of New Mexico who are graduating from high school and have been awarded the Congressional Certificate of Merit. These students have excelled in not only their academic endeavors, but also in community service, school and civic activities. They represent the leaders of tomorrow and it is my pleasure to recognize these select students for their outstanding achievements. I, along with their parents, teachers, classmates, and the people of New Mexico, salute them.

Certificates of Merit Award Winners 1999—Adam Chamberlin, Menaul School; Jacob Dopson, Valley High School; Jessica Einfield, Hope Christian High School; Jodie Ellis, Del Norte High School; GERALYN ESPINOZA, Cibola High School; Jose Fernandez, Rio Grande High School; Kozina Gallegos, Evening High School; Lisette Graham, Manzano High School; Lindsey Kasprzyk, St. Pius High School; Suzanne Martinez, Bernalillo High School; Laura Matzen, Sandia Preparatory High School; Karissa McCall, Albuquerque High School; Christina Muscarella, La Cueva High School; Catrina Padilla, Mountainair High School; Amanda Pepping, Eldorado High School; Kate Sandoval, Academy High School; Jolianna Schultz, New Futures High School; Eric Stanton, Sandia High School; Olivia Tenorio, Estancia High School; Erin Ullrich, Moriarty High School.

ANNIVERSARY OF TEA 21

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 9, 1999

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate the anniversary of the signing of TEA 21, the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century. Our commemoration of this event is a fitting recognition of the importance of this legislation to the American people and to the nation's economy.

This afternoon, I was joined in our main committee room by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee leadership, Chairman SHUSTER, Chairman PETRI, Congressman RAHALL, Senators CHAFFEE and VOINOVICH, Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater, and Federal Highway Administrator Ken Wykle in recounting some of the important achievements of that landmark bill. I would like to take this opportunity to share some of my thoughts with my colleagues.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, TEA 21 is important because it secured the future health of our transportation infrastructure system with guaranteed federal funding. The budget rules in the Act ensure that all federal gas taxes will be spent on needed surface transportation improvements. And we now have an opportunity

to apply the same principles to our nation's irreplaceable economic jewel: our nation's aviation system.

TEA 21 reversed a dangerous 30-year trend in which transportation spending as a percentage of public spending dropped by one-half. It authorized \$218 billion for six years—the highest funding levels ever for surface transportation—including \$177 billion for highway and highway safety programs and \$41 billion for transit programs, 43 percent more than its predecessor legislation, ISTEA, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. Of the amounts provided, at least \$198 billion is guaranteed for obligation under the new budget rules in the Act.

TEA 21 is important because transportation capital investments have profound effects on national economic growth and productivity. Investment in the transportation system reduces the cost of producing goods, resulting in lower prices and increased sales, in virtually all sectors of American industry. These productivity effects allow businesses to change the way they organize their production and distribution systems for the benefit of all Americans.

The Act has significant employment impacts in the transportation construction sector. According to the Federal Highway Administration, each billion dollars of construction investment supports a total of 44,709 full-time jobs at the national economy level. These include 8,390 "direct" on-site construction jobs, 20,924 "indirect" jobs in industries providing construction materials and equipment for transportation projects, and 15,395 jobs produced in other sectors of the economy as a result of these "direct" and "indirect" employment effects. And we're talking about good jobs in the construction sector that compensate the average construction worker \$17 per hour or higher.

TEA 21 and ISTEA made important policy shifts and took new directions to solving our transportation problems. TEA 21 continues the legacy of ISTEA by enhancing the intermodal balance of our transportation network. TEA 21 provides more than \$3.6 billion for enhancement projects, compared to just \$41 million spent on bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the 18 years before ISTEA. In addition, TEA 21 designates a full 20 percent of the legislation's total funding for rebuilding and expanding existing transit systems and constructing new ones. It also supports maglev and high speed rail development and provides loans and loan guarantees for freight railroad rehabilitation and improvement.

Second, TEA 21 further integrates transportation, stewardship of our natural resources, and protection of the environment. It maintains and expands the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program providing \$8 billion to help communities address environmental concerns related to transportation and enable them to develop innovative transportation solutions, such as rail transit, to address problems traditionally tackled by pouring more concrete. TEA 21 also created a new \$120 million pilot program to coordinate land use and transportation planning. TEA 21 shows that increased transportation spending need not be harmful to the environment.

Third, TEA 21 includes strong provisions to reduce transportation risks and promote safe driving. TEA 21 establishes a new \$500 mil-

lion incentive program for states that enact and enforce a .08 blood alcohol standard for drunk driving and that severely punishes repeat drunk drivers and prohibits open alcohol containers in motor vehicles. TEA 21 also increases funding for highway safety data collection for the National Driver Register to track dangerous drivers across state lines. Finally, TEA 21 preserves national size and weight limits on big trucks.

While we should be proud of the giant steps forward that we have taken in ISTEA and TEA 21, we must also recognize that we have to build upon its framework if we are to solve the enormous transportation problems that we face today. We must begin thinking now about the successor to TEA 21 and the future of our surface transportation system.

Our best hope for dealing with the difficult, complex transportation problems that increasing travel demand creates is to channel our creativity toward continuing to develop innovative approaches to relieve congestion and protect the environment, leverage our federal investment, and improve safety. As Albert Einstein once said, "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

One way to relieve our congestion is to develop alternative modes of transportation. To relieve our congested highways, we do not need to develop new technology from scratch—we can begin by merely looking across the oceans.

To the West, we see the Japanese high speed rail system, the Shinkansen. Traveling to and from Tokyo and Osaka at speeds of up to 170 miles per hour, 250 million passengers a year sense the innovation, comfort and productivity of the "bullet" train. To our East, we see the French Train à Grand Vitesse (TGV), the German ICE, the Spanish Thalys, and the international Eurostar—all high-speed trains connecting the great cities of Europe. Today, we can ride high-speed trains from Paris to London but not from Chicago to Minneapolis. We can ride on a maglev prototype in Bremen, Germany, or Yamanashi, Japan, but not in Washington, D.C. or New York.

TEA 21 provides the opportunity for states and localities to establish high-speed ground transportation in the United States: it reauthorizes the Swift Act; continues a modest program for development of high-speed corridors; and specifically authorizes \$1 billion for magnetic levitation over five years. The innovative finance programs of TEA 21 are also a source of funding for these high-speed projects.

Let me close by emphasizing the importance of safety as an overriding objective of our surface transportation system of the 21st Century. In 1997 alone, 42,000 people were killed and an additional 3.3 million people were injured in motor vehicle accidents on our nation's highways.

I believe that as our technical capabilities improve early in the next century, these appalling statistics will become simply unacceptable. Americans will demand a safer system. Last year, not a single person died as a result of a U.S. scheduled airline accident. As we look to the future, we should establish the same goal for surface transportation.

Although the legacy of the surface transportation system of the 21st Century is far off, we