

line systems to be compatible and interoperable. However, that day is rapidly approaching.

In the short term, it is my hope that the Congress will have the opportunity to work toward a national standard for Smart Cards as other States like Ohio and Wyoming begin to consider their own Smart Card projects for domestic feeding programs, unemployment compensation, health care, and other benefits. It is my view that there is much to learn from Ohio's leadership and experience in this area.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I want to thank the chairman for his comments.

As I understand his comments, Ohio would not, then, be required to change its off-line system to an on-line system under this proposal?

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, he is correct; Ohio, as well as Wyoming, would not be required to make any changes. And for that matter, those States currently using an on-line system that does not achieve the national interoperability standard would not be required to meet this standard until their current contracts expire.

Finally, I should point out that in the case of Ohio and Wyoming's Smart Card programs, the bill's waiver language and Smart Card provisions provide a clear exemption with no time limit imposed as to when changes would have to be made.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I appreciate these very important clarifications with regard to how legislation relates to Smart Card changes, especially my home State of Ohio.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time on this side. I would just conclude by thanking the gentleman from Virginia (Chairman GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Texas (Chairman COMBEST) for their work on this piece of legislation, and I urge our colleagues to support it.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I rise to support this important bill that amends the Food Stamp Act of 1977 to provide for a national standard of interoperability and portability applicable to electronic food stamp benefit transactions.

This measure ensures that our citizens can use their food stamp cards in any state. Currently, citizens in my home State of Texas cannot use their cards in any other states—a situation that hinders their ability to obtain vital necessities while traveling to other states. Clearly, we do not want our citizens burdened when they cross state lines to visit friends and families.

By amending the Food Stamp Act of 1977 with this bill, we can provide for a national standard of interoperability and portability applicable to electronic food stamp benefit transactions enhance food stamp interstate commerce. This measure would bring the food stamp process into a new age of technology by requiring systems that provide for the elec-

tronic issuance, use, and redemption of coupons in the form of electronic benefit transfer cards to be interoperable, and food stamp benefits to be made portable, among all States not later than October 1, 2002.

I appreciate that this bill works in conjunction with the Secretary of Agriculture. The measure appropriately directs the Secretary of Agriculture to promulgate regulations that adopt a national standard based upon a standard used by the majority of States and require any electronic benefit transfer contract (as defined by this Act) entered into 30 days or more after promulgation of such regulations be in accordance with the national standard.

The bill also includes language to rectify potential technological difficulties. This piece of legislation authorizes the Secretary to provide a requesting State with a temporary deadline waiver based upon unusual technological barriers.

It is also vitally important that we provide for an interim system until the electronic standard is completed. This bill directs the Secretary to allow a State using a smart card food stamp delivery system to continue such system until a technological method is available for electronic benefit transfer card interoperability. Sets forth the conditions for full Federal payment of State switching costs, including annual fiscal year caps.

In an effort to provide a thorough analysis of this undertaking, this measure directs the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a study of alternatives for handling food stamp benefit electronic transactions, including use of a single switching hub.

I am aware that this measure passed the Senate, and I appreciate the bipartisan effort to enact this bill. I support this fine piece of legislation.

Mrs. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 1733, the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Interoperability and Portability Act. I'd like to thank Chairman LARRY COMBEST and Chairman BOB GOODLATTE for bringing this bill to the floor today and for their strong leadership on this important issue.

Interoperability of food stamp EBT systems makes sense both for recipients and retailers. As USDA moves from paper food coupons to EBT cards, interoperability ensures that recipients will retain the same portability as before. Recipients will be able to access stores nearest to their homes and retailers will be able to serve their customers regardless of state boundaries. In areas of the country near state lines, such as in my Congressional District in Southern Missouri, incompatible EBT systems have been a significant problem for both groups. I am very pleased that the bill before us today will resolve this problem and bring the best technology to the food stamp program.

The government and the taxpayer, too, are well served by S. 1733, because it establishes a new mechanism for tracking and policing fraud and abuse in the food stamp program. In my home state of Missouri, the Department of Social Services estimates that an interoperable EBT system would save the federal government as much as \$1 million annually in reduced fraud in Missouri alone.

One aspect of S. 1733 that I would like to highlight is that it provides 100% federal fund-

ing of the costs associated with switching and settling interstate transactions. These costs will not be imposed on other entities, such as retail food stores, states, and food stamp households. This is entirely appropriate because these costs are directly related to administering the program on a nationwide basis, not within a particular state.

Again, I would like to reiterate to my colleagues that this is a very sensible piece of legislation that deserves the support of this House. I urge a strong "Yes" vote.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1733.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on S. 1733.

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

There was no objection.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6 p.m.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 52 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 6 p.m.

□ 1800

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS) at 6 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, the Chair will now put the question on each motion to suspend the rules on which further proceedings were postponed earlier today in the order in which that motion was entertained.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

House Concurrent Resolution 244, by the yeas and nays;

H.R. 2130, concurring in Senate amendment, by the yeas and nays.