

supporter of NOW, she jumped wholeheartedly into local politics. Through her volunteering, Maria developed contacts that brought her into the San Diego Democratic Club. Called "a staple of the work crew," Maria quickly distinguished herself through her participation. She was elected Chairwoman of the Women's Caucus in 1999 and Executive Vice President in 2001.

Maria has left behind a legacy. The President of the San Diego Democratic Club had the following to say, "As we do things within our club—increasing its diversity, making it more woman-friendly—it will be in no small part due to the memory of Maria."

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my deepest sympathy to Maria Plasencia's family by celebrating her life and contributions to the San Diego community. Maria was admired by so many for her dedication to women's issues and the friendly and effective manner she brought to activities. She will be greatly missed.

IN SUPPORT OF PASSENGER RAIL

HON. MICHAEL N. CASTLE

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 3, 2005

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to disagree with the President's proposal to eliminate federal funding for passenger rail. On February 7, President Bush presented a budget proposal to Congress that contained no funding for Amtrak. As explanation, the provision states: "With no subsidies, Amtrak would quickly enter bankruptcy, which would likely lead to the elimination of inefficient operations and the reorganization of the railroad through bankruptcy procedures. Ultimately, a more rational passenger rail system would emerge, with service on routes where there is real ridership demand and support from local governments—such as the Northeast Corridor."

Last year, Amtrak carried 25 million passengers on 22,000 miles of track with approximately 20,000 employees, including close to 2,000 employees based in my state of Delaware. In addition to operating 300 daily intercity trains, close to 850,000 daily rail commuters throughout the country also depend on operating agreements with Amtrak. While the Administration's goal is apparently to improve passenger rail by shutting it down, I surmise that eliminating federal funding for rail transportation would jeopardize the livelihood, and threaten the safety, of millions of riders and thousands of communities who depend on Amtrak.

No country in the world operates an effective passenger rail system without government subsidies. In fact, countries such as Germany and Japan, which have well-developed passenger rail networks but much smaller populations, invest \$3–4 billion annually, over 20 percent of their total transportation spending. In contrast, Amtrak's appropriation of \$1.217 billion last year equaled only two percent of the Department of Transportation's \$59 billion budget.

Directly, or indirectly, the United States subsidizes all our forms of transportation, with rail receiving the least amount by far. Other modes of transportation operate on predominantly federally owned or federally assisted in-

frastructure, and rely on government-supported security, research, and traffic controllers. The U.S. Transportation Security Administration alone received \$5.2 billion in federal funding for security this year, yet Amtrak sustains its own security force. Unlike aviation, highways, and transit, there is no dedicated fund for investing in passenger rail development.

For fiscal year 2005, the Administration proposed \$900 million for Amtrak and budgeted \$1.4 billion for each year thereafter. It is apparent that the current proposal to cut funding for passenger rail represents a drastic and dangerous turnaround in the President's policy. Seeking no funds for direct Amtrak expenses and ceding control of the railroad to a bankruptcy trustee, whose sole legal responsibility is to Amtrak's creditors, would put the future of rail travel on very uncertain footing.

Furthermore, the proposed budget provides \$360 million to continue commuter rail traffic on the Northeast Corridor, but only after Amtrak ceases operations. As some of my colleagues have recognized, the Administration's proposal anticipates a period during which all Amtrak services, including those on the Northeast Corridor, would be stopped. With over 1,700 trains operating over some portion of the Washington-Boston route each day, states would be devastated if forced to handle the disruption and congestion that terminating Amtrak service would trigger.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, while the President's plan undoubtedly includes some recommendations worth considering, the facts are clear; Amtrak needs federal support to survive, just like highways, ports, and airlines. I am one of many Republicans in Congress eager to improve the safety, efficiency, and ridership of passenger rail. Putting Amtrak on the chopping block directly contradicts this goal. Dozens of reform proposals exist without jeopardizing the viability of Amtrak and they should be openly debated in Congress.

H.R. 1042, THE NET WORTH AMENDMENT FOR CREDIT UNION ACT

HON. SPENCER BACHUS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 3, 2005

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, earlier today, I, along with 15 of my colleagues introduced H.R. 1042, the Net Worth Amendment For Credit Unions Act. This amendment to Section 216 of the Federal Credit Union Act (12 USC 1790d(0)(2)(A)) redefines the term "net worth" for Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) purposes for credit unions. This legislation is needed in order to avoid an unintended consequence caused by an accounting change that the Financial Accounting Standards Board ("FASB") is about to promulgate, requiring credit unions to utilize the "purchase method" of accounting rather than the "pooling of interests" method of accounting to account for credit union mergers.

This amendment does not affect accounting practices; credit unions will be required to use the "purchase method" of accounting for mergers in order to receive a clean audit. It should be noted that FASB itself has stated that it sees no problem with the amendment from an accounting perspective. The legisla-

tion does not grant credit unions that currently lack the authority to offer alternative capital accounts the authority to do so, nor does it confer upon the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) the regulatory authority or discretion to authorize such accounts now or in the future. This amendment is intended to address a narrow and technical accounting issue and in the process simply maintain the status quo so that, in the case of merging credit unions, 2 + 2 can continue to equal 4.

Currently, under the "pooling of interests" method of accounting, if a credit union with \$2 million in retained earnings merges with another credit union with \$2 million in retained earnings, the surviving credit union has \$4 million in retained earnings: 2 + 2 = 4. In the absence of this amendment, when the "purchase method" of accounting becomes mandatory for credit union mergers, if a credit union with \$2 million in retained earnings merges with another credit union with \$2 million in retained earnings, the surviving credit union will only have \$2 million in retained earnings: 2 + 2 = 2! That inequitable conclusion results from the fact that the Federal Credit Union Act defines the "net worth" of a federally-insured credit union as "GAAP retained earnings" and under Generally Accepted Accounting Principles when utilizing the "purchase method" of accounting only \$2 million would be categorized as "retained earnings" while the other \$2 million would be classified as "acquired equity."

Many credit union mergers are done at the request of the NCUA as a way of dealing in a constructive way with troubled institutions. Accordingly, it is in the public interest to redefine the term "net worth" for PCA purposes so that a credit union is not unfairly penalized and its net worth diminished merely because of an antiquated definition contained in the Federal Credit Union Act. It is with this in mind that I have introduced H.R. 1042 today. I hope that we will be able to move this important legislation for credit unions through the Financial Services Committee and this body in a timely fashion.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF LAREDO CITY COUNCILMAN ALFREDO AGREDANO

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 3, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the important contribution of Council Member District 1 Alfredo Agredano in Laredo, TX in my Congressional District.

Alfredo Agredano was born on August 28, 1948 in Grafton, North Dakota. He was the second of 9 children born to migrant workers Norberto and Francisca Agredano. After attending elementary schools in Corpus Christi, TX, Mr. Agredano and his family moved back to Laredo, TX at the age of thirteen. From there he attended L.J. Christen Jr. High School and graduated from Martin High School in 1968.

The following year he went on to joining the United States Marine Corps. During his stay, he became a Viet-Nam veteran and received an Honorable Discharge from the Marine Corps with the rank of sergeant. Not only did Mr. Agredano serve his country proudly, he

also went on to earn an Associate Degree in Law Enforcement from Laredo Community College.

Mr. Agredano went on to work for the Laredo Fire Department for 7 years. For the past 25 years he has been an employee of the United States Post Office.

As a long life resident of Laredo, TX, Mr. Agredano went on to be elected to the Laredo City Council in 1998 and re-elected in 2002 in which he ran unopposed.

Councilman Agredano has been married to Geraldine Valdez for the past 21 years. He has 8 wonderful children and 3 grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have this opportunity to recognize the hard work of Councilman Alfredo Agredano.

EXPRESSING SYMPATHY TO
JUDGE JOAN HUMPHREY
LEFKOW AND FAMILY

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 3, 2005

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my sincere sympathy to Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkow and her entire family after the tragic deaths of her husband, Michael F. Lefkow, and her mother, Donna Grace Humphrey.

The city of Chicago and the entire nation have been shaken by these horrific murders. While we watched the headlines every day this week, we ask ourselves how such terrible crimes could have taken place, and we hope those answers come sooner than later.

Michael Lefkow spent his life fighting to protect civil rights for all Americans—marching with Martin Luther King, Jr., arguing cases before the Supreme Court, and representing the poor and underserved in his law practice. To all who knew and loved him, Michael was a dedicated family man and an active member of his church who used his time and his expertise to make life better for so many others.

Judge Lefkow is also a dedicated public servant, committed to her family and her community and with a reputation for fairness in her judicial decisions.

I want to particularly express sympathy to Michael Lefkow's daughter and Donna Humphrey's granddaughter, Laura, who attended high school on the northwest side of Chicago, won my district's entry in the Congressional Arts Contest in 2003, and volunteered in my Washington office during the summer of 2004.

Mr. Speaker, my prayers and thoughts are with Judge Lefkow, Laura, and the entire Lefkow family in this difficult hour.

AMTRAK FUNDING

HON. STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 3, 2005

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my dissatisfaction with the President's Fiscal Year 2006 budget that zeroes out funding for Amtrak, eliminates funding for high-speed rail, and provides \$360 million to the Surface Transportation Board to maintain ex-

isting commuter operations should Amtrak shut down.

The shutdown of Amtrak would cause wide disruption and hardship. Millions of passengers—many of whom can't afford a car or a plane ticket—would be stranded. Millions of travelers would be added to already congested roads and airports.

Residents of 106 U.S. cities, which have no air service and are well over 25 miles away from the nearest airport, would have to find new transportation alternatives.

Amtrak's 20,000 workers would be out on the streets looking for new jobs. Local economies and businesses that have benefited from Amtrak's service would suffer.

Amtrak serves my state of Ohio with four long-distance trains: The Capital Limited (daily Chicago-Cleveland-Pittsburgh-Washington, DC); The Cardinal (tri-weekly Chicago-Cincinnati-Washington, DC-New York); The Lake Shore Limited (daily Chicago-Cleveland-Buffalo-Boston-New York); and The Three Rivers (daily New York-Philadelphia-Akron-Chicago).

During Fiscal Year 2004 Amtrak served the following Ohio locations:

City and ridership: Akron—7,930; Alliance—2,324; Bryan—6,204; Cincinnati—11,632; Cleveland—35,394; Elyria—2,651; Fostoria—1,935; Hamilton—1,483; Sandusky—4,098; Toledo—59,661, and Youngstown—4,417.

Total Ohio Ridership: 137,729.

Amtrak expended \$9,567,180 for goods and services in Ohio in Fiscal Year 2004. Much of this money was spent in the following locations: Cleveland, \$2,458,778; and Columbus \$1,540,264.

During fiscal year 2004, Amtrak employed 88 Ohio residents. Total wages of Amtrak employees living in Ohio were \$4,609,915 during this period.

The Railroad Retirement and Unemployment programs, which cover employees of all railroads, freight and passenger, would be depleted. According to the Railroad Retirement Board, without the participation of Amtrak, employer and employee payroll taxes would need to be increased from the current 16 percent to 27 percent in 2027. Those tax increases, however, would ultimately be insufficient and serious cash flow problems for Railroad Retirement would begin in 2031.

Cash reserves for the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account would be exhausted by 2006, and nearly \$297 million would have to be borrowed from the Railroad Retirement account to make up for losses. Ultimately, Amtrak's unemployment benefit costs would be borne by other railroads. In Fiscal Year 2004, Ohio had a passenger rail ridership of 137,729.

While the United States once had a passenger rail system that was the envy of the world, a lack of capital investment has stalled the advancement of corridor development throughout the country.

Dependent upon an annual federal appropriation, Amtrak's national network is constantly threatened by under-investment, lack of a clearly articulated federal rail policy, and an uncertain future.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to reiterate my outrage over a budget that cuts out a program that carried 25 million passengers in 2004; operates a nationwide rail network, serving over 500 stations in 46 states on 22,000 miles of track with approximately 20,000 employees; and operates 300 daily intercity trains, ap-

proximately 850,000 commuters each day depend on operating agreements with Amtrak, Amtrak-owned infrastructure, or shared operations.

INTRODUCTION OF "INFORMATION
PROTECTION AND SECURITY
ACT" AND "SOCIAL SECURITY
NUMBER PROTECTION ACT"

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 3, 2005

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing two bills aimed at protecting the privacy of personally identifiable individual information and making it more difficult for unauthorized persons to obtain access to such data.

In *Bonfire of the Vanities*, the novelist Tom Wolfe wrote about "The Bororo Indians, a primitive jungle tribe who live along the Vermelho River in the Amazon Jungles of Brazil." According to Wolfe, the Bororos believed that "there is no such thing as a private self." Instead, they "regard the mind as an open cavity, like a cave or a tunnel or an arcade, if you will, in which the entire village dwells and the jungle grows." Wolfe compared this to the situation faced by his protagonist, Sherman McCoy, who was caught in the middle of a public scandal in the last quarter of the 20th century.

In the 21st century, we now face the prospect of a world in which all of us—not just someone in the midst of scandal—will be forced to live without a private self: with the entire "village" able to obtain access to some of the most personal aspects of our lives.

In the emerging surveillance society of the 21st century, the data mining and information brokerage firms, much like Wolf's Bororo Indians, believe that there is no such thing as a private self. These companies are collecting and selling a vast array of personal information about the American public. For a fee, these companies will tell you someone's Social Security number, their address, phone number, driver's license number, driving record, any criminal record information, court records, insurance claims, divorce records, and even credit and financial information.

Recent press reports indicate that ChoicePoint, an information broker and data mining firm, had allowed a group of Nigerian con artists to get access to names, Social Security numbers, and other personal information about 140,000 Americans, including roughly 1,100 Massachusetts residents. Apparently this is not the first time that ChoicePoint has allowed criminal identity thieves to get access to such information. Two years ago, a similar problem reportedly occurred at the same company.

Unchecked, these companies take advantage of the most valuable possessions that Americans have: their personal identities. Companies like ChoicePoint are playing Russian roulette with the personal information and identities of millions of Americans. If we don't take steps to protect America's consumers soon, it is not a question of whether or not more Americans will lose their privacy—it is question of when will the next ID theft scandal hit. We must take immediate action to protect consumers from more information breaches.