EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

THE SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 25, 1996

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, with my colleagues Mr. WAXMAN and Mr. STUPAK, I am today introducing legislation to extend an arbitrary deadline established by the House leadership that will deprive the States, cities, and towns of more than $700 million for protecting and enhancing the Nation's drinking water. Sadly it is the fumbling of the House Leadership that necessitates this action.

Mr. Speaker, when the leadership cobbled together the Omnibus Appropriations Act earlier this year, it included language which set an August 1 deadline for the $725 million that had been accumulated to fund the new safe drinking water state loan fund. Specifically, the measure provided that Congress must pass Safe Drinking Water Act amendments authorizing the revolving loan fund before the deadline. Without passage of the amendments, the funds will pass to the clean water fund and will no longer be available to help this Nation's water systems provide safe and healthy water.

All agree this loss would be catastrophic.

To avoid this problem, the House unanimously passed a strong, bipartisan reauthorization of the Safe Drinking Water Act on June 25, 1996. This measure will improve protection of our drinking water from microbiological contaminants that cause acute illnesses—even death—from single exposures. It will reduce exposures to carcinogens, endocrine disruptors and other long-term human health threats. Equally importantly, the bill gives States and water districts unprecedented flexibility to customize their safe drinking water programs to meet their individual needs and circumstances.

But with this progress and flexibility will come increased responsibilities for the States and the water districts. And this is where the State revolving fund comes in. This fund is vital to help States and localities meet the costs of complying with the Safe Drinking Water Act.

This State revolving fund is to be divided between the States by an objective formula. States can use the money for grants and loans to their water districts under rules that focus the money on projects that address the most serious health risks, ensure compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act, and assist water districts with the greatest need on a per household basis.

Despite the strong, bipartisan support for this measure and for the establishment of the safe drinking water fund, the House leadership complicated the task of completing work by the deadline. First, while the bill passed on June 25, conferees were not selected until July 17, some 22 days after passage and after more than half of the time available before the deadline had passed. Worse, when conferees were appointed, the leadership added layers of complexity by appointing three committees as conferees on the bill.

Indeed, the leadership decided that one committee which added some pork projects to the Safe Drinking Water Act on the floor would be the exclusive conferees on those pork provisions.

I have asked the Parliamentarians for a list of the bills in this or other Congresses in which such an extraordinary and remarkable appointment had been made—naming as exclusive or even majority conferees a committee that was not the primary committee on a bill. Thus far, we have been shown no other examples. This leaves me to conclude that this is merely a political exercise. While, I trust, therefore, that it will have no precedential value, it still must be faced during this conference.

In practical terms this means that there will be no conference report, and no safe drinking water bill enacted into law, until the conferees from the Transportation Committee have secured everything they want. This is not a formula for a fast conference.

So today, only 6 days before this money is lost, we find ourselves in the following predicament. The conferees have not met. No issues have been resolved. We do have a conferees' meeting scheduled for tomorrow morning. But there is no telling at this moment whether there will be any progress before we depart this week.

I remain hopeful that our staffs can make progress without our assistance over the weekend, and that time will not run out on us. But when we get back next week we will have to have an agreement reached, a conference report drafted and signed, approval of that report voted by both Houses of Congress, and a bill sent to the President and signed—all before midnight on Wednesday.

Mr. Speaker, is this possible? Yes, I still believe it is. But I do not want our constituents to suffer an irrational forfeiture of this money for safe drinking water. If it becomes necessary on Monday, I ask the Appropriations Committee, the leadership, and the House to move the deadline and rescue this money for the safe drinking water systems of this country.

ABINGTON, PA HONORED IN NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION SUCCESS

HON. JON D. FOX

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 25, 1996

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the community of Abington, PA for their success in revitalizing the small businesses in their neighborhoods.

The Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs approved a grant request from Abington Township in which the township planned to improve six business districts.

Supervisors at the Department of Community Affairs have lauded the Abington proposal as one which truly and effectively works to preserve neighborhoods and the small town atmosphere. The grant will be applied to the Old York Road, Town Center, Roslyn, Keswick, McKinley, and North Hills sections of the township.

While business usually takes the initiative on revitalization issues, in Abington's case it was the vision of the local government which motivated the program and grant proposal. It should be noted that Abington developed this outstanding economic development program in just 2 years.

Abington's economic development committee of its board of directors, founded by the late Richard Fluge, exercised vision and wisdom in its work toward economic development.

I would like to add my congratulations and best wishes to these community leaders for their superlative public service. They are proof of the ability and professionalism of our local governments, demonstrating that members of the community are most often the sources of the best solutions to the problems American families face in their daily lives.

THE TRAIN WHISTLE RESOLUTION

HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 25, 1996

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in order to introduce a piece of legislation that will benefit communities throughout the Nation. My legislation is a straightforward resolution regarding the implementation of the train whistle requirement of the Swift Rail Act of 1994.

An amendment added to the Swift Rail Development Act of 1994 mandated the Secretary of Transportation to issue regulations requiring trains to sound their horns at every public road-rail grade crossing in the country, 24 hours a day. According to the law, the Secretary must issue the new regulations by November 1996.

There are approximately 168,000 public highway-rail crossings in the United States and railroads regularly sound train whistles at most of these crossings. Trains sound their horn as a final warning of a train's approach; the horn is in addition to motorist warning devices such as signs, lights, bells, and gates at crossings. However, at nearly 2,100 crossings, local communities have banned train whistles to limit excessive noise in residential or other designated areas. The rules required by the Swift Rail Development Act will now preempt the local ordinances that silence train whistles.

At a distance of a half-mile, the noise level of a standard American train whistle is 86 decibels. This is well over what the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says is the maximum noise threshold tolerable for peace and serenity. It is no wonder that communities that