

the majority has chosen to address a very serious problem with unrealistic and potentially damaging solutions.

Gang activity is a very real and dangerous problem. In my own district, gangs pose a severe threat to the youth in many communities. Just yesterday, I spoke at length with a constituent whose son has suffered permanent and irreversible brain injury from a beating at the hands of a local gang.

There is much that Congress can and should do to help keep our youth out of gangs and strengthen our law enforcement efforts against gangs. Gangs are tough and gang members often do not respond to mild measures. We should increase the resources available to gang prevention, intervention, and suppression programs, such as the Juvenile Delinquency Protection Block Grant (JJDPBG). These programs have been very effective in helping youth make the correct decisions with regard to gang activity.

We should increase the resources available to our public schools. All too often, youth join gangs because they feel that it is the only option available to them. By helping our teachers, administrators, and school systems, we can show them other, more promising, options.

We should oppose the reduction or elimination of programs that put police officers on our streets. Since 1994, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program has funded 4,806 additional police officers and sheriffs deputies to prevent crime in New Jersey. It has allowed New Jersey to spend \$45 million on crime-fighting technologies. We should be having a serious discussion about why this successful program warrants an 80 percent cut in the Republican budget for Fiscal Year 2006.

Unfortunately, this legislation proposes ineffective and damaging solutions to this serious problem. Mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines discount mitigating factors in crimes and are discriminatory towards people of color. It is time to give up the Congressional fascination with mandatory sentencing. It does not work. It may make the legislator feel good, but it hinders the judicial process, and most important it does not stop crime or deter criminals.

Also, diverting youth to the adult criminal justice system does nothing to deter crimes. In fact, youth tried and sentenced as adults are much more likely to commit violent crime after being released. Further, I am concerned that H.R. 1279 provides no exception for youth who have mental health problems and may not be competent to stand trial as adults.

I am happy that Congress is addressing this issue, which has affected so many communities across New Jersey and the country. Serious crimes like murder, assault, and rape at the hands of gangs and criminal enterprises clearly deserve our attention. However, this bill proposes solutions that do nothing to deter youth from gang membership or strengthen the law enforcement presence in our communities.

I urge my colleagues to oppose H.R. 1279.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1279, GANG DETERRENCE AND COMMUNITY PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 11, 2005

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 6) to ensure jobs for our future with secure, affordable, and reliable energy:

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1279, "The Gang Deterrence and Community Protection Act of 2005."

Northern Virginia is home to large Central American and Asian populations. I believe these groups bring a diversity and work ethic that enhances and benefits our region. Our diversity is one of our strengths.

Unfortunately, we have become increasingly aware of the gang element that sometimes attends these communities, and we are now fighting the spread of violent gang activity here in our neighborhoods.

Accounts of machete attacks and other violent murders have awoken my constituents to the dangers gangs present to all communities in Northern Virginia. In fact, law enforcement officials say there is a gang presence in every high school in Fairfax County. In the past, I have worked with my colleagues Frank Wolf and Jim Moran to direct federal resources for anti-gang activity to Northern Virginia. I have also traveled on numerous occasions to those Central American countries that serve as the breeding ground for MS-13 and other such gangs.

The legislation we are voting on today addresses one aspect of gang control. As our neighbors in El Salvador have learned, you can make all the arrests you want, but if you don't have the ability to effectively prosecute you actually exacerbate the problem. This legislation will help ensure that we do not have the same issue here in the United States.

The tough penalties set out by the bill will send a clear message that we intend to stop the menace of gang violence, and that those who challenge us will be dealt with harshly. We are also bolstering our commitment to law enforcement by providing them the resources they need to penetrate gangs and successfully put members behind bars.

Of course, if we are to ultimately be successful and effectively stem the expansion of gang activity, we need to take a comprehensive look at all strategies including law enforcement, international engagement, educational programs, social services and prevention. Law enforcement is one key component; however, without adequate attention to these other aspects, we will have a great deal of difficulty eradicating this epidemic.

To that end, I plan to continue to work with my colleagues to provide adequate support for education and prevention efforts, outreach, and other proactive programs to deal with the problem at the source. In addition, as the chairman of the committee with jurisdiction over the Office of National Drug Control Policy, I intend to thoroughly investigate the tie between narcotrafficking and gang activity. I

plan to travel again to both Colombia and El Salvador this month as part of this effort.

I also intend to meet with leaders of those countries to determine how the United States can better assist their efforts to stem the flow of gang members to the United States.

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to address this serious challenge, and I again want to thank my friend Randy Forbes for taking the lead on this critical aspect of our fight.

PROVIDE GREATER JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES THROUGH CAR OWNERSHIP

HON. GWEN MOORE

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, for many low-income families, getting to a job can be even harder than getting hired in the first place. Research shows that lack of affordable and reliable transportation is a significant barrier to employment. If we want more people to work, we need to help make sure that they can get to work. Unfortunately, travel to and from a specific workplace on our cities' public transportation systems can be time-consuming and even practically impossible—especially for those struggling to leave welfare.

Public transit is designed to accommodate 9-to-5 commuters who need to get from one city destination to another during the normal workweek. But the entry level jobs of low-income workers are increasingly found in the faraway plants, warehouses, strip malls, and office parks of suburbia. The work schedules of these new hires may include "off-hour" shifts when public transit is unavailable or too unreliable. Low-income parents also need to go to job training classes, the supermarket, the doctor's office, or to day care to drop off their children. These destinations may not be located along public bus or train lines.

Studies show that people are more likely to find steady employment and earn a decent wage when they have access to a car. But all too often, buying and maintaining a reliable automobile is too expensive for families struggling to make ends meet. A recent report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that one-fourth of families earning \$25,000 or less have no cars.

In recent years, a number of states and non-profit organizations have developed programs to assist the working poor with the purchase of a car. Most of these programs receive vehicles donated by the public or purchase them wholesale from dealerships. The used cars are repaired to good working order and then leased or sold to low-income workers and job seekers, usually at a subsidized purchase price. In many cases, program operators work with local lending institutions to obtain loans for the car purchase while also providing financial education to the new owner. In addition to improving access to jobs in far reaching suburbs or rural areas, some low-income car ownership initiatives can bolster the family's credit for future purchases, such as a home, as well as connect these families to a savings institution.

In order to help develop and expand these low-income car ownership efforts, I am introducing the Creating Access to Rides (CAR)

Act. This legislation would establish a 5-year, \$50 million grant program through which states, localities, and nonprofits could apply for funding to strengthen existing low-income car ownership programs or create new ones.

The bill would also facilitate car ownership through the use of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). IDAs are special savings accounts for very low-income individuals through which, as an incentive to save, a person's contributions to the account are matched by public and private funding. States can use funds authorized by a little-known law called the Assets for Independence Act (AFIA) to match participant contributions to IDAs. However, when IDA contributions are matched using AFIA funds, withdrawals may be used for only three qualified expenses: homeownership, post-secondary education, and starting a business. This bill would expand permissible IDA uses under AFIA matching rules to include the purchase of a car.

In addition to AFIA dollars, states can use their Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to match IDA contributions. While the purchase of a car is not included in the underlying TANF statute as a qualifying IDA expense, the Department of Health and Human Services has clarified that states can elect to permit withdrawals for car purchases when the participant's IDA is matched with federal TANF dollars. However, some states have found that, as a result of choosing this option, the IDA can be considered an asset when determining the participant's eligibility for other programs such as food stamps.

This legislation would remove this barrier and allow states to use TANF dollars to match IDA savings for a car without the account's assets being counted against the participant's eligibility for other important programs.

Mr. Speaker, vehicle ownership is critical to matching the available workforce with available jobs. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and enact it in a timely manner so that low-income Americans can get behind the wheel, improve their job prospects, and gain greater opportunities to provide for their families.

CONGRATULATIONS TO PLUMBERS
LOCAL UNION 210 2005 APPRENTICE
GRADUATES

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor and admiration that I offer congratulations to many of Northwest Indiana's most talented, dedicated, and hardworking individuals. On Friday, June 10, 2005, the Plumbers Local Union 210 will honor the completion class of 2005 at the Annual Apprentice Completion Banquet which will be held at the Patio Banquet Hall in Merrillville, Indiana.

They will be recognizing and honoring the 2005 Apprentice Graduates. The individuals who have completed the apprentice training are: Jamie Anderson, Damon Berry, Jesse Brill, Robert Burkus, Raymond Crawford, Michael Fanning, Kenneth Francus, Jason Kennedy, Robin Marshal, Josh Musser, Scott Norwine, Joe Palek, Joshua Poston, Daniel Rosenbaum, Collin Sanders, Brian Schoff,

Kevin Stonehill, Lee Thomas, Chris Tomko, and John Zbell.

Northwest Indiana has a rich history of excellence in its craftsmanship and loyalty by its tradesmen. These graduates are all outstanding examples of each. They have mastered their trade and have demonstrated their loyalty to both the union and the community through their hard work and self-sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and my other distinguished colleagues join me in congratulating these hardworking individuals. Along with all the other men and women of Northwest Indiana's unions, these individuals have contributed to the growth and development to the economy of the First Congressional District, and I am very proud to honor them in Washington, D.C.

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. DORIS O. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut, the anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel.

On this day 57 years ago in 1948, the British Mandate over Palestine expired and cleared the path for the State of Israel to be created. Despite her continued struggle for existence, Israel has overcome these difficulties to thrive and prosper. Israelis have become world leaders in agriculture, technology, medicine and science.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Israel for its continued support through the decades. Since its creation, Israel has been one of America's staunchest allies. And as the sole democracy in the Middle East, we as a nation must maintain our support and ensure our ally's continued survival.

INTRODUCING THE RAIL SECURITY
ACT OF 2005

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, today, together with Subcommittee on Railroads Ranking Member CORRINE BROWN and 12 of my other colleagues, I introduce the "Rail Security Act of 2005."

It's been almost 4 years since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and one year since the terrorist train bombing in Madrid, Spain, that killed 191 people and wounded more than 1,800 others, making it the deadliest terrorist attack against European civilians since 1988. Last month, Spanish authorities found in the home of a suspect in the Madrid bombing, a rough sketch of New York's Grand Central Terminal, the significance of which is being evaluated.

The Madrid bombing was just the latest in a series of attacks on railroads worldwide. Between 1998 and 2003, there were 181 attacks worldwide on trains and rail-related targets such as depots, ticket stations, and rail bridges, resulting in an estimated 431 deaths and several thousand injuries. Yet the Federal

Government has done little to enhance rail security in the United States. The Madrid bombing alone should have served as a wake-up call to Congress and the Administration.

Last year, the United States spent \$4.4 billion on aviation security, but only \$115 million on rail and transit security, even though five times as many people take trains as planes every day. The President's FY2006 Budget for the Transportation Security Administration proposes \$4.7 billion for aviation security and just \$32 million for highways, passenger rail, buses and other modes of surface transportation.

Amtrak alone has requested \$100 million in security upgrades and nearly \$600 million for fire and life-safety improvements to tunnels on the Northeast Corridor in New York, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. Securing Amtrak and other rail facilities is a formidable task, but Congress must get it done. Of course, that requires Federal leadership and Federal resources, both of which are long overdue. For 4 years now, our country still hasn't produced a national transportation security plan.

The Aviation Transportation Security Act of 2001 originally required the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to develop and submit to Congress a National Strategy for Transportation Security. In 2003, then Transportation Security Administrator Admiral James Loy promised the plan by the end of that year. Most recently, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorist Prevention Act of 2004 required the plan to be produced by April 1, 2005. Unfortunately, the Department has pushed back the completion date for this document again. On April 1, 2005, the DHS sent a letter to Congress stating that the Department now intends to produce the National Strategy for Transportation Security to Congress in two to three months.

We cannot continue to delay security improvements while awaiting the National Strategy. Congress needs to act now to protect the safety and security of our Nation's railroads, rail passengers, rail workers, and communities served by them.

The Rail Security Act of 2005 requires that within 180 days of enactment, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of Transportation shall develop and implement a railroad security assessment, a railroad security plan, and prioritized recommendations for improving railroad security. The bill also requires the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of Transportation to execute a memorandum of agreement governing the roles and responsibilities of their Departments in addressing railroad transportation security matters.

The bill authorizes more than \$1 billion to safeguard our Nation's rail network from terrorist threats, \$500 million of which is authorized for grants to State and local governments, railroad carriers, rail labor, and others for costs incurred for preventing 3 or responding to terrorist activities or other security threats to intercity passenger rail and freight rail service.

Under the bill, Amtrak will receive \$100 million for security upgrades, plus a total of \$597 million to make fire and life-safety improvements to tunnels on the Northeast Corridor in New York, New York, Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. This funding is critical to protect Amtrak's 25 million passengers, two-thirds of whom travel along the Northeast Corridor.