breadwinners who have devoted their entire careers to public service. It is also the smart thing to do, from the standpoint of the taxpayer, who has invested in these employees over the years, and who would lose the value of that investment if the employees were to take positions elsewhere. As a former personnel director, I certainly recognize that for any organization, including the Federal government, to maximize its effectiveness, it needs to attract the most talented people it can, invest in those people, and retain them. It makes sense to enable talented employees to transfer their skills to other agencies, if they wish to remain in Federal service and cannot find suitable positions in the Library or CRS.

The legislation which I have introduced would accomplish two things toward that end. First, it would give Library employees who have successfully completed a probationary period in a non-temporary position ''competitive status'' when seeking vacant positions in Executive departments and agencies for which the employees have the required qualifications. Currently, service in the Library, a Legislative-branch agency, does not confer competitive status, leaving Library employees at a disadvantage when competing for vacancies in Executive agencies requiring competitive status. The provision would become effective immediately, and is designed to assist current CRS employees who may wish to apply for positions throughout the government, as well as other CRS or Library employees seeking positions in the future.

Second, the legislation would render Library employees (including the Congressional Research Service) eligible for a program, administered by the Office of Personnel Management for displaced employees in the Executive branch, which provides ''special selection priority'' for employees facing a reduction-in-force. Thus, Library employees, including the CRS personnel facing loss of their jobs later this year, would qualify for priority selection to positions across the Executive branch.

Mr. Speaker, in 1990 Congress enacted similar legislation granting competitive status to employees of the Judicial branch. It made sense then for employees of the Federal courts, and it makes sense for the employees of the Library of Congress today.

Mr. Speaker, my legislation has the support of the Librarian of Congress, Dr. James Billington, and Director Mulhollan, who have assured me that they will do everything possible to identify suitable positions in the Library for the affected employees. I take them at their word and hope their efforts succeed for every employee who wants to continue contributing to the agency's success.

This Congress could not discharge its responsibilities without the support of the employees of the Congressional Research Service and the Library of Congress, who provide unbiased, non-partisan, timely, reliable information to its Members every day. As Ranking Member of the Committee on House Administration, which oversees the Library and CRS, I am eager to see this precious asset preserved, and I trust that Library management will do everything within its power to avoid a RIF in 2006 or any other year. In the meantime, H.R. 5328 will make it easier for the CRS employees now facing loss of their jobs to transfer their skills and expertise to other Federal agencies and continue their careers in public service. I urge all Members to join in supporting this urgent legislation.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF G.V. ''SONNY'' MONTGOMERY

HON. NICK J. RAHALL, II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember the life of a man that I am proud to have called a colleague and a friend, Gillespie V. ''Sonny'' Montgomery. Sonny had already been serving the people of Mississippi for 10 years by the time I had been elected to Congress, but his drive and tenacity for the men and women of his District and of the armed services: rivaled that of any of my freshman class of 1977.

The epitome of one man making a difference, Sonny helped expand the G.I. Bill to Guardsmen and Reservists and helped make possible the dream of a higher education to countless Americans. His efforts to elevate the Veterans Administration into the 14th Cabinet level department truly ensured, in his words, that ''veterans will no longer have to go through the back door to the White House.''

Few men leave the kind of lasting legacy that Sonny leaves. When I am back home in West Virginia, I see him in the faces of the West Virginia National Guard. The time before his accomplishments seem to stand in stark contrast to the current realities of serving our great Nation, and it reminds us all of how justice always needs an advocate.

I see how one man can better the lives of so many, and it reminds and reaffirms in me what it means to be a public servant.

This coming Memorial Day, we will remember and pay tribute to those who have served our country, in doing so we also remember and pay tribute to Sonny.

As the Lord welcomes him back home into the Kingdom of Heaven, may we all honor his legacy by picking up the torch that he so skillfully carried.

HONORING G.V. ''SONNY'' MONTGOMERY

HON. JIM GIBBONS

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the state of Nevada, I would like to recognize the late Gillespie V. ''Sonny'' Montgomery for all of his lifetime achievements. Sonny passed away on May 12 of this year. His 30 years in Congress and 13 years as Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee do not even begin to reveal all that he has done for this country.

As a strong Veterans' advocate, he was the man responsible for rallying Congress to pass The Montgomery G.I. Bill, which offered education benefits to National Guard and Reserve personnel for the first time. Mr. Montgomery also served on the House Armed Services Committee, where he made progress in the quality of life for both the National Guard and reserve units. As a veteran himself, he seemed to establish a stubbornness about him that pressed for improved treatment of veterans on Capitol Hill, where he gained the nickname ''Mr. Veteran.''

After returning home from World War II, he returned to active duty during the Korean War as part of the National Guard. Shortly thereafter, Sonny began his political career in 1956 when he was elected to the Mississippi State Senate, where he served for ten years before joining the United States House of Representatives in 1967. He remained in the National Guard and retired in 1980 with the rank of major general.

In 2005, he received the highest form of civilian honor when President Bush awarded him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Sonny Montgomery was the embodiment of freedom and worked every day of his professional life to strengthen our national defense and to ensure that this nation honors the soldiers who protect our freedom.

Not only has this country lost a dedicated serviceman and former Member of Congress, but we have also lost a great friend.

CONGRATULATING AMTRAK ON ITS 35TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, known more commonly as Amtrak, and its workers for achieving 35 years of operation as America's passenger rail service provider.

Prior to the creation of Amtrak, passenger rail service had fallen on hard times. Freight railroads had a common carrier obligation to provide passenger train service, but virtually all of them were losing money and wanted to be rid of it. Regrettably, it was the policy of many of the freight railroads to simply allow the service to deteriorate to the point where ridership was so sparse that the Interstate Commerce Commission would grant the carriers permission to discontinue their passenger train operations. Some of the railroads went beyond benign neglect and actively downgraded the service to discourage people from riding the trains.

Indeed, passenger rail service had been in decline since 1920. Americans' preferences shifted to air and auto to meet their intercity transportation needs. In 1920, passenger rail was the dominant mode of intercity transportation; by 1970 passenger rail service had declined to relative insignificance. Many thought that the day of the passenger train was over, and that, outside of a few densely populated corridors, passenger trains were destined to join the stagecoach and the flatboat as relics of America's transportation history.

Fortunately, that was not the case. Congress understood the long-term value of and public need for intercity passenger rail service and passed the Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970 to create Amtrak.

On May 1, 1971, Amtrak assumed responsibility of the nation's passenger trains from the freight railroads and began service when Clocker No. 235 departed New York Penn Station at 12:05 a.m. bound for Philadelphia. It was clear from the outset that Amtrak would have to face a number of challenges. Years of freight railroad neglect of passenger operations meant that stations and terminals were often old and run down, that passenger cars offered dated amenities, and the equipment was prone to failure. The nation's railroad infrastructure was in a serious state of disrepair. Trains, even some passenger trains, crept along at 10–15 miles-per-hour in some places and derailments were becoming distressingly commonplace. By the time Amtrak commenced operations in 1971, the number of daily intercity passenger trains had been reduced from 11,000 in 1964 to fewer than 300 in 1970.

Today, despite chronic under-investment, Amtrak has managed to replace and upgrade many car and locomotive fleets, rehabilitate once dilapidated train stations, and introduce a variety of new services in an effort to keep people riding the rails. Ridership has grown from 4.4 million on 184 trains operated in 1971 to more than 24 million on 100,000 trains operated in 2005, a record level for Amtrak. And just last month, despite increasing freight congestion on the nation's railways, Amtrak's on-time performance on the Northeast Corridor reached 90 percent.

In other words, Amtrak survived—survived the inadequate equipment and facilities; survived the budget cutters, and survived the competition from low-cost airlines. And now, as we see gas prices soaring to more than $3 a gallon, we see the wisdom of keeping intercity passenger rail service in place in the United States.

This month, Congress will begin its annual debate on funding for Amtrak. The Administration and a minority in Congress will once again argue for inadequate or no funding for Amtrak. In the past 35 years combined, Amtrak has received less federal funding than we will spend on highways in just this fiscal year. The Federal Government has also established robust funding mechanisms for aviation and public transit, and Congress has always properly supported Federal investment in these modes. But not for Amtrak: Amtrak is forced to beg for federal funding year after year, and rarely gets what it needs because of false expectations that it should be profitable.

Railroads throughout the world receive some government support to supplement the revenues paid by passengers. China invests $16 to $20 billion annually in passenger rail. Japan and Germany devote 20 percent of their total annual transportation budget to passenger rail, totaling $3 to $4 billion each. A host of other nations also invest heavily in passenger rail—France, for example. When I was a graduate student at the College of Europe in Belgium, part of our work was to travel to various parts of Europe and see different economic systems. I traveled from Paris to Lyon, almost 300 miles. It was a 4½ hour trip. I went back in 1989, as chair of the Aviation Subcommittee. We were following the trail of Pam Am 103. I just wanted to experience the TGV (Train à Grande Vitesse). The same trip took 2:01 hours. At a certain point, the train passed a small airfield where a twin-engine aircraft had taken off, and the train passed the plane at 180 mph.

We can do the same here in the United States. The Federal Government just needs to step up and take charge with a strong program to support passenger rail.

Congratulations again to Amtrak and its workers for 35 years of public service. Not only are you a vital link to our nation's past, you are indispensable to our Nation's transportation future.

ENERGY LEGISLATION (H.R. 5253 AND H.R. 5254)

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Federal Energy Price Protection Act (H.R. 5253). By protecting consumers at the gas pump, this legislation takes an important step towards a more responsible federal energy policy.

H.R. 5253 bans price gouging in the sale of fuels, permits states to bring price gouging lawsuits against wholesalers or retailers and sets meaningful penalties for those convicted. After nearly a year of opposing these consumer protections, Republicans have finally realized this is a necessary and appropriate action to addressing rising gas prices. However, this is only a first step—it is what we do next that really matters.

We should not expect our energy situation to change until Congress gets serious about tackling our oil dependence. With the booming economies of China and India squeezing global oil supply, and political instability among key oil producing countries like Iran, Venezuela, Nigeria and Iraq, it is likely that world oil prices will remain volatile and could continue rising for some time to come. Unfortunately, the Republicans are proposing to meet this serious challenge with an ill-conceived policy of distraction.

The Refinery Permit Process Schedule Act (H.R. 5254) is a cynical attempt to relieve public pressure for new energy policies and divert attention away from meaningful solutions. It empowers the Secretary of Defense to evade state environmental laws and overrule the wishes of local communities by "streamlining" siting and permitting of new refineries on closed military bases. I strongly oppose this bill, which blames state environmental regulations for rising gas prices and would undermine local control in a misguided attempt to ease them. H.R. 5254 is another attempt by the Republican majority to sell Americans the false promise of easy answers.

With families burdened with gas at $3 per gallon, it is time for real leadership, vision and commitment from Washington to make the smart investments that will protect our BNation's economic security and our planet's future. A clean energy future that addresses oil dependence and environmental concerns such as climate change is achievable. It starts by rescinding the billion of dollars in subsidies for oil and gas companies and with investments in research and extending incentives for alternative energy sources such as wind, biomass and biofuels that keep energy costs down, create jobs and make us more competitive in the global economy. As Robert Samuelson stated in today's Washington Post, the United States has the energy policy it deserves but not the one it needs. It's time for real solutions.

[From the Washington Post, May 3, 2006]

HOW WE GOT TO $3 A GALLON

(By Robert J. Samuelson)

The United States has the energy policy it deserves, although not the one it needs. Having been told for years that their addiction to cheap gasoline was on a collision course with increasingly insecure supplies of foreign oil, Americans are horrified to discover that this is actually the case. But for all the public outcry and political hysteria, high gasoline prices haven't significantly hurt the economy—and may not do so. Since 2003 the economy has grown about 3.6 percent annually. It's still advancing briskly. That may be the real news.

But first, how did we get to $3 a gallon? The basic story is simple enough. Oil was cheap in the 1990s. From 1993 to 1999, crude prices averaged about $17 a barrel. Low prices discouraged exploration and encouraged consumption. China emerged as a big user. In 1995 global demand was about 70 million barrels daily; now it's almost 84 million barrels daily.

Spare production capacity slowly vanished, meaning that now any supply interruption—or rumor of interruption—sends prices up sharply. An Iraqi pipeline is attacked; prices jump. Nigerian rebels menace oil fields; prices jump.

These pressures get transmitted quickly to the pump, because there are few fixed-price contracts in the oil business. At each stage of distribution—from producers to refiners, from refiners to retailers—prices are adjusted quickly. They're often tied to prices on major commodities exchanges, where oil and other raw materials are traded.

"A gas station will get a delivery every four to eight days at a different price," says Mary Novak of Global Insight. Even between deliveries, station owners may push prices up because they know that "for my next tankload, I'll have to pay the market price."

Of course, profits have exploded. Production and refining costs haven't risen in tandem with prices. To the extent that oil companies have their own crude reserves—as opposed to buying from producing nations—they've reaped a bonanza. From 2002 to 2005, profits for most U.S. oil companies more than quadrupled, to almost $140 billion a year, the American Petroleum Institute reports. But the really big winners are the oil-producing countries. In 2005 their oil revenue exceeded $750 billion, up from $300 billion in 2002. (Crude oil and taxes represent about three-quarters of the retail price of gasoline; refining, distribution and marketing account for the rest.)

It's conventional wisdom that big increases in oil prices usually trigger a recession—or at least a sharp slowdown. Why haven't they? One oft-cited reason is that the economy has become more energy-efficient. True. Compared with 1973, Americans use 57 percent less oil and natural gas per dollar of output; compared with 1990, the decline is 24 percent. Cars and trucks have gotten more efficient, though not much more so since 1990. New industries (software programming, health clubs) use less energy than the old (steelmaking, farming). But there's a larger reason: The conventional wisdom is wrong.

Big oil price increases in the past (1973–74, 1979–80 and 1990–91) did not cause recessions, though recessions occurred at roughly the same time. The connection has been repeated so often that most people probably accept it as gospel. But much economic research has concluded that it's a myth. These recessions resulted mainly from rising inflation—inflation that preceded higher oil prices—and the Federal Reserve's efforts to suppress it. Higher oil prices merely made matters slightly worse. In 1980, for example, consumer prices rose 12.5 percent; excluding energy prices, they increased 11.7 percent.

This may explain the economy's resilience. One hopeful sign: most nonenergy companies aren't yet passing along higher energy costs to their customers. "Businesses have had wide profit margins," says Mark Zandi of