

the Great Lakes Icebreaker Replacement Act, will address future icebreaking needs by providing a fully capable, multimission icebreaker to the Great Lakes. In addition to its role as an icebreaker, the new vessel will be equipped with capabilities to support all of the Coast Guard's many missions, which will greatly enhance the service's ability to carry out search and rescue, fishery enforcement, and maritime homeland security missions throughout the year.

I hope this bill is only the beginning of Congress' efforts to enhance the Coast Guard's icebreaking capability. As many Members know, the Coast Guard's seagoing polar icebreakers are in dire need of rehabilitation or of outright replacement. I would hope that we could address this issue through the Coast Guard reauthorization bill later this year.

Historically, polar regions have been closed off to vessel traffic for a significant amount of time. However, in recent years, we have seen an increase in the amount of open time and water and a corresponding interest in the commercial use of these waters. We have extensive scientific, national security, homeland security, and economic interests in the Arctic; but we do not have the vessels necessary to project a continued maritime presence in these regions. We must come up with a solution to address this gap to protect our national interests as other Arctic nations are racing forward to explore and stake claim to resources in the polar regions.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I am very grateful to the gentleman from Texas for his strong support and for his thoughtful statement about the Great Lakes icebreaker. I want to assure the gentleman, Madam Speaker, that we'll be happy to assure that the only ice you ever have to break in the Texas ports will be at cocktail hour, because you don't want to have to deal with the ice as we see it and as we experience it in the Great Lakes where I grew up and lived most of my life.

□ 1530

But I know the needs for the Houston ship channel, which I strongly supported. It's going to need more dredging, more improvement, as the Panama Canal, the second Panama Canal, is completed in the next few years and those 1,000-foot carriers carrying 12- to 13,000 containers make their way through Panama and into the gulf ports—all the ports in Texas and Louisiana and Alabama are going to need a channel deepening and port upgrades to accommodate those vessels. And we're going to support that activity in our committee. We're going to make sure that the gulf region is competitive in this ever-changing world of international commerce.

With regard to the polar icebreakers, the Recovery Act stimulus funding has provided for refurbishing and reintro-

duction in service of one of the polar icebreakers. I would advise the gentleman, Madam Speaker, the Coast Guard is doing an evaluation of the costs and how the costs of the polar icebreaker fleet can be contained. We have received testimony in the 110th Congress and information updated this year that the cost per icebreaker might run in the range of \$1 billion. It seems to me that the Coast Guard ought to be able to contain that number and bring it down to something much more manageable.

Those original polar classes, the Polar Wind, the Polar Star—I remember very well serving with Mr. YOUNG, our former committee chairman on Transportation and Infrastructure, and we both served on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee in the seventies when those vessels were commissioned and then when they set out on their first voyage. My recollection is it was less than \$100 million, and the cost has escalated enormously; and we have to be sure that the Coast Guard—and they, too, want to be sure they can contain those costs and assure a multimission activity for those icebreakers.

Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of all Texans, I think your solution to an icebreaker in Texas would be much appreciated there. And I want to thank you, too, for your kind and insightful remarks about the needs of our ports in the gulf coast, particularly the Port of Houston and Port of Galveston and Texas City.

As you alluded to, the ports there, unfortunately, have a lot of silt coming down from the rivers above. They fill up from time to time, and we need to keep them dredged out. And you have eloquently made the point that when the Panama Canal project is completed—widened and deepened—the ships that are currently coming across the Pacific Ocean and stop at our west coast are just going to continue right on through and come to our heartland. So I look forward to working with you to make sure that the gulf ports are ready for that when it happens.

Mr. OBERSTAR. If the gentleman will yield?

Mr. OLSON. Yes, I will.

Mr. OBERSTAR. It is not only the silt from the rivers but the hurricanes that have devastated and in the last 5 years have brought enormous amounts of silt into those harbors. And we have worked with the Corps of Engineers to accelerate dredging. We had, actually, funding for an accelerated dredging program for the Corps of Engineers in the Recovery Act, and those funds have not yet been released by the Office of Management and Budget, but I am very hopeful that some of those funds, Madam Speaker, will be directed to the gulf coast ports to alleviate the adverse effects of hurricane movement of sand into the shipping channels.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. OLSON. I appreciate the gentleman's comments on that as well.

I was down at the Port of Texas City last month, and they brought a ship in early this year, as you alluded to, after the hurricane had come through. The way it rolled in, a lot of the way the storm was moving, it pushed the water, it brought the silt back towards the ocean, and they brought a ship in with 6 inches of clearance, a 5-, 600-foot boat and that much clearance. And I appreciate your commitment to work with that.

I see no one on my side of the aisle. I thank the chairman for his kind remarks.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his remarks. We look forward to moving the Water Resources Development Act bill through the committee this year and addressing in that legislation whatever accelerated dredging needs may be beyond those we already have in the recovery program to address the imminent issue facing us, and that is vastly increased vessel capacity and size that needs to move into those gulf ports. And meanwhile, maybe the Coast Guard can get started—if the other body will move this bill—get started on an icebreaker replacement.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1747.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 36 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m.

□ 1830

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BRIGHT) at 6 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on motions to suspend the rules previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

H. Res. 329, by the yeas and nays;

H.R. 1746, by the yeas and nays;

H. Res. 335, de novo.