



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 158

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 2012

No. 51

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HARPER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 28, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable GREGG HARPER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

THE TIME TO REBUILD AMERICA IS NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, as our Nation winds down from its military engagements overseas, it's time for America to do some nation-building here at home.

A \$1.2 trillion investment in rebuilding American roads, bridges, transit, and water systems would create 27 million jobs over 5 years. In the first year alone, the economy would add 5.2 million new jobs and grow by over \$400 bil-

lion. In the second year, unemployment would be reduced to 5.6 percent. These are among the findings of the New America Foundation report, "The Way Forward."

Nearly every expert agrees that America's infrastructure is broken and is in need of immediate repair and replacement. The American Society of Civil Engineers gave America a D grade for infrastructure quality. It is estimated that \$2.2 trillion is needed to bring our Nation's infrastructure to good repair. The World Economic Forum ranks the United States 23rd in infrastructure quality. Transportation for America reports that there are 69,000 structurally deficient bridges nationwide, including 2,000 in New York and 99 in western New York alone.

In fact, every second of every day, seven cars drive on a bridge that is structurally deficient. Dangerous road conditions were a significant factor in one-third of all traffic fatalities last year, and Americans spent 4.2 billion hours stuck in traffic due to congestion, costing \$78 billion, or \$710 for every American motorist.

The 1987 collapse of the Schoharie Creek Bridge in New York killing 10 people and the 2007 collapse of the Minneapolis bridge killing 13 people are tragic reminders of the human costs associated with deteriorating infrastructure.

The economic costs are staggering, too. The United States Chamber of Commerce says that the Nation will lose \$336 billion in economic growth in the next 5 years due to inadequate infrastructure. One local example: in January, the New York State Department of Transportation closed a crucial bridge in Springville, New York, due to concerns about its safety, and the weeks-long closure was devastating to local businesses.

The time to rebuild America is now. Actually, it's right now. The cost of borrowing money is at a historic low

rate. The interest rates on 5-year debt is less than 1 percent. The Treasury Department is considering negative interest rates, meaning that investors will actually pay the Federal Government to buy United States debt.

The question is not whether to undertake this work. Public infrastructure is a public responsibility. The question is when to undertake this work. The cost acceleration of delaying road and bridge repair increases by 500 percent after only 2 years. Put simply, a \$1 million road repair project today not undertaken will cost \$5 million in 2014; a \$5 million bridge repair project will cost \$25 million in 2014. What's more, a 5-year \$1.2 trillion program would create such robust economic activity that it would generate an additional \$600 billion in Federal tax revenues, that is to say that our country would be purchasing \$1.2 trillion in investment for infrastructure for nearly half off.

The United States has spent \$76 billion rebuilding the infrastructure of Afghanistan, a population of 30 million people, and \$63 billion rebuilding Iraq, a population of 27 million people. Both of these nation-building efforts were deficit financed. And as they took money out of the American economy, they actually undermined American economic growth and employment.

And for America, a population of over 300 million, the House is considering a 5-year \$260 billion transportation bill, or \$52 billion each year for the next 5 years, on average. That's less in any given year than we spent in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Rebuilding our Nation's roads and bridges will support private sector American businesses. Construction trade jobs average approximately \$70,000 a year, and these jobs can't be outsourced to China or Mexico.

HELMETS TO HARDHATS

Mr. HIGGINS. I began this morning by talking about the wars in Iraq and

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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