

Mr. Speaker, in my previous life as the public works commissioner for the city of Portland, Oregon, it was my pleasure to work with our community to implement programs to promote transit as has been encouraged for years by Federal policy.

These programs enjoyed widespread support from the business community, from private citizens, from government, and they have made a difference in promoting the quality of life in our city.

When I was elected to Congress a couple years ago, I was surprised; no, let me say I was shocked, to find out that what the Federal Government had been encouraging local communities to do, what the Federal Government had been encouraging other people in the Washington metropolitan area to do, what the United States Senate had done for the last 6 years, I was unable to do as a Member of Congress. I could give free parking to everybody who worked for me, worth over \$1,500 a year, but I could not give a partial transit subsidy for the people who choose not to drive to work.

I set about trying to find out why this was and to fix it. I have introduced legislation, House Resolution 37 that has now been cosponsored by a majority of the House, indeed 230 people already, that would make it optional for Members to at least provide this for their employees who wish to do it.

I have surveyed every one of the House agencies, there are 15 of them, to see if they support it, if they could afford it, if they want it, and I have been told unanimously that they thought it was good for the institution, that it was good for their employees, it was good for the environment.

I am pleased to note that this bill before us today, the rule of which we are debating, would finally, by an amendment from the Committee on Appropriations, would have put this in place, and I commend the committee and the Members who brought it forward so that we can short-circuit the legislative process and get on with business.

I appeared before the Committee on Rules, trying to protect this provision because I heard a rumor that somebody may object. Evidently that may occur. I think it would be unfortunate if the welfare of our employees gets caught up in some sort of jurisdictional battle.

This has been authorized by Congress for the last half dozen years, and many of the employees on the Hill, as well as 100,000 Federal employees, already benefit from it.

I would hope that we would find a way in our wisdom to not hold our employees hostage to the machinations of the House, and, as a new Member, I plead guilty of maybe not understanding them in their entirety, but when we have the second most congested area in the United States in metropolitan Washington, D.C., when we are crying about traffic congestion and parking on the Hill, when we are talking about throwing billions of dollars to try and repair Washington, D.C., I would hope that the Members of this House could somehow find it in their conscience or their creativity to make sure that we implement this little piece of Federal policy so that the Members of Congress will not be the only ones who deny it to their employees.