

DAILY NEWS CLIPS

FEDERAL NEWS CLIPS

April 20, 2012

HOUSE HIGHWAY BILL IS PRELUDE TO TALKS WITH SENATE

By Joan Lowy
Associated Press
April 20, 2012

The House on Wednesday approved a Republican bill aimed at keeping alive prospects for enacting an overhaul of federal transportation programs and continuing the flow of highway and transit aid to states.

The bill would also allow the Keystone XL pipeline to proceed. The pipeline, which would transport oil produced from Canadian tar sands to Port Arthur, Texas, was previously blocked by President Barack Obama. The White House has threatened to veto the GOP bill, which it says bypasses longstanding practices for the approval of cross-border pipelines. The veto statement noted that a final pipeline route has yet to be decided.

The bill, passed by a 293 to 127 vote, technically extends the government's authority to spend money from the federal Highway Trust Fund through Sept. 30. That authority now is due to expire on June 30. But the real intent of the measure is to provide a parliamentary rationale for formal negotiations with the Senate on a more comprehensive transportation plan. Both parties have made passage of a transportation bill their top job-creation priority for the year.

House Republican leaders decided on the strategy after repeatedly trying and failing to garner enough votes to pass their own, long-term transportation plan. That effort ran into opposition from tea-party conservatives, who say transportation programs should be paid for entirely by user fees such as federal gas and diesel taxes, even though revenue from those taxes isn't enough to cover current transportation spending. Conservatives also would like to see the federal role in transportation dramatically reduced, with states picking up those responsibilities. However, moderate Republicans from suburban districts don't want transportation spending cut and complained about the bill's treatment of transit programs.

Democrats have solidly opposed the GOP transportation plan, saying it undermines environmental protections, penalizes union workers and doesn't spend enough money to meet highway and transit construction needs. Instead, Democrats have unsuccessfully pressed House Republicans to bring up a bipartisan, \$109 billion transportation bill passed by the Senate earlier this year.

Lawmakers in both parties said the Senate bill would likely pass the House, but possibly with more Democratic than Republican votes, an awkward prospect for House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio. That gave rise to the House GOP's newest tactic — trying to trigger a formal legislative conference with the Senate without actually having passed their own long-term legislation.

But there is concern in Republican ranks that by using what is effectively a shell bill, the Senate will have the advantage in negotiations on a broad array of transportation policies.

"Are we going to support the Senate bill? Absolutely not," Rep. Bill Johnson, R-Ohio, said at a conservative gathering the day before the House vote.

The Senate is unlikely to go along with a final bill that requires approval of the Keystone XL pipeline, but Republicans said it was appropriate to tie to transportation programs a project they believe will increase the amount of oil available to the U.S. market and lower gas prices.

"If anyone has not felt the pain at the pump, all they have to do is go to a local gas station," Rep. John Mica, R-Fla., chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said. "This pipeline has been studied to death."

But Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass., called the pipeline a scheme to export oil to China that will do little or nothing to lower gas prices in the U.S. He said most of the oil that arrives in Port Arthur winds up being exported.

"That oil is American oil," Markey said. "It should stay in the United States."

Sixty-nine Democrats joined Republicans in supporting the extension, partly in the hope of keeping prospects for a long-term transportation plan alive.

"A long-term bill will provide the certainty that states need to invest and proceed with their plans long on the books," said Rep. Nick Rahall, D-W.Va., the senior Democrat on the transportation committee. "It will provide the certainty that highway and transit contractors desperately need to give them the confidence to hire that one more worker."

Originally published here: <http://www.timesunion.com/news/article/House-highway-bill-is-prelude-to-talks-with-Senate-3492203.php#ixzz1saqamwhH>

ENCOURAGING SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

Press Release from the Office of Representative Diane Black

April 19, 2012

Today, U.S. Representative Diane Black (R-TN), hailed passage of H.R. 9, a bill that would provide small businesses with less than 500 employees a 20 percent tax deduction that they could reinvest and use to grow their business and hire more workers:

[Click here to watch Black's speech on the House floor.](#)

“I have spent the last year and a half traveling throughout the 6th District, talking to small, medium and large businesses and I ask them, ‘What is it that would help you grow your business and hire again?’

“What I hear from them is there is a lot of uncertainty and they are concerned about the large burdens of increasing taxes, more regulations, and more mandates. They really fear what Washington will do to them next.

“Well what if, what if we said to small businesses, that really are the engines of economic growth, that we’re going to do something for you instead of to you?

“What if Washington encouraged growth instead of causing small businesses to live in fear that one more tax might sink them?

“Over twenty years ago, my family started a small business, and I can tell you that if conditions then were like they are today, we would not have taken the risk to put everything on the line and start our small business.

“That is why I’m supporting Leader Cantor’s twenty percent small business tax cut, that would allow small business owners to retain more capital to invest in their business, and this is the key: hire more workers.”

Originally published here: <http://black.house.gov/press-release/encouraging-small-business-growth-and-job-creation>