

he might consume to a member of our subcommittee and a cosponsor of this legislation, Representative SARBANES from the State of Maryland.

Mr. SARBANES. I want to thank the chairman of our subcommittee, Representative DAVIS, for yielding this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4106, the Telework Improvements Act of 2008.

As a daily commuter from Baltimore to the District of Columbia, I know how frustrating it can be to spend hours a day traveling. And with a focus on gas prices that we've heard repeatedly today, we need to explore pragmatic and innovative alternatives.

I've worked closely with Subcommittee Chairman DAVIS and with Chairman HENRY WAXMAN on this legislation, and I thank them for their leadership. Last year, when I offered a similar amendment to the energy bill, they helped to ensure that the amendment passed the House by voice vote, and I am pleased we will now pass this measure so that we can begin to expand telework options for the Federal workforce.

This is a win, win, win. A stronger telework policy will be good for the Federal Government, it will be good for the Federal worker, and of course it will be good for the environment. At a time when a large percentage of the Federal workforce is at or approaching retirement age, we need to recruit and retain the best and brightest of a new generation of workers. By crafting strong and effective telework policies, agencies can compete for these workers and retain them.

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and the Defense Information Systems Agency, which have some of the most robust telework policies in the Federal Government, are perfect examples of how agencies can utilize telework to recruit and retain a first-rate workforce. USPTO and DISA have retained workers, despite having a workforce that is in high demand elsewhere.

The private sector is still far ahead of the government in terms of embracing telework as a recruiting tool. We must catch up if we want to compete. In fact, the Federal Government can and should be a model employer and a driving force for increasing productivity while striking the right balance between family and work.

If you want to understand the competitive edge that comes from telework, you don't have to take my word for it, just listen to what one major CEO said. "What would I say to a CEO who resists greater employee flexibility because of concerns about loss of accountability and productivity? I would hope he was a competitor, and I would keep my mouth shut. Companies that don't believe in this are going to be trapped by it in the end." We don't want the Federal Government to be trapped either, and that's why it is important to embrace telework.

Telework is also beneficial to Federal workers by helping to improve quality of life and strike a better work/family balance. It would have the effect of giving back a couple hours a day to commuters who would otherwise be stuck in traffic, time they could spend with their families. At a time when gas prices are soaring, it could also have a profound economic benefit for families that are struggling in the current economic climate.

So again, in conclusion, I want to say that telework is a win, win, win. It's good for the Federal Government, it's good for the Federal workers, and it's great for our environment.

I am pleased the House has taken up this legislation, and look forward to working with the Senate to ensure that it becomes law.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, while this legislation will give a break from high gas prices to some Federal employees, the vast majority of Americans have to use their cars to go to work and to other activities and are paying an average of \$4 a gallon, the highest prices in history, while the Democratically controlled Congress does nothing to help those hardworking Americans who struggle to do the right thing every day, but are receiving no assistance from the Democrat majority here.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I once again want to commend the chairman of the Oversight Committee, Mr. WAXMAN from California, for his outstanding leadership and support. I also want to express appreciation to the ranking member, Mr. TOM DAVIS from Virginia, for his support and leadership.

I also want to thank all of the members of the subcommittee, especially the ranking member, Mr. MARCHANT, as well as all of the Members on both sides of the aisle. Our staffs have done a tremendous job of working through all of the snares that may have existed and have helped us shape a piece of legislation that I think is going to give enormous benefit to the American people. We are going to be able to cut down on the use of gasoline as people commute to and from work. We're going to be able to reduce pollution. And we're going to enhance the creation of a more desirable environment. So I thank all of those who have been a part of making this day possible. I urge passage of this legislation.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4106, the Telework Improvements Act of 2008.

I would like to thank Congressman DANNY DAVIS for introducing this important and necessary legislation. I also want to recognize Chairman HENRY WAXMAN and Ranking Member TOM DAVIS on the Oversight and movement Reform Committee for reporting out a good bill for our consideration today.

As many of my colleagues know, I have been a long-time and staunch supporter of telework or telecommuting. Telework offers a 21st century workplace option that can reduce

traffic congestion and air pollution, as well as cut gasoline consumption and dependency on foreign oil. Study after study has shown that telework benefits employees and employers. It gives employees the flexibility they need to meet daily demands.

Employers—both government and private businesses—get the benefit of increased productivity, improved morale, fewer sick leave days used, better worker retention, and reduced costs for office space.

My legislation enacted in 2001 mandated a phased-in program to expand the number of federal employees who telework with the goal of giving every eligible federal worker this workplace option by the end of 2005. While annual surveys by the Office of Personnel Management on telework by federal employees have shown some progress in meeting the law's mandate, there is much more that agencies can do to expand the number of federal telecommuters and this legislation is an important next step in making the Federal Government a model telework employer.

To emphasize the importance of telework in the federal workplace, when I chaired the Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations subcommittee, I included provisions in the FY 2005, FY 2006 and FY 2007 spending bills for the departments of Commerce, Justice, and State and related agencies to withhold \$5 million from the agencies which fail to meet the 2001 law.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor and strong proponent of the Telework Improvements Act that we are considering today. It will require the head of each executive agency to establish a policy under which employees may be authorized to telework and allow authorized employees to be allowed to telework at least 20 percent of the hours worked in every two administrative workweeks.

Given the soaring cost of gas, I can think of no better time for us to be passing this bill and encouraging further adoption of telework. In the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, including my district in northern Virginia, telework has the added benefit of taking cars off the road and reducing congestion and air pollution. It is also a good policy to have in place for continuity of operations in the event of an emergency.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to vote in support of this legislation so that we can ensure that the federal workforce is making full use of teleworking.

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in on H.R. 4106, the Telework Improvements Act of 2008. This issue has long been a struggle for many of us here in Congress, especially those Members representing the National Capital Region.

The problem is far too many federal agencies are missing the opportunity to promote teleworking among their employees. Ninety percent of the employees eligible to telework do not do so at this time.

With the vast majority of the federal government's workforce located here in the National Capital Region, utilizing telework will have an immediate and dramatic impact on the traffic congestion in the region. It will also increase worker productivity as our Federal workforce spends less time commuting to and from work every day. As an added benefit, keeping people off the roads will reduce our carbon emissions. Everybody benefits, not just the teleworkers.