

Oberstar Democracy Project



Friends of Jim Oberstar
222 West 1st Street
Duluth, Minnesota

Phone: 218-723-8813
www.oberstar.org

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Jim's Schedule:

Saturday, Sept. 1st

- Nimrod Labor Day Parade

Sunday, Sept 2nd

- Virginia Labor Picnic, Olcott Park

Monday, Sept. 3rd

- Cloquet Labor Day Parade
- Duluth Labor Picnic

Bridge Plan Invests in Public Safety

Just one week after an Interstate highway bridge collapsed in Minneapolis, MN, taking at least five lives and plunging dozens of vehicles and their occupants into the Mississippi River, Congressman Jim Oberstar introduced a comprehensive program to repair the nation's bridges.

Oberstar, who chairs the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, announced the plan this month in Minneapolis after visiting the site of the bridge tragedy.

"One week ago, a routine commute after a day of work, school, or shopping turned to horror, shock, and tears," Oberstar said. "Today, as the recovery effort continues, we ask ourselves if such a tragic failure can happen elsewhere. How many structurally deficient bridges are out there? How many more collapses are waiting to happen?"

Oberstar pointed out that there are 73,784 bridges in the country rated "structurally deficient" by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

House Moves on Major Energy Bill

Congressman Jim Oberstar's work on global warming is a major part of a comprehensive energy bill that cleared the House of Representatives this month.

"We are moving in the right direction," said Oberstar.

ment of Transportation. He said a major reason these bridges are not repaired, rehabilitated, or replaced can be attributed to a "tombstone mentality" in the federal government and in the states.

"We react to tragedy, when lives are lost, but we fail to take preemptive action that could prevent these tragic events," Oberstar said.

Oberstar's initiative would address the need to repair, rehabilitate, or replace the aging, failing bridges in the National Highway System. The NHS consists of the Eisenhower Interstate System, the Strategic Highway Military Network, and additional major highways across the country. The NHS covers only 4.1 percent of total road mileage in the country, but it carries 45 percent of its traffic, in terms of vehicle miles traveled. NHS bridges carry more than 70 percent of the nation's bridge traffic. The Department of Transportation lists 6,175 NHS bridges as structurally deficient; almost

half of them (2,830) are on Interstate highways.

The initiative has four main components:

1. It significantly improves bridge inspection requirements.
2. It provides dedicated funding.
3. It distributes funds based on public safety and need. It prohibits Congressional and Administration earmarks, and
4. It establishes a trust fund, modeled after the Highway Trust Fund, to provide a dedicated source of revenue for the repair, rehabilitation, and replacement of structurally deficient bridges. Revenues deposited in this trust fund will be available for no other purpose.

Oberstar said addressing this issue will be the first order of business for his Committee when Congress returns in September.

"We cannot wait for another tragedy," Oberstar said. "We must act, and act quickly

Transportation and Infrastructure.

The Democratic Energy Initiative makes significant investments in homegrown biofuels and closes tax loopholes that are benefiting big oil companies. The legislation also



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supports cutting-edge research and the development of new technologies that will bring down energy costs and help create new jobs.

Key provisions that originated in Oberstar’s committee include:

Short Sea Shipping: authorizes \$2 billion in loan guarantees to help companies construct a new class of energy-

efficient cargo vessels. These ships will operate on the Great Lakes and along the nation’s sea coasts can help ease truck traffic on the nation’s freeways.

Mass Transit: sets up a \$1.7 billion fund for metropolitan and rural transit authorities to purchase buses, build facilities, and operate routes.

Green Buildings: requires the

government to evaluate and install new energy saving technology whenever a government building is constructed or renovated.

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WRDA Makes Final Voyage Through House

A major waterways bill that will include funding for a second lock at Sault Ste. Marie has won final passage in the U.S. House of Representatives by a veto proof margin. Earlier this week, the House approved the final conference report on the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (WRDA) by a vote of 381 to 40. Congressman Jim Oberstar is a primary sponsor of the \$20 billion piece of legislation, which upgrades the infrastructure for waterborne commerce on the nation’s waterways, while protecting the clarity and quality of those waters. The Senate is also expected to approve the legislation by a wide bipartisan margin when it reconvenes after the August recess.

Passage of WRDA is long

overdue. For the past six years, the Republican-led Congress has been either unwilling or unable to enact legislation to invest in the transportation infrastructure that moves waterborne commerce in the United States. “It was almost seven years ago that a seed was planted for the next WRDA bill,” said Oberstar. “With several bills not coming to fruition, the plant has overgrown its pot. If WRDA was a library book, it would be so far overdue, there wouldn’t be the normal fine – the patron would be asked to pay for a replacement.”

For the Great Lakes, WRDA authorizes \$341 million to construct a second lock to accommodate modern ships at Sault Ste. Marie. Another \$134 million will be

authorized to make other repairs and upgrades on the St. Lawrence Seaway. Additionally, as dredging on Great Lakes harbors has not been done in earnest for the past six years, WRDA directs the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to begin those projects as soon as possible.

“Global warming and extended drought conditions have caused water levels across the Great Lakes to drop to historic lows. If we do not begin dredging now, products like taconite, coal and grain will become too expensive to ship on the Great Lakes,” said Oberstar. “Vessels carrying iron ore from the upper lakes to the lower lakes’ steel mills have gone out 7500 tons light; that means two or three extra voyages each season.”

Contact the Campaign!

Blake Chaffee

Campaign Manager

(218) 310- 4376

blake@oberstar.org

Alana Petersen

Political Director

(218) 213- 4129

alana@oberstar.org

Local DFL Unit

Chair: Don Bye

8th CD:

www.cd8dfll.org

Jim Oberstar

WORKING for you 
for minnesota

E-mail _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please contact me about—

The Oberstar Democracy Project

Volunteering

Traveling around MN to support Democrats

Placing a lawn sign in my yard

Writing a letter to the editor

Using my name and testimonial

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Please sign me up for—

The Oberstar Democracy Project

E-mail updates from Jim

Please share your story about Jim:
