

Rep.Opsommer offered the following concurrent resolution:

House Concurrent Resolution No. 28.

A concurrent resolution to memorialize Congress to allow states to opt out of levying the federal excise tax on gasoline in their state if they agree to increase their own gasoline excise tax by the same amount and constitutionally dedicate it fully to transportation needs.

Whereas, Currently, federal motor fuel and motor vehicle taxes are collected for transactions in each individual state and are then deposited into the Federal Aid Highway Program of the Highway Trust Fund, where they are later redistributed back to the states by the federal government for approved projects. Michigan is considered a "donor state" when getting back these federal transportation dollars, receiving less than its taxpayers send out relative to other states. In recent years, Michigan has received federal transportation dollars at about 92 percent of the share of the tax revenue that the state and its citizens generate for the Highway Trust Fund. This inequitable and unfair federal highway funding practice makes it more difficult for Michigan to maintain the quality of its highways even as its citizens pay more into the fund; and

Whereas, the federal government continues to overstep its constitutional boundaries by making what federal money Michigan does receive contingent upon the selection of transportation projects that Michigan might not otherwise choose to spend on because of more pressing transportation priorities in the state. Michigan must use its own money to match federal funds that go to create rest stops that we do not need, and road beautification projects that we can't afford, while basic infrastructure needs go unaddressed. Only about 60 percent of the federal fuel taxes paid by motorists go to roads, and newly proposed legislation in Washington calls for even more of these dollars to be diverted away from these basic purposes. Such mass diversions clearly show that the federal government's transportation priorities are out of step with Michigan's. We can no longer afford to chase additional federal tax dollars when we must use our citizens' tax dollars as match money for poorly prioritized projects and agendas. There were 7,000 individual earmarks enacted in the federal transportation reauthorization bill in 2005, which clearly detracts from the original intent of the highway program while helping the federal government justify the creation of ill-advised new tax schemes, such as a GPS-based Vehicle Miles Traveled tax that could continually track where motorists drive, ending the right to anonymous travel in our country; and

Whereas, unreasonable federal standards on policy issues impacting such things as the sovereignty of our driver's licenses, driving curfews for our children, and cell phone usage, are also used as fiscal coercion to accomplish the goals of Washington, DC, on issues that are best addressed by the states without federal interference. Where these issues have merit, it should be up to the states to implement the details in a manner consistent with our own unique needs; and,

Whereas, the interstate highway program was completed in the early 1980s, fulfilling the original goals of the federal highway program. The federal program should be ended and the responsibility turned back to the states so they can stop sending gas taxes to what has essentially become nothing more than an expensive federal transportation middleman. States could make decisions regarding road taxes with full knowledge that they would be able to keep and use all of the dollars that are generated. States would be free to pursue transportation objectives that are in the best interest of their citizens while still meeting certain performance standards and maintaining and enhancing segments of interstate highway in their state; and

Whereas, If the highway program was turned over to the states, motorists and truckers would get a more equitable return on the taxes they pay, the inequitable geographic allocations in the current system would be eliminated, congressional earmarking in transportation would be curtailed, and transportation priorities could be set by the legislature and state officials, who could introduce reforms without being hobbled by federal prohibitions and costly mandates that lead states to spend scarce resources in inappropriate ways; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That we memorialize Congress to allow states to opt out of levying the federal excise tax on gasoline in their state if they agree to increase their own gasoline excise tax by the same amount and constitutionally dedicate it fully to transportation needs, returning both the responsibility and accountability for operating our highways to such states and obviating the need for the creation of a GPS-based federal Vehicle Miles Tax; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.