

**Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman on H.R. 4653
September 20, 2006**

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank everyone who assisted in bringing this bill to the floor today – Chairman Don Young, Ranking Member Jim Oberstar, and Representatives Jerry Lewis and David Dreier.

H.R. 4653 is noncontroversial legislation. It repeals a law enacted in 1985 that prohibits subway tunneling in an area of Los Angeles I represent.

I authored the 1985 measure after a methane gas explosion demolished a Ross Dress for Less store. At the time, serious safety concerns were raised about the City's plans to extend the subway through this area due to underground pockets of methane gas.

In recent years, experts have indicated that technologies have been developed that could make tunneling in this area safe. In 2004, the Los Angeles City Council passed a motion urging a reversal of the 1985 law. And, in February 2005, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority's board voted to renew discussions of the subway's expansion in this area.

As a result, I worked with Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa to select a panel of scientific experts to conduct an independent safety review. These experts made a unanimous determination in a November 2005 report that tunneling in the methane gas area can be done safely if proper procedures and appropriate technologies are used.

H.R. 4653 simply lifts the federal tunneling prohibition that has been in place since 1985.

The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee reported this bill unanimously on July 19, and I urge my colleagues to support it.