

tees for short-line and regional railroads to rehabilitate their tracks to carry the 286,000-pound railcar that is becoming the industry standard. This \$7.5 billion would create 356,000 jobs and 46.5 billion in economic activity, the bill states.

The bill also authorizes \$2.5 billion to port security; \$11.5 billion for Environmental Infrastructure, including essential investment in both drinking water systems and wastewater treatment; \$1.5 billion for investment in water transport infrastructure, including locks, dams, hydropower facilities, and ports; \$1.5 billion in Economic Development, targeted to communities with more than 150% of the national average of unemployment, poverty, and outmigration rates; and \$500 million for investment in aging Federal public buildings.

Existing Legislation Is Approved

As well, bipartisan Amtrak funding legislation (H.R. 2572) cleared the Senate, and passed the House Transporta-

tion Committee by voice vote on June 25. It would give Amtrak the \$2 billion annually which it requested over the next three years.

On June 25, the House Transportation Committee also approved the "Railroad Infrastructure Development and Expansion Act for the 21st Century" (RIDE 21), which would provide \$60 billion for high-speed rail and rail infrastructure projects. It would expand the existing Railroad Rehabilitation and Infrastructure Financing (RRIF) loan and loan guarantee program tenfold—from \$3.5 billion to \$35 billion of outstanding loan principal at any time. Both magnetic-levitation and steel-wheel systems are eligible. There are still more bills pending, if temporarily blocked, along these lines, such as Sen. Ernest Hollings' National Rail Defense Act (S.104), which would fund high-speed rail corridors and Amtrak.

Evidently, the reality of the collapse is dawning on some in the U.S. Congress. If the Congress wants a high-speed solution, it should listen to LaRouche.

Nevada Out of Chips

Nevada State Senator Joe Neal (D-North Las Vegas), a candidate for Governor in 2002 and a member of the Nevada legislature for 32 years, was interviewed on July 2 in Washington by Marcia Merry Baker.

EIR: June 30, the end of the fiscal year for most states, has come. What do you see in Nevada?

Neal: We now have a stalemate in Nevada: After our regular session and two general sessions, we were not able to pass any revenue measures to support our budget. Due to the two-thirds requirement, we fell one vote short in the Assembly. . . . I understand, that on July 1, the Governor has filed a lawsuit in our courts to force the legislature to act . . . I don't know what's going to happen.

EIR: You have been providing leadership in Nevada on the need for utilities and services such as railroads . . . and you have fought to tax the world famous Las Vegas gaming industry. What about these factors in terms of the current stalemate?

Neal: Well, I brought these issues, of increased taxation on gaming, before the legislature, but the measure that I proposed did not pass. Even though there were minor increases on gaming, raising their top gaming rate of 6.25% to 6.75% . . . it's just a pittance, as far as I'm concerned.

I had made the statement, when I had thought that we were going to have a stalemate, that if we should happen to be sued—and we are now being sued—I advised the court that since I thought that they would have to increase taxes that are already on the books, since the courts cannot make legislation, that the most popular tax would be the gaming tax

to be raised. So, hopefully, they would follow suit on that.

EIR: Last Fall, when Mr. LaRouche was down in Coahuila, Mexico, he was talking about the "Great American Desert Development" project. Have you had a chance to look at that idea—new, high-tech projects of water provision, power, transportation, and so on?

Neal: We've looked at it in terms of transportation needs. Many of our small communities are dying for the lack of transportation, because of deregulation and all of that. So I propose that we create a levitated train system that would run throughout the state, and make a circle, and hit all of our major cities, and then come back, emanating from Las Vegas and wind back up into Las Vegas.

EIR: Under the conditions of these state emergencies, do you think there may be a new chance for putting these things on the agenda again, in the way that Mr. LaRouche is saying?

Neal: Oh, yes. Yes, I think that there is a great chance of having these things put on the agenda again.

EIR: Without this kind of pathway out of the disaster, what does the Nevada situation look like?

Neal: Well, we are not so fortunate as some of the states; in California, you know, they have to pay minimum wages. When we are not able to provide a budget, everything stops. Nobody gets paid. . . . That's the problem that we are confronted with right now. Nobody gets any money. Schools suffer as a result of that, because you cannot hire any teachers, because you cannot enter into any contracts, because you do not know whether or not the money's going to be there. We don't have a continuing resolution like Congress does. . . . This is the first time in the history of the state of Nevada, that we've had a situation where we were not able to generate any taxes or balance the budget to meet the needs of the people.