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REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT

A Republican who champions transportation for all its benefits

Robert W. Patterson

is the founder and president of the Arsenal of Democracy Project in Washington

When the U.S. House passed the Water Resources and Redevelopment Act in October — upgrading the nation's ports and waterways — the near-unanimous vote of 417-3 demonstrated the effectiveness of a Pennsylvanian who is quietly emerging as a go-to conservative leader showing the way to renewing America's economic strength and creating jobs.

Indeed, Rep. Bill Shuster, the chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, may be the only Republican with the skills to shepherd a critical infrastructure agenda through a bitterly divided Congress. He has already secured pledges to pass next year's reauthorization of legislation addressing passenger-rail and highway needs — another critical step in rebuilding America's physical foundation and its neglected manufacturing sector.

That's good news for the Keystone State and Shuster's south-central Pennsylvania district, which have been hit hard by federal pro-globalization and outsourcing policies that have hollowed out the country's industrial heartland while ballooning the U.S. trade deficit.

The seven-term congressman embodies a nearly forgotten but authentic conservatism rooted in American history. The Constitution, for example, invests authority in Congress to provide for "post roads," the 18th-century equivalent of interstate transportation infrastructure.

Moreover, the 19th-century statesman Henry Clay included "internal improvements" as part of



U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster, chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

KEITH SRAKOCIC / Associated Press

his "American System," which knit the country together and turned it into an industrial powerhouse after the War of 1812. Likewise, Abraham Lincoln saw the necessity of building the transcontinental railroad to grow the Union into a middle-class republic from east to west and points in between.

Now, with discretionary spending as bloated as ever — from social-welfare and Medicaid expenditures, billions of dollars squandered on foreign aid and environmental boondoggles, and more — Shuster will defend A-plus infrastructure as a constitutionally mandated, federal imperative.

Infrastructure may not grab headlines, but delivering family-supporting jobs for the 73 percent of Pennsylvanians without college degrees starts with rebuilding our deteriorating highways, bridges, public transit, and aviation system to lubricate the wheels of commerce, industry, and agriculture.

Toward that end, Shuster helped facilitate the upgrade of U.S. Route 219 in Somerset Coun-

ty and improvements to aid the redevelopment of Bedford Springs and the Interstate 81 corridor, as well as the Flight 93 memorial in Shanksville.

Despite his efforts, Shuster faces a primary fight fomented by tea-party Republicans and libertarians working from outside Pennsylvania, who confuse conservative nation-building with big-government liberalism. The Madison Project, a political-action committee in Washington, has targeted Shuster as a "red-district statist" and endorsed challenger Art Halvorson. The group should read Article 1, Section 8, of the Constitution, which its namesake wrote, to be reminded that Shuster's work is exactly what Madison had in mind.

The claim that Shuster isn't "conservative" enough is preposterous. He boasts a 91 percent lifetime rating on the American Conservative Union's gold-standard scorecard. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the American Farm Bureau Federation have praised his pro-growth policies. An opponent of Obamacare, he is a social conservative and gun-rights supporter who understands that mass immigration means mass unemployment for his constituents.

Pennsylvania would be ill-served without Shuster. The congressman exemplifies the wisdom of previous GOP presidents — from Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt to Dwight Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan — who championed transportation as part of a comprehensive economic-growth strategy. Shuster is a "one-nation conservative" whose pro-business and pro-worker agenda offers hope for Americans left behind in today's jobless "recovery."

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