

November 1, 2001

Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Securing America For Effective Transportation, or Safety, Act. This legislation is in stark contrast to the bureaucracy laden approaches of other bills. My bill would not create new federal spending nor new federal bureaucracies. The actions taken by this legislation fit into a few broad categories. First, it would give airline pilots the right to defend themselves, their aircraft, and their passengers by permitting them to bear arms. Second, it would clearly define the act of skyjacking as an act of piracy and provide appropriate punishment for any such act, up to and including capital punishment. Next, this legislation would provide appropriate strengthening of regulation of airline security in a fashion consistent with our constitutional framework. This would be done by requiring, for example, that law enforcement personnel be posted at screening locations rather than simply in the confines of an airport, and by requiring the production of passenger manifests for international flights. Finally, this bill would give airlines a strong incentive to improve passenger security, not by giving them taxpayer funded grants nor by creating new bureaucracies tasked with making administrative law, but rather by providing a tax incentive to airlines and other companies performing screening and security duties.

One example of my approach is how it treats employees. Rather than the Senate approach federalizing the work force or the House approach of subsidizing private security firms via federal contracts, my bill raises the take-home pay of airline security personnel by exempting their pay from federal income taxes.

Mr. Speaker, the House bill, while a slight improvement over the Senate version, is still a step in the wrong direction. By authorizing a new airline ticket tax, by creating new federal mandates and bureaucracies, and by subsidizing the airline industry to the tune of another \$3 billion dollars, this bill creates a costly expense that the American people cannot afford. We appropriated \$40 billion dollars in the wake of September 11, and I supported that measure as legitimate compensation for individuals and companies harmed by the failure of the federal government to provide national defense. Soon thereafter we made another \$15 billion available to the airlines, and now we have a House bill that further victimizes the taxpayers by making them pay for another \$3 billion dollars worth of subsidies to the airline industry.

We need to stop this spending spree. President Bush correctly has indicated that the best way to deal with economic stimulus is not to spend more federal dollars but rather to engage in tax cuts. Yet, by creating this new airline ticket tax, we are going in the opposite direction. I oppose this new tax and it is not included in my bill. Instead, the approach taken in my bill uses tax reductions to ensure airline safety and promote further economic growth. By granting tax incentives for safety initiatives, we gain the advantages of new security precautions without creating onerous new regulations or costly and burdensome new bureaucracies. I proudly offer this bill for consideration.