Selected by Newsweek magazine among and Campbell High School, which were passive schools in my district, Columbus today in praise of three very impressive schools in my district, Columbus

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in praise of three very impressive schools in my district. Columbus High School, LaGrange High School, and Campbell High School, which were selected by Newsweek magazine among the top high schools in America. To have three Eleventh District schools included on this prestigious list speaks to the dedication and accomplishments of our district's educators, students, and community members.

As the former chairman of the Marietta City School Board, I know they do great work that goes on in our school districts. I am glad the rest of the Nation finally knows about it as well.

LaGrange High School has a long tradition of students with the kind of education that truly helps our children succeed in life.

Columbus High School traces its history back to the 1890s, so it is no wonder the school is a perennial education all-star; practice makes perfect.

Campbell High School has upheld the standard of excellence in Cobb County for years, its teachers, staff, and students showing a relentless ambition for achievement, and, just last week, hosted our Vice President for a discussion on Social Security.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating these schools.

AMERICAN PEOPLE SUPPORT FILIBUSTER

Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I just want to stress that the protection of the filibuster is something that the American people support. My colleagues just a few minutes ago talk about the New Jersey filibuster which is down here at the Mall with a group of people who are trying to make the point that we must protect the filibuster. We should not repeal it as the Republicans want to do, because it does protect minority rights. It protects individual freedoms in terms of making sure that justices and judges that are appointed are those that have a consensus.

I want to say that, in my State, it is not just the people involved in the New Jersey filibuster; a lot of other people have expressed their concern on this issue. Just a week or two ago, I was at Princeton University outside the Prist Student Center, and the students there at Princeton University were conducting a 24-hour filibuster which went on for almost 2 weeks, I think it may still be going on, because they felt so strongly about this issue. They feel strongly about it because it has been around for so long. It is over 200 years now that the Senate rules have provided for a filibuster, and that is what our Founding Fathers wanted, because they did not want an abuse of power. They did not want the majority to be the absolute rule.

CONGRATULATING ELEVENTH DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS

Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in praise of three very impressive schools in my district, LaGrange High School, and Campbell High School, which were selected by Newsweek magazine among the top high schools in America.
The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATHAM). The gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this rule and the underlying legislation, H.R. 1544, the Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act of 2005. This bill sponsored by my good friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. COX), has the support of 40 bipartisan co-sponsors and was accepted at both its subcommittee and full committee markups with unanimous consent of the majority and minority members of the Select Committee on Homeland Security.

The goal of this bipartisan legislation is simple: to reform the way the Department of Homeland Security issues terrorism preparedness grants to States and local governments so that funds can be spent in a timely manner, used effectively and efficiently.

The current way that the federal government allocates funds is simply: to reform the way the Department of Homeland Security issues terrorism preparedness grants to States and local governments so that funds can be spent in a timely manner, used effectively and efficiently. It also expedites the delivery of Federal assistance to first responders, those brave men and women who are our first line of defense against terrorism, where it is needed most while also endorsing undisciplined spending on the homeland security front.

This legislation also reflects an agreement among policymakers here in Congress to reform the way we allocate Federal terrorism preparedness grants on the basis of risk; on the importance of ensuring that such grants are spent in a timely manner; and on the necessity of ensuring collaboration between neighboring jurisdictions.

As Members of Congress, we have seen too clearly the problems associated with coordinating the effective and efficient allocation of these new funds to fight and defend against acts of terrorism on our shores. Since 2001, the Federal Government has made roughly $30 billion available in grant funding for this purpose, but approximately $4.1 billion awarded by the Department of Homeland Security still remains in the pipeline, unspent, along with another $2.4 billion recently added from 2005.

This bottleneck in getting our first responders the funds they need to protect our safety is unacceptable, and this legislation will get these terrorism preparedness funds into the hands of those who need it most, by ensuring that guarantee that no State or territory falls below a certain base level of funding while also ensuring that States prioritize their own anti-terrorism spending on the basis of risk and need.

By providing financial encouragement to States that pass through their awarded funds to localities within tight timeframes, this legislation makes our funding for such programs faster. And by allocating grant awards to States and regions based on an assessment of risk and need to achieve clear and measurable preparedness goals, this legislation also makes our funding for such programs smarter.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1544 fulfills the recommendations included in the 9/11 Commission report, and recognizes the fundamental reality that terrorists are not arbitrary in selecting their targets, so we cannot be arbitrary in our efforts to protect our Nation. By streamlining the grant process and giving States and regions the tools that they need to develop specific flexible and measurable goals, this bill will make sure that every Federal dollar allocated for the purpose of defending our security is used effectively and efficiently.

I encourage all my colleagues to support this rule and the underlying legislation which brings a risk-based approach to addressing our country’s most pressing homeland security needs.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today we will debate bipartisan legislation from the Select Committee on Homeland Security to improve funding for first responders.

Mr. Speaker, today we will debate bipartisan legislation from the Select Committee on Homeland Security to improve funding for first responders. It makes our funding for such programs faster. And by allocating grant awards to States and regions based on an assessment of risk and need to achieve clear and measurable preparedness goals, this legislation also makes our funding for such programs smarter.

This bill would alter the funding allocation to States based on threat and risk. However, each State would be guaranteed a minimum if its dollar amount fell below a specified level. Even the 9/11 Commission recommends that Federal dollars supplement State and local efforts that fall in higher-risk areas. This is a commonsense proposal.

I am pleased that this reform will greatly benefit California and my hometown of Sacramento. Further, this bill continues Federal support for the Urban Area Security Initiative, which Sacramento has received funding through, in addition to other Federal grant programs.

H.R. 1544 also recognizes the increased risk to our region posed by our flood control systems by specifically including dams in its list of critical infrastructure. Its inclusion will allow consideration of flood control levees and dams as a factor in determining the risk a community faces.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the ranking member, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS), for highlighting this issue of great concern to Sacramento. Our communities are faced with a continuing risk of flooding. Sacramento’s flood risk is among the highest of...
major urban areas in the country. Located at the confluence of the Sacramento and American rivers, the Sacramento floodplain is the hub of a 6-county regional economy that provides 800,000 jobs for 1.5 million people. A major flood along the American River would likely produce damages between $7 billion and $16 billion in direct property damages, and likely result in significant loss of life.

While we typically view the levee system as our first line of defense against America's raging storms, we must also face the reality that this critical infrastructure must be protected from terrorist attack. A major levee failure or a terrorist attack at the dam upstream would be absolutely devastating to the region.

The addition of this provision by the Select Committee on Homeland Security shows why amendments and increased discussion of this bill are so important. And I am glad to see that the Committee on Rules did not make in order a few of the amendments that were brought before our committee. But I must express my disappointment that this bill will not be debated today under a more open process. I believe that there are a number of other amendments that, while we may disagree on the position, they are worth continued debate on the House floor.

For example, while the Select Committee on Homeland Security explored the issue of whether all first responder grants should be awarded strictly on the basis of risk, doing away altogether with the Committee on Rules did make in order a majority of first responder grants which will finally direct Federal assistance to protect communities near levee failure or a terrorist attack at the dam upstream.

Even the gentleman from California (Mr. COX) acknowledged that while he personally would like to see all first responder funding based on actual risk, the issue of ensuring each State receives a minimum amount of funding based on population and the importance of this in his home State of California, believe is ineffective.

For example, a 2004 committee report found that nearly 85 percent of the components or initiatives have not been utilized. And because current law requires a minimal level of funding given to States, many States receive a lump sum of money from DHS without a clear understanding of how to spend it.

Mr. COX acknowledged that while he personally would like to see all first responder funding allocated by risk, the issue of ensuring each State receives a minimum amount of funding based on population and the importance of this in his home State of California, believe is ineffective.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the underlying amendment, which will finally direct Federal assistance to protect communities near levee failure or a terrorist attack at the dam upstream.

Even the gentleman from California (Mr. COX) acknowledged that while he personally would like to see all first responder funding based on actual risk, the issue of ensuring each State receives a minimum amount of funding based on population and the importance of this in his home State of California, believe is ineffective.

For example, a 2004 committee report found that nearly 85 percent of the components or initiatives have not been utilized. And because current law requires a minimal level of funding given to States, many States receive a lump sum of money from DHS without a clear understanding of how to spend it.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS). Mr. Speaker, one of the advantages of having a great bipartisan bill means that we have good leadership in the Select Committee on Homeland Security, and today I am very pleased for one of our bright new young Members to be with us. He is the chairman for the Subcommittee on Management, Integration, and Oversight.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1544. This rule would provide for the consideration of H.R. 1544, the Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act of 2005.

In the years since 9/11, our Nation has spent billions of dollars to strengthen our firefighters, police, and emergency personnel. These hard-working Americans known as our first responders are the frontlines of our Nation's homeland defense. They keep our communities safe, and they respond when disaster strikes.

The bill we will be debating today is a good piece of legislation and is designed with our first responders in mind. It does several things. First, it reforms the grant funding system that most States, including my home State of Alabama, believe is ineffective.

For example, a 2004 committee report found that nearly 85 percent of the components or initiatives have not been utilized. And because current law requires a minimal level of funding given to States, many States receive a lump sum of money from DHS without a clear understanding of how to spend it.

Mr. Speaker, I yeald today in strong support of this important legislation which will finally direct Federal assistance to those first responders serving where the need is greatest. We know the enemy seeks to attack again. We just do not know when and where it will occur.

New Jersey faces unique terrorism threats that require a greater portion of homeland security aid due to its proximity to New York City and to its vast number of potential targets of terror, such as the largest seaport on the east coast, one of the busiest airports in the country, an area known as the “chemical coastway,” our four nuclear power plants, and the six tunnels and bridges that connect New Jersey to New York City.

If that were not enough, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has placed more than a dozen New Jersey sites on...
the National Critical Infrastructure List and has called the area in my dis- trict between Port Newark and Newark International Airport the most dan- gerous 2 miles in the United States when it comes to terrorism. A recent article in the New York Times pointed out that the 2-5000 area provides a

"convenient way to cripple the econ- omy by disrupting major portions of the country's rail lines, oil storage tanks and refineries, pipelines, air traf- fic, communications networks and highways on the coast of New Jersey.

Yet the State's homeland security funding was cut in this fiscal year by 34 percent. In my district, two high-risk urban areas saw their funding reduced by 17 and 60 percent respectively. Mr. Speaker, the current system of allo- cating homeland security funds is bro- ken and needs to be fixed immediately.

The 9/11 Commission report said that, "Homeland security assistance should be based strictly on an assessment of risks and priorities. That is ex- actly what the Menendez substitute to the intelligence reform bill would have accomplished last October. That is ex- actly what I fought for in the confer- ence report on that legislation and what I sought to accomplish earlier this year when I introduced the Risk- Based Homeland Security Funding Act with Senators CORZINE and LAUTEN- BERG.

We must take every step to secure our communities from the threat of terrorism, and this bill will ensure that the first responders on the front lines of this war in both New Jersey and throughout the country will receive a much-needed increase in Federal homeland security funding.

The House of Representatives must pass this important piece of legislation today, and the Senate should act as quickly as possible to get it to the President's desk.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill. It will turn the 9/11 Commis- sion's recommendation into law, while protecting those areas and targets that are at the greatest risk of a future at- tack.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3

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Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good and fair rule that provides ample time to dis- cuss this very, very important issue. I urge my colleagues to support the rule and to support the Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to applaud the gentleman from California's (Chairman COX) commitment to first responders and for developing a bill that better prepares our Nation for terror-
The 9/11 Commission recommendations rightly stated: “Homeland security assistance should be based strictly on an assessment of risks and vulnerabilities. Federal homeland security assistance should not remain a program for general revenue sharing. It should support State and local jurisdictions in their bill just passed out of full committee have echoed this important recommendation.

Since September 11, 2001, U.S. intelligence reports that our New York-New Jersey region is still among the most attractive targets for terrorists. For all of our critical infrastructure of the trans-Hudson tunnels, airports, seaports, oil refineries, chemical manufacturing, population density, financial centers in both lower Manhattan and in Jersey City, our basic close relationship with New York City, anti-terrorist experts continue to acknowledge that the risk of terrorism remains.

Yet, despite the best efforts of the President, homeland security officials and Members of Congress, these security funds continue to be distributed to States based on population, rather than risk and vulnerability. That is why this bill needs to be passed in its present form.

Fortunately, the legislation addresses our concerns and follows the Commission’s recommendations. We are sending more Federal homeland security to States like New Jersey and other high-threat areas where risk is greatest and critical infrastructure must be better protected against terrorism.

H.R. 1544 establishes a more rational approach to distributing homeland security funding by sending more resources to where they are needed. As we learned on September 11, terrorists do not arbitrarily select their targets. Therefore, homeland security funding cannot be arbitrarily distributed.

This legislation would ensure that homeland security grants are awarded according to an assessment of risk and vulnerability, not just population.

For these and many other reasons, Mr. Speaker, this bill and this rule needs to be supported.

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS), a young man who was on the frontline, a captain, a pilot in the United States Air Force, who served during the Persian Gulf War and who is a Member of Congress, serving since the 104th Congress. And while this country has great respect for the men and women who are on the frontlines defending our country in the United States military today, we also remember back then men and women of the military during the Persian Gulf War who were standing ready not only to protect this country, but also to liberate others and to provide freedom.

GIBBONS. Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS), my friend and colleague, for that generous introduction; and I rise today, Mr. Speaker, in support of both the rule and the overall bill, H.R. 1544, the Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act of 2005. As a member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, I am

nates on both sides of the aisle of this great Chamber. The Members of this body recognize that the challenges we face are unique in our history. No previous generation has had to combat the threat to the homeland that we face right now.

Today’s terrorists are determined to wage war against us not on some overseas battlefield, but in our cities, ports, and transportation hubs. This is why this bill is so important. It makes sure that we can take into account, vulnerabilities, and consequences of attack as we decide how to best spend our anti-terrorism dollars.

This bill is also necessary because it confronts the issue of threats to the homeland head on. It directs appropriate State authorities to come up with a comprehensive homeland security plan tied to the achievement, maintenance, and enhancement of the essential capabilities established by the Department of Homeland Security. In developing those essential capabilities, the Department is required to seek the input of those on the frontlines: local police; fire departments and EMS units; medical service units. This provision is vital because combating terrorism is a nationwide problem that calls for cooperation between officials at the local, State, and Federal levels.

Finally, the bill requires the Department to set national standards for first responder equipment and training so that all frontline units responding to a terrorist attack will be able to operate effectively.

The Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act of 2005 is an important tool for safeguarding the homeland. It is a positive step towards development of an effective homeland security policy, and I support it wholeheartedly.

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), the ranking member, the gentleman from New York (Mr. COX), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON), and to the Members on both sides of the aisle who have worked in a bipartisan manner to make our Nation safer.

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. DENT), one of our bright new young Members.

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the rule and H.R. 1544, the Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act of 2005. Mr. Speaker, it is said that in this country politics end at the water’s edge. This is certainly the case with this legislation. The Select Committee on Homeland Security, on which I serve, passed this bill unanimously. This occurred because the idea behind the legislation is a bipartisan one: combat the threat of terrorism at home by directing funds to those localities that are most at risk for terrorist attack.

The idea that funding should be based on risk and security rather than on political concerns is one that resonates on both sides of the aisle of this great Chamber. The Members of this body recognize that the challenges we face are unique in our history. No previous generation has had to combat the threat to the homeland that we face right now.

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Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the very distinguished gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS), a young man who was on the frontline, a captain, a pilot in the United States Air Force, who served during the Persian Gulf War and who is a Member of Congress, serving since the 104th Congress. And while this country has great respect for the men and women who are on the frontlines defending our country in the United States military today, we also remember back then men and women of the military during the Persian Gulf War who were standing ready not only to protect this country, but also to liberate others and to provide freedom.

GIBBONS. Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS), my friend and colleague, for that generous introduction; and I rise today, Mr. Speaker, in support of both the rule and the overall bill, H.R. 1544, the Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act of 2005.

As a member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, I am
proud to be an original cosponsor of this bipartisan bill; and I congratulate the chairman, the gentleman from California (Mr. Cox), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. Thompson), for their diligent work.

This bipartisan bill will help expedite the homeland security grant process and ensure that money gets to those who need it the most, our first responders. Importantly for my State, the State of Nevada, this bill will allow the Department of Homeland Security to take into account both resident and tourist populations when determining a State’s funding for terrorism preparedness.

My fellow Nevadans know that tourism is a significant part of our State’s industry and our population. On any given day of the year, Nevada hosts hundreds of thousands of tourists from across the country and around the world. Las Vegas Boulevard, Mr. Speaker, is not just a hotel district than any other city in the world. According to Nevada’s Commission on Tourism, Nevada welcomed over 50 million tourists alone just last year.

Prior to this bill, the terrorism preparedness grants did not take tourism into consideration in determining a State’s population. Yet Nevada’s first responders were and remain responsible for protecting everyone, residents and visitors, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The answer to that is, and the answer to that is, no, it is not. And the question is also whether it is being spent properly, in a way that makes us more prepared. And, unfortunately, the answer to that question is, not always.

There are opportunities for major improvement, and that is why this bill is important. It is called the Flooded and Smarter Funding for First Responder Act because it solves both those problems. It will get the money to the frontlines faster, and it will make sure that we are spending the money based on what we know from our intelligence about terrorist threats and capabilities, our own vulnerabilities, and the consequences of terrorist attacks.

I strongly support this rule and look forward to passage of the bill later today.

Ms. Matsui. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. Nadler).

Mr. Nadler. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, on September 11, 4 years ago, fanatic Islamic terrorists attacked our country, hijacked our planes, rammed the Pentagon, and destroyed the World Trade Center that is now located in my district. This is deadly serious business, and we do not have a dime to waste. This bill, while certainly an improvement over current law, still includes State-based formula funding.

I am very proud of the chairman from California (Mr. Diaz-Balart), chairman of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, and Porter Goss of Florida, who is now the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, all were Members of the Select Committee on Homeland Security in the last Congress and also Members of the Committee on Rules that worked to change the jurisdiction of the House of Representatives to make sure we would have a focus on this critical national priority that both President Bush and the leaders of this Congress have recognized as so important that we have reorganized the entire executive branch and now the legislative branch of government. That is the process by which this rule and the bill that it outlines are coming to the floor.

Since September 11, over $30 billion in terrorism preparedness funding has gone from the Federal Government to State and local governments. In this year’s budget, President Bush has added to the annual amount an incremental $2 billion more. That will mean that we have had an increase in annual spending on terrorism preparedness for States and localities since 9/11 of over 2,000 percent. The question is whether we are putting enough money to our first responders. The question is whether the money is making it to the frontlines. And the answer to that is,
The bipartisan 9/11 Commission recommended that anti-terrorism funding should be distributed based on risk and not based on state formulas or pork-barrel spending. We should follow their excellent advice. The state minimum provision in this bill is in direct violation of the 9/11 Commission's recommendations. In its report, it said that, homeland security assistance should be based strictly on an assessment of risks and vulnerabilities. "The commission went on to say that "Federal homeland security assistance should not remain a pork-barrel approach. This bill, in its present form is strongly endorsed by the 9/11 Commission and it implements their recommendation.

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN).

(Mr. LANGEVIN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANGEVIN. I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Faster Response Fund Act of 2005, and I am especially grateful for the bipartisan nature of this bill, which reflects the desire of both leaders in both political parties to take this challenge seriously.

In 1787, John Jay wrote, "Among the many objects to which a wise and free people find it necessary to direct their attention, that of providing for their safety seems to be the first." More than 215 years later, we all agree on the importance of protecting the people. However, this House today finds itself raising the question of just how best should the government protect the people.

In 2001, Congress enacted many sweeping changes to our Nation's anti-terrorism laws, including the antiterrorism laws, including the het and other provisions which have been used to craft homeland security grants through the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act. Under the PATRIOT Act, each state is guaranteed to receive three-quarters of a percent and each territory .25 percent of each year's .25 percent of that amount to be appropriated each year for terrorism preparedness grants. The balance of the funds is then distributed to each state and territory based on population.

In hindsight, we can see that this system of allocation is flawed. For example, in fiscal year 2005, the minimum allocation for each state is $11.25 million. Using that total, based on current census numbers, the State of Wyoming would receive a minimum guarantee of $22.23 per person in Wyoming. The State of California would receive a minimum guarantee of just 31 cents per person. In other words, the Federal Government would allocate approximately 7,100 percent more funding per capita at a minimum to the state of Wyoming than it would to the State of California for homeland security grants.

That is why I am a cosponsor of H.R. 1544 and voted to support the bill in committee. It is the responsibility of this government not only to ensure that we are protecting the people but also to ensure that we do so in an efficient and measured fashion.

Let us be clear about one point. H.R. 1544 does not eliminate minimum guarantees for the States. Under this legislation, each state, regardless of population, would receive a minimum of 25 percent of the total amount appropriated each year for terrorism preparedness grants.

H.R. 1544, however, does require the government to move away from its arbitrary approach to anti-terrorism funding toward a more rational approach. Rather than continuing to simply allow homeland security grants programs to become Federal cash cows for states and localities, this legislation focuses our efforts on what is truly important, namely, our Nation's vulnerabilities.

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I look forward to hearing the debate on this legislation to improve first responder funding. We all want to ensure our communities are well equipped and prepared to face any threat. I believe that the underlying bill will help accomplish exactly that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

And so as we go forward with the bill, I just want the Members to know that this bill in its present form is strongly
I want to thank the gentlewoman from California for her work on this bill today. I would also like to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. COX) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) for their hard work and determination in bringing this bill forward. They worked well together. This is a bipartisan bill.

The Rules Committee met just several days ago and heard how the ranking member and Chairman COX put a great work package together. The Rules Committee decided to help out a little bit. We have made in order with this rule three Democrat amendments and two Republican amendments that will be part of this wonderful bill that will be debated in just a few minutes here in this House. I am very proud of the work that we have accomplished together. I am very proud of the legislation.

Mr. Speaker. I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered. The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE
Mr. COX. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1544.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Sessions). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

FASTER AND SMARTER FUNDING FOR FIRST RESPONDERS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 269 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1544.

At 11, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COX), the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COX).

Mr. COX. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1544, the Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act. It is on the floor today with the ranking member of the Committee on Homeland Security, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON). He and I are here to argue today on behalf of a bill that is strongly endorsed by every single Republican and Democratic member of the Committee on Homeland Security. More than that, this legislation is supported by the Bush administration. We have received a formal statement of administration support for this bill. It is endorsed by scores of first responder groups, the men and women on the front lines from whom it is intended. They worked with us over a period of over 2 years, first to identify the problems in the current grant-making system for billions of homeland security and terrorism preparedness dollars and, second, to develop a solution.

The solution that today’s bill presents is a simple one. We are going to move away from political formulas for allocating these billions of dollars and toward a system that relies on the intelligence that the American taxpayer already purchased at the price of billions of dollars every year, information about terrorist capabilities and intentions, information about our own critical infrastructure and vulnerabilities and information about the potential consequences of different kinds of terrorist attacks. In combination, this mix of threat, vulnerability and consequence is called risk. Funding for first responders in the future is going to be based upon risk. That is what this bill is all about.

And we solve the second problem. Of the over $30 billion in terrorism preparedness moneys that the Federal Government has made available to States and localities since September 11, some 60 percent of it is not yet spent. It is stuck in the administrative pipeline.

There are a number of reasons for this that our committee has discovered through field hearings across the country, hearings here in Washington, and our own investigation. But at bottom it is this: right now there is an ad hoc patchwork of priorities at the money, which are passed around the country. There is no predictability about when the funds might arrive, whether reimbursement will be there. And the planning, as a result, tends to take place after the money is received, slowing things down.

In our new system, the planning will be moved at the front end of the process. Every State which already has a statewide terrorism preparedness plan will ensure that when these applications for grants are made, they are directly tied to that statewide plan and also directly tied to the achievement of national objectives for first responder preparedness.

We will have clear standards for the first responders so that they will not have these kinds of questions about reimbursement that have plagued them in the past. We will know that we are buying in the form of equipment and training will be directly tied to national terrorism preparedness goals.

In recent days, there has been a fair amount of press coverage about abuses of homeland security spending. For example, right here in Washington, D.C., we learned that $100,000 of this grant money meant for first responder terrorism preparedness was instead spent on a Dale Carnegie course for sanitation today. Mr. Chairman, is that this was spent to develop a rap song purportedly to educate young people about how to be prepared in the case of a terrorist attack.

These kinds of abuses will come to an end as a result of this legislation, and our money will be directed toward keeping our first responders, who are not only first in line to protect us but first in line for the terrorists, the first to die if this system does not work right, keeping these people well trained and well equipped.

I would like to thank, in addition to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON), ranking member, the other members of the Committee on Homeland Security. There has been a great deal of work that has gone into this bill. The last step in bringing this to the floor was a 13-hour markup in our committee. I think what we will find today, Mr. Chairman, is that this debate will go forward in a very bipartisan fashion. We might not agree about all the details of this legislation. We may not agree when we go to conference with the Senate. And when we come back with a report, hopefully in just a few weeks or maybe a few months, we may not agree on every detail.

But there is a big change in this bill that we all agree on, and that is that henceforth moneys for terrorism preparedness that go from Washington to States and localities to our police, to our firefighters, to our EMS personnel, to people in hospitals who will be there first in line for a biological attack. Indeed to treat the wounded in case of any attack, that the people who get these moneys will be assured that, first, the moneys will arrive soon, on time, right after we want them to be available; second, they will know how to spend it and they will know, when they spend it in accordance with their plans, they will get reimbursed for it. This will move America in the direction that we need to go to be prepared for another terrorist attack. And that will provide more confidence that our money is being used effectively.

A great deal of our work in the Committee on Homeland Security is focused on preventing terrorist attacks,