prove itself capable of governing a functioning democratic society, free from terrorism and focused on improving the lives of its citizens, or will it squander yet another opportunity? After hearing Gaza, Israel will no longer provide an easy excuse for Palestinian failure.

The world is united, principled and bipartisan support for Israel in the United States has been vital to our ability to overcome terrorism and prepare the ground for a political initiative. The notion of disengagement would have been unthinkable had Israel not prevailed in the latest round of sustained terrorism waged by the Palestinians since September 2000.

The stakes for Israel are enormous. We are a strong but small country facing a largely hostile region roughly 500 times our size. We can ill afford to make mistakes. Iran’s nuclear weapons program is imminent, posing an existential threat. Syria and Iran promote and support Palestinian terrorist groups, torn to our destruction. Hezbollah has intensified terrorist attacks against Israel from Lebanon, opening a second front aimed at derailing any progress. Despite these challenges, Israel has shown it is prepared to take difficult steps to achieve President Bush’s vision for peace in the Middle East. We would insist on no less from the Palestinians.

The writer is Israel’s ambassador to the United States.

**USA PATRIOT AND TERRORISM PREVENTION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2005**

**SPEECH OF**

**HON. BRIAN HIGGINS**

**OF NEW YORK**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Thursday, July 21, 2005**

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Chairman, in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States Congress passed the USA PATRIOT Act with broad bipartisan support to better equip law enforcement and intelligence agencies in their struggle to combat terrorism. As the shock of those horrible events subsided, many from both political parties began to question some of the more invasive aspects of the Patriot Act, including a number of provisions that allow Federal investigators to enter homes, tap phone lines, and search library records without a warrant.

Since then, the Patriot Act has become a much-debated issue, symbolizing a Federal Government abusing its power and violating civil liberties for a necessary but-wary against the barbarity of terrorists for others. And yet, all agree that the United States faces a daunting challenge in combating terrorism, both abroad and at home, through continuing efforts to safeguard borders, protect airports, and monitor centers of trade and commerce. In order to overcome these challenges, we must remain vigilant in our fight against terror and continue to strengthen our resolve even in the face of degraded and desperate acts such as the bombings that terrorized London this past week and a few short weeks ago.

The events in London provide a somber and revealing backdrop for the current debate regarding the renewal of a number of provisions contained in the USA PATRIOT Act. Many of my colleagues have voiced well-reasoned and thoughtful objections to the current bill, the USA Patriot and Terrorism Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2005, H.R. 3199, which would make permanent 14 of the 16 provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act. I share the concerns of my colleagues who fear that the proposed legislation will endanger the civil liberties of U.S. citizens and create the potential for abuse of Federal powers. Additionally, I am troubled by the administration’s lack of cooperation in providing detailed information regarding the effectiveness of the increased enforcement power contained in the Patriot Act. The members of the 9/11 Commission specifically directed the Bush administration to explain how the expanded powers of the Patriot Act “materially” enhance U.S. security. They also directed the administration to make certain that proper supervision was in place to monitor these enhanced powers. The administration has ignored these recommendations and showed a repeated willingness to place the acquisition of increased power above the common interest of individual citizens.

But as we deliberate over this bill, it is important to consider the ongoing fight against terrorism, so violently displayed in the terrorist bombings in London this past week. These attacks are a reminder that we remain susceptible to terrorism and must protect ourselves from continuing threats. While I have deep concerns regarding the effect of certain provisions of the Patriot Act on the civil rights of Americans, I strongly believe that we must end this legislation but amend it. “Mend, don’t end” should have been the guiding theme in redrafting and analyzing the Patriot Act.

We cannot let our partisan differences obscure our common fight against terrorism. We cannot let our very real concerns about the violation of civil liberties overwhelm our oath to protect the citizens of the United States from further terrorist activity. While I would have preferred a “mend don’t end” strategy to reshaping the Patriot Act, the leadership chose a different tactic and brought the bill to the floor with the most disconcerting provisions included. In light of recent events, and our continued war on terrorism, I chose to stand on the side of law enforcement and the intelligence community and protect our country by voting for the Patriot Act reauthorization.

**PERSONAL EXPLANATION**

**HON. JOHN LINDE**

**OF GEORGIA**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Tuesday, July 26, 2005**

Mr. LINDE. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to cast roll call votes 415 and 416 on July 22, 2005, because I was unavoidably detained on official business with President George W. Bush in Atlanta, Georgia, at a roundtable discussion on retirement security for future generations of Americans. I was also unable to cast roll call votes 417, 418, and 419 on July 25, 2005, as I was traveling on official legislative/policy business. Had I been present I would have cast the following votes: On roll call No. 415, I would have voted “no” on roll call No. 416, I would have voted “yes”; on roll call No. 417, I would have voted “yes”; on roll call No. 418, I would have voted “yes”; and on roll call No. 419, I would have voted “yes.”
Subcommittee as well as Chairman Lewis of the full Committee for their hard work and dedication to our Nation’s service members and veterans. Working with the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, the conference report accompanying H.R. 2361, the fiscal year 2006 appropriations act for the Department of Veterans Affairs, and certain other VA programs, includes an additional $1.5 billion allocated to the Veterans Health Administration. These funds are especially critical for VA to treat new veterans, those returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans.

Year after year, the annual budget for the Veterans Health Administration is the subject of great debate. On February 16, 2005, VA Secretary Nicholson and other VA officials stood before the VA Committee and justified the Administration’s budget request. Subsequently, we learned that all the hard work and tough choices Congress has made to increase VA health care funding—by no less than 42 percent in just the last four years—has now been overshadowed by a “discovery” of inadequate funding. Since then, the VA Committee has held three separate hearings over the past month and a half to understand and examine VA’s methodologies for forecasting health care costs and utilization projections, to identify the breakdown in the budget process, and to bring to light the serious flaws in VA’s usage assumptions.

Equally important, the conference report demands new levels of accountability inside VA. In fact, the VA Committee is seeking to institutionalize accountability in the budget process at VA to ensure that similar circumstances can be averted in the future. There is but one constant we can all agree upon: the VA must ensure a continuity of care for our severely disabled veterans.

While $1.5 billion seems to be the right figure at this point in time, there are only two months left in the fiscal year. This means that the Department of Veterans Affairs has the ability to roll over into fiscal year 2006 whatever sums remain unspent in fiscal year 2005; I expect department officials to spend wisely. With this particular provision, we are not only seeking to meet the urgent needs for the remainder of the year, but are providing a significant down payment on the shortfall we anticipate in fiscal year 2006.

Mr. Speaker, again, I applaud the work of Chairman Lewis and Chairman Taylor of the Appropriations Committee, as well as the leadership of the House and Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committees.

IN HONOR OF JAMES FLANNERY
HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH
OF OHIO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, July 26, 2005

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor and recognition of James Flannery, a state senator dedicated to his family, his church, his community and his country. Named Cleveland’s “Man of the Year” in 1981, his life of service continued for more than two decades and will be cared for by the friends and family who so well understood and supported his®

Mr. Speaker, today marks the 15th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Signed into law by George H. W. Bush on July 26th in 1990, and enacted with bipartisan support in the Congress, the ADA served as the world’s first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities.

FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
HON. JAMES P. MORAN
OF VIRGINIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, July 26, 2005

Mr. Speaker, today marks the fifteenth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Signed into law by George H. W. Bush on July 26th in 1990, and enacted with bipartisan support in the Congress, the ADA served as the world’s first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities.

In its fifteen years of existence, the ADA has accomplished much. Access ramps, curb cuts, Braille signs, and assistive listening devices at movie theaters now appear in communities around the country. Transit and communications systems have become more accessible to people with disabilities.

Yet despite this progress, I remain deeply concerned that the promise of the ADA has not been fulfilled for many of America’s 54 million people with disabilities. For example, empirical evidence demonstrates that there has been little change in the employment rate of people with disabilities. Only 32 percent of