Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I simply want to say thank you to each and every one of the pilots, men and women, who have stepped forward to take a stand to defend the United States and to ensure that our traveling public is safe and that further harm does not come to aviation.

On the reasons we have changed the rules with TSA in screening passengers is because we have a system like this in place, and they have just announced that this week.

Mr. Speaker, I would say it is almost impossible to take over an aircraft the way the 9/11 terrorists did. We have armed pilots throughout this program. We have air marshals and secure cockpit doors. And then we have the traveling public who would never allow that to happen knowing what we know. So now we are changing the focus and these pilots and efforts and this program have allowed us to look at additional risk such as explosive devices and other threats that we face. We know we are secure again through the efforts of the countless pilots we are honoring who have participated in our Federal Flight Deck Officer program.

So again, on behalf of Chairman YOUNG, who chairs our full committee and Mr. KING and Mr. COSTELLO, and many other colleagues, I am pleased to present this resolution to adequately recognize those who have come forward and have helped make this a more secure Nation through the aviation industry.

Mr. Speaker, I have not been a supporter of the Federal Flight Deck Officer program because I believe it creates safety problems which outweigh any security benefits. Without any disrespect for the individuals participating in the program, I rise to remind the colleagues that there is still a lot of work left to do to improve aviation security.

On Monday, the 9/11 Commission released its Final Report on Commission Recommendations. The Commission gave aviation security low to failing grades ranging from “C” to “F.”

Three priority issues we must work expeditiously to address in the coming months include: suicide bombers at the checkpoint, checked baggage screening and screener staffing.

Suicide Bombers

Probably the greatest threat facing aviation is the threat of a suicide bomber getting past airport checkpoint security. We know that we have vulnerabilities at passenger checkpoints, and we need to give our screeners the tools to get the job done.

Earlier this year Department of Homeland Security Inspector General (DHS IG) released a report indicating that our airport screening system still needs improvement. Regarding the causes of poor screener performance, the DHS IG stated “that significant improvement in performance cannot be possible without greater use of technology.”

While we have made some progress in recent months deploying checkpoint explosive detection machines like trace portals, the 9/11 Commission report gives checkpoint explosive detection a grade of “C.” We can and must do better.

Checked Baggage Security

As to checked baggage screening, it is important to note that the checked baggage system at large airports given both the increased security such systems provide as well as the cost benefits. In-line EDS systems promote greater security because they are not exposed to the public; screeners are able to focus on screening bags rather than moving them; and fewer people are congregated around machines in the public area.

In addition to these benefits, in-line baggage screening systems have a much higher throughput than stand-alone systems. If we install in-line systems, more bags will be screened by explosive detection systems instead of less reliable, alternative methods.

TSA and airport operators rely on commitments in letters of intent (LOIs) for Federal assistance as their principal method for funding the modifications necessary to incorporate in-line baggage screening systems. To date, TSA has issued only 8 LOIs to cover the costs of installing systems at 9 airports.

Earlier this year GAO reported that TSA has estimated that it would cost $2 billion over 7 years. TSA further estimated that it could recover its initial investment in in-line systems at these airports in just over 1 year. Moreover, TSA officials stated without in-line EDS technology, 27 airports will not comply with the congressional mandate to screen all checked baggage using EDS or ETD.

Yet despite the security benefits and savings that we would clearly gain from installing in-line EDS systems, this Congress has failed to provide sufficient funding to install-in-line EDS at more than a few airports. We must fund the installation of in-line EDS systems.

Screening Staffing

TSA’s main mission is security. But the agency also has the responsibility to move passengers efficiently, so long as security is not compromised. In both of these missions, TSA has been handicapped by the ill-advised cap of 45,000 full time screeners imposed by the FY06 DHS Appropriations Act (P.L. 109–90).

This cap was imposed without any basis for determining that 45,000 was the right number, and is both arbitrary and counterintuitive. Moreover, this cap does not provide TSA with flexibility that it needs to schedule screeners for training and other skill improvement activities, while continuing to adequately staff security checkpoints.

To add insult to injury, the FY06 Appropriations provides a $2.4 billion for Federal passenger and baggage screeners, which I am told is tantamount to 43,000 full time equivalent screeners—a decrease of 2,000 screeners below the cap! Passenger enplanements in 2006 are expected to reach upwards of 750 million. This anticipated increase in passenger traffic justifies fully funding TSA up to the 45,000 cap!

I urge my colleagues to support these needed improvements in aviation security.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the House suspend the rules and agree to H.R. 1721 to extend the authorization of appropriations for the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize programs to improve the quality of coastal recreational waters, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1721) to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize programs to improve the quality of coastal recreational waters, and for other purposes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair’s prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1721 to extend the authorization of appropriations for Clean Water Act programs aimed at improving the quality and safety of our Nation’s recreational coastal waters. Beaches are a very important part of American life. Each year, over 180 million people visit coastal waters for recreational purposes.

This activity supports over 28 million jobs and leads to investments of over $50 billion each year in goods and services nationally. Public confidence in
the quality of our Nation’s waters is important not only to each citizen who swims, but also to the tourism and recreation industries that rely on safe and swimmable coastal waters. To improve the public’s confidence in the quality of our Nation’s coastal waters and to protect public health and safety, Congress passed the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000, commonly called the BEACH Act, in the 106th Congress. Under the BEACH Act, the EPA has been developing new water quality criteria to protect human health from disease-causing pathogens, and States are updating their water quality standards for recreational coastal waters to incorporate these more protective criteria.

The EPA also has been making grants to States to help them implement programs to monitor beach water quality and to notify the public if water quality standards are not being met. H.R. 1721 reauthorizes the current level of funding for these programs. This includes $30 million annually through fiscal year 2011 for the EPA to make grants to help them implement their water monitoring and public notification programs.

H.R. 1721 will help protect public health and safety and continue to improve the quality of our Nation’s recreational coastal waters that are so very important to the economies of our coastal communities. I certainly want to congratulate our colleague, Mr. Bishop, on sponsoring this bill, and I urge all Members to support this very worthwhile legislation.

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

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1721, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First, I would like to begin by thanking Chairman YOUNG and Ranking Member OBERSTAR for their support, their leadership and their hard work in moving this important and bipartisan legislation through the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and on to the House floor today.

In addition, I am deeply grateful for the support and contributions of the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN), the chairman of the Water Resources and Infrastructure Committee, and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON), the subcommittee’s ranking member, for their steadfast support and commitment to America’s coastal environment.

Mr. Speaker, as the distinguished subcommittee chairman has just explained, H.R. 1721 reauthorizes grants under the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000 known as the BEACH Act through fiscal year 2011. The record shows that the BEACH Act has been a proven success for 35 coastal States and U.S. territories. It goes a long way towards maintaining pristine coastline, and is a critical component of preserving our Nation’s environment and sustaining the tourist economies of our States.

Mr. Speaker, America’s beaches are our national treasures. They are an important part of our heritage. They are environmental assets and economic assets. We want to keep them that way, and that is exactly what this measure will do.

This vital legislation provides State and local governments with grant money to monitor pathogen levels off their shores, and to notify the public when those pathogen levels are above acceptable levels. Pathogens, we all know, can cause illness when people are exposed to them through swimming or consuming fish from contaminated water.

It is absolutely essential that we continue to fund these programs so that States and localities have the resources that they need to protect recreational users from dangerous levels of bacteria, viruses or parasites off their shores. When people go to the beach, including the 981 square miles of coastal waters in New York, it should be pleasant and it should be safe. That is why this bill is so vitally important. I urge my colleagues to support the re-authorization of the BEACH Act to ensure that we protect Americans from potentially toxic coastal water.

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

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I will simply close by saying that this is a very strong bill for the environment. It is a bill that is important to thousands of cities, towns and small communities along the coast of this country. Not every bill that claims to be for the environment is really a good bill because some of them drive up prices and destroy jobs and hurt lower income and working people, but this is a pro-environment bill that helps sustain and even creates jobs. I do not know of any negatives with this bill. I think it is something that all of our colleagues can support. I urge its passage.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support H.R. 1721, a vital measure to reauthorize appropriations for coastal recreation water quality monitoring and notification grants through 2011. Originally passed in the BEACH Act in 2000, this program was added to the Clean Water Act to require states with coastal areas, including those in the Great Lakes region, to adopt minimum standards for water quality, test recreational beach waters, and notify the public when test levels prove unsafe.

In 1999, before the BEACH bill became law, only eleven states tested their waters and reported to the public when there was a presence of bacteria and viruses. Human contact with such waters, especially in the elderly and very young, can result in gastrointestinal disorders, respiratory diseases, and ear, nose, or throat infections. These bacteria and viruses are typically the result of polluted stormwater and runoff, overburdened sewage treatment facilities, and malfunctioning septic systems. Ignorance was not bliss, ignorance was a serious health hazard. While we must certainly do more to eliminate these pollution sources, until they are eliminated, we must test recreational waters and adequately inform those who might be at risk from them.

Poor health conditions from contaminated waters adversely affect those who live by...
I am proud to have participated in developing this legislation, and today’s consideration ensures that we will be renewing our commitment to preserving Long Island Sound for future generations of Americans.

In conclusion, I would encourage each of my colleagues to visit the sound and experience its grandeur. Again, I appreciate my friend from New York, Mr. BISHOP, for sponsoring and pushing this bill to the floor here today. I urge all Members to support this bill.

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

THE SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. BISHOP) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3963) to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to extend the authorization of appropriations for Long Island Sound.

The Speaker read as follows:

H.R. 3963

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. LONG ISLAND SOUND AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS TITLES.

Section 119(f) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1269(f)) is amended by striking “2005” each place it appears and inserting “2010.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. BISHOP) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3963 to extend the authorization of appropriations for the Long Island Sound program under the Clean Water Act.

More than 8 million people live within the Long Island Sound watershed. The sound generates more than $5 billion annually for the regional economy from boating, swimming, and commercial and sport fishing, plus other activities. The Long Island Sound, like many estuaries around the Nation, supports multiple uses and demands and provides habitat for a multitude of fish and wildlife species.

Yet despite its value, the sound is experiencing stress from increasing population growth and development. Storm water and agricultural runoff, wastewater discharges with high nutrient levels, industrial pollution, and commercial and recreational waste all have led to water quality issues arising in the sound. The Long Island Sound is one of the estuaries in the EPA’s national estuary program. A long-term estuary management plan has been developed and approved for the sound. The Long Island Sound program was created in part to help carry out the goals of the sound’s estuary management plan.

H.R. 3963 authorizes the current level of funding for the Long Island Sound program to continue implementing the sound’s estuary management plan. This includes $40 million annually through fiscal year 2010 for the EPA to make grants to State and local parties for projects and studies aimed at improving water quality in the sound. H.R. 3963 will help the local States and the EPA to restore and protect Long Island Sound, which is so important to the economy of this very important region of our country.

I want to especially congratulate the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS) for sponsoring and pushing this bill to the floor here today. I urge all Members to support this bill.

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

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in full support of H.R. 3963, bipartisan legislation offered by the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS). This bill is important to those of us who rely on the sound as an economic engine for our communities and as a clean source of water and food for our families.

It is important to recognize nationally designated estuaries such as Long Island Sound, not only for the economic growth they generate, but also their important role in the global environment. Estuaries provide feeding and nursing grounds for diverse plant life, wild birds and fish, along with other animals.

In addition, countless families and businesses in my district and indeed throughout the northeast rely on Long Island Sound for their livelihood, enjoyment and peace of mind. The sound plays an integral role in not only the 8 million people who live in the immediate vicinity, but also the tens of millions who visit the area each year.

In fact, this dynamic body of water produces $5.5 billion in revenue for State and local economies in the tourism, fishing and boating industries in the northeast each year.