

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN
ALCEE L. HASTINGS INTRO-
DUCING THE DISPLACED WORK-
ERS RELIEF ACT OF 2001

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 24, 2001

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, earlier today I received a call from George Mador. Mr. Mador is the President of L & M Aircraft Services and he called my office looking for help. L & M is a small aircraft maintenance company that services charter airlines transporting passengers to and from the Bahamas. L & M only has seven employees and many of them have been with the company for a majority of the company's existence.

However, in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, L & M is now facing imminent bankruptcy and its seven employees, therefore, are facing certain unemployment. George told me that he did not want to get out of bed this morning because of the reality that he will have to lay off at least half of his staff by the end of the week as a result of zero income in the past two weeks. Last week's payroll left George and some of his employees without a paycheck and L & M \$500 in the hole. With no apparent income coming in this week, the future of L & M Airport Services and its seven employees are undoubtedly in jeopardy.

At the three international airports serving my district, Ft. Lauderdale/Hollywood, Palm Beach, and Miami, there are more than 300 small businesses just like L & M that are now on the verge of bankruptcy as a result of loss

of income. In Miami-Dade County, the airline and aviation industry is the County's primary economic engine, representing more than nine percent of the County's total workforce. Thousands of employees have already or will lose their jobs, and hundreds of business will go under nationwide if Congress does not act today.

To help remedy some of the future hardships sure to be faced by hundreds of thousands of people in the coming days, weeks, and months, I am proud to introduce the Displaced Workers Relief Act of 2001. My bill serves as the companion bill to S. 1454, which was introduced in the Senate by Senator JEAN CARNAHAN of Missouri. It provides those who have lost their jobs in the wake of the attacks of September 11 with the ability to pay rent, put food on their table, buy school books for their children, while trying to live their lives even in these difficult times.

My bill extends unemployment benefits from 26 to 78 weeks, provides 26 weeks of unemployment insurance benefits for workers who would not otherwise qualify, extends Job Training Benefits from 52 to 78 weeks, and provides up to 78 weeks of federally subsidized COBRA premiums; and provides optional temporary Medicaid coverage for up to eighteen months to those workers without COBRA coverage.

Under the Displaced Workers Relief Act of 2001, all airline and airport workers, including transit workers, as well as employees who work for airline suppliers, such as service employees and plane manufacturers, will all be eligible to receive these needed benefits.

In the past two weeks, more than 100,000 airline employees have been laid off, and airline analysts suggest that as many as 250,000

additional layoffs in airline-related industries may shortly follow. Everywhere I look in this country, industries and business are hurting. Hotels are reporting record lows in occupancy levels; travel agencies are losing customers by the dozen; the cruise industry has come to a virtual standstill; and service industries dependent upon airlines are closing their doors as we speak. As these businesses suffer, Mr. Speaker, so do their employees, many of whom no longer have jobs.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, last Friday evening, Congress missed a golden opportunity to assist American workers affected by this tragedy. Now, it is time for this body to recognize the responsibility it has to these hard working Americans and provide them with relief. The Displaced Workers Relief Act of 2001 is the vehicle which Congress can use to help these workers at a time that they need it most. For if we fail to act today, then we are neglecting the responsibility that we have to serve the very same people who put us here to represent them. It is essential that Congress move swiftly and pass this legislation immediately.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. VITO FOSSELLA

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 24, 2001

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 348, I was inadvertently detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."