

word magnificent citizens and role models. They have given much and asked little in return.

They hear all the platitudes and promises. They are celebrated in speech and in books and in the movies. But it is hard, hard to go home and look them in the eye and say there is no prescription drug relief, to say we are exhausting the Social Security surplus not only to fight Osama bin Laden but to provide corporate tax cuts. It is hard to look them in the eye as they travel to Canada for prescription drugs while Congress rolls back the alternative minimum tax.

Even amidst what must be hurtful to them, they never waiver. They stand by their Nation, their flag, their beliefs, prepared to sacrifice yet again for the Nation they love. Living out their lives in dignity is all they ask. Platitudes and promises do not heat their homes, put food on their table, or pay for the prescriptions needed to sustain their lives. Their generation believes you should be known by your deeds, not by the words that translate into empty promises.

There will be numerous speeches given on Veterans Day exalting the brave men and women of our Nation. Wreaths will be placed at memorials and people will gather in solemn remembrance and in firm resolve. When Members are back in their districts for parades and speeches and memorials, they should take a long look in the eyes of those veterans. We stand on their shoulders, the benefactors of their sacrifice and accomplishments.

They are prepared to see this second day of infamy through until justice is served. If only Congress would respond with the same resolve for them, the resolve to see their twilight years lived out in dignity, the resolve to provide them with affordable prescriptions here at home. If only Congress would show the willingness to sacrifice a corporate tax cut to preserve a life, to heat a home, to have a nutritious meal. If only Congress had the resolve to preserve Social Security and Medicare, the programs that have kept our elderly barely above the poverty line.

This is an unprecedented opportunity. The Nation stands united behind the President and Congress to root out terrorism.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AIRLINE SECURITY BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Madam Speaker, tonight we are gathered to discuss a serious issue, and that is the issue of airline security. One of my colleagues from the great State of Texas is here and is on a limited time schedule, so I will begin this hour together by turning the time over at this point to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ).

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. First of all, let me congratulate the gentleman on taking this opportunity for us to come and say a few words on this very important issue. It is an issue that we recognize that we have not come to grips with since September 11, and I just wanted to share with my colleagues a couple of statistics.

Prior to September 11, we had over 9 million passengers. After that date, we have had only 5 million. So we have had a drastic decrease.

There is no doubt that people have some serious concerns about flying. A lot of people that are flying now are those that have business and those that have to, but a lot of people are choosing not to fly. And for good reasons they feel insecure in terms of the situation that they find themselves in.

The actions of the House leadership have delayed the passage of strong airline security legislation. Politics must give way to action. This is not the time to be partisan. This is not the time to be playing games at the expense of our national security. It is a time to deal with it. It has been 7 weeks. So we have to come to grips with it.

We must provide the best security we can at our airports. Not just adequate security, not just sufficient security; no, we need to provide the best security, and we will not get the best security if we continue to auction it off to the lowest bidder. We have to come to learn the hard way that airline security is a national security. So we need to recognize that national security should be in the hands of highly trained, highly motivated Federal law enforcement personnel.

The current work force, brought to us by private contractors, are underpaid and undertrained, and we recognize that. We all understand that, and we all realize that we have a serious problem. This weekend someone managed to slip through at the O'Hare Airport at Chicago. He did not just have one knife but seven folding knives with blades up to 4 inches. He also had a stun gun and a small container labeled teargas pepper spray.

This is unacceptable. The American people expect our airport security personnel to be able to handle the job and be able to do the right thing. We cannot take chances. We cannot accept what we have before us, and we have to make sure that when it comes to tourism, when it comes to trade, when it comes to security in the air that we make it as secure as possible.

What disturbs me is that the company at O'Hare is the same company that has already been cited by the FAA

and has been placed on probation. Here we have a company that we continue to allow to be there, continue to allow them to do the things they have been doing.

□ 2030

It is obvious that the private companies do not provide the type of security that we need. The private companies, no matter what, are going to cut corners. When it comes to our national security, we should not live with those types of situations where they are going to cut corners.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Madam Speaker, the gentleman talks about the private security company that is responsible for the situation in Chicago. That same company is responsible for the security at the Columbus, Ohio, airport which I flew out of this morning. While I was standing in line waiting to get on the airplane, there was a lady who started talking about her frustration. She knew I was a Member of Congress, and she said we need to federalize these workers. Who can I write to and express my opinion. I shared with her some names that she could contact.

Then she told me this story. She said when I came to the Columbus, Ohio, airport, and I am a quilter, I went through security and after I went through security, I realized I had a large pair of scissors and what she described as a rotary blade cutter. She got through security and realized she had these scissors and blade. She said they were valuable to me, and I knew if I was caught with them, they probably would take them away, so she went back through security and took them to her car and left them in her car and then came back to the airport. She said I am furious I was able to get through security this morning with those scissors on me.

Madam Speaker, it is happening over and over and over. This one particular company, the Argenbright company, seems to be very, very lax in the expectations they have for their employees, apparently for the training they provide; and certainly they are very lax with the supervision. Otherwise, these multiple incidents would not happen.

It is a dangerous situation. Some of my colleagues have expressed that they think I ought not to say that flying is not safe. So I will say it this way: flying still has a risk attached to it. Is that risk less than it was before September 11? Perhaps. In some cases it may be much, much less. But the fact is that people have a right to accurate information. The American traveling public has a right to know what kind of security exists before they choose to get on an airplane and fly, especially if they are going to put their family members at risk. We are trying to inform the public, and the public is the one that will ultimately force this Congress to do the right thing and force the airlines to do the right thing. Until they feel safe, they will not return to the airlines as they have in the past.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Madam Speaker, I agree with the gentleman completely. A survey showed that 85 percent of Americans support the importance of federalizing our airline screeners. There is no doubt even after we have Federal workers we are still going to have some breaches. But I feel confident that those people can do a better job in making sure. I have had some experience with Customs workers. Those Customs workers have the experience and are able to tell and question people. For example, on the Mexican border, they were able to catch some people by asking where are you headed and why are you going there. They sensed some problems, and they were able to catch them. They have worked there and they understand.

The type of workers employed as airline screeners, we have all seen the turnover rates. Up to 400 percent. Not to mention that same company has hired people with criminal records. Here we have some criminals who have been in jail, they are providing our security. We have a real problem in this country. I hope that we come to grips with these issues.

Whether my colleague is a Republican or a Democrat, we need to do the right thing; and the right thing is to get good law enforcement people. National security is nothing less.

I heard today on the House floor the discussions about the fact that a Member was angry on the Republican leadership that we made an indication that our security here in the Capitol is federalized. They are Federal workers. He was embarrassed that we compared them with the workers in airline security. They should not be any less. They should be trained. Just because they look at luggage and people coming through, they need to be trained. They also need to be on the lookout for the types of people that are coming through. It becomes important that we do the right thing.

Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for allowing me to go a little ahead of everyone else. I thank the gentleman for what he is doing. It has been 7 weeks since September 11. Hopefully, we can get some Federal law enforcement workers that know what they are doing.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for joining us tonight. I have some other colleagues here, including the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY), and I yield to the gentlewoman.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time and putting together this Special Order tonight.

I believe we have been forced to view aviation security in a brand new way. These past events emphasize that aviation security is vital to our national security, but also to our national economy. We have to get people back on airplanes. We cannot run the business of this Nation if people will not fly from one place to another. We are in

very unfamiliar territory now, and we have to carefully assess what constitutes appropriate responses in this very new world that we are living in because whatever our response, we will leave a permanent mark on the lives of the American people.

If Congress passes the aviation security measure that the House passed last week, I believe that the American people will know, they will not be surprised, and we cannot fool them that we have passed a status quo proposal. We will not have passed the best proposal. The public will know that we passed a measure to keep those same private companies in charge that the gentleman from Texas and the gentleman from Ohio just referred to. Those are the same companies in charge on September 11, and they are still in charge of security.

The public will know that as Members of Congress we did not rise to the occasion and we will not pass the remedies that were desperately needed.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Madam Speaker, we had quite a heated debate last week about two competing approaches. One would federalize our airline security workforce so the traveling public would know they were being protected by those who were answerable to Uncle Sam, who were law enforcement personnel, who were properly trained, who were adequately paid, and who were supervised.

I would like to just share with the gentlewoman some thoughts that I saw in an editorial in USA Today on November 6. "House Barbers Away Strong Protections for Flyers." Want to know why at a time when tight airline security is needed, the House rejected a tough bipartisan bill and passed a weak version favored by the Republican leaders? First, stop looking at the House as a law-making body; think instead of a flea market.

"Last Thursday, the day of the vote, the House was one big bazaar. Lawmakers with swing votes were doing the selling. Their price: Last minute special interest amendments and political pay offs." That is the opinion of USA Today.

After the Senate passed a bipartisan bill 100 to nothing, and as the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) stated, we cannot get more bipartisan than 100 to nothing; yet there were Members on the other side of the aisle that accused many of us in engaging in bipartisanship. All we wanted was an opportunity to pass the bill that the Senate passed so it could have gone directly to the President, he could have signed it into law the next day, and today we could have a strong airline bill in effect. We were not able to do that; but I believe when the American people come to realize what is at stake here, they will force this Chamber and this Congress to do the right thing.

I have another editorial from my hometown paper, The Portsmouth Daily Times: "Federalize Airport Workers." The Columbus Dispatch over

the weekend had a long, thoughtful editorial opinion chiding this House for not doing the right thing and saying we need to federalize this responsibility. We still have that opportunity because the House and the Senate will take their competing bills to conference, and we still have an opportunity to have a bill that federalizes these workers and makes the situation not perfectly safe because it will never be perfectly safe to fly, but as safe as we can make it. Thus far we have not passed a bill that makes the traveling public as safe as they can be or as safe as they should be.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, first of all I read that same USA Today article on the airplane flying here from California this morning. I was hoping that everybody else on the airline was missing it because it was kind of frightening.

I do not know if the gentleman heard the pilot that spoke at our press conference last week before we voted on the aviation security bill. He said one of the reasons the opposition to federalization is speaking so loudly is that they fear that federalization will equal labor unions. He said, I want to remind the public, I want to remind everybody here today and the press, that all of the heroes in this country since September 11, the pilots, the airline attendants, the firefighters and the police officers, every single one of them belong to a labor union. So what is the fear?

The gentleman is right, we do have another chance. Our chance this week would be to agree to the other body's language to federalization, follow their lead and agree to some really meaningful provisions that will put our citizens first, not the airlines, not the private companies that contribute great amounts of money to these individuals that are insisting that we stay private.

Since the other body did vote 100 to nothing, we know that is a bipartisan idea. We also know that the public is going to watch what we are doing, and they want us to take care of them.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Madam Speaker, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE), who is an attorney, has joined us; and I would like to inquire regarding a legal matter.

Another Member of this body suggested to me because these private companies, at least two of the largest private companies that are responsible for airline security at many of our major airports are foreign-owned companies, as a result, their CEOs would be unable to get security clearance so that they would be able to get classified information.

□ 2045

The question has been raised with these private security companies responsible for airline security, what would happen, for example, if the CIA or the FBI came across information that was classified in nature but was relevant to airline security or some incident that may happen. Would it be

possible for these private companies to have access to that information so that they could work collaboratively or would that be possible? Would you have a legal opinion about that?

Mr. INSLEE. Let me express an American opinion, that is just not a legal opinion, which is whether you are a lawyer or not a lawyer, you want law enforcement information to be used by law enforcement personnel.

The nature of your question points out the exact flaw of continuing this failed experiment of having private contractors provide this service. They are not in a law enforcement context and this is a law enforcement responsibility. We do not share law enforcement information with people that you might not be able to have total confidence in. Unfortunately, these contractors have shown nothing but something akin to a Keystone Kops approach to this law enforcement situation. That is why this bill, the Republican bill that passed out of this House last week, is generating nothing but disdain as far as I can tell all across the country.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I think I hear you saying that the private companies, the private security companies, have the primary motive of making a profit, and a government law enforcement system would have the primary motive of protecting the public. Is that a fair way of phrasing that comment that you just made?

Mr. INSLEE. As always, the gentleman has done it with much more eloquence than I have been able to muster, but that is exactly right.

When we have the Border Patrol, we do not contract out the Border Patrol because we do not want to see the contractor's motivations to have low cost, low bid, cutting corners affect the law enforcement security issues that we have. It is the same with firefighters and police.

The reason we feel that way in this country is that these jobs are life-and-death jobs. If the job is done well, people live. If the job is not done well, people die. This is why we believe so strongly and Americans believe so strongly all across the country, I am hearing on Main Street, I am reading USA Today, I am reading the Seattle Post Intelligencer, I am reading the New York Times, this bill is a clinker because it does not match Americans' expectations that we have a law enforcement type system.

Let us just talk for a moment about this Keystone Kops idea. Since September 11, look at what has happened. Since September 11, when you would think these companies would be telling their employees to be on their best behavior, they would have their best front line people, their most trained people, they would be on their toes and they would have bells and whistles on, since September 11, we have had a test by the FAA at Dulles Airport that serves the Nation's Capital, you think would be the acme of achievement for these private contractors.

They went out to Dulles Airport a couple of weeks ago and they tried to run the gate 20 times with weapons that would show up on the magnetometer; guns, knives, I do not know what they used. Out of that 20 times, seven times people went through without being challenged by the security personnel. Almost half the times they failed at the Nation's principal airport. The company that was already fined \$1 million for hiring felons we found is hiring felons again.

Now just the other day we have heard about this story where the guy ran through the system with multiple knives, stun guns, Mace, the only thing they kept him from taking on the plane was a Stinger missile. That was the only success they had. Yet the Republicans want to continue that status quo arrangement.

The status quo has failed. We hope this conference committee sticks by the Senate version which has a Federal responsibility.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I would like to ask my friend a question. Perhaps you cannot give me a definitive answer, but I am puzzled. Why is it that when the American people overwhelmingly want to federalize this function, when newspapers like the Columbus Dispatch in Ohio and the New York Times, the Portsmouth Daily Times, newspapers all across this country are editorializing in favor of federalizing this security function, and the Senate passed a bill that would do that 100 to nothing, is it puzzling to you that this House just would not get on board, do the right thing, pass the Senate version which could go directly to the President for his signature? And although the President has indicated he is not crazy about the bill, his spokespersons have said that he would be willing to sign it. We could have such a law in effect now, today.

Do you have any theory as to why this House would be so intractable in its approach to this issue?

Ms. WOOLSEY. If the gentleman will yield, I would like to suggest that if the GOP version does not sway towards the other body's, the Senate's version, it will be because they really do not want this to pass at all, because it is not going to pass. We will not get out of conference with the House version of that bill. So nothing will go to the President and we will not have an aviation security bill.

Mr. STRICKLAND. So we could enter the Thanksgiving holiday season without a security bill? And people who go to the airports to get on airliners would do so knowing that this House, this Congress, had failed to take action to protect them. That would be truly a sad set of circumstances.

Mr. INSLEE. To answer the gentleman's question, I am not so much puzzled as I am extremely disappointed because it is pretty obvious to anyone who has followed this with any but the scantiest degree of attention what is happening here. The companies that

have failed the American people over and over again, the companies that have allowed sticks, guns, bottles, knives, everything short of a Stinger missile on these airplanes, have run up to their friends in Congress and have tried to save their bacon and their contracts and tried to put a kibosh on this bill that passed the Senate 100 to nothing, totally bipartisan, because they are trying to save their contracts and their potential profits.

There is nothing wrong with profit, but the problem is, these companies should lose their contracts. These companies should not be providing this service.

We have not seen anything in the Republican bill that will keep these same companies from not winning these same contracts. This same company that had seven knives get through security the other day and seven out of twenty through Dulles who are hiring ex-felons after they have already been fined \$1 million, under the Republican bill could come up and they could get the same contract again. That is a pathetic failure of congressional responsibility.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Is it not true that this same company has already been fined over \$1 million?

Mr. INSLEE. Already been fined \$1 million. They got caught again with their hand in the cookie jar, hiring ex-felons. You have to ask yourself another question, how can this system of private contractors under Federal supervision be such a failure? Would one think that if we had a Federal agency supposedly riding herd on these contractors we could accomplish a fair degree of training and certification? One would think.

But the problem is this dirty little secret. We knew in 1995 that these companies were giving us a lousy job, they were not providing adequate security; and this Congress passed measures to require the FAA to adopt additional rules. But it never happened in 6 years. The reason is that every time the FAA tried to pass a meaningful safety regulation, those companies and airlines, too, to some degree, sent lobbyists up to Congress and blocked those safety regulations.

That is why this experiment is a failure, because our agencies have been under the control of the ones they are supposed to be regulating. And you cannot break that iron cycle unless we get campaign finance reform which we have also not had a vote on. The American people need to know that the reason this has not passed is, we have a sick campaign financing system that needs to be reformed. But until we get that, we need a new system of airline safety.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I do not want to put words in the gentleman's mouth, but as I listened to you, I am starting to feel some anger. I said earlier I felt frustration and puzzlement, but what you are saying, it seems to me, is that you believe that there is a system in

place here that would allow special interest money, special interest contributions, to be so influential over the actions of this House that we could take action or fail to take action which would literally put the lives of Americans at risk. Is that an overstatement in your judgment or do you think it is a fair statement?

Mr. INSLEE. That is a fair statement, that this Chamber put the financial security of special interests above and beyond the personal security of Americans who are in airplanes. It was a very sad day. That is why I hope the conferees will change the result that came out of this House.

Ms. WOOLSEY. If the gentleman will yield, I think it would be good if we laid out right here in our conversation how we think it would be different if it was federalized, how the standards would be set, and they would be national standards, and there would be a Federal corps of workers that would be hired, trained, monitored and supervised and actually earn a livable wage; and we would have a work force not too dissimilar from the work force we have here protecting us at the Capitol. We have the Capitol Police. They are Federal workers. They are not contracted. We do not contract the Marines.

Mr. STRICKLAND. It has been brought up in this Chamber on multiple occasions that we are protected here at the Capitol of the United States by police officers. They work for Uncle Sam. Some have taken offense when we have suggested that it is not fair for those of us who live and work in this Capitol to be protected by these well-trained professional individuals, who are adequately paid, adequately trained, adequately supervised, while we would be willing to let the American traveling public expose themselves to unnecessary danger. And when we pointed out the unfairness of that, some have taken offense.

But I think it is absolutely fair. Why should you as a Congresswoman or why should I as a Congressman have a different level of protection than other Americans who may be in vulnerable positions and threatened by terrorists? I think we should not. We should not have any less or any more protection.

I think what we have now is a system that leaves the traveling public, when they go to our airports, vulnerable. I know there are those who do not want us to say that, because they want the American people to go back and live a normal life. They know our economy needs our airlines to be successful and the public to feel like they can travel safely.

The public can travel safely if we do the right thing in this Chamber. It is in our hands.

I see that our friend from the great State of Colorado (Mr. UDALL) has joined us. Welcome.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I want to thank my good friend the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) for calling this important special order tonight.

I want to change the thrust of our discussion, if I could, somewhat and talk about the economic consequences of not having an airline security bill in place. In my home State, we have a beautiful airport, Denver International Airport, known as DIA locally. It is a driver in our economy and a driver in the entire Rocky Mountain West of all of the States' economies that make up the Rocky Mountain West. We have seen a falloff of about 30 percent in flights, in concessionaire revenue and in subsequent falloff to the local tax collection moneys that accrue to the city of Denver, which incidentally has a responsibility to pay the bonds that covered the cost of the airport.

I have talked with a lot of people in the business community across the various sectors in our State, high tech, telecommunications, manufacturing, agriculture, you name it, we have it. I say, what can we do to bring our economy back to where it was? They say the number one thing we can do is get people back on airplanes again.

The ripple effect in our economy of people using our air transportation system, which is still second to none, is phenomenal. That is why passing this legislation is so, so important. That is why it was so disappointing to all of us here last week when we did not take the opportunity to pass the legislation. It was bipartisan in nature, as we all remember. It would have been on President Bush's desk on Friday. We would now today on Tuesday be in the process of implementing this legislation.

I also wanted to just underline what I have heard here too about the law enforcement function that we are trying to put in place. The people who are now doing the security work at our airports are well-intentioned. Many of them are hardworking. They want to do a good job. But they are not law enforcement professionals.

That is what we want to do by federalizing this work force. We would be able to provide them with the training, with the uniformity of approach, with a relationship with the intelligence community so that we can do a better job of catching people who should not be on our airplanes. We would provide these people with a career track.

There are some very thoughtful proposals that would link our airport security system, were it to be federalized, to Customs and to the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

□ 2100

People could work across those various agencies. I think that is a powerful concept and one that would be very, very useful to us.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I do not think the gentleman was here a few moments ago when I pointed out an issue that had been brought to me regarding the fact that some of the larger private firms that provide security at our airports are foreign-owned firms, and, consequently, the CEOs of those companies would be literally unable to

achieve a high level of security clearance that would enable them to have access to classified information which may be essential as the FBI and CIA and other law enforcement agencies gain access to information, for example, about a terrorist threat.

On the other hand, if this was a Federal function, it would be quite easy for these Federal law enforcement agencies to work collaboratively, to share information, to make plans, to develop strategies together. It seems to me that is a glaring problem that I have not heard addressed as we have discussed this bill.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. If the gentleman will yield further, I want to affirm what the gentleman has just pointed out, that we have the opportunity here as we move to provide for the homeland defense, two months ago, few of us had heard that term, "homeland defense," but we now have that responsibility, not only to ourselves and our constituents, but to our children and their children. If we were to continue the work of the Homeland Security Commission headed by Senator Rudman, a Republican from New England, and Senator Gary Hart from Colorado, who suggested that we combine about 40 Federal agencies into a Homeland Defense Agency, part of that would be airline security. It is so, so crucial. It is at the core of our economic activity and our economic strength.

So I think the gentleman makes a very good point as to why it is important now, as soon as possible, to get about the job of federalizing our airport security and airline security system.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I would share a thought with my friend from Colorado, that I think it may not happen, what we are talking about here, it really may not happen until the American people become so determined that it has to happen. By that I mean only perhaps after the American people start calling and writing and making demands upon their elected Representatives and upon their Senators.

I would just share one additional thought from the USA Today editorial. It says: "This week a House-Senate conference is charged with reconciling the competing bills, giving Congress one more shot at putting security wholly in the hands of the Federal Government, where it belongs."

So we can still do this, as the House and Senate meets. We just passed a resolution here, or a motion to instruct, asking that this be accomplished by this Friday, so there is still time this week for the American people to let their will be known, to make phone calls or to write letters or to send e-messages or to visit their Representatives and express their opinions.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. If the gentleman will yield further, he makes a very, very important point; and I want to once again remind the viewers that the bill had bipartisan support. This is

not about Republicans or Democrats. This is not about partisan advantage or disadvantage. This is about creating a new system of airline security that will ensure that every person who gets on our world-class airline system will know that they are going to arrive safely at their destination. They will know that when they go to the airport that they are going to proceed through a security system that is going to treat them respectfully, treat them as if their time is important, but also make sure that the bottom line is emphasized, which is to ensure that our airline system is safe and secure.

Mr. STRICKLAND. My friend understands that last week we spent a good deal of time talking about the fact that much of the baggage that is placed in an airliner is not screened for explosive devices. It is estimated that perhaps 5 percent is. But even the 5 percent that is being screened at Dulles International Airport, if I could just share a personal incident, this happened to me three times. I have flown out of Dulles now five times in the last few weeks, and three times I have been selected to have my luggage screened for explosive devices. Now, I am not sure what kind of profile I fit. Sometimes I think that maybe I am being screened because I am a Member of Congress and they want to convince me that the system is working. But here is how they have asked me to have my bags screened.

I have gone up to the ticket counter, I have given them my ticket, I have received my seat assignment. Then the person behind the ticket counter says to me, sir, we would like for you to take your bag and walk down this corridor until you come to the first crossover, turn to your left, go to the next main corridor, turn to your left, and you will see the machine, one of these CTX machines, \$1 million machines, you will see one of those machines over on your right, and they will screen your bag for you.

Now, that is absolutely absurd. Any person who was devious enough to have an explosive in a bag would not voluntarily, without being observed or without being escorted, carry that bag around and ask someone standing on the other side of the wall to screen that bag for an explosive device. It is just simply absurd.

This Argenbright Company, I assume, is involved in that kind of process. It is so ridiculous, it is almost unbelievable. I am almost embarrassed to share that, because I know it is hard for people to believe that we would have a \$1 million machine, we would have a process in place that would be so absurd and call it security.

I see my friend from California has stood.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Well, this is not about being inconvenienced; it is about being inefficient and senseless. We were talking about should we be protected here at the Capitol in a different fashion than our constituent in the traveling public is protected, and the answer, of course, is no.

We have to remember that it is the pilots that fly those planes and the flight attendants that work so hard to make us comfortable that are telling us and told us last week, federalize the system. That is what we would feel safe with.

They will; the public will. We know it is better. So we have one more chance this week in the conference discussion, the public does not care what a conference is or is not, but it is one more chance that we can get together and do the right thing.

I agree with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) that it is time for the different Members of Congress here to hear from their constituency about this. But we have to remind them, they cannot send letters, because we do not get any mail. Phone calls, e-mail, call the district offices, but be heard.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. If the gentleman would yield for another minute, I want to thank my colleague from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for joining us as well. I wanted to make one final point.

Frederico Pena, the Mayor of Denver, well respected for his accomplishments, helped to see that our new international airport was first approved and then built; and it has now become a world class facility. He then served as the Secretary of Energy and then Secretary of Transportation. He wrote an editorial last weekend entitled "Federalize Airport Screeners." If I could, I would like to enter this in the RECORD. He makes a compelling set of arguments for why we need to move to federalize our workers. He rebuts all of the arguments that have been made by people who do not want to take this step.

I know my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY), talked about this argument that somehow unionizing these workers would result in them being less productive; and we would not have an opportunity to dismiss those who were not effective. That is inaccurate at best, and just not right, when you get under the surface and understand what we were proposing in our legislation last week.

He says, just one example, that some people say the one-size-fits-all solution would not work. That was one of the arguments against our legislation. But it is uniform, consistent high security at all airports, which is exactly what is necessary, because terrorists can find the weakest link, as they did when they went to Boston and drove to Portland, Maine, flew back to Boston and then boarded those airlines that hit the World Trade Center.

If I could, I want to thank my colleague for hosting this very important Special Order, and I hope a week from now we can all celebrate because this legislation will be on the President's desk, he will sign it, and before the holiday season begins, we can know that the American people will not only be secure physically, but secure psychologically. That is as important in this

process as providing for the physical safety of all Americans who use our world-class aviation system.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I would like to share an anecdote regarding the wonderful Denver Airport. I know my friend is rightly proud of that great airport; but there is a problem there, and I would share this true story with the gentleman.

About a month ago some friends of mine in Denver, a young man with his wife and very young child, were going to fly to Columbus, Ohio, to visit this young man's mother. So they went to the Denver Airport, they had their tickets, they checked their luggage.

As they sat there waiting to get on the plane, they noticed someone who appeared to be nervous to them, and maybe they were allowing their imaginations to run wild, I do not know if they had a right to be concerned or not. But as they observed individuals boarding the plane that they were to fly, they saw this individual get on their plane, and so they were frightened so they chose to not fly on that airplane, but to drive from Denver to Columbus, which is a long distance.

But, guess what? Their luggage stayed on that plane. In the past we have thought, well, if a person checked luggage and flew on the plane, they would be unlikely to try to explode that plane because they would lose their own lives. But in this incident the traveling persons did not even bother to take the flight, and yet their luggage remained on that airplane.

That is another problem. We do not match passengers with luggage.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. If the gentleman will yield, it strikes me that given the advances in telecommunications and computing and data processing, that all we need is the will and the resources to provide the system that would make that bag and passenger match, something that could be done.

Mr. STRICKLAND. It absolutely could be done. But once again, there is a story in the newspaper today saying the airlines are opposed to this, because they say it would cost too much and it would slow down the process.

We cannot put a price tag on public safety. There are reasonable things we can do. It may add somewhat to our inconvenience. But as that woman in Columbus, Ohio, said to me, this woman who had gotten through security with a pair of large scissors, she said, I would not mind the inconvenience if it kept me safe. But people do not feel like what is currently happening is going to keep them safe. Quite frankly, I do not think that will be the case until we federalize this effort.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. People of all backgrounds and professions and experiences in my district have said to me, I will gladly pay the extra \$2 or \$3 on each ticket to insure that the security system is one that provides me a safe experience, provides my family and my friends a safe experience, and provides

all Americans who want to use our air system with the understanding and the security of knowing that they are not going to be threatened by another set of terrible acts such as we saw on September 11.

I want to thank my colleague for hosting this Special Order tonight.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I thank the gentleman for joining us. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. INSLEE. I just want to answer a couple of the questions people have asked about our plan of federalizing these security forces.

One of the arguments against this essentially has been you will not be able to layoff incompetent people once they are Federal employees. People should realize that in the Senate bill we have made provisions to give additional flexibility to management to lay people off, to take disciplinary action, consistent with their law enforcement function.

We need to treat these people like FBI agents, Border Patrol and Federal Marshals. They should have a similar disciplinary system, that perhaps does have more flexibility for management than a different Federal job. That is a really a red herring, because we have taken care of that, to make sure that if there is incompetence in that workforce, we can take care of it, just like we need to with Federal Marshals and the like. That is taken care of.

The second argument people have played is there are some other countries that have different systems. There are some other countries that do have some private contractors under government supervision, which is fine. Other countries have managed in some circumstances to make that work.

But those countries are not America. We are 20 times bigger than some of those countries, number one. Number two, those countries have not had a 10-year continued pattern of failure like we have had with this system; and, number three, and most importantly, those countries do not have a sick campaign system that allows these people with tons of money to come into the FAA and Congress and spread influence around and stop safety from being implemented.

□ 2115

Mr. Speaker, that is the difference that we have to pay attention to.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, that is a very good point. It is amazing to me that a company responsible for the security of the traveling public could violate procedures, hire felons, give false statements, be fined \$1 million and continue to be allowed to provide, quote, "security to our traveling public."

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, it is a symptom of the illness that affects our system, of why we have not had sufficient regulation.

But I do not know what the campaign system is in some of these countries, the Netherlands and other places, but I

know that they do not have a system like we do; otherwise they would have lousy security. They would have lousy security because the security companies would come in, spread influence around and block any safety or yank in their contracts when they do not do a good job.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, the gentleman has just reminded me of the fact that the gentleman and I sent a letter to the Speaker and to the majority leader asking that this House of Representatives not adjourn, that we stay in session throughout this year and attend to the important business of the American people.

One of the items we need to be attending to is the campaign finance issue. The campaign finance bill passed the Senate. All we need to do is pass it here in the House. The President has indicated, I believe, that he would sign the bill if the House were to pass it. If we did that, it would be a wonderful holiday gift to the American people, because the American people could then have confidence that regardless of what decision we made in this Chamber regarding airline security and a whole host of other things, that we were doing it out of the right motive, and that we were not doing it because we were trying to please some large contributor. That would be an amazing, wonderful gift for the American people.

That is why I do not think we should adjourn this House. We should not adjourn this House in time of war, we should not adjourn this House until the people's business has been attended to. That is one of the critical items that we need to address.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, every time the gentleman brings up campaign finance reform, I see the shelf, and if the leaders of this House will not move towards the other body's federalizing of aviation security, we are going to take aviation security and shelve it. So there will be campaign finance reform on the shelf, there will be aviation security on the shelf, there will be HMO reform on the shelf. It is all because of campaign finance reform. The gentleman is so absolutely right.

We have to remind everybody that last week the aviation security bill only passed out of the House with four additional votes on the passing side. That is not a mandate from anybody. So it needs to go back to ground zero and be rethought.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, it is of interest that the gentlewoman mentioned three critical issues: campaign finance reform, a Patient's Bill of Rights, which has passed the Senate, and now airline security. These three huge issues that are of such great importance to the American people could become law if we could just get the leadership in this Chamber to take the stranglehold off this Chamber and let it work its will.

We are near the end of our time together. I am wondering if the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) would just take a moment and reiterate the process that we are facing here. We have had the House and Senate bill. What is likely to happen? How can this bill become law by the end of this week? What needs to happen?

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, as the gentleman knows, the Senate passed a strong version requiring the Federal Government to assume responsibility for security of Americans in the air. It was 100 to zero. The bill came over to the House. It languished here for weeks and weeks and weeks after September 11. The Republican leadership refused to bring it up, essentially because they could not pass it. They finally brought it up last week and a very, very narrow margin passed a different version that had this giant hole in it, more Swiss cheese than anything; and now it goes to a conference committee where members of the House and Senate will meet to try to reconcile this to come up with a bill.

We are just very hopeful that now that America has found out about this bill and people have found out, as Siskel & Ebert would say, it is two thumbs down for America on its failure to federalize this responsibility, that the conferees will, in fact, adopt the Senate version and have the Federal Government have Uncle Sam take over this system like they should have done 10 years ago to prevent guns, knives, sticks, bottles and everything else getting through this poor system.

That can happen in conference committee. It can be signed into law by Monday by the President. We are hoping that Americans let their Members of Congress know what they think about it so that that is exactly what will happen.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, this is the situation: A relatively small number of Members of the House of Representatives and a relatively small number of Senators will make up this conference committee, and they will get together and try to resolve the differences, and then they will bring back a final version to this House to be voted upon and to the Senate to be voted upon. So it is still possible, is it not, that that conference committee could decide to federalize this security apparatus?

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, it is very possible, and it is more likely if Americans will let their elected officials know that that is what they want to see happen, that they want certified Federal marshals, Federal officials at these gates to make sure people are not taking bombs and are not hijacking airplanes. And if we do that, we think this conference committee can, should and will adopt a federalized work force.

I want to thank the gentleman for helping to get that message out.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from

California and the gentleman from Washington State and the gentleman from Texas and the gentleman from Colorado for joining us this evening.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight on an issue that is similar to that which has been discussed on this floor for the last hour or so, and that is national security. It was focused almost entirely, the last hour, that is, on airline or airport security.

It is an incredibly important issue. No one denies the fact that what is happening around the country in our airports in terms of security has got to be improved, and that there is a great deal of concern about how that should be accomplished, whether it is the federalization of screeners at airports or not.

That seems to be the major sticking point, and it is an interesting one, certainly. It is not a very relevant point, however. I am afraid it is only a rhetorical point. It provides the minority party the opportunity to come to the floor of the House and suggest that the majority party is responsible for a lack of action that would lead to airline and airport security because we have not passed their brand of airport security.

Now, that is predictable; it is understandable. That is the way this House operates.

It is interesting to note that little, if anything, can be accomplished in terms of true overall airport security and certainly, very little can be accomplished in terms of national security by simply doing what is suggested needs to be done over the objections of the majority party; and that is to federalize the screeners that look through that little box as stuff passes through the x-ray machine as one tries to reach one's flight.

That is really what this is all about. Should those people, the screeners, be Federal employees? Somehow, we are led to believe that in doing that one thing, just by making that one person, because remember, Mr. Speaker, regardless of the fact that those folks who were up here for the last hour kept talking about federalizing the system, we are not talking about federalizing the system.

The system includes airplane pilots and airplane attendants and baggage handlers and food handlers and mechanics and people who sell the tickets at the airport and people who pick up bags when people come to the baggage check-in area. That is the system. That is the airport system. No one, absolutely no one that I know of up to this point in time, has suggested federalizing that whole process, eliminating

the private entrepreneurial activity that goes on in airports all over this country, eliminating airlines taking over instead of the variety of airlines that we have.

Federalizing the system would mean one airline run by the Federal Government. It would mean all pilots, all airline attendants, everybody I mentioned earlier would be part of this, quote, "Federal system." That is what federalizing the system means.

Now, they use that phrase, "federalizing the system," but they are not really talking about that. They are talking about federalizing one tiny little part, making Federal employees of the people who look through that screen to determine what is going past the x-ray machine. And they are suggesting that somehow, somehow by magic, as if by magic, doing that, making those people who peer through that screen Federal employees, we will all be safer.

Now, there is a cachet to the whole concept of federalization. I understand it. It is a knee-jerk reaction. The other body had that reaction when they passed the original bill. It was a knee-jerk reaction. Some of those Members of the other body closer to the second half of knee-jerk were on television explaining why that needed to be done and suggesting that there is some enormous advantage to be gained as a result of making all of the folks who screen your baggage and look through that little machine Federal employees. But no one has ever said why.

Not once, not even in the 1 hour previous to this debate that I am having tonight, this discussion, did I hear anybody say that if we federalize these screeners, we will all be safer because. Because why? They will be what? Better trained? Well, fine. Does that mean that only a Federal employee can be trained?

Well, I do not think so. I do not think anybody believes that that is the case. Then why would it be better just to make them Federal employees?

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many times my colleagues take advantage of that particular mode of transportation, airplanes.

□ 2130

I do it twice a week. My family periodically joins me out here. My sons, my daughters-in-law, my grandchildren all fly on airplanes quite often.

They are the dearest things in my life, and to suggest, as our Members did in the previous hour, that if we vote against the federalization of airport security workers, of these baggage screeners, we are really surrendering to these money interests who evidently have put a lot of money into all these campaigns, and that is what has corrupted the system, they have suggested that the gentleman or I would in fact vote for a piece of legislation because somebody put money into my campaign, even though I thought that we would be less secure as a result of it.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I put every single person who donates 5 cents to my campaign on our Web site. Anybody can go to it any time they want. That is more than the FCC requires. They require that we disclose periodically anybody that has given us over \$200. We put everybody there. Everybody who gives us any money, we list them. We disclose them.

I challenge anyone to go to our Web site, my Web site, and find any contribution from Argenbright or any of these other organizations that we are talking about, security organizations.

I will tell the Members something else: if I were in charge right now of airline security, airport security at DIA, I would think very, very strongly of firing Argenbright. From everything I have heard, they are not doing a very good job. That may be the case. But I suggest, Mr. Speaker, it is easier to fire Argenbright security than it is to fire even one Federal employee.

I suggest something else: if the same circumstance would happen in the future as happened yesterday or the day before in Chicago when someone went through the security process; now as I understand it, here is what happened: somebody came through the security process, and they were detected as carrying something that needed to be identified; and those screeners found this gentleman carrying two knives, and they took them away from him.

What they did not do at that point in time was search his baggage. That happened some point later in the process when he was trying to board the plane and they found these other knives.

Okay. Now let us assume something was wrong in this whole thing, that they should have searched his bags earlier; undeniably true. But remember, they found, these incompetent private employees found the two knives initially and took them away. That is what they were supposed to do at that point.

Maybe there was some problem with what should have happened next, and as a result of that, some people may very well be fired as a result of not doing what was right and following procedure. I do not know exactly what the procedure was; but if there was something wrong, they could be fired, and I would suggest that they should be fired. We are not talking about an unimportant activity here; we are talking about the safety of the flying public. So I think the standards should be very high. If somebody did not meet that standard, they should be dismissed.

Think for a moment, Mr. Speaker, what would have happened if the exact same scenario that I just laid out had occurred, but the employees there had been Federal employees.

Does anybody think for a moment, by the way, that if we federalize the screeners, that this similar type of situation would not happen? Is that what I am being told by the other body, by the other body and including the other