

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

Members who spoke earlier, that if we federalize the screeners by making them Federal employees, somehow what I have just described, this process that happened in Chicago, would not happen?

Of course, why? Just making them Federal employees would make them, what, more astute, more intent on making sure that the procedures were followed? No. It is a problem, of course, of training and of standards. We know that. And it is silly to assume that just simply having Federal employees there would have changed the outcome.

But what would have changed, Mr. Speaker, is the possibility of the kind of action taken against the employees, because if they were Federal employees, regardless of what we try to write into a law about our ability to fire a Federal employee, about our ability to transfer a Federal employee, about our ability to stop a strike or a work slowdown of a Federal employee, all those things have been challenged in court; and time and time again they have been thrown out.

So it is just enough to put that into a piece of legislation, and to suggest that that is the way in which we would build a firewall between irresponsible action on the part of the union and the safety of the flying public is a ruse. It cannot happen. We cannot write laws to force people or to make it illegal for people to go on work slowdowns and strikes and to actually be fired if they are Federal employees if they do something wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I spent 12 years as the regional director of the U.S. Department of Education. I assure the Members that the ability to actually dismiss someone for incompetence as a Federal employee is darned near impossible. It would take, sincerely, it would take years; and it would take hundreds of thousands of dollars to get rid of just one, let alone several people who we found to be incompetent.

So I wonder, with that being laid out there, I just wonder, Mr. Speaker, what would be the outcome if these were Federal employees who had not followed the regulations correctly, as perhaps this happened in Chicago? We can at least fire the ones in Chicago. We will never be able to fire the Federal employees who would go through that same process and unfortunately make the same mistakes.

Now, somehow people, again, as I say, would feel better. They would go, oh, gee, that is all right. I feel better. I am more secure if these guys are Federal employees that are looking through that screen.

That is not it. If Argenbright, which has been referred to oftentimes in the last hour as the major contractor for security, if they are not doing it right, fire Argenbright. Fire Argenbright tomorrow. Bring someone else on who can do a better job. If whoever is responsible for hiring and firing Argenbright does not do their job, then hold them accountable politically.

That is the process that I believe would make us more secure.

I fly, as I say, every week, Mr. Speaker, twice a week to my family. I would never do anything, I would never cast a vote for anything that I did not believe would improve the security for my own family, and certainly myself.

So to suggest that our opposition to this particular proposal is based on, on what, payments I had gotten, or other Members have gotten, for voting the way we vote? As I say, go look. We were moving close there to taking down the gentleman's words when he suggested such a thing.

The other countries, we can look around the world and think about the other countries that have tried this. Yes, I know that they brought this up saying, well, the other countries have done this, but they are not like America. They do not have a political system that allows us or allows their politicians to be bought off. That is what they were saying.

I do not know about the Speaker, but I think that kind of statement is irresponsible. I think the suggestion of the Members on the other side that it is only our system of government that prevents us from federalizing airport security, and that is essentially what they said. Go back and read their words. They said that other countries do not have a system that allows the corruption of politics to occur as a result of the money that private companies put into this.

As I say, I had never heard of Argenbright Security in my life until this discussion over airport security began some month or two ago. They have certainly never contributed to my campaign; and I will tell the Members what, if they had given me 5 cents or \$5,000, which I suppose is the most they could give; no, they are a corporation, perhaps they cannot give a dime.

I do not know what the actual legal status of their arrangement is, but the reality is they have never given us any money. If they are a corporation, of course they never have been able to give any Member of this body any money.

So to suggest that our support for a private company being held to high standards, federally established standards, is somehow injudicious or an aspect of corruption, then I suggest that we take a very close look at those people who are making these charges and ask ourselves, for what purpose would they be coming to this floor with those kinds of spurious allegations?

There are many countries, many countries, such as the Netherlands, Japan, Belgium, France, Great Britain. These are excerpts from articles from the Washington Post with regard to countries who have at one point in time either employed or used federalization as a way to handle the airline security and moved away from it, or never started it to begin with.

The Netherlands: "As an armed member of the Dutch Royal Police looked

on, the guard, an employee of a private contractor who had undergone a year of training through the Royal Police Academy, began questioning the couple."

These are examples of what we can have, where we can have Federal oversight and private actual implementation of the process.

Japan. At Japan's Narita International Airport, the airlines hire separate companies to screen checked baggage, but combine to hire one contractor, one contractor to X-ray carry-on bags.

Belgium. Sixty government inspectors work at the Brussels airport to oversee about 400 employees of private companies; 60 inspectors oversee 400 employees of private companies.

Securitas, an arm of the Swedish Securis group, AB.

So there are alternatives to this Argenbright outfit, evidently.

France. In France, airports do the hiring of security contractors and must draw from a list of companies approved by the Interior Ministry. Fine. No problem.

Great Britain. Britain allows its airport to either hire a contractor or to perform the work themselves. Fine. Our bill, the bill that they so readily castigated over here, does exactly that. It allows the President to make whatever choice he wants in terms of how we will handle this issue, federalization or private or some combination thereof.

But it is the height of hypocrisy to come to this floor and suggest that the only way this can be done, because, of course, we are the only Nation that would be in this position of having private security firms overseen by the Federal Government, actually be responsible for the security of our airport; to castigate us for that and not share with the American public the truth of the matter, that there are many governments that do. And this is not a definitive list of those countries that have tried federalization of airport security and moved away from it; there are many others.

I suggest that we all should look carefully at this issue, and we should refrain from suggesting on the floor of this House or in any other medium that if a person votes for or against the bills that were on this floor not too long ago with regard to airline security, that we are doing so for any reason other than what we believe in our hearts to be the best thing for this Nation, and certainly for our own personal security, if nothing else, and for the security of our families who fly all of the time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me get to the second point of my discussion this evening. It will probably not be a surprise that that point is going to revolve around the issue of immigration and immigration reform.

I find it fascinating that we spend many hours on debate, in debate on this floor on the issue of, in this case,

airline security, and whether or not to actually make that individual who looks through that little box a Federal employee.

This has just been so, so difficult for us to handle, such a major issue, such an incredibly important change in the procedure in America, that it deserves the hours that have been spent here in debate.

I find it amazing that we have chosen to spend that much time in the debate over whether or not one tiny part of the entire airline system, just the lady or man who looks through that little screen, should be a Federal employee, that we find that to be the most important thing to talk about when it comes to our Nation's security; and we spend little if any time dealing with what I consider to be a far, far more important issue, and that is this: Would it not be better, would it not be better to spend at least as much time in the determination of who gets into this country in the first place, keeping track of them once they get here; trying to keep people who want to do us ill, want to do us ill, is it not better to do that than to even worry about what happens to them as they go through airport security, once they are here, once they are in the Nation?

How is it that we can ignore the fact that there are millions of people in this country illegally, that there are millions of people who have overstayed their visas, millions of people who violate our laws all the time, and we are so worried here?

I heard reference after reference to the fact that some of these private companies hire "noncitizens" to do the security at the airport, to look through that screen.

□ 2145

This has been said with aghast, taken aback, to use the Casa Blanca line. They are shocked, shocked to find that noncitizens are being employed at the airports. Hello, noncitizens, and not just noncitizens but illegal aliens in the United States are being employed in every aspect of American life; and no one seems to care about that, and no one seems to care about the fact that hundreds of thousands, in fact, millions of people cross our borders every single year, without going through the system, without going to apply for a visa, without coming through a border checkpoint so that someone could determine who they are and where they are going and why. Millions of people come across our borders where there is no checkpoint and where no visa is required. They sneak into the country.

It is true that certainly a huge, vast percentage of the people who do that are not coming here to do harm to the United States. They are coming here for their own personal benefit, and it is understandable. It is also true that some of them may not have the best interests of the United States at heart. It is true that some of them who come

across illegally may, in fact, be coming here to do us harm.

Mr. Speaker, 19 people, all of them noncitizens of this country, on September 11, 19 people, as we all know too well, hijacked airplanes, crashed them into buildings or were prevented from doing so by the heroic efforts of certain efforts of the crew and/or passengers, I should say, on one of those flights.

Who were they? Who are these people? Who were these people? All, of course, unable to tell their own story because they are dead. But who were they and how did they get here?

My staff asked the INS shortly after September 11 for a list of those people and for their immigration status. We got nothing back; and finally, the only thing that they told us to look at was a press release from the FBI that listed all 19 people and had three of them identified with a particular status, and all of them were visa holders.

One of those they had identified had overstayed their visa. It turns out that 13 were here on visa status of one form or another, one category or another, some of those here illegally because they had overstayed their visas or were not doing what the visa had said they were supposed to be doing here.

Six of them, Mr. Speaker, up to this point in time, as to this time right now, November 6, we have not the slightest idea how they got here or who they are. We may know their names, but we do not know what their status was. We do not know how they entered the United States of America, six of them. The INS finally had to admit it. It is one of those shrug-your-shoulders, I-do-not-know, I-am-not-sure, I-do-not-know-how-they-got-here.

Let me suggest that they did not come through the regular process. Let me suggest that they did not apply for a visa in Saudi Arabia. We would know that. Let me suggest they did not come through one of the border checkpoints and use their name. We know that. We would know that.

Let me suggest they got here some other way. How could that be? How could it be that somebody could come into the United States and we would not know it? Of course, that is how millions of people come into this country. They swim across rivers. They take canoes across rivers in the north. It is a little colder. They walk across into the deserts of the South or into the mountains in the north, but they come by the millions.

We have absolutely no plans today to defend against that. Nothing will change. Nothing has changed. We are approaching the 2-month mark since the tragedy in New York and Pennsylvania; and yet I have seen not one significant piece of legislation on this floor or even in the developmental stages that would reform the process, reform the immigration system so that we could begin to think that our borders are being secured. Nothing.

We are certainly concerned about whether or not the person that looks

through that little device at the airport is a Federal employee. Give me a break, Mr. Speaker. Where in the world are our priorities here? Do we honest to God think that if we only federalize the screeners that we will be safe in America? That something as horrendous, if not even more so than the September 11 event, would not occur? Do we really believe that? Of course not. Of course not.

It is political rhetoric, my friends. It is partisanship rearing its ugly head on this floor. Incredible as that may sound, that appears to me to be what is happening here; and it is a reluctance on the part of this body, certain Members of this body certainly, to advance the concept of immigration reform because of the fear of two things: one, the political backlash that will occur among certain ethnic groups.

There is a fear that if we were to try and clamp down on our borders, especially Mexican nationals who come to the United States, stay here for a long enough period of time, either vote illegally themselves or through gaining legal status or their children who are born here as American citizens and who then vote, would somehow make one of our parties pay the price for being hard on immigration.

There is that fear. There is a recognition of the fact that most of the people, massive numbers of immigrants coming across the border eventually grow into, as they become eligible to vote and some of them, of course, unfortunately, voting even if they are not eligible to do so, but will vote primarily for one party, in this case the Democratic Party.

So the Democratic Party is reluctant to talk about this issue, although they are very happy to talk about whether or not screeners should be Federal employees, spend hours on it. But they will not talk about illegal immigrants coming across the border and the threat that porous borders poses to this Nation. Again, I say it is not the vast majority of people coming across those borders illegally that pose a threat to the health of the Nation or the stability of the Nation in a very immediate sense, although they may pose that in the long run. But the fact is that unless we secure our borders against all of those people who are trying to come here illegally, we cannot hope to prevent another incident.

Even if we did, I understand fully well, Mr. Speaker, that even if we did do everything I am suggesting, put troops on the border, if not active military put on National Guard troops to secure our borders, use technology to monitor the borders, use every aspect of military and police work available to us to make sure our borders are secure, overnights and patrols and electronic monitoring, if we did all of that, we cannot be absolutely positive that nothing else would ever happen as a result of somebody sneaking into the country.

But let me ask, Mr. Speaker, let me ask the American public, should we do

any less? Should we not do everything we can to make sure that those borders are secure simply because we cannot make sure they are absolutely impervious?

Mr. Speaker, I have said on more than one occasion that, God forbid, if something else happens similar to the occurrence of September 11, and we find that they are perpetrated by people who came into the United States illegally, or even came here legally with a visa status that we gave them but did not monitor, and they perpetrate another event of a similar nature, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we are not just going to be held to be irresponsible as a Congress, but we are going to be held to be culpable. And I recognize that this is a very strong statement, but I cannot for the life of me figure out why it is not true.

We sit here, Mr. Speaker, with the ability to put in place a system that would be far more efficient than presently exists. We are the only people, this Congress is the only thing that can act. We cannot expect States to actually do the work of immigration reform for us. We have to do it. We are the only ones with that authority and with that responsibility.

But why is it that we have refused to do so? As I said, there is a political price to pay, that is for sure. And we understand that there is a political benefit to pandering to illegal aliens. There is also on our side of the aisle a reluctance to deal with this issue because of economic implications. The fact is that many, many of our jobs are being taken, many jobs in this country are being taken by illegal immigrants or by people who are here legally but are willing to work for less than an American citizen would work for. That is true. And, therefore, we have pressure on our side, on the Republican side, the people who have business interests, to avoid doing anything that might impede the flow of low-cost employees, low-wage, low-skilled people; or in some cases like H1B, which I will talk about in a minute, high-skilled people but still lower paid.

Let me go into that for a moment, Mr. Speaker. H1B is a visa category that allows people to come into the United States, about 160,000 a year, by the way. And they can stay here for up to 6 years to work in jobs that, quote, "no one else will take." Jobs like computer programmer at some of the most prestigious companies in America in terms of technology. These really rotten jobs that no one else will take, computer programmer, analyst.

We were told by the mavens of industry that in this particular arena, technology, that we could not hire enough people. They could not hire enough people, qualified people, here in the United States. So we had to grant H1B visa status to 165,000, at least, every single year. Let them stay for 6 years. So we now accumulated several million, 4 or 5 million people here in the United States on that status, H1B visa status.

Now, unless it has escaped us, Mr. Speaker, and I do not believe it has, there has been a change in the economy over the last year. Starting with the last quarter of the Clinton administration, the economy has begun a slow but steady decent into what is now undeniably a recession. Yesterday, I believe it was, unemployment figures came out; and the figures were frighteningly high, higher than they have been in well over a decade. Especially frightening in the area of high-tech jobs where hundreds of thousands of people have been laid off.

Mr. Speaker, in America today there are factually millions of people looking for work, people who can operate in this capacity as a computer programmer or whatever and people with various other skills who are looking for work.

□ 2200

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it is time for us in this body to revisit the whole idea, the whole issue of H-1B, and I have, in fact, introduced a bill to abolish H-1B visas. I think, Mr. Speaker, we do not need them anymore. I do not think we needed them when we passed them. I think we did it as a favor to some large corporations in the United States because they could get people to come to the United States and work for less than they could hire an American worker to do the same job.

And I say that with the recognition that there are people in the United States who I know today are unemployed and unemployed because an H-1B visa holder took his or her job, took a job that those people would be qualified for and would be doing except, of course, they asked for more money.

Now, this kind of thing, to my friends on our side who are Libertarians and who feel as though we should not really care about the issue of high wages for American employees, that it is all a function of markets and we should just simply erase the borders, let people come and go freely, that is all fine. It is an idealistic concept. But the idea of open borders, I think by now has been totally and completely discredited, for obvious reasons. Look where we are. Look what has happened to us. Look what happened on September 11.

The idea that American citizens who need and want jobs should be kept from those jobs because there are H-1B visa holders here is, I think, unconscionable. But it is where we are.

And let me tell my colleagues what has happened, Mr. Speaker. It is true because there have been many layoffs in industry, the high-tech industry especially, that some of these H-1B holders are out of work or were out of work. Now, the law says, by the way, that if they are no longer employed by the company that hired them to bring them over here as an H-1B visa holder, they must go home. That is the law.

The INS has said essentially that we are going to look the other way. They

say, do not worry about it. When H-1B holders call them and say, what am I going to do, I am out of work, am I going to have to go home? They say, well, we are in the process of writing regulations, so we will let you know. Other people have been told they have a couple of months to look for another job; take another job away from an American citizen because, after all, you are here. We would not want you to be disadvantaged. We would not want you to have to leave the country.

The INS is no longer an organization that looks out for the best interests of the United States. The INS is an organization that has turned into a bunch of social workers. Immigration social workers. That is how they think of themselves, Mr. Speaker. They are not concerned about the health of this Nation, about the impact of massive immigration on the overall course of the Nation, and certainly not concerned about the fact that American workers are being displaced by H-1B visa holders.

Why do we still have H-1B visa holders in light of the fact that there has been a significant turndown in the economy? For one reason, Mr. Speaker, because this body is afraid to take that up. There are powerful interests who want the H-1B visa status to be expanded, certainly maintained, because they get many workers here at a lower price than they can hire American workers for. That is the story. I wish it were not true, but it is true.

And it is actually totally understandable, I suppose, if you are an employer whose eye is only on the bottom line and could not care less about the United States of America. And, believe me, what we now call multinational corporations, that is a good, good descriptor. They are multinational. They could not care less about America. Their interests are bottom line, and so should they be.

Maybe we can argue their interests should be just that, bottom line. But I argue that our interests in this body should be for the people in the United States who are citizens of this country, who are looking for jobs and are competing with people who have been brought into the country, albeit good people.

I do not suggest for a moment because someone is here as an H-1B visa holder that they are a bad individual. That is absolutely not true and irrelevant. They are fine people looking to better their own lives. I understand it. I empathize with them. But my job is not to make sure that every single unemployed person in the world is given the opportunity to take an American job. That is not what I consider to be my responsibility as a Member of this body.

Yet my bill for the elimination of H-1B status will not be heard, I will predict. We will not even get a hearing, Mr. Speaker. My bill to put a moratorium on the deliverance of visas will not be heard, I fear. My request, as the

chairman of the Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus, to have a bill that would actually reform the INS by abolishing that responsibility that they take so casually, that is for enforcement, abolishing that and creating a brand-new agency that includes some of the responsibilities that are now given to the INS, Customs, Treasury, Coast Guard, and others for border security and internal security.

We would abolish those agencies, or those parts of agencies that are now given that responsibility, an overlapping and confusing and conflicting responsibility, and create a new agency under Governor Ridge, under the Homeland Defense Agency. We could call it the National Border Security Agency, or whatever we want; but let us make sure that it has only one responsibility, not to on the one hand hand out green cards and help individuals get legal status in the United States, help them figure out a way to get here and achieve their life's dreams as an immigrant, but has as its only responsibility to make sure that people we do not want in this country cannot get into this country, and to make sure that those people who are here illegally are deported.

Now, that is the true and real responsibility of a Federal Government. It is especially our responsibility now. It does not mean we slam the door shut to every single immigrant. We will hear that, I know; that what we are trying to do is deny our heritage as immigrants, as a nation of immigrants. Poppycock. It is irrelevant to talk about the fact that we are all here as immigrants.

Yes, well, so what? What has that got to do with September 11 and what we should do from that day forward? It is irrelevant. It does not matter. Because if we continually look to the past in that respect to try to determine what we do in the future, why do we not simply abandon the border? How much of a death wish do we have?

It is not the fact that we cannot grow our own terrorists. It has happened. But it is the fact that right now the most significant threat we face to this country does not come from a home-grown terrorist; it comes from an immigrant, people who are here either legally or illegally, who are not U.S. citizens, and are here to destroy this Nation.

Now, how do we stop that? Do we just say that only those people whom we deem to be potential terrorists are going to be given a hard time trying to get a visa? Well, that is what we have proposed.

That is the huge immigration reform proposal we have had so far, that we are going to make it much more difficult, Mr. Speaker, for anybody to come into this country on a student visa; and we are going to actually try to make sure if they do come in on a student visa, they go to school.

Well, I feel so much better. That, combined with making sure that that

person that is peering through that little box a Federal employee will make me sleep so much easier at night. Idiotic. Almost incomprehensible. But here we are. Here we are.

By the way, when I talk about my suggestion for a bill that would move us in the direction of a brand-new agency, it will not be heard. I am sure it will not find its way into legislative format. I am more than willing to draft a bill, Mr. Speaker, but if history is any guide, I am going to bet that I would not be very successful in getting that bill heard in the committee of reference, the Committee on the Judiciary, chaired by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER), or any other place in this process.

I suggest that there is a problem that needs to be addressed of far greater significance than who pays the salary of the person who looks through the screening device at the airport when we talk about the security of the Nation. Far more serious. Far more serious. The defense of the Nation begins with the defense of our borders.

I find it fascinating, almost, again, incomprehensible that time and again I have to come to this floor and plead with my colleagues to do something significant about immigration reform, to do something that would in fact improve the security of the Nation; that in fact would help us all sleep a little easier.

I ask my colleagues to think about the fact that as we stand here tonight on the floor of the House, not one thing has happened to improve the security of our borders, although a great deal of attention is paid to trying to get on an airplane in America. And whether it is improved or not, I do not know. I certainly go through a lot more security every single week than I ever did before.

But nothing has really happened to change the fact that if a person wanted to come into this Nation and avoid being detected, he or she could easily do so. All it would take is the willingness to expend a little energy to get around the border security checkpoint. That is all it takes.

We talk about tightening the visa requirements. I am all for it. But I ask, Mr. Speaker, for us to apply just a tiny bit of logic to this whole process, this whole question, to this controversy.

Let us assume for a moment that we have someone, a member of the al-Qaeda, or any one of the other various groups that want to do us harm, and that person is in, let us say Saudi Arabia today, or Pakistan or the UAE, or any country that requires a visa. And by the way, we do not require every country to actually approve visas for people coming into the United States.

But let us say that person is coming from one of those countries, and they go to the consulate to try to get a visa and they find out the requirements are a little more difficult: that there is actually a form they have to fill out, maybe even a fingerprint they have to

give, maybe even some other form of identification that actually will be shared with other agencies; and that information from the CIA and other groups will all be stored in one place, and we will be able to determine whether this person trying to come into the United States is connected with a terrorist organization; and therefore we will say to them, no, sir, you cannot come in, we will not give you a visa.

Then will we go, oh, thank God, that stopped that. That person is now probably going to go home and say, you know, Mr. bin Laden, I tried to get into the United States but, hey, they would not give me a visa. So I guess I just will not go any farther with this plan. I will just go home and take my bomb with me. I do not think so. I do not think so, Mr. Speaker.

Again, let us apply a little logic. If that person wants to come into the United States, and let us assume we actually tighten up visa requirements, then that person, of course, will come the way that millions of others come every year. He will simply walk across the border, the part of the border that is undefended, and come into the United States, probably the same way that at least six of the nineteen hijackers on September 11 came in. We do not know because, as I say, the INS cannot tell us. They have not the slightest idea how they got here. They shrug their shoulders. I do not know. Gee, we are just the INS, do not expect us to keep track of people.

Here is an interesting statement that was reported in the Marietta Daily Journal in Georgia. It is from Fred Alexander, who is the INS Deputy District Director, speaking to a group of "undocumented day workers."

□ 2215

If I am driving without my driver's license, I am undocumented. But if I am here illegally, I am an illegal alien. "It's not a crime to be in the United States illegally. It's a violation of civil law."

Oh, I see. It is not a crime to be here illegally. That sentence makes all of the sense in the world. No problem. I do not know if this fellow is really that unable to understand the English language. Perhaps he himself is not able to really communicate well in English, although his name does not suggest it. It is not a crime to be in the United States illegally; it is a violation of civil law. I do not know what that means except this guy is trying to say do not worry about being here illegally. The INS is here to help you. That is what he is saying.

Members wonder why we are concerned about the INS and why we are trying to push this body into truly reforming the INS. There will be bills put into the hopper that will split the INS into two. That idea is not good enough because of course, if we do not gain control over the entire process, we will soon be left with this peculiar and at

least questionable method of border security where people actually look at lines, and this happens, Mr. Speaker. People will actually view which line is being monitored, and this is coming across the border now, which line is being monitored by border patrol and which line is being monitored by any other agency. Customs in this case in particular, because of course Customs has certain regulations that they have to follow and Border Patrol has others. Border Patrol does not look in certain places where Customs will look. If you are trying to smuggle drugs in, you will come in via one line; and if you are smuggling people, you will come via the other. That happens. It is incredible, but it is true. It is because we have this mish-mash of responsibilities.

Trying to actually change all that, reform the system, this is our greatest opportunity, Mr. Speaker. This is the greatest opportunity we have ever had to reform immigration; but I fear that the lethargy, the inertia is so strong and the political obstacles to overcome are so great. We fear the political ramifications of immigration control, both Republicans and Democrats. Those ramifications are significant, but none more so than the potential safety of the Nation.

We have asked, this is our e-mail address and if Americans want to get in touch, we have encouraged them to write Tom.Tancredo@mail.house.gov for more information about immigration reform and for us to be in communication with people when there are important bills coming up in the Congress that they should be aware of and that we can request their help.

This is the only way that this will happen, the only way any of the reforms will be accomplished is if there is a huge outcry, to both Senate and Members of the House, to please, please do something more than just give lip service to immigration reform. Please develop true immigration reform proposals, put them in front of the President for him to sign.

We are going to be looking at one issue coming soon, and that is the extension of 245(i). The only thing we are going to do is perhaps extend amnesty for literally millions of people who are here illegally. That is going to be coming up on the House floor. Whether it is a part of the Commerce, State, Justice appropriations bill or a freestanding bill, that is what we are going to be asked to do, not throw out H-1Bs or diversity visas which give 55,000 visas to special countries because they do not send us enough people, many of those Middle Eastern countries, not to reduce or eliminate the number of immigrants coming into the country, not border security, not doing anything about truly trying to significantly change and improve immigration at INS by creating a new agency, entirely new agency. None of that.

What we are going to be asked to do is to extend, for the ability of people to

stay without going through the process of being reviewed in their country of origin so we will not know whether or not they have a criminal background or whether or not they are connected with any sort of agency that will bring harm to the United States. That is what we are going to be facing.

If people are willing to help us, we encourage them to go to that Web site, Tom.Tancredo@mail.house.gov. We need the help of everyone on this issue. It is the only way we will improve the whole procedure of immigration. It is the only way we will reform immigration and the only way we will be able to sleep easier at night, and that is what we are seeking here. It is far more important in my mind and in the mind of most people than who pays the salary, than the person who looks through the screening device at the airport.

TRIBUTE TO JERRY WILLIAMS AND REPRESENTATIVE BOB DORRAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHUSTER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) for his very excellent statement about the state of the country with respect to control of our borders and the important need to hesitate at this point in our history and put together a strategy that allows us to control our borders and to get a handle on immigration, and on all of the people who have come into this country legally but stayed beyond their legal limit and apparently did not care. I would hope to work with the gentleman and lots of others in the House over the next several months and try to get our arms around this important issue. I thank my colleague for his statement.

Mr. Speaker, on 9-14, just a couple of days after the tragic occurrence that we have been so focused on, a real American, a great Westerner, passed away. That gentleman was named Jerry Williams. I knew him as Mr. Williams because I had a lot of respect for him and for the legacy that he represented.

If one drives north from my district in San Diego and you go past Camp Pendleton, it is the only open area between San Diego and the greater Los Angeles area, and you proceed north, you can drive for hours without leaving the site of lots of pavement, lots of construction, lots of traffic and lots of people. That is the southern California that most Americans know. They see it on television. They see it in person when they fly into LAX or San Diego or any other metropolitan area in southern California.

But if one goes north and inland, one comes to a different California. It is a California of rolling foot hills, and I

am speaking of the Santa Barbara area, big oak trees draped with Spanish moss, and a legacy and a tradition of the Old West, a tradition that was started with the founding of the missions along the California coastline.

There are not a lot of great Western families left in southern California because we have urbanized enormously; but there are still a few, and Jerry Williams was one of those great Western ranchers. He represented a hospitality, a big heart, a sense of giving, a sense of community, that is now more rare in the West than it was 20 or 30 years ago.

I got to know him by knowing his sons, Rodney and J.P. Williams, and their families, and their good neighbor, John Wiester and his wonderful wife. The Santa Ynez Valley has a spirit of hospitality, just inland from Santa Barbara 15 or 20 miles with one coastal range between the valley and the Pacific Ocean.

President Ronald Reagan found that area to be the area that he wanted to locate in and he put his house on top of that mountain range about 10 miles or so from the Pacific Ocean.

But that was the world of Jerry Williams. He was a rancher. He was a farmer. He was a businessman extraordinare. Jerry gave of himself to his community during his entire life. He and his wife, Nancy, lived in the Santa Ynez Valley for 40 years. Wild Turkeys flew overhead, and they had a pet raccoon or two. They had a wonder world for their grandchildren, and I could see this was a Western family that really cared about family.

Jerry Williams was a member of the Santa Barbara Cattlemen's Association; the Santa Barbara Fiesta Days is an event that we all remember. For 10 years he was a member of the board of that wonderful event until for the last 10 years he was the chairman of that particular board. This was a guy who represented a lot of California that many of us knew and loved and would like to see return. It is the California of graciousness and hospitality and goodness and people who make business deals by shaking your hand, not by bringing in a troop of lawyers. That was Jerry Williams.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to talk about Mr. Williams a little bit and to honor his legacy and the tradition that he has left in the California ranch country.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about another individual. This individual is very much alive. I thought about him today as I was going through the New York Times and read the story about the defeat of Daniel Ortega, who at one time was the leader of communist Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and ran for president, and for the third time was defeated, this time by Enrique Balanos who is a businessman who was arrested a number of times, who always spoke out against the Sandinistas and had much of his property confiscated during the Contra wars.

This race was considered to be one that would go down to the wire. Mr.