

In the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, I cannot support a proposal to contract out the air traffic control function to the lowest bidder in the heart of this critically important corridor.

Immediately after September 11, this Congress passed legislation to take the air passenger screening function out of the hands of private bidders and place it in the hands of a federalized screening force. For the life of me, I do not understand why the Bush administration wants to take the exact opposite approach when it comes to the highly skilled personnel that actually control the movement of our aircraft.

The administration has also cited an interest in privatizing other aspects of our Nation's national air traffic control enterprise, including the employees at our Nation's flight service stations and the technicians that maintain our Nation's air traffic control equipment.

These privatization ideas have not been adequately explained or adequately justified to the Congress or to the public. It has not been determined that such contracting out activities would actually improve upon the exemplary safety record that we currently enjoy with our air traffic control system. I, along with many of my colleagues, have deep-seated doubts about the safety ramifications, the security ramifications and whether there will be any real financial benefit to the taxpayer as a result of such a privatization scheme. It was for these reasons that I and 42 of my Senate colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, were required to vote against bringing debate on this bill to a close on November 17, and why I joined 55 of my colleagues in support of a measure to explicitly exclude privatization of our air traffic control towers during the initial debate on the Senate bill. At that time, we did not have what I considered to be adequate assurances from the FAA that they would not be launching into these privatization schemes in the very near future.

I am pleased that we have now overcome this hurdle and the administration has given us assurances that they will not engage in any competition studies or outsourcing activities for air traffic controllers or for maintenance and technician personnel during fiscal year 2004. This will give the Congress some time to review the administration's plans in detail, which I intend to do during next year's appropriations' hearings process. Also, with the written assurance now in hand that no outsourcing activities related to our air traffic control system will take place in 2004, we can, if need be, work on putting sufficient safeguards in the 2005 Transportation Appropriations Act if we feel that the administration is heading in the wrong direction when it comes to protecting safety and security.

It is for these reasons that I am relieved by the administration's new let-

ter on this topic which I understand has already been put into the RECORD. I am glad that we have overcome this hurdle.

This bill will provide investments in critical infrastructure and operations at our Nation's airports. Furthermore, it will allocate needed funding to continue our efforts to improve the security of aviation system.

For these reasons, I support this important conference report today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the request of the Senator from Maine is so ordered.

The conference report was agreed to. Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I see the Senator from North Dakota. If the Senator has a very brief comment to make, I yield to him.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I appreciate the courtesy of the Senator from Maine. Let me say with respect to the unanimous consent she just offered to pass the FAA conference report, I would like to say that Senator LAUTENBERG has led the fight in this Chamber to try to prevent the privatization during this coming fiscal year of those who work for the FAA. That fight required us to go through one cloture vote and the majority did not invoke cloture. As a result, the FAA conference report was not passed.

Since that time, I and Senators LAUTENBERG, HOLLINGS, LOTT, ROCKEFELLER and others have engaged in discussions with the administration. I want to point out that the letter just printed in the RECORD by unanimous consent is from Marion Blakey. She says:

During this fiscal year we have no plans to initiate additional competitive sourcing studies, nor will we displace FAA employees by entering into binding contracts to convert to private entities any existing FAA position directly related to our air traffic control system.

I point out that the reason we were able to move this conference report tonight was because the administration has agreed they will not, during this fiscal year, privatize those positions in the FAA. That is a very important position, one that my colleague, Senator LAUTENBERG, from New Jersey, fought very hard for. We have achieved that commitment from the administration.

For that reason, we were able to move that FAA reauthorization. Let me say how pleased I am because it is so important to virtually every region of this country. The investment in the Airport Improvement Program and the other things that provide strength to the FAA system is very important to our country.

Let me thank my colleague from Maine. I wanted to explain the circumstances that have led to this point and especially say I have been pleased to work with Senator LOTT, in many contacts over recent days, to try to accomplish this and again say that my colleague from New Jersey, Senator LAUTENBERG, deserves a pat on the back for forcing this result.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM ACT OF 2003

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now proceed to consideration of Calendar No. 404, S. 1741, a bill to provide a site for the National Women's History Museum in the District of Columbia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1741) to provide a site for the National Women's History Museum in the District of Columbia.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the bill be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 1741) was read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 1741

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "National Women's History Museum Act of 2003".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) the National Women's History Museum, Inc., is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, educational institution incorporated in the District of Columbia;

(2) the National Women's History Museum was established—

(A) to research and present the historic contributions that women have made to all aspects of human endeavor; and

(B) to explore and present in a fair and balanced way the contributions that women have made to the Nation in their various roles in family and society;

(3) the National Women's History Museum will collect and disseminate information concerning women, including through the establishment of a national reference center for the collection and preservation of documents, publications, and research relating to women;

(4) the National Women's History Museum will foster educational programs relating to the history and contribution to society by women, including promotion of imaginative educational approaches to enhance understanding and appreciation of historic contributions by women;

(5) the National Women's History Museum will publicly display temporary and permanent exhibits that illustrate, interpret, and demonstrate the contributions of women;

(6) the National Women's History Museum requires a museum site near the National Mall to accomplish the objectives and fulfill the ongoing educational mission of the museum;

(7) the 3-story glass enclosed structure known as the "Pavilion Annex" is a retail shopping mall built next to the Old Post Office in 1992 by private developers using no Federal funds on public land in the Federal

Triangle south of Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.;

(8) the Pavilion Annex came into the possession of the General Services Administration following bankruptcy and default by the private developer of the Old Post Office Pavilion;

(9) the Pavilion Annex has been vacant for 10 years and is in a state of disrepair;

(10) the Pavilion Annex is located near an area that has been identified as an ideal location for museums and memorials in the Memorials and Museums Master Plan developed by the National Capital Planning Commission;

(11) the National Women's History Museum will provide a vibrant, cultural activity in a building currently controlled by the General Services Administration but unused by any Federal agency or activity;

(12) the General Accounting Office has determined that vacant or underutilized properties present significant potential risks to Federal agencies, including—

(A) lost dollars because of the difficulty of maintaining the properties; and

(B) lost opportunities because the properties could be put to more cost-beneficial uses, exchanged for other needed property, or sold to generate revenue for the Government;

(13) the National Women's History Museum will use Government property for which there is no Government use as of the date of enactment of this Act, in order to—

(A) promote utilization, economy, and efficiency of Government-owned assets; and

(B) create an income producing activity;

(14) the National Women's History Museum will attract an estimated 1,500,000 visitors annually to the District of Columbia; and

(15) the National Women's History Museum will promote economic activity in the District of Columbia by—

(A) creating jobs;

(B) increasing visitor spending on hotels, meals, and transportation; and

(C) generating tax revenue for the District of Columbia.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Administrator” means the Administrator of General Services.

(2) MUSEUM SPONSOR.—The term “Museum Sponsor” means the National Women's History Museum, Inc., a nonprofit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia.

(3) PAVILION ANNEX.—The term “Pavilion Annex” means the building (and immediate surroundings, including any land unoccupied as of the date of enactment of this Act) in Washington, District of Columbia that is—

(A) known as the “Pavilion Annex”;

(B) adjacent to the Old Post Office Building;

(C) located on Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., to the east of 11th Street N.W.; and

(D) located on land bounded on 3 sides by the Internal Revenue Service buildings.

SEC. 4. OCCUPANCY AGREEMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Administrator shall enter into an occupancy agreement to make the Pavilion Annex available to the Museum Sponsor for use as a National Women's History Museum in accordance with this section.

(b) APPRAISAL.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, a fair market value for the purpose of determining rent shall be determined by not more than 3 appraisers, operating under a common set of instructions, of whom—

(A) 1 shall be retained by the Administrator;

(B) 1 shall be retained by the Museum Sponsor; and

(C) 1 shall be selected by the first 2 appraisers only if—

(i) the first 2 appraisals are irreconcilable; and

(ii) the difference in value between the first 2 appraisals is greater than 10 percent.

(2) DIFFERENCE OF NOT MORE THAN 10 PERCENT.—If the 2 appraisals differ by not more than 10 percent, the fair market value shall be the average of the 2 appraisals.

(3) IRRECONCILABLE APPRAISALS.—If a third appraiser is selected—

(A) the fee of the third appraiser shall be paid in equal shares by the Administrator and the Museum Sponsor; and

(B) the fair market value determined by the third appraiser shall bind both parties.

(c) TERM OF OCCUPANCY AGREEMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The term of the occupancy agreement shall be at least 99 years, or any lesser term agreed to by the Museum Sponsor.

(2) FIRST PAYMENT.—The first payment shall be due on the date that is 5 years after the date of execution of the occupancy agreement.

(d) PRIVATE FUNDS.—The terms and conditions of the occupancy agreement shall facilitate raising of private funds for the modification, development, maintenance, security, information, janitorial, and other services that are necessary to assure the preservation and operation of the museum.

(e) SHARED FACILITIES.—The occupancy agreement may include reasonable terms and conditions pertaining to shared facilities to permit continued operations and enable development of adjacent buildings.

(f) RENOVATION AND MODIFICATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The renovation and modification of the Pavilion Annex—

(A) shall be carried out by the Museum Sponsor, in consultation with the Administrator; and

(B) shall—

(i) be commenced as soon as practicable but not later than 5 years after the date of execution of the occupancy agreement;

(ii) sever the walkway to the Old Post Office Building; and

(iii) enhance and improve the Pavilion Annex consistent with the needs of the National Women's History Museum and the adjacent structures.

(2) EXPENSE CREDIT.—Any expenses incurred by the Museum Sponsor under this subsection shall be credited against the payment under subsection (c)(2).

(g) REPORT.—If the Administrator is unable to fully execute an occupancy agreement within 120 days of the date of enactment of this Act, not later than 150 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Governmental Affairs in the Senate and the Committee on Government Reform in the House of Representatives a report summarizing the issues that remain unresolved.

SEC. 5. EFFECT ON OTHER LAW.

Nothing in this Act limits the authority of the National Capital Planning Commission.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I now ask unanimous consent to engage in a colloquy with the Senator from Alaska, and I yield to the Senator from Alaska for that purpose.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today and engage in this colloquy with the Senator from Maine. I thank the Presiding Officer for the opportunity to

speaking about opening a National Women's History Museum near the National Mall.

Currently, the National Women's History Museum is without a home. It is accessible online, but Americans need a physical location for the National Women's History Museum so a history from every State can be collected, viewed, and analyzed.

Recognizing the Senator from Maine and this Senator from Alaska have a connection, both of us coming from Northern States, both of us coming from States with populations that are relatively small, both States have a history that demonstrates a history of pioneering women. Alaska and Maine have historically afforded opportunities that might not be available to women in other States.

Throughout Alaska's and Maine's history, women have had perhaps more opportunities because our populations are isolated, and you are forced to be a little more self-reliant.

Women of Alaska and Maine, as their male counterparts, are ingrained with the ability to make do with what we have. I ask the Senator from Maine if she would agree with some of my statements?

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I certainly do agree with the distinguished Senator from Alaska. Both of us have had the opportunity to serve in public office. Both of us come from States that are small in population but large in the impact that women have had on our Nation's history. We are from States with rich histories of accomplishments by women of all backgrounds and cultures.

For example, the legendary Senator Margaret Chase Smith was the first woman in history to serve in both the U.S. House and the Senate.

Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins, who has been called the dean of African-American Women Writers, and who has been considered one of the most prolific black female writers in the beginning of the 1900s, was born in Portland, ME.

Mary Gabriel, of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, was a famous Native-American basket weaver, largely credited with reviving the art in the State of Maine.

Brenda Commander is the first woman to be elected as chief of Maine's Maliseet Indian Tribe.

Is the Senator from Alaska aware of similar accomplishments by Alaskan women?

Ms. MURKOWSKI. We have a history, as I have said, of pioneering women, women who perhaps have done the unexpected, who have reached out into areas that we would not anticipate, at a time we would not anticipate, women such as Kate Carmack, who is especially important in Alaska's history. Kate was an Athabaskan woman who married an American trader. She is actually credited with discovering the first gold in Bonanza Creek, which started the Alaska gold rush in 1896.

As the story is told, when Kate first discovered the gold, it was frozen in

the mud. Kate and her husband did not have the grub stake, if you will. They did not have the cash necessary to do the digout that winter. So they literally were sitting on the largest gold discovery in history. Kate's resourcefulness as a skin sower and her skill as an outdoorsman earned enough cash for the family to pull together that grub stake to hit "pay dirt" when the ground thawed the next spring.

When we think of women like Kate Carmack in Alaska, who braved some pretty tough, some pretty difficult conditions, I ask the Senator from Maine if she has any similar stories from her State?

Ms. COLLINS. I certainly do. That is a wonderful story of a truly courageous woman.

We have many women such as that throughout Maine's history. Josephine Peary was one such woman. She was married to the great explorer, Robert E. Peary, who was the first to reach the North Pole, not that far from Alaska. They lived together on Eagle Island in Casco Bay, ME. Josephine began exploring when she accompanied her husband to Greenland on a journey sponsored by the Academy of Natural Sciences that would last for a year and a half. That travel, in 1892, made Josephine the first woman in history to be a member of an Arctic exploration team.

I understand that women in Alaska also have been pioneers in expanding opportunities for women to work outside of the home. I wonder if the Senator from Alaska might expand on that.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. We have a lot of firsts that, again, when we look at Alaska's history and recognize we did not become a State until 1959, it is a very recent history, but yet women's involvement in some very important firsts have gone back so many years prior to statehood it really gets your attention.

Historically, Alaskan women were employed in jobs that women in other areas of the country could only dream about. In 1915, Anchorage employed its first female principal in the Anchorage School District, our largest community now, 3 years before World War I and 5 years before women's suffrage was ratified.

A year later, 1916, and still 4 years before national women's suffrage passed, Lena Morrow Lewis is believed to be the first woman to campaign for Alaska's territorial seat in the U.S. Congress. She did not win, but she was certainly followed by other pioneering women in the workforce.

Marvel Crosson was the first female licensed pilot in Alaska in 1927. Mildred Herman became the first woman admitted to the Alaska Bar Association in 1934. And Barbara Washburn was the first woman to climb Mount McKinley, the tallest mountain in North America.

This is all long before Alaska became a State. Other opportunities for

women, as we flip through the history books, become very apparent. A woman by the name of Nell Scott became the first woman to serve in the Alaska State legislature in 1937. This was a year before the National Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 was passed, which established a minimum wage.

Blanche McSmith was the first Black woman to serve in the Alaska State legislature. Sadie Neakok was the first Native Alaskan woman to serve as a magistrate in Alaska in 1960, during the same time period when the struggle for civil rights was raging in the South. Blanche and Sadie began serving in Alaska in very prominent roles 4 years before the Civil Rights Act was passed.

Could the Senator from Maine describe for me some of the pioneering women in her State.

Ms. COLLINS. I would love to share that information with the Senator from Alaska. It is just fascinating to hear the many firsts that women from her State have established.

The Senator from Alaska obviously has a great deal of pride in the history of women in her State.

In Maine, too, we have women who have played influential roles throughout history, but especially in the field of literature.

I am sure all of my colleagues know well the story of Harriet Beecher. She wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin" in 1850 while pregnant with her seventh child. She began writing the book while residing in Brunswick, ME. Her deep religious faith and dedication to bringing to light the problems with slavery encouraged "Hattie" to write with such passion that she quickly finished and continued to write an average of a book a year to support her family.

Another famous Mainer, Martha Ballard, also made important contributions. She lived in Hallowell, ME, and was a midwife and a healer. She faithfully maintained a diary from 1785 to 1812, and her meticulous records have provided us with a rare glimpse into the daily life in Maine in the late 1700s and the early 1800s. Her contributions and life were only recently highlighted when Laurel Ulrich documented her work in a Pulitzer Prize winning book "The Midwife's Tale."

America's first female novelist, Sally Sayward Barrell, also known as Madam Wood, was born in York, ME, in the southern tip of our State. She wrote five gothic novels, first under the signature of "A Lady of Massachusetts," and then, later, under the signature of "A Lady of Maine" when Maine was granted statehood in 1820.

Another pioneering woman was Dorothea Dix. She was born in Hampden, ME, in 1802, and is considered a groundbreaking reformer in the area of treatment for individuals suffering from mental illness. She traveled the Nation advocating for a more compassionate, holistic approach to the treatment of those suffering from mental illness. She was truly ahead of her

time. She also successfully lobbied Congress to establish the first and only national Federal mental health facility which would become a world premiere mental health and research center.

I ask my colleague to further expand on how Alaska has supported women and their accomplishments.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Well, as the Senator has noted, her home State of Maine and Alaska both have a very rich history of groundbreaking women, women who have been pioneers, women who have reached out. I think our States have demonstrated the very supportive nature of moving women forward in their prosperity.

In Alaska, as a for instance, since we are talking about "for instances and firsts," the very first bill ever passed by the Territory of Alaska was the Shoup women's suffrage bill in 1913.

That was our first bill as it related to women's rights. Seven years before women's suffrage was ratified in the rest of the country and 46 years before Alaska became a State, our territorial legislature's first bill was related to women's rights.

I ask the Senator from Maine, in terms of your role model throughout your political career, who would you cite as that role model, that individual?

Ms. COLLINS. I would reply to my friend and colleague from Alaska that my role model and inspiration was the great Senator Margaret Chase Smith. She served as Senator from Maine the entire time I was growing up. She served in the Senate from 1949 to 1972. I realize how fortunate I was to have as a role model this courageous, smart, and brave woman who did so much and set so many firsts for America. I have often thought that the path for my colleague OLYMPIA SNOWE and myself to the Senate was paved by the remarkable Senator Margaret Chase Smith.

I remember well my very first meeting with Senator Smith. I was a senior in high school. I was in Washington for a special program, and she spent nearly 2 hours talking with me. She talked about national defense, her service on the Armed Services Committee and, most of all, about her decision to speak out against the excesses of Joseph McCarthy. That was an extraordinarily brave thing to do, but it was typical of Senator Smith, who had a courageous and independent spirit.

She was the first to do so many things. She was the first Republican Senator elected to the Senate. I would note that when I was elected to the Senate, Maine became the first State to send two Republican women to the Senate to serve at the same time. She was the first woman to serve in both the House and the Senate. She was the first woman to be backed by a major political party in a Presidential election. Long after it became commonplace for women to serve in the highest ranks of our Government, Senator Smith will always be acknowledged and remembered and honored in Maine for her dignity and her courage.

Although I didn't realize it at the time, when I look back at her meeting with me, I realize that that was the first step in a journey that led me to run for her seat 25 years later. I am so proud to hold the seat once held by the legendary Senator Margaret Chase Smith.

Women such as those the Senator from Alaska has spoken of and whom I have talked about today are the reason we are so proud to sponsor a bill that, at no cost to the taxpayers, directs that the Old Post Office Annex be made available to house the National Women's History Museum. We need a place for our country to honor the contributions of women, particularly for young girls who are coming to Washington to be able to go to this museum and learn about some of the remarkable women who have changed American history, about whom the Senator from Alaska and I have talked today. Women's history needs a place in our capital and in our collective American history.

I ask my colleague from Alaska if she would agree with that sentiment. She has been such a leader in getting this bill through.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. I couldn't agree more with the Senator from Maine. Just in the discussion we have had this evening about some of the women from my State and their pioneering enterprises and hearing the stories about the women of Maine, I would love to be able to go somewhere and spend the time to do more research, to find out more about these pioneering women, not only in Alaska and Maine but all of the States in between. By having the women's history museum here in Washington, DC, we will be able to do that.

Women have played such a crucial role in the development of my State, as you have heard, and certainly in the development of yours. By encouraging women's history of all of our respective States, we can see and celebrate this common history from as far apart as Maine to the east and Alaska in the west.

Those frontier women, women of independent spirit, demonstrated self-reliance, themes that embody all American women and the American spirit. I, too, am most proud to be a co-sponsor of this bill and thank the Senator from Maine for her leadership in moving this forward so that we do have a place to house these great collections.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Alaska for participating in this discussion tonight. She certainly continues that proud tradition in Alaska of women who have made a real difference. I am honored to serve with her. She does an extraordinary job. I also think we would be remiss in not recognizing the contributions of our Presiding Officer today, the Senator from North Carolina, Mrs. DOLE, who also has established so many firsts in American history. I know that she, too, will be prominently featured in this museum once it comes about.

I think we can take great pride in being here tonight and knowing we have passed this legislation unanimously.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI.) Without objection, it is so ordered.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, tonight we got some good news. I want to just say a few words about the FAA bill because we have resolved the issue on air traffic control. The good news is that tonight we scored a victory, a victory for safety and a victory for homeland security.

As many of my colleagues know, I held up the FAA traffic control bill in order to get some assurance that the safety and security of the flying public would not be jeopardized by the privatization of the air traffic control system. I am pleased to announce that we have now received an assurance from the administration regarding fiscal year 2004. Until the end of this fiscal year, the administration has agreed not to privatize any components of our air traffic control system. The controllers are protected, the technicians are protected, the flight service station controllers—all of those units that make up the air traffic control system—are protected. We have a letter stating the administration's assurance.

Some of my colleagues have asked why I was doing this: Why do you feel so strongly about it? I put it in personal terms. I told them: Because I don't want my grandchildren or your grandchildren or the grandchildren of our constituents put in danger by a risky privatization scheme. That is what was at stake here.

I extend my thanks to many of my colleagues for their support in this fight, specifically our Commerce Committee ranking member, Senator HOLLINGS, and the subcommittee ranking member, Senator ROCKEFELLER, Senator DORGAN, and the leader and assistant leader of our caucus, Senators DASCHLE and REID. They always stayed strong and said "safety first."

Senator LOTT has been an honest broker throughout this process. He kept the discussions alive.

It was a tough fight. But at the heart of this fight was the reality that it was a bipartisan decision. In June of this year, 11 Republicans voted to prevent privatization, to stand up for safety. I know we often get pressured to vote with our caucus or vote with our party's President, but sometimes you just have to stand up for your constituents' safety, and that is what my Republican friends did here.

Within days of returning to the Senate earlier this year, I learned that the administration intended, through this A-76 process, to privatize air traffic control. In my previous 18 years, I had an active interest in aviation and the air traffic control system. But the moment I learned of the administration's actions, I knew I would spend much of this year fighting to prevent that action from taking place. We won a Senate vote to prevent privatization. We fought off the terrible first conference report. We fought the pending conference report until we received the assurances that we got tonight.

But the fight is not over, and I will continue to push for a permanent prohibition. In the words of California's current Governor, I'll be back. We are going to fight this again, and we will keep fighting it until it goes away for good.

I am reminded, 700 million people fly in our skies every year, roughly 2 million a day. Our system is going to be pushed to the limits of capacity in these next couple of weeks in what will be the busiest travel day of the year. I hope travelers will rest assured knowing that control of the skies will be in the hands of professionals, the Government employees who make up the air traffic control system.

This is the greatest air traffic control system in the world, most safe, most efficient. There are 15,000 Federal air traffic controllers and thousands of professional systems specialists and flight service station controllers. These are the men and women who keep our skies safe and secure.

But there are some obvious lessons we need to heed, those of September 11, when the air traffic control system worked flawlessly to bring home safely some 5,000 airplanes in just a couple of hours. These are the lessons from other countries that have tried this. They were left with just what could be expected: Less safety, more delays, and more cost in the end.

There are lessons from the space program.

I look forward to examining these issues during the policy debate to which our chairman is committed. I hope there can be an adequate discussion for the American people so they can learn how, after next year, the White House proposes to put their safety and security at risk—if they do, all for the benefit of the profit motive.

I would like to mention one other item in this bill that is of particular importance to the State of New Jersey. Our great State has a proud history of aviation with a number of public use airports. Certainly the occupant of the chair understands since aviation in Alaska is the lifeblood of that beautiful State. Our great State has a proud history with a number of public use airports, and now some of these airports are disappearing, giving way to urban sprawl and development. To help stem this problem, a key provision in this bill establishes a pilot program