Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 261. This resolution expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services should be commended for implementing the Medicare demonstration project to assess the quality of care of cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, and should extend the project, at least through 2006, subject to any appropriate modifications. Further, it commends CMS for implementing the Medicare demonstration project to assess the quality of care of cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, and calls on CMS to extend the project, subject to any appropriate modifications, at least through 2006.

In brief, this resolution is important because it:

Encourages CMS to extend the oncology demonstration project, which helped preserve patient access to cancer therapies in 2005 by maintaining critical resources in the cancer care delivery system.

The demonstration, currently set to expire at the end of 2005, asks about quality of care information such as pain, nausea/vomiting and fatigue. This was an important step in measuring outcomes for quality cancer care.

The demonstration helped focus limited resources on symptom management and treatment, an aspect of cancer treatment most difficult for patients. The Resolution encourages CMS to make refinements, as appropriate, to make the data collection even more meaningful for patient care.

As you know, the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA) significantly reformed the way Medicare pays for chemotherapy administered in doctors' offices. These reforms resulted in considerable reductions in Medicare payments to cancer care.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) following efforts by many Members of Congress, the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), patient advocacy groups, and others in the cancer community, implemented a one-year demonstration project that provided resources to assess the patient experience with chemotherapy side effects. These include pain, nausea and vomiting, and fatigue. This demonstration project has achieved three important objectives: (1) collecting data to improve the quality of cancer care, (2) maintaining stability in the cancer care delivery system, and (3) focusing limited resources in an aspect of cancer treatment most difficult for patients.

The demonstration project was critically important to protecting quality cancer care in 2005. I encourage Members to support this resolution.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the resolution offered by my friend and fellow Texan, Mr. HALL.

I am proud to be a co-sponsor of this resolution, which would encourage CMS to extend a Medicare demonstration project that has maintained cancer patients' access to chemotherapy.

Approximately 9.6 million men, women, and children in the United States are currently living with a diagnosis of cancer.

Despite the tremendous strides made in cancer research and cancer care, the disease unfortunately still ranks as the number two killer in the United States, exceeded only by heart disease.

According to the American Cancer Society, more than 1.3 million new cancer cases will be diagnosed this year alone.

These individuals face a tough road ahead and difficult decisions about the path they will take in fighting this disease.

This year, the Medicare program implemented a demonstration project to look at chemotherapy patients and the quality of care they receive.

A good deal of cancer patients receive lifesaving chemotherapy in physicians' offices.

However, the Medicare bill Congress passed in 2003 reduced payments to physicians who administer chemotherapy in their offices.

This demonstration project has temporarily alleviated some of the financial strains oncologists were to receive under the Medicare bill—

And the result is continued patient access to chemotherapy administered in the familiar and more-convenient office setting.

Ultimately, the goal of the demonstration is to improve cancer treatment through a better understanding of the patient experience under chemotherapy.

But we don't want to cut off patients' access to chemotherapy before we determine how their cancer care could be improved.

While chemotherapy has literally been a lifesaver for countless cancer patients, it is not an easy process to endure.

Patients often experience pain, nausea, vomiting and fatigue while undergoing chemotherapy.

We know a great deal about chemotherapy and its effect on patients, but our knowledge base is not complete.

Unfortunately, the cancer care demonstration project is scheduled to end on December 31, 2005.

This resolution would encourage the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to extend the cancer care demonstration project at least through next year.

By extending this project, CMS would continue to support chemotherapy services offered in physician offices.

At the same time, CMS would continue to build on the information already gleaned from the project to improve the quality of care for Americans suffering from cancer.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. HALL for his leadership on this issue and encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting this important resolution.

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 261, expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services should be commended for implementing the Medicare demonstration project to assess the quality of care of cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, and should extend the project, at least through next year.

In 2005, CMS implemented a Quality of Life demonstration project to assess quality care for cancer patients receiving chemotherapy services in an office-based practice. The demonstration project was designed to gather data on the effects of chemotherapy on Medicare patients. Practitioners participating in the project must provide data and document services related to pain control management, minimization of nausea and vomiting, and the reduction of fatigue. This program is now underway and I strongly support its continuation.

I would note, however, as the program is currently designed, it only applies to patients receiving IV infusion and push chemotherapy, not to patients receiving oral chemotherapy. As was originally intended when Congress created this demonstration program, it is critical that all patients, regardless of the method of chemotherapy treatment, are included in the assessment of these key quality of life factors impacting their treatment for cancer. As it stands today, the data collected under the QOL is incomplete—patients receiving oral therapies are not assessed in the same way, and their side effects cannot be compared to the side effects of infused chemotherapy. As I stated, I strongly support the continuation of this demonstration program but I believe CMS should act to ensure that data is collected from patients receiving oral drugs as well as injectable drugs.

Oral chemotherapy treatment can improve the quality of life for cancer patients by allowing patients to have chemotherapy at home or work without daily visits to the doctor's office or to a cancer infusion center. These treatments can also be cost effective as they require fewer physician visits and fewer invasive procedures. While these treatments are relatively new, more are being developed each year and they can provide unprecedented freedom for Americans battling cancer. If we are going to collect data and learn how to improve the quality of life for those fighting cancer it is my belief that we should focus on collecting data on all treatment options—including the very promising use of oral drugs.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 261, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The title of the resolution was amended so as to read: ''Resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services should be commended for implementing the Medicare demonstration project to assess the quality of care of cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, and should extend the project through 2006, subject to any appropriate modifications.''.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2360, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 474 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 474

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2360) making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, the rule before us today is the standard rule for the consideration of a conference report. It waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration and provides that the conference report shall be considered as read.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule and the underlying legislation. This rule, brought to the floor today by the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. ROGERS), the chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, funds our most important Federal programs aimed at securing this Nation against terrorist attacks.

It provides $30.8 billion for the operations and activities of the Department of Homeland Security in fiscal year 2006, an increase of $1.4 billion above fiscal year 2005 and $1.3 billion above the President's request. The conference report agreement reflects the DHS organizational structure recommended by the Secretary on July 13, 2005, and does not create any new aviation security fees.

This legislation secures our homeland first and foremost by protecting our borders and revitalizing immigration enforcement. It provides nearly two-thirds of the overall budget for the Department, $19.1 billion for border protection, immigration enforcement and related activities.

□ 1745

This represents an increase of $1.2 billion over funding in 2005 and $490 million over the President's request. These funds are used to support cutting-edge technologies for high-risk cargo screening, to expand cargo inspection at foreign ports, and to support a robust revitalization of immigration enforcement along our borders and around our Nation.

Among other security enhancing measures, this funding includes $1.8 billion for border security and control, funding an additional 1,000 Border Patrol agents. When combined with this year's supplemental appropriations, 1,500 new agents will be hired in 2006. It provides for $3.4 billion for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, funding an additional 250 criminal investigators and 100 Immigration Enforcement agents. When combined with this year's supplemental, 568 new ICE agents and officers will be hired for year 2006.

It provides $41 million for border security technology, including surveillance and unmanned aerial vehicles; $562 million for Air and Marine Operations to maintain the integrity of our borders and aerospace security, as well as drug interdiction; $94 million for the Institutional Removal Program, including an additional 100 agents; $40 million for implementation of the READ ID Act; $5 million to train State and local officials and officers to enforce immigration laws; $1 billion for immigration detention custody operations; and $135 million for transportation and removal of illegal immigrants.

This conference report also recognizes the active role that the Department of Homeland Security must play in disaster mitigation and relief efforts. It prioritizes spending on Federal response capacities as well as increased planning and coordination with the States.

To accomplish this, it includes $1.77 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund; $20 million for Urban Search and Rescue Teams; $20 million for FEMA catastrophic planning; $22 million for the National Incident Management System; $200 million for the Flood Map Modernization Program; a requirement that DHS develop guidelines for mass evacuation plans; and a requirement that DHS reports on the status of catastrophic planning in each of our 50 States.

This conference report also provides $3.3 billion for first responders, in the form of performance grants to high-threat areas, firefighters and emergency management. Since September 11, 2001, $32.1 billion has been provided to first responders, including funds for terrorism prevention and preparedness, general law enforcement, firefighter assistance, airport security, seaport security and public health preparation.

This conference report includes funding of over $1 billion for high-density urban areas, including $765 million for urban area grants, $150 million for rail security, $175 million for port security and $65 million for other infrastructure protection, $655 million for firefighter grants, $400 million for State and local enforcement terrorism prevention grants and $185 million for Emergency Management Performance Grants.

Finally, this conference report provides $1.5 billion for the research and development of leading-edge technologies and $625 million to protect our critical infrastructure and key assets. These funds will be used to test and transition these technologies for use by Federal, State and local officials. It will also support ongoing efforts to develop secure communication systems with Federal, State and local entities and continue efforts with the private sector to implement protective measures around this important infrastructure.

To accomplish this, the bill includes $538 million to develop radiological, nuclear, chemical, biological and high explosives countermeasures; $110 million for the research and development and testing of antimissile devices for commercial aircraft; $318 million to start up the new Domestic Nuclear Detection Office to help coordinate global nuclear detection and tracking; $14 million to identify and characterize potential biological terrorist attacks; and $93.3 million for cyber-security technology.

Mr. Speaker, I could spend a lot of time listing the many strengths of this bill and the thoughtful and threat-based way that it funds the programs that keep American families safe. Instead, I want to take time to strongly support this legislation with an open rule.

I commend my colleagues on the Committee on Appropriations for their hard work.

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

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

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, this Homeland Security conference report will be the third and one of the most important appropriations conference reports considered by Congress this session. In the wake of a wholly inadequate Federal response to Hurricane Katrina, it is this Congress's responsibility to provide the Department of Homeland Security with appropriate funding and resources. That funding must also come with proper direction and full oversight.

Unfortunately, this conference report falls far short of that standard. Hurricane Katrina revealed several institutional problems with the Department of Homeland Security, in particular with the structure of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Over the past decade, FEMA has been stripped of its duties; folded into a disorganized department; and, most disturbingly, staffed by inexperienced people.

With this bill, Congress had a golden opportunity to address the institutional disarray that has tarnished FEMA. Instead of doing the right thing, this conference report provides absolutely no guidance on how to spend billions of taxpayer dollars or how to properly restructure the agency. Furthermore, Secretary Chertoff has insisted on restructuring the Department again, for the sixth time, without any congressional oversight and hearings. He has proposed to place FEMA in the Preparedness Directorate, further splintering the agency's ability to respond quickly to disasters.

Disaster preparedness and response are intrinsically linked. FEMA must be responsible for both. Separating these duties will only hinder the Federal Government's responsiveness potential. This systematic dismantling of FEMA's authority was the primary cause of the botched Federal response to Hurricane Katrina.

Secretary Chertoff's proposal to restructure FEMA will not solve the institutional deficiencies of the agency. While FEMA was not perfect before it merged into the Department of Homeland Security, at least there existed a level of expertise and skill and FEMA's director had immediate and direct access to the President of the United States.

Experience and professionalism have been missing from FEMA under the Bush administration. Michael Brown, a product of political cronyism, is the perfect example of what happens to government without thorough oversight. Instead of having somebody with disaster experience, President Bush ended up with an Arabian horse specialist.

A year ago, when the State of Florida was ravaged by multiple hurricanes, State and Federal officials complained about the lack of preparedness and inadequate response from FEMA. Counties that were hit the hardest were overlooked while other counties that storms avoided received millions of dollars in funding. Florida lawmakers this past March urged two House committees with FEMA jurisdiction to hold hearings on what went wrong.

Even after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit 6 months later, the Republican leadership has continued to block the Florida delegation's oversight request. And now we are all paying the price for neglecting oversight of FEMA, most notably the thousands who paid with their lives and their livelihoods.

The House Republican leadership has consistently ignored proper oversight of this administration. It is clear that they do not want to ask tough questions or demand straight answers. This Congress has become a rubber stamp, and the results have been disastrous.

Mr. Speaker, Brownie did not do a ''heckuva'' job and neither has this Congress. Unfortunately, when given the opportunity to do the right thing, the Republican leadership has once again acted against the best interests of the American people. Their response to these disasters and to these deficiencies at FEMA is to install a partisan committee that will simply gloss over the most important issues surrounding the failures of FEMA. Mr. Speaker, that is not oversight. That is a whitewash.

A more effective FEMA can only be created when independent, experienced disaster specialists analyze the problems that Katrina exposed and then identify solutions. Restructuring FEMA without independent input and oversight is premature and will further plague its prevention and response capabilities.

And not only is the oversight missing, Mr. Speaker, but so is the money. While my Republican friends will highlight the $1.3 billion increase over fiscal year 2005, let us be clear that this increase is only barely above the current rate of inflation. In reality, there are several funding cuts in this conference report that significantly and adversely affect the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA programs.

This conference report cuts State and local preparedness funding by $585 million, a 19 percent cut from last year. Fire grants are funded at $60 million below the fiscal year 2005 level. Disaster relief funding is cut by $370 million, and pre-disaster mitigation funding is cut in half. Let me repeat that: Cut in half.

How can we justify cutting disaster relief and mitigation funding by $420 million? Did Katrina not demonstrate how severely unprepared and ill-equipped FEMA really is? What kind of rationale is this?

Thankfully, there are some programs in this conference report where funding levels are justifiable. For instance, the Coast Guard's ''Deepwater'' program is fully funded at $933 million, due mostly in part to the Guard's extraordinary rescue efforts after Katrina.

Mr. Speaker, I do not understand what the majority is thinking. Every single disaster, pre-disaster, preparedness and response program should be fully funded. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita should have taught us that. And along with full funding, there needs to be proper oversight. Neither the two enacted relief packages totaling over $60 billion nor this conference report provide any meaningful oversight. None. No check on the flow of the money. No way to ensure the proper awarding of contracts through competitive bidding. No accountability.

Thankfully, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), ranking member of the Committee on Appropriations, offered an amendment in conference requiring the Department of Homeland Security to provide detailed information on how Katrina disaster relief funding is being spent. The specific requirements laid out in this provision force the Department of Homeland Security to send Congress weekly reports that detail any and every kind of disaster relief spending, and I applaud the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) for offering this important amendment. It is an important step in the right direction, a step toward accountability.

I am also grateful to the efforts of the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO), the ranking member of the Homeland Security Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, who fought hard last week to instruct the conferees not to accept Secretary Chertoff's reorganization program.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that this conference report will pass by a comfortable margin, but it will not have my vote. We can do so much better than this. We need to do so much better than this, and I hope in the coming weeks and months, both the majority and the Democratic side will work together to achieve a product that we all can be proud of and that will truly ensure the homeland security of the people of our country.

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

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

The gentleman from Massachusetts was very kind to enunciate and talk about the contributions that have been made on both sides of the aisle, Republicans and Democrats working together in an effort to make sure that Katrina is taken care of. I also take him at face value that he will not vote for this because there is not enough spending in the bill. There is not enough money that is being spent, and he outlined that money that he wants to spend.

The majority party does need to make sure that the bill that comes forth is balanced and one that maintains the priorities of this country. So we on this side are standing up in strong support of this not only well-balanced bill but really will allow equal distribution as we see the needs of this country and the spending and to control that which we do.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER), the chairman of the Committee on Rules.

□ 1800

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding, and I appreciate his hard work on this and his very strong commitment to our Nation's homeland security. In the last Congress he served very ably as a member of the authorizing committee on homeland security.

I also want to join in expressing my appreciation, Mr. Speaker, to the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) and the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. ROGERS) who worked very hard on this, and for the bipartisan spirit of consideration of this measure. As the gentleman from Massachusetts correctly said, this is going to enjoy strong bipartisan support.

Why? Because we all know that there must be a focus on our Nation's homeland security. It is part of our national security; and, frankly, Mr. Speaker, a very important part of our national security happens to be border security. One of the things included in this measure, of which I am particularly proud, is a measure that in the last Congress, I worked with our former colleague, Mr. Ose of Sacramento on, and my colleagues from California, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. CUNNINGHAM and others have spent a great deal of time working on this, that is, we provide $35 million for completion of the 3½-mile gap in the border fence.

Earlier this week, I had the opportunity to be right on the border near that gap. It is an area known as Smugglers' Gulch. It is an area where people

have illegally entered this country, and they have pummeled the environment. The notion of completing that 3½-mile gap is going to go a long way towards dealing with our border security concern, number one, and, number two, our environmental concerns in the area.

I also have to say, having spent a great deal of time with our border patrol agents on the border just a few days ago, I am particularly proud of the hard work they put in their job. They want to have the ability to do their job. Right now they spend most of their time and energy coming to this country simply seeking an opportunity to feed their families. We need to ensure that they have the ability to focus on criminals and potential terrorists. That is exactly what we want to do.

That is one of the other reasons that we, in this bill, have increased by 1,000, adding to the 500 already provided in the earlier supplemental appropriations bill, 1,000 additional border patrol agents. I hope that will help us turn the corner. I am convinced that it will.

The overall commitment to homeland security is one which has, I believe, been very adequately addressed in this important measure. I urge my colleagues to provide strong bipartisan support for this effort.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, let me just respond to the gentleman from Texas. One of my problems is the fact that this bill cuts some very important programs that I think do not deserve to be cut. It cuts first responder grants, which I think is a mistake. It underfunds communications equipment for first responders.

Just like the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Hurricane Katrina highlighted the problem of first responders having incompatible communications equipment. When Hurricane Katrina hit, emergency personnel were on at least five different channels and were hampered in communicating with one another. Yet this conference report continues to underfund interoperable communications systems. It cuts the disaster relief account. It cuts predisaster mitigation. It underfunds port security. It underfunds rail and transit security. It fails to include dedicated funding for chemical plant security. I could go on and on and on.

Homeland security is not for free. If we are not funding these agencies, and we are not funding the necessary personnel to be able to protect our country, then we are not doing a very good job at homeland security. One other thing I will say to the gentleman from Texas. I believe that we have an obligation when we spend the taxpayers' money that there is thoughtful and effective oversight. We have allocated billions and billions of dollars already in response to this hurricane with no oversight. I do not want taxpayers' money wasted, and I am uncomfortable with the fact the bill provides no oversight. The gentleman may not be, but I am.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON), ranking Democrat on the Homeland Security Committee.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, later today the House will consider a measure that provides $30.8 billion in funding for the Department of Homeland Security. It also makes significant structural and policy changes to the Department. I am pleased that the conferees adopted many of the policy changes for which the Democrats on the Homeland Security Committee advocated during the Department's authorization process.

For example, I am pleased that the Department is directed to undertake a quadrennial review, examine and justify multiyear procurement projects and develop a long-term strategy to ensure optimal development of explosive detection systems. I have to say, it is a sad state of affairs, Mr. Speaker, when Congress has to tell the Department to do planning.

In the short history of the Department, it has earned a reputation for lacking focus and being crisis-driven. It took the London bombing to remind the Department that it is the lead Federal agency for protecting rail and transit. It took Hurricane Katrina to remind the Department that it is the lead Federal agency for all disasters, not just terrorism. We do not have the luxury of time to wait until the Department gets another wake-up call. In July, the Secretary of Homeland Security proposed a number of structural changes. Since that time, Katrina revealed dysfunction at the highest levels of the Department.

I cannot understand why the conference report adopts many of the Secretary's proposed changes wholesale as if Katrina never happened. The establishment of a preparedness directorate would not make us any more prepared if FEMA is not fixed. The Department's changes are outdated. If we grant them to Mr. Chertoff, we will find ourselves revisiting this issue again after the next catastrophe. We need to fix the Department properly, not with duct tape and wires, what this conference report does by giving Secretary Chertoff carte blanche on the agency's structure.

In response to this error, 13 members of the Homeland Security Committee have introduced the Department of Homeland Security Reform Act of 2005. This bill recognizes Katrina happened, and among other things, creates a statutory requirement that the head of FEMA have disaster and emergency preparedness experience. Current law requires the head of the National Park Service to have substantial experience in land management. The least we can do is require the director of FEMA to have prior experience in disasters. We do not need any more Brownies.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KELLER).

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the rule and the homeland security appropriations bill. This legislation improves our homeland security in three key ways.

First, it helps us crack down on illegal immigration and protects our borders by providing funding to hire 1,000 additional border patrol agents.

Second, the bill provides $3.3 billion for first responders, including grants that go directly to high-risk urban areas and firefighters. Significantly, for the first time, the majority of the funding for first responders is appropriately allocated based on the actual risk of terrorism to these areas.

Third, this legislation provides key funding for critical explosive detection devices, which are used to screen high-risk cargo coming into the United States through our seaports and airports.

I am proud that one of the top manufacturers in the world of these explosive detection devices is CyTerra, a company headquartered in my district of Orlando, Florida. On August 15 of this year, Senator MEL MARTINEZ and I toured CyTerra's facilities and met with their employees. These hard-working folks are proud of their role in making our country safer, and they should be. Their bomb detection devices have already saved many lives in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on the rule and ''yes'' on the underlying homeland security appropriations bill.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL), a leader on a number of homeland security issues.

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, we all know that the current system for distributing grants is fundamentally broken. I applaud the fact that this bipartisan conference report gives the Secretary of Homeland Security the flexibility to distribute more money based on risk rather than population.

While I would like to see a much greater percentage of funds allotted exclusively on risk, at least this conference report finally addresses an issue on which many of us have spent years on both sides of the aisle working to remedy. I find it inexplicable that just as we improve the methods of monetary distribution, just as we improve the way first responders can get what they need, we limit the availability, the pool of needed resources. In fact, if it were not for both folks on each side of the aisle, we would have accepted the administration's plan, which would have been 4 percent less than what we have and no increase whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, I think you should know today that the New York subway system is under high alert. We need to understand what the ramifications of that are. The FBI is working in concert with the New York City Police. This is the first time they have had very specific place, very specific time ramifications. Yet the coordinated and timed

bombings in London and Madrid, the latest example of the fact between 1998 and 2003, there were approximately 181 terrorist attacks on rail and transit targets.

Since 9/11, despite the fact that passenger rail systems in the United States carry five times as many passengers each day as do the airlines, only $250 million of the estimated $6 billion needed has been invested in improving rail and transit security.

Congress continues to provide woefully inadequate appropriations. Only $150 million was appropriated for rail and transit authority.

Mr. Speaker, I think we should all be aware of this. It took a bipartisan effort to get us this far. We need to understand what is going on in New York City today, and I know this is not going to change the dollar figure, the dollar amount of this legislation.

I would simply ask my brothers and sisters on both sides of the aisle to take note that this is serious business. We need to continue this hard work. The FIRE Act, for instance, was cut $60 million, which has been extremely, extremely crucial to the 32,000 fire departments throughout the United States of America. We cannot do everything. We realize that, Mr. Speaker, but there are things that we can do and we should do.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, serving as a member of the conference, when you go and you look at an appropriations and tear apart where all the money goes and what the priorities are and what the needs are and work with the Senate, one of the most important attributes of getting a good bill is listening to both sides, Republicans and Democrats, and to understand those priorities as they relate not only to, in this case, homeland security, but really the needs of the entire country.

The next gentleman, who is a leader in this Congress, did exactly that. He took time with HAL ROGERS and JOHN CARTER to understand the needs as expressed by this administration, as expressed by the Senate, and by the House.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP).

Mr. WAMP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for his outstanding work and the work of the Rules Committee in bringing this rule to the floor. I rise in support of the rule and the conference report. We worked for months across the aisle to come to this point.

I want to reemphasize, though, how much this rule does strengthen our work at the borders. One of the best employees I have ever had, Trish Mullins, the best caseworker, probably, in any congressional office in Tennessee, her son Scott Mullins is a border patrol agent on the Mexican border. We hear weekly of the trials and tribulations they face. They need the cavalry. With these 1,000 new border patrol agents, it brings the total in this fiscal year to 1,500, and hundreds of new investigators, criminal investigators through Immigrations and Customs Enforcement. This really does strengthen our borders. We have got to continue to take further steps.

I also want to say that one of the things that Chairman ROGERS and I have worked on for months now is to try to get the science and tech directorate to invest in new technologies. This bill creates the domestic nuclear detection office, which will really leverage all the laboratories and all the scientific assets in the country for better protection detection and get the equipment out there so that we continue to further protect our country.

I also want to slow down and thank the staff, the professional staff, 22 agencies, nearly 200,000 employees. This has been very complicated for 2½ years: Michelle Mrdeza, our staff director; Stephanie Gupta; Jeff Ashford; Tad Gallion; Tom McLemore; Ben Nicholson; Kelly Wade on the majority side; Beverly Pheto and the entire minority staff. They have worked countless hours to bring us to this point. They are excellent and professional.

I believe we will meet not only to do what is right and pass this bill, but I think we are going to meet to actually continue this homeland security challenge that we face. There is a lot of money in the pipeline. I want to say to any of our people who have raised concerns about the firefighter and first responder grants, there is a lot of money in the pipeline.

We had a hearing earlier in the day about how much money is yet to be allocated that is in the system. This Congress has funded these needs. This is the bread and butter. This is not the response to Katrina. This was under way prior to Katrina. The select committee, the supplementals will address Katrina. We are doing that daily. Clearly, we have got to do better.

We will meet to make sure the Federal Government's response continues to improve. I encourage adoption of the rule and support for this most important homeland security conference report.

□ 1815

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO).

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, how quickly we forget. We are essentially flying blind with this bill. We were supposed to have a comprehensive report from the Department of Homeland Security which was long overdue, and then, when finally produced, which was supposed to be comprehensive on all the transportation sectors, was a regurgitation of open-source material and news articles. They had an early, more specific version, but it was pulled by the administration because it was measurable. It had goals, objectives and technology. It would have shown how short the funding is in this bill and how little progress we have made: $150 million for all of the ports in the United States of America over the next year. Whew.

Mr. Speaker, we could be buying radiation detection equipment for those ports, but that money is not available. It is not in the budget.

Aviation security, arbitrary cap on screeners. Okay, you can cut back on labor if you give them adequate technology. But guess what? There is not enough money in this bill to buy the new technology, the new explosives detection equipment that should be at every passenger checkpoint, that should be under every airport, that should be used for cargo security, but they do not want to put up measurable goals, because they are not getting there, and the American people would be pretty darn mad about it if they knew.

Then, first responder money, come on. Interoperable communications. First lesson: 9/11. We could not communicate with the fire and police and other first responders in the buildings, and many of them died, because they were out of touch as the buildings were collapsing, and they had no notice.

Katrina, first lesson: no interoperable communications. Well, the President provided for zero dollars, and this is up to $76 million nationwide. Wow, that is enough to do three counties in my State out of 36, and that is the money for the entire Nation of the United States of America for interoperable communications, the most basic tool that our first responders need to protect American lives and to rescue people and to better and more effectively deal with emergencies, whether they are terrorist-generated or natural disaster-generated, and we can come up with $76 million nationwide, not even a real tax break for some of the rich people around here.

So to say somehow that this is adequate is absurd. If you set goals and the goals are, every first responder in America has interoperable communications, we are falling way short. If you say we are going to begin to protect ourselves against radiological attack, against bombs coming in in shipping containers, we are doing virtually nothing. If you are going to improve aviation security, nothing.

Then, finally, they want to push us back to the good old days of private aviation security, but it is not happening, because people know what we have now is better. But in order to facilitate that push, they cap the liability of the private companies who are so good and, now, they have to extend complete liability exemption to the airports to try and induce them to bring in private security, because everybody knows it failed us on 9/11, and it will fail us again, but it will make money for a few special interests.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER), who is a speaker who

also had an opportunity to serve on this appropriations conference in a detailed fashion and made sure that he looked at those priorities which were necessary for spending for this very important bill.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, the State of Texas has demonstrated to the world that they opened their arms to the evacuees of the 2 hurricanes that struck our Nation and brought disaster to a great area of the Gulf Coast. Texas has always opened their arms to their neighbors and said, come to Texas, you are welcome.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have a problem on the Texas border. I was down in Laredo, Mexico, and Del Rio, Texas, recently where 42 American citizens have been kidnapped. I have a photograph of a woman who was burned alive, an American citizen, by these criminals who cross freely across our borders of Texas. We say, welcome, in Texas, but when you come here, do not break the law to get here. It is time for border security in this bill.

I rise in support of this rule and this homeland security appropriation bill because we start down the road to providing safe borders for the entire southern border and northern border of the United States. We add 1,000 Border Patrol men, which will be of great assistance in shutting down this criminal activity and all of this illegal behavior of people coming illegally into our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, 68,000 OTMs, Other Than Mexicans, have crossed within the last 8 months. That is a crisis. We have to do something about the borders, and this bill does that.

We have new agents for the Border Patrol. We have new criminal investigators, we have new investigators for immigration and for ICE. We have provided a great start on a secure border. We will continue to work hard to secure the borders of this country so that this illegal behavior will be caught and punished and these people will be turned back, because, Mr. Speaker, our Nation's security depends upon it.

So I am very supportive of this bill, and I ask for a ''yes'' vote on the rule and a ''yes'' vote on this bill, because it is a vote for a secure border for America.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN).

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 2360 which will equip our Nation to better prepare and respond to future natural disasters and terrorist attacks. This bill includes needed funding for priorities such as 1,000 additional Border Patrol agents, port and transit security improvements, the Coast Guard's Deepwater program and a pilot program to improve air cargo screening.

However, H.R. 2360 is not perfect. Mr. Speaker, I am deeply concerned that this legislation implements structural changes proposed by Secretary Chertoff's second-stage review without full congressional scrutiny. While some changes may be warranted, today we will be voting to shift the TSA, eliminate the Under Secretary for Border and Transportation Security and weaken FEMA at a time when we need the agency to be strengthened, all without the benefit of significant oversight.

That is why several members of the Committee on Homeland Security, myself included, have introduced the DHS Reform Act, which would improve the proposed reorganization plan by strengthening FEMA, detailing duties of the new chief intelligence officer and chief medical officer and establishing assistant secretaries for physical infrastructure security and for cyber security and telecommunications.

Finally, it would require a quadrennial Homeland Security review, unlike H.R. 2360, which simply encourages such a review.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we will have an opportunity to consider the DHS Reform Act before it is too late to alter some of the significant changes proposed by the second-stage review and included in this appropriations bill. Nonetheless, while the conference report is not perfect, it is indeed an important and significant step towards strengthening our Nation's preparedness, and I will support H.R. 2360.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE) who, once again, is a gentleman who served on the conference report, who is a person, who is a veteran of the Committee on Appropriations, a person who sits directly on the border of the United States and Mexico; he is a person who has been involved for many years in making sure that tough questions were asked and that we made sure that a balance for delivery of money was given to agencies with an expectation of performance.

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments and for yielding me this time, and I rise today to urge my colleagues to support both the rule and the underlying conference report on H.R. 2360, the appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security.

As a member of the Subcommittee on Homeland Security of the Committee on Appropriations, I am especially pleased that this bill provides the resources needed to help secure our border. There are a lot of proposals in Congress that deal with the problem of illegal immigration, and they vary tremendously, but they all have one common theme to them, one common thread, and that is, they all recognize the need to secure our border, and this bill helps to provide the resources that are necessary to accomplish that goal.

The bill ensures that Customs and Border Patrol will have ample funds to protect our borders and enforce our immigration laws. We have to secure the border, and this appropriation bill provides the Department of Homeland Security with the resources it needs to get the job done.

From additional agents, detention space, airplanes, helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, to better technology for securing and facilitating travel into the United States by land, air and sea, this bill has nearly everything that is needed to protect our homeland.

The district I represent includes a large portion of the Border Patrol's Tucson sector, through which almost half, that is right, half of all of the Nation's illegal immigrants enter into this country. The negative impact that this has on communities in my area is staggering. The impact of environmental degradation, the cost to hospitals, police and sheriff's departments and other public agencies, not to mention the tragic loss of life in Arizona in the desert, as many people who seek to come to the United States for better opportunities perish in the heat of the summer.

I am pleased that this conference report provides necessary resources to protect our border, not only an additional $56 million for the Tucson sector for expanding Border Patrol stations, fencing, vehicles, lighting, border roads and sensors, but across our entire border. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this rule and the underlying bill.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS).

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration's Registered Traveler program.

Like many of my colleagues, I was shocked to learn last month that the TSA has discontinued the Registered Traveler pilot program operating at five commercial airports. While TSA claims they need time to evaluate the pilot program before expanding, I contend they have been slow to act and, as a result, are depriving the traveling public, particularly frequent travelers, a more efficient, effective and safer manner of proceeding through airport security.

TSA has been running the pilot programs since the summer of 2004. Each one was advertised to be 90 days in duration, at which point decisions about further deployment would be made. However, we find ourselves now over a year since these pilot programs began with TSA still saying they need additional time to evaluate it. I do not buy it.

This is a classic example of the Federal Government being slow in making critical decisions about a program which we know to be a success and a program that we know also makes us safer.

Now, the TSA is continuing to operate a sixth pilot program at Orlando International Airport that they launched this past June. The Orlando pilot is different from the five pilots that have been shut down in that it is a public-private partnership that is run in conjunction with the airport, its vendor and TSA. I believe this public-private partnership is the way to go, as it will allow the private sector to add additional strengths to the programs, such as offering greater flexibility in meeting the needs and customer expectations, making rapid decisions on capital investment, and customizing programs based on intimate knowledge of the local market.

The Registered Traveler program has promise, and I believe in it. However, due to the manner in which the pilot programs were structured and the lack of decision-making at TSA, this program is in jeopardy of not getting off the ground at the national level. First and foremost, there are too few measurable benefits at the security checkpoint for individuals enrolled in the Registered Traveler program. Why does TSA collect a list of personal data on an individual and then subject him or her to a security threat assessment and provide so few measurable benefits?

I contend that if the Federal Government knows who you are by running your information against terrorist watch lists and other government databases, then they should provide more meaningful benefits at the security checkpoint such as not having you take off your shoes or not having you take off your coat or perhaps allowing nonticketed individuals back to the gates, as we did prior to 9/11, where they have our fingerprints and our eye retinas to make sure that we are safe going through. These are common sense benefits that can and should have been granted to individuals who sign up for this program. With not providing real benefits such as these, TSA is running the risk of killing this program before it is even started.

□ 1830

I am also extremely concerned with this language contained in the DHS conference report that provides a monopoly in my view to one organization to be the central collector and aggregator for biometric data necessary for the background vetting of the Registered Traveler program like other programs. This is not the approach we should be headed in in the United States Congress. We should be promoting competition, growth and an even playing field. And with a public-private partnership like the public-private partnership taking place in Orlando, the American people will win, and the options and competitive environment will be what we need to make us safer.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from New York is exactly correct. We do need more competition engaged in not only homeland security but all across our government. The last session of Congress, I had an opportunity to serve on the Select Committee on Homeland Security and had an opportunity to work very closely with the gentleman from New York (Mr. SWEENEY). As part of this appropriations conference, he very clearly and carefully brought forward thoughts and ideas, just exactly what our colleague from New York (Mr. MEEKS) stated about the ability to create better competition but also to expect results. Several years ago the gentleman from New York (Mr. SWEENEY) was the first Member of Congress to bring forward a threat-based funding analysis plan. That was that we would aim our funding at the most likely threats that our Nation would be facing. And it is this kind of leadership that has allowed us, and I know we all do not agree on this. I know that there are a lot of people that think you ought to divide up the pie and every State or every city get so much money and every first responder gets so much money. But that is not what this administration and not what this Congress believes is the right way to do that.

I am pleased right now to have as our next speaker the gentleman from New York (Mr. SWEENEY) and I would yield him 3 minutes.

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for the kind introduction and thank him for his great work at getting this rule out and onto the floor and for his friendship and his hard work on behalf of this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I have been on this committee for a number of years since its inception. And every one of these bills comes to the floor, and we have common interests in the bill that we can agree on and common things that we can disagree on. But it is an accumulation of work representative of the process here, a bipartisan, bicameral bill that is not perfect by any means, but gets us significantly closer to the places we all want to be. And I think this is probably the one conference report that does that more than any other that I have been fortunate enough to work on, and it is because, as the gentleman from Texas pointed out, it does do something that is important and that has been voted on by this body a number of times, and that is to distribute first responder grants appropriately, threat-based, risk-based, first before we go to minimum standards.

Now, we had negotiated, and we had a compromise with our friends in the other body who still have not gotten to the place where they understand that the most efficient way we are going to fund and protect this Nation is to make sure that the funds and the resources are directed to where threats most exist. And they insisted on still a minimum level of funding for every State in this Nation that I think exceeds common sense. But nevertheless, this is the first time we have been able to codify in legislation and will enact in legislation the idea that homeland security is going to be done threat-based, and that is critically important. And it is why this is an important bill. It is the most significant of the homeland security approps bills because it enacts into law what this body has said now for 2 straight years that we ought to be doing.

It does a number of other really important things, too. And despite the critics, who we have heard from today, saying that it does not do enough, it does more to improve border security than any other single piece of legislation we have had before us since September the 11th. It does important things on restructuring our capabilities in science and technology, and every year, we have this debate that we are not spending enough money, whether it is for screening devices in airports or ports or other kinds of places or interoperability of communications. The fact of the matter is structurally this bill does more to get us to the place where we actually can have the technology put to use in the field that will ensure that we are able to provide that kind of support for our citizens and our first responders.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that, after a very arduous negotiation, the Coast Guard Deepwater program, which is critically important to maintaining our security throughout, is really strengthened here in this bill. Now, we have got a lot of work left to do. There were billions, literally billions of dollars in the pipeline for first-responder grants. And the most important thing that we can do in this body, I think, is provide the proper oversight to make sure that those billions of dollars get to where they need to go and they are spent in a reasonable and responsible manner. This bill does that.

I want to salute Chairman ROGERS for taking the prudent steps that he has taken here and for really leading us. I support this bill and urge my colleagues to do so as well.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things that is missing in this bill is the lack of oversight. That is why some of us have great concerns about it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ).

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, this bill fails us on chemical plant security. According to data from the Environmental Protection Agency, there are 23 States, including my home State of New Jersey, which has seven such plants where a worst-case release of chemicals could threaten more than a million people per incident. And a part of my district, in northern New Jersey, is home to the area commonly referred to as the most dangerous 2 miles in America, an area between Newark Liberty Airport and Port Elizabeth that is home to a number of chemical plants.

The New York Times recently reported that one plant in this area that

possesses chlorine gas ''poses a potentially lethal threat to 12 million people who live within a 14-mile radius.''

Now, the attacks of September 11th made each of us realize that terrorism had entered a whole new realm, one in which our Nation's assets, infrastructure and people could be used against us. That is why the Menendez amendment to the House homeland security appropriations bill, which passed with the support of 224 of my colleagues, sought to improve the security of that area of chemical plants across the country by providing $50 million to State and local governments to enhance the security of those plants and the communities that surround them. This money could have been used to equip and train first responders, provide assistance and guidance to chemical plant officials to implement best management practices to improve security or to increase law enforcement presence and patrols around chemical plants.

As a matter of fact, just this past week, there was a chlorine incident in a pool plant that strangulated traffic in the New York-New Jersey metro area. Unfortunately, the Republican controlled conference committee chose to delete the amendment from the entire conference report.

Hurricane Katrina should have taught us the importance of addressing the problems we know we face before disaster strikes. The chemical plants that dot northern New Jersey are the Lake Ponchartrain of our region, and this Congress just decided to cut funding for the equivalent of levees that would protect our people.

And not only did the conference committee on homeland security delete that amendment increasing funding for chemical security, it also cut State and local preparedness grants by $585 million, a full 19 percent lower than the level in the last fiscal year.

This Congress had a chance to address a looming problem before it was too late. The decision to cut funding for chemical security is an astonishing abdication of Congress's responsibility to keep our families safe.

And just while New York City at this very moment has heightened transit security because of a critical threat of bombing on the subway system, this bill woefully underfunds transit security.

While my colleagues focus on undocumented immigration in this homeland security bill, they allow the Nation to be unprotected from attacks on our chemical plants, transit systems, ports and the ability of our first responders to respond. That is a Federal Government that is failing to secure its people.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that this bill finally fully funds the mitigation programs authorized last year by the Flood Insurance Reform Act, which I was pleased to coauthor with our former colleague, Doug Bereuter, which reauthorized and reformed the National Flood Insurance program assisting property owners who live in repetitively flooded areas. The programs in this bill are not funded by taxpayer dollars but by a transfer from the National Flood Insurance paid by premium dollars which authorized mitigation assistance to communities to elevate properties or move people out of harm's way.

Hurricane Katrina highlighted the importance of preparing for and mitigating against these natural disasters. While I am pleased that we have partial funding, I am disappointed that the administration has not requested funding for these programs earlier, an approach that could have, if fully funded and aggressively implemented, saved lives and property.

Unfortunately, the conference committee report cuts critical funding for other important mitigation programs. It provides only $50 million for pre-disaster mitigation, which is 67 percent below the House passed level and the President's request and 50 percent below the level for last year. This is what helps keep people out of harm's way.

But my deepest concern in the report, I must say, is a local concern, dealing with what it does to Portland's airport screeners with a reduction of over 2,000 from last year and the President's request. These have led directly to cuts in screener levels at over 200 airports across the country.

The airport that serves the Portland metropolitan area is hit the hardest in the country, losing over a third of our screeners despite an increase in our air traffic. These cuts will impact not just my community but those across the country and undermine our air transportation system.

The cuts will lead to longer lines and lost luggage. These proposed cuts will leave Portland less protected than it was before 9/11. We have introduced a resolution of inquiry to find out why in the world TSA wants to do that.

Unless we in Congress understand how TSA is doing the job of cutting funding for these screeners, they will come back to haunt our local communities and our already ailing airlines. I think our constituents deserve better.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

First of all, let me begin by saying something nice to the majority. I would like to point out for the record that this is the first conference report in this Congress that has lain over for 3 days as required under the rules of the House, so I want to thank the Speaker and the majority leader and the members of the Rules Committee for following the rules of the House for a change. I hope we can do this more often.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me address the substance of this conference report. This conference report cuts first-responder grants. We have heard that over and over and over again. And let me just say to my colleagues on the other side who say that somehow there is money in the pipeline, well, there shouldn't be any money in the pipeline. The need is that great.

The first responders in this country, our fire fighters and our police officers, they do not want resolutions of support. They do not want your eloquent speeches. They do not want your meaningless proclamations. What they want, what they need are the resources to be able to do their job, to protect their communities.

And yet, under this conference report, three of the four major grants programs for first responders in the Department of Homeland Security are cut below fiscal year 2005 levels. It underfunds communications equipment for first responders. We have been talking about that over and over throughout this debate.

But what is particularly astonishing to me is that, despite what we saw in Katrina, where people could not communicate with each other, similar to what happened during 9/11, the conference report actually provides $15 million or 36 percent less than the amount the House provided for this equipment in the original bill back in May before Katrina ever struck.

Now we have heard a lot on the other side about budget priorities and limited moneys and funding shortfalls. But we have to get this right. This is about protecting our homeland security. This is government's first responsibility, to protect the people of this country.

You never talk about budget priorities. You never talk about money shortfalls when it comes to tax cuts that benefit mostly the richest people in this country. But yet when it comes to protecting people, providing the equipment that our first responders need, providing the equipment our communities need to protect themselves against a terrorist attack or a natural disaster, somehow we do not have the money.

I would urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on the conference report.

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

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WALDEN of Oregon). The Chair will remind all persons in the gallery that they are here as guests of the House and that any manifestation of approval or disapproval of proceedings or other audible conversation is in violation of the rules of the House.

□ 1845

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

I am pleased and proud today to have the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. ROGERS) to lead us today as we have an opportunity to debate, discuss, and vote on this important appropriations bill for homeland security.

Mr. Speaker, I will admit to my colleagues we worked hard on this bill. It is a bipartisan effort. It was one that employed a lot of people with a lot of thoughts and ideas. We worked with the Senate, we worked with the administration, a lot of work, but what we have done is produce a package that is threat-based. It is based on those experts who see the threat that is aimed against the United States, and they are numerous. They are numerous. They are not in our largest cities, but along our border, but, Mr. Speaker, we have worked together to make sure that in a bipartisan fashion this was addressed, and I am pleased and proud today to say that this is a threat-based bill, based upon what the experts tell us is facing the United States today.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to highlight the retirement of a very important person in the administration. He is a former commissioner of U.S. Customs; and under Homeland Security, he has been commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Judge Robert Bonner from Los Angeles, California, who has served this great Nation for a number of years as a Federal judge and once again in the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Judge Bonner will be leaving in just about a month from his service to the administration; and Judge Bonner has been a man of not only substance and vision but a person who has offered Members of Congress his best advice on how best to deal with the threats against this Nation.

So I would like to highlight not only the service to this country that the Members of Congress have done in this appropriations bill but also working with the administration, with such fine people as Judge Bonner.

Mr. Speaker, I will confess to my colleagues that this bill that we have here today is aimed at averting and stopping the next terrorist attack that comes aimed at this country. I hope that we have put the best minds to this and that we are prepared.

I am prepared to tell my colleagues right now I support this rule and the underlying legislation.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I will ultimately support the underlying legislation under the Conference Report, but I recognize that it has many shortfalls that will affect this nation's ability to respond to a new and substantial set of circumstances—namely the aftermath of Katrina and Rita. I speak not only from the standpoint of a Representative of an area that experienced compound effects of both Katrina and Rita, but I speak as mother, wife, and a person who understands the pains of economic hardship.

A restrictive rule in a situation such as this will only limit the effectiveness of this legislation. Hurricane Katrina has been a natural disaster of unprecedented proportions. The effects of Katrina, now compounded with the effects of hurricane Rita, have been difficult to predict and even more difficult to prevent. Thousands of people are displaced, hungry, and without hope. Authorities at every level of government are virtually writing the book on how to respond to a disaster of this proportion and scope. In my district alone, there are 15,000 displaced children who need homes, schooling, food, jobs, and subsistence items. New information is coming in by the hour on damage that was done to our infrastructure, the numbers of displaced people, and the paltry resources available.

I applaud the Conferees for giving agencies such as ICE an appropriation of $3.175 billion—which was a $216 million increase over the FY05 level of $2.95 billion. Furthermore, of the $4.6 billion allocated to TSA, $2.54 billion is allocated to cover passenger and baggage screener workforce. The number of TSA screeners is capped at 45,000—which will constrain our efforts to compensate for the effects of the two hurricanes. Within this account, privatized screening operations are funded at $140 million. The conferees also extended liability protection to airports with private and TSA screeners for "any act of negligence, gross negligence, or intentional wrongdoing" committed by a Federal or private screener—which will be a good element.

Unfortunately, the underlying bill is not exactly on-point or up-to-date vis-a-vis Hurricane Rita. Many of the problems that we face are new, late breaking, and developing in front of our eyes. We need as unrestrictive a rule as possible in order to best address the issues contained with this legislation. In fact we have still not given full attention to the value of growing and promoting citizen Corps—established neighborhood groups that were established in the original homeland security legislation that would help train neighborhoods in securing their communities.

This measure is of critical importance for the constituents of my district. We can do better.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WALDEN of Oregon). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on motions to suspend the rules previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

S. 1786, by the yeas and nays;

H. Res. 276, by the yeas and nays;

H.R. 3894, by the yeas and nays.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. The remaining votes in this series will be 5-minute votes.

AUTHORIZING SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION TO MAKE EMERGENCY AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT GRANTS-IN-AID FOR REPAIRS AND COSTS RELATED TO DAMAGE FROM HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The pending business is the question of suspending the rules and passing the Senate bill, S. 1786.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1786, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 420, nays 0, not voting 13, as follows:

[Roll No. 509]

YEAS—420

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Andrews
Baca
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bass
Bean
Beauprez
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd
Bradley (NH)
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Brown (OH)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Butterfield
Buyer
Calvert
Camp
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Carter
Case
Castle
Chabot
Chandler
Chocola
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Cramer
Crenshaw
Cubin
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Cunningham
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis (TN)
Davis, Jo Ann
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
DeLay
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doolittle
Doyle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Edwards
Ehlers
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Everett
Farr
Fattah
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Fitzpatrick (PA)
Flake
Foley
Forbes
Ford
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green (WI)
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Gutknecht
Hall
Harman
Harris
Hart
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hefley
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth
Higgins
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hobson
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hostettler
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Hyde
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Istook
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jenkins
Jindal
Johnson (CT)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Keller
Kelly
Kennedy (MN)
Kennedy (RI)
Kildee
Kilpatrick (MI)
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Leach
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mack
Maloney
Manzullo
Marchant
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui