

corporate citizens in promoting Internet safety.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I just want to commend the gentlelady for her statistics that she brings forward. I think many of us, when you hear 1 in 25, that doesn't sound too bad, but that one person out of 25 could be your son or daughter, and it would be a tragedy. The statistics bring home to all of us, particularly people that have seen our children grow up and use the Internet.

I would also suggest that she make available to all Members a copy of that bookmark. I think that bookmark is a terrific idea, and I think a lot of Members who have young children certainly could use that bookmark back in their district. Again, I think what she is doing is very important.

In the committee that I am ranking member of, the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection, we have passed out of the subcommittee, the full committee, and in the House recently, the spyware bill, H.R. 964. This bill obviously is about spyware that's used to penetrate your computer and to find out different pieces of information about what you are doing that can be used for cyberstalking.

I want to applaud the House for voting overwhelmingly. I think it was over 360 Members voted for spyware. I urge the Senate to pass the spyware bill and bring it to conference, so that we can get it to the President's desk.

This would go also towards preventing the cyberstalking, some of the things we see here, and which we are seeking with Internet Safety Month.

Again, I thank the gentlelady for her efforts here.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I am pleased to offer my support of H. Res. 455 offered by my colleague, Representative MELISSA BEAN.

The power of the Internet has revolutionized communications and affected the lives of people in every corner of the planet. It does more good than most of us can imagine. It's also no secret that the Internet also can be dangerous, especially for trusting children who go online without parents or teachers looking over their shoulders.

Studies say that more than a billion people use the Internet, and none of us need a study to know that some of them are wretched predators. In the United States, 35,000,000 children in kindergarten through 12th grade have Internet access. Of those students, 61 percent admit to using the Internet unsafely or inappropriately. As many as 47 percent of parents feel unable to fully monitor and shelter their children from inappropriate material.

We on the Energy and Commerce Committee are acutely aware of the Internet's value to commerce and communication, but we have also seen the evil that people can do when they use the Internet to attract and abuse children. And yet many parents and children are simply unaware of hazards that exist only one click away.

We want our children to feel safe at home, and they do, but that sense of safety can also cause them to let down their guard with the strangers they meet by computer. The consequences can range from unhappy experi-

ences with cyber-bullying to tragic involvement in kiddy porn.

June is National Internet Safety Month, a time used to promote education and awareness of these issues and stress their preventability through an ad campaign. The campaign focuses on advice to parents in educating their children on the dangers of the Internet along with true stories of children succumbing to predators. It also provides important links and information on how to report an offender.

H. Res. 455, promoting National Internet Safety Month, commends national and community organizations for promoting awareness of the dangers of the Internet and providing information and training that develops critical thinking and decision making skills that are necessary in order to safely utilize the Internet. The House also recognizes the continued involvement of parents, educators, law enforcement, and community leaders as vital to the online safety of America's children.

Designating June as National Internet Safety Month reminds us that we should always be on guard to protect our children from potential online threats.

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

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. 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 North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 455, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### TRUTH IN CALLER ID ACT OF 2007

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 251) to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to prohibit manipulation of caller identification information, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 251

*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 "Truth in Caller ID Act of 2007".

#### SEC. 2. PROHIBITION REGARDING MANIPULATION OF CALLER IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION.

Section 227 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 227) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (e), (f), and (g) as subsections (f), (g), and (h), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (d) the following new subsection:

“(e) PROHIBITION ON PROVISION OF DECEPTIVE CALLER IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—It shall be unlawful for any person within the United States, in connection with any telecommunications service or VOIP service, to cause any caller identification service to transmit misleading or inaccurate caller identification information, with the intent to defraud or cause harm.

“(2) PROTECTION FOR BLOCKING CALLER IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION.—Nothing in this subsection may be construed to prevent or restrict any person from blocking the capability of any caller identification service to transmit caller identification information.

#### “(3) REGULATIONS.—

“(A) DEADLINE.—Not later than 6 months after the enactment of this subsection, the Commission shall prescribe regulations to implement this subsection.

“(B) CONSIDERATION OF RELATED REGULATIONS.—In conducting the proceeding to prescribe the regulations required by subparagraph (A) of this paragraph, the Commission shall examine whether the Commission's regulations under subsection (b)(2)(B) of this section should be revised to require non-commercial calls to residential telephone lines using an artificial or pre-recorded voice to deliver a message to transmit caller identification information that is not misleading or inaccurate.

“(4) EFFECT ON OTHER LAWS.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to authorize or prohibit any investigative, protective, or intelligence activities performed in connection with official duties, and in accordance with all applicable laws, by a law enforcement agency of the United States, a State, or a political subdivision of a State, or by an intelligence agency of the United States.

“(5) SAVINGS PROVISION.—Except for paragraph (3)(B), nothing in this subsection may be construed to affect or alter the application of the Commission's regulations regarding the requirements for transmission of caller identification information, issued pursuant to the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-243) and the amendments made by such Act.

“(6) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this subsection:

“(A) CALLER IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION.—The term ‘caller identification information’ means information provided to an end user by a caller identification service regarding the telephone number of, or other information regarding the origination of, a call made using a telecommunications service or VOIP service.

“(B) CALLER IDENTIFICATION SERVICE.—The term ‘caller identification service’ means any service or device designed to provide the user of the service or device with the telephone number of, or other information regarding the origination of, a call made using a telecommunications service or VOIP service. Such term includes automatic number identification services.

“(C) VOIP SERVICE.—The term ‘VOIP service’ means a service that—

“(i) provides real-time voice communications transmitted through end user equipment using TCP/IP protocol, or a successor protocol, for a fee or without a fee;

“(ii) is offered to the public, or such classes of users as to be effectively available to the public (whether part of a bundle of services or separately); and

“(iii) has the capability to originate traffic to, or terminate traffic from, the public switched telephone network.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill which I offer today with an amendment under suspension of the rules. This is a consensus, noncontroversial bill, and it is sponsored by our colleague, Representative ELIOT ENGEL from the State of New York. A similar bill, sponsored by full Energy and Commerce Ranking Member JOE BARTON, passed the House in the last Congress unanimously.

I want to commend Telecommunications and the Internet Subcommittee Ranking Member FRED UPTON for his work and cooperation on this measure, and I commend full committee Chairman JOHN DINGELL for his excellent efforts on this bill as well.

This legislation addresses issues regarding so-called "caller ID spoofing." "Spoofing" is when a caller masks or changes the caller ID information of their call in a way that disguises the true origination number of the caller. In many instances, a call recipient may be subject to pretexting through spoofing, which can lead to fraud, personal ID theft, harassment or otherwise put the safety of the call recipient in danger.

On the other hand, lest we think that spoofing always has nefarious aims, we must recognize that there may be circumstances when a person's safety may be put in danger if their true and accurate call origination information is disclosed as well.

For instance, Members of Congress often have direct lines in their offices in order to ensure that such lines do not become generally public and, therefore, remain useful to us. It may be necessary to keep such direct numbers confidential and have the outgoing caller ID information indicate a different number at which offices can be reached for return calls; that gives the recipient a legitimate phone number to call back, but keeps confidential lines that must remain private.

There are many doctors, psychiatrists, lawyers and other professionals who would similarly like to keep direct confidential lines private in this way, who have no intention of misleading anyone.

In addition, there may be instances, for example, when a woman at a shelter seeks to reach her children, when spoofing is important to safeguard someone's safety. Moreover, informants to law enforcement tip lines or whistle blowers have additional reasons for why their calling information should remain private. We should not outlaw any of these practices, and I think the legislation needs some improvement and clarification in these areas.

What we seek in caller ID policy is balance. This has been the case since we held hearings in the Telecommunications Subcommittee in the early 1990s on caller ID, when we sought to take into account emerging caller ID technology in a way that also allowed callers to block their origination number on a per call or per line basis. Tech-

nology also allowed call recipients to refuse to receive calls by anyone who is blocking their caller ID information from going through.

This is much-needed legislation. I urge support by all Members of the House.

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I request such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 251, the Truth in Caller ID Act of 2007. I thank my good friend, Mr. ENGEL of New York, for his work here; also the ranking member, JOE BARTON of Texas, for his leadership on this very important piece of legislation.

My colleagues, millions of Americans use caller ID in order to secure greater privacy for their families. Yet, as new technologies continue to be developed, caller ID spoofing, as brought out by the gentleman from Massachusetts, has become a problem for both consumers and businesses.

This bill protects consumers by prohibiting the deceptive manipulation of caller identification information, a practice which has been defined and is clearly delineated as "spoofing," "caller ID spoofing."

Now, this occurs when a caller masquerades as someone else by falsifying a number that appears on the recipient's caller ID display. The most important point about this discussion is that caller ID spoofing can make a call appear to come from any phone number the caller wishes. The increasing use of VOIP, which is voice over Internet protocol, that we see in America and other Internet telephone services, has made it much easier for people to make any number appear on a caller ID system.

In addition, several Web sites have sprung up to provide caller ID spoofing services, eliminating the need for any special hardware to replicate this. Although these caller ID spoofing services promote themselves for use in prank calls or for simple entertainment purposes, and that's what they propose only, they say, such services can be easily accessed and used by criminals.

□ 1150

So Caller ID spoofing has emerged as a useful tool for identity thieves and other scam artists. In addition, my colleagues, many business functions, from credit card verification to automatic call routing, depend on caller ID for security purposes, which spoofing can render useless.

So this bill, H.R. 251, prohibits sending misleading or inaccurate caller ID information with the intent to defraud or cause harm. The Energy and Commerce Committee drafted the language in this bill so carefully that it will go after the bad actors but, at the same time, preserve the ability to manipulate the caller ID information for legitimate purposes, such as the protection for victims of domestic violence.

A woman is calling, let's say, from a shelter and she wants to protect her

ID, or she doesn't want to disclose, get the phone number disclosed where she is.

A single mother at home, she should have the opportunity to block her phone number so people can't recognize that number and call her, harass her or even use it in a way to bring harm to her.

So my colleagues, this is an important piece of bipartisan consumer protection legislation. I urge all of you to support H.R. 251, the Truth in Caller ID Act.

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

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the sponsor of this legislation, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL).

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman and my good friend from Massachusetts for recognizing me.

I'm very proud that this was the first bill that was reported from our Telecommunications Subcommittee this year. We had extensive hearings last year on the bill, and this bill is truly bipartisan.

I want to thank the ranking member, Mr. BARTON, for working with me on this bill, as well as Chairman DINGELL, Mr. STEARNS and of course my friend, ED MARKEY.

When people look at their caller ID, they have a right to believe and expect that the number that is there and the name of the person who is listed there is truly the number and the name of the person calling them. And I was shocked when I first heard that can you manipulate both the name and the number. In fact, there are Web sites, you only have to dial a Web site and pay a fee and you can manipulate the name, the number. And there's even technology where you can change the sound of a person's voice. So a 50-year-old male calling can sound like a 21-year-old female, and the name is different, and the phone number is different. That should not be.

Constituents thought they were receiving calls from congressional offices at one time, and these calls turned out to be far from appropriate.

Think of the mischief that can continue to happen. Unscrupulous people can trick unsuspecting victims to release personal information such as credit card numbers or Social Security numbers. It's easy for someone to pretend to be with Chase Manhattan or Citibank when you take a look and you see it says Chase Manhattan or Citibank and a number, and someone calls and says, well, we just need to verify your Social Security number with your account, and perhaps a senior citizen or someone else would feel that they could trust the caller ID and give personal information. This has to stop.

Having investigated this issue in great depth, I became convinced that what was happening was only a harbinger of things to come. There's a strong possibility that more and more

people will use this technology in political campaigns. Imagine calling someone at 2 o'clock in the morning and having the number of the opposite political campaign calling you to say vote for this candidate. So this is ridiculous.

You could have insulting, slanderous, racist, sexist calls, and people would think when they look at their caller ID that it's somebody else calling, not the person who is calling.

Both the gentleman from Massachusetts and the gentleman from Florida pointed out numerous instances. So this is truly a bipartisan piece of legislation, one that is needed, one that the American public is probably not aware that needs to be corrected. People just don't think that this can happen. They believe in what the caller ID says.

So I urge my colleagues to give this important legislation strong support. This is a good step towards protecting our Nation from this emerging technology. And again, the people who use this have to have the intent to defraud in order to come under this statute. So this protects everybody, as Mr. MARKEY pointed out.

There may be some instances, Mr. STEARNS pointed out, where we would want to protect this technology, where we would not want to give the correct ID. This shows that if you have the intent to defraud, you can be prosecuted under this. So it strikes a fair balance. Those were the hearings that we had.

And, again, I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill, and I'm pleased to be the sponsor of this legislation.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I request such time as I may consume.

The gentleman from New York mentioned about the harbinger of things to come, and I think that's what we are all worried about, so I think this is a great first step forward.

Just recently, my subcommittee, the Commerce Consumer Protection and Trade, which Mr. RUSH chairs and I'm ranking member of, we did a do-not-call reauthorization, which is H.R. 2601. We dropped that bill last week. We urge the conference committee to mark that up and get that forward. It's part of the process here to protect consumers.

In fact, in the committee that I serve, we've done a lot of Internet consumer protection, so I'm very wholeheartedly in support of this, and I encourage some other bills. In fact, the gentleman from Massachusetts' Social Security bill, H.R. 948, is an excellent bill; as well as the Data Security bill, H.R. 958. So I think these are the types of bills we need to protect consumers, and I very wholeheartedly support them.

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

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from California (Ms. HARMAN).

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to resume my service on the

Telecom Subcommittee in this Congress.

I also rise in strong support of the Truth in Caller ID Act, which will prevent acts of identity theft and billions of dollars in consumer losses each year.

I would like to engage the bill's sponsor, Mr. ENGEL, in a brief colloquy to clarify the effect this bill has on other laws relating to national security and law enforcement. The relevant section reads: "Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to authorize or prohibit any investigative, protective or intelligence activities performed in connection with official duties, and in accordance with all applicable laws, by a law enforcement agency of the United States, a State or a political subdivision of a State, or by an intelligence agency of the United States."

I'd like to ask the author what the meaning of this language is.

Mr. ENGEL. I want to assure the gentlewoman that this bill does not confer or authorize any new powers for any intelligence or law enforcement agency, nor does it prohibit any lawfully authorized investigative, protective or intelligence activity of a law enforcement agency of the United States, a State or a political subdivision of a State, or of an intelligence agency of the United States.

Ms. HARMAN. I thank the gentleman for clarifying that. Lawfully authorized national security and law enforcement activities are critical in this era of terror. Legislation designed to improve our Nation's safety and security, like the Truth in Caller ID Act, should not inadvertently impair them, nor should it expand them. This carefully crafted bill, in my view, strikes the right balance. And I would like to commend the author, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. BARTON, Mr. DINGELL, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. UPTON for their diligent work. I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

□ 1200

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I would just conclude by thanking all of the Members, led by Mr. ENGEL; the very, very helpful comments from Ms. HARMAN in clarification of the intent of this legislation; Mr. DINGELL, the chairman of the full committee; along with Mr. BARTON, the ranking member, Mr. UPTON and Mr. STEARNS. This is a completely bipartisan piece of legislation, and we thank them for this cooperation. This is the way telecommunications legislation should be passed.

I would also like to commend the staff: Tim Powderly from the majority

staff and Neil Fried and Courtney Reinhard from the Republican committee staff. I also want to thank Pete Goodloe and Gregg Rothschild from Mr. DINGELL's staff; Cristina Batt from Mr. ENGEL's staff; and Colin Crowell on my staff, who has been doing this type of legislation for 17 years, going back to the beginning of the discussion of all of these caller ID-related issues.

And, finally, I would like to thank Johanna Shelton on her last bill on the House floor. Johanna has been incredibly competent, more than competent. She really brings the word "excellence" into congressional and legislative service. And this will be her last bill on the floor, and there is lamenting of a magnitude hard to fully measure on the Democratic side that her leaving is creating, although I understand her husband is not sharing that sentiment as she leaves her service here.

And it is that duality that we all have to deal with here in our congressional service. But for my part, there has been no more dedicated public servant that I have met in my time here in Congress, and we will miss her service, and we thank her for all of her great work.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of this legislation.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 251, the "Truth in Caller ID Act of 2007," which I co-authored with my friend, Representative ENGEL from New York. This bill protects consumers by prohibiting the deceptive manipulation of caller identification information—a practice is known as caller ID "spoofing."

Caller ID technology is an invaluable tool. Millions of people rely daily on the caller identification information that appears when their phones ring. Unfortunately, criminals are using "spoofing" to perpetrate fraud. "Spoofing" occurs when a caller masquerades as someone else by falsifying the name or number that appears on the recipient's caller ID display. Those who answer the phone and see the number of a legitimate company or charity are far more likely to fall victim to an illegitimate request for money or personal information.

Even worse, the Internet has made "spoofing" easy. Numerous websites sell simple web interfaces to caller ID systems that allow criminals to appear to be calling from any number they choose. Some of these services boast that they do not maintain logs or provide any contact information of their customers. Some even offer voice scrambling services to enable a caller to sound like someone of the opposite sex.

H.R. 251 prohibits sending misleading or inaccurate caller ID information with the intent to defraud or cause harm. The bill is drafted so that it will go after bad actors, but at the same time preserve the ability to mask or block caller ID information for legitimate purposes.

This is an important piece of bipartisan consumer protection legislation.

I urge you to support H.R. 251, the "Truth in Caller ID Act."

Mr. MARKEY. 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 Massachusetts

(Mr. MARKEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 251, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 3 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1322

### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SALAZAR) at 1 o'clock and 22 minutes p.m.

### PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2638, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 473 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

#### H. RES. 473

*Resolved*, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2638) making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. Points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI are waived. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. When the committee rises and reports the bill back to the House with a recommendation that the bill do pass, the previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration of H.R. 2638 in the House pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous

question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida, Mr. DIAZ-BALART. All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous materials into the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 473 provides an open rule for the consideration of H.R. 2638, the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act for 2008. The rule provides for 1 hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill except for those arising under clauses 9 or 10 of rule XXI. The resolution also waives points of order against the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI regarding legislating in an appropriations bill and appropriating for unauthorized programs.

During consideration of the bill for amendment, the chairman of the Committee of the Whole may provide priority in recognition based on whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. The rule also provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

I am pleased to bring to the floor the first appropriations bill of the 110th Congress under a traditional open rule process. The security of our Nation concerns every American in every State, and it is a priority of every Member of this body. But while the effort to secure our homeland is a bipartisan one, there are clear differences between how the two parties approach it, and the bill demonstrates them.

We have before us legislation that provides more than \$36 billion in critical funding needed to address security vulnerabilities identified by the Homeland Security experts. It is a fulfillment of commitments made by Democrats in implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act of 2007, which passed the House with a bipartisan majority.

With this bill Democrats are increasing funding for homeland security by 7 percent, or \$2.5 billion, over the

amount appropriated for it last year. In fact, we are providing close to \$2 billion more than what the President asked for in his request to Congress. These increases aren't excessive. They are, instead, the result of the Democrats' commitment to adequately fund security programs which in past years have been talked about, but not sufficiently supported.

These funding increases stand in stark contrast to past Republican decisions to cut money for vital security efforts and to impose unfunded mandates on State governments. My fellow Democrats and I have rejected the Republican proposals for across-the-board cuts in these areas. We feel that they would indiscriminately and unnecessarily sacrifice billions in needed funding for rail, transit, and port security, as well as for first responder grants. And, indeed, the sad truth is that these grant programs have suffered funding cuts every year since 2004. Compare that to the fact that this bill provides over \$4.5 billion, nearly double the requested amount, for these critical areas.

More specifically, we have provided \$400 million for port security, doubling the requested amount. Similarly, \$400 million will go towards rail and transit security grants, more than the administration requested. And we will increase spending for firefighter grants by \$138 million. The administration had wanted to cut these funds significantly, but we are increasing them.

At a time of heightened concern about our border security, the legislation will help to secure our borders by paying the salaries of 3,000 new Border Patrol agents, and it also improves the benefits package for Customs and Border Patrol officers to ensure higher recruitment and retention rates. After years of a lack of accountability and questionable government contracts, this bill promotes both accountability and oversight through reforms of the contracting process, and this is amazingly important.

I mentioned our borders a moment ago and I want to return to that subject very briefly. As a representative from western New York, the security of our borders is an issue of great concern to me.

□ 1330

Both our northern and southern borders face unique and separate challenges, and the bill addresses each in turn.

The 3,000 new agents funded by the bill will mean over 17,800 brave men and women will patrol our borders by the end of 2008. And at the same time, we will increase northern border funding by 33 percent, and 500 new agents will be placed there. As important as this is, border security efforts must never blind us to the deep connection we share with our neighbor to the north. Ours is a 200-year-old relationship that has benefited both of our nations immensely. In fact, I often say