

“(ii) gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

“(2) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section and for purposes of applying the procedures established under title IV for the consideration of alleged violations of this section—

“(A) the term ‘covered employee’ includes an employee of the Government Accountability Office or Library of Congress; and

“(B) the term ‘employing office’ includes the Government Accountability Office and the Library of Congress.

“(b) REMEDY.—The remedy for a violation of subsection (a) shall be such remedy as would be appropriate if awarded under chapter 12 of title 5, United States Code, with respect to a prohibited personnel practice described in section 2302(b)(8) of such title.

“(C) REGULATIONS TO IMPLEMENT SECTION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Board shall, pursuant to section 304, issue regulations to implement this section.

“(2) AGENCY REGULATIONS.—The regulations issued under paragraph (1) shall be the same as the substantive regulations promulgated by the Merit Systems Protection Board to implement chapters 12 and 23 of title 5, United States Code, except to the extent that the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance may determine, for good cause shown and stated together with the regulation, that a modification of such regulations would be more effective for the implementation of the rights and protections under this section.”

(C) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for part A of title II of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 is amended—

(A) in the item relating to part A, by striking “**FAIR LABOR STANDARDS**,” and all that follows and inserting “**AND OTHER PROTECTIONS AND BENEFITS**”;

(B) by redesignating the item relating to section 207 as relating to section 208; and

(C) by inserting after the item relating to section 206 the following:

“Sec. 207. Rights and protections under whistleblower protection rules.”

(2) APPLICATION OF LAWS.—Section 102(a) of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1302(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(12) Section 2302(b)(8) of title 5, United States Code.”

Mr. INOUE (for himself, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. LOTT, and Mr. LAUTENBERG):

S. 509. A bill to provide improved aviation security, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Aviation Security Improvement Act with Senators STEVENS, ROCKEFELLER, LOTT, and LAUTENBERG, who are all original co-sponsors of this legislation.

When the 9/11 Commission released its report in 2004, the Commission expressed continuing concern over the state of air cargo security, the screening of passengers and baggage, access controls at airports, and the security of general aviation. Congress responded then and enacted measures to address inefficiencies highlighted by the Com-

mission. However, implementation through the rulemaking process was slow, and as a result, significant shortfalls in our security regime remain.

In fact, a little more than year ago, the 9/11 Public Discourse project issued a scorecard that gave inadequate grades in those key areas where the Commission had advocated for improvements in aviation security. Checked Baggage and Cargo Screening received a “D,” Airline Passenger Explosive Screening received a “C,” and Airline Passenger Prescreening received an “F.”

Over the past year, the Transportation Security Administration, TSA, has continued working to significantly bolster air cargo security in the United States. While that is a good step in response to the report card, more must be done. The government must remain vigilant in its effort to provide security for our Nation, and the steps proposed in this bill will both improve our existing security system and give TSA the flexibility to combat new and emerging threats.

The bill we are introducing today would require the screening of all cargo going on passenger aircraft within 3 years. We expect TSA to develop a robust screening program that improves upon current measures and ensures the security of all cargo transported in commercial passenger air carriers.

To improve our ability to detect explosives in checked baggage and at passenger screening checkpoints, the bill extends the Aviation Security Capital Fund and promotes the purchase and installation of advanced baggage screening systems that can be integrated into the daily workings of our Nation’s air transportation system. This capital investment will improve security screening by permitting TSA employees to better focus on potential threats while reducing the high workplace injury rates.

The bill addresses airline passenger explosive screening in several ways:

1. By promoting advanced research and development for checkpoint technology;

2. By enhancing screener training to more clearly identify and address potential threats; and

3. By requiring the Administration to complete and implement a plan over the next year that thoroughly addresses the threat of and response to carry-on explosives.

Airline passenger prescreening also remains a primary concern of the Congress. Not enough progress has been made by the TSA to develop an advanced passenger prescreening system since it took on this task nearly 4 years ago. Too many passengers are inconvenienced each year by false positives when matched against passenger watchlists.

Our bill would ensure a system is in place to coordinate passenger redress matters, and that the TSA moves rapidly to develop a strategic plan to test and implement an advanced passenger prescreening system.

Our bill also takes steps to improve general aviation security, airport access issues for airline employees, screener staffing issues, and other issues where there have been consistent shortcomings over the past several years.

The 9/11 Commission’s report and subsequent Public Discourse project helped keep Congress and the Administration focused on the need for aviation security. While they did not have all the answers for quick fixes, they did offer a vital blueprint, particularly in the areas of infrastructure and transportation system security.

My colleagues and I used that guideline in drafting the legislation we are introducing today. We believe that once this bill is enacted, it will significantly improve aviation security in the specific areas I have highlighted, and the aviation system as a whole. I look forward to working with my colleagues to move this bill quickly. We have had 5 years to consider what does and does not work. Now it is time to implement what we have learned.

I ask unanimous consent that this bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 509

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

SEC. 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Aviation Security Improvement Act”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

TITLE	—AVIATION SECURITY
Sec. 1.	Short title; table of contents.
Sec. 2.	Extension of authorization for aviation security funding.
Sec. 3.	Passenger aircraft cargo screening.
Sec. 4.	Blast-resistant cargo containers.
Sec. 5.	Protection of air cargo on passenger planes from explosives.
Sec. 6.	In-line baggage screening.
Sec. 7.	Enhancement of in-line baggage system deployment.
Sec. 8.	Research and development of aviation transportation security technology.
Sec. 9.	Certain TSA personnel limitations not to apply.
Sec. 10.	Specialized training.
Sec. 11.	Explosive detection at passenger screening checkpoints.
Sec. 12.	Appeal and redress process for passengers wrongly delayed or prohibited from boarding a flight.
Sec. 13.	Repair station security.
Sec. 14.	Strategic plan to test and implement advanced passenger prescreening system.
Sec. 15.	General aviation security.
Sec. 16.	Security credentials for airline crews.

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION FOR AVIATION SECURITY FUNDING.

Section 48301(a) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking “and 2006” and inserting “2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009”.

SEC. 3. PASSENGER AIRCRAFT CARGO SCREENING.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 44901 of title 49, United States Code, is amended—

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

(2) by inserting after subsection (f) the following:

“(g) AIR CARGO ON PASSENGER AIRCRAFT.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of the Aviation Security Improvement Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security, acting through the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, shall establish a system to screen all cargo transported on passenger aircraft operated by an air carrier or foreign air carrier in air transportation or intrastate air transportation to ensure the security of all such passenger aircraft carrying cargo.

“(2) MINIMUM STANDARDS.—The system referred to in paragraph (1) shall require, at a minimum, that the equipment, technology, procedures, personnel, or other methods determined by the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, provide a level of security comparable to the level of security in effect for passenger checked baggage.

“(3) REGULATIONS.—

“(A) INTERIM FINAL RULE.—The Secretary of Homeland Security may issue an interim final rule as a temporary regulation to implement this subsection without regard to the provisions of chapter 5 of title 5.

“(B) FINAL RULE.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary issues an interim final rule under subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall issue, not later than 1 year after the effective date of the interim final rule, a final rule as a permanent regulation to implement this subsection in accordance with the provisions of chapter 5 of title 5.

“(ii) FAILURE TO ACT.—If the Secretary does not issue a final rule in accordance with clause (i) on or before the last day of the 1-year period referred to in clause (i), the Secretary shall submit a report to the Congress explaining why the final rule was not timely issued and providing an estimate of the earliest date on which the final rule will be issued. The Secretary shall submit the first such report within 10 days after such last day and submit a report to the Congress containing updated information every 60 days thereafter until the final rule is issued.

“(iii) SUPERSEDING OF INTERIM FINAL RULE.—The final rule issued in accordance with this subparagraph shall supersede the interim final rule issued under subparagraph (A).

“(4) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date on which the system required by paragraph (1) is established, the Secretary shall transmit a report to Congress that details and explains the system.”

(b) ASSESSMENT OF EXEMPTIONS.—

(1) TSA ASSESSMENT OF EXEMPTIONS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security, through the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, shall submit a report to Congress and to the Comptroller General containing an assessment of each exemption granted under section 44901(i) of title 49, United States Code, for the screening required by section 44901(g)(1) of that title for cargo transported on passenger aircraft and an analysis to assess the risk of maintaining such exemption. The Secretary may submit the report in both classified and redacted formats if the Secretary determines that such action is appropriate or necessary.

(B) CONTENTS.—The report shall include—

(i) the rationale for each exemption;

(ii) a statement of the percentage of cargo that is not screened as a result of each exemption;

(iii) the impact of each exemption on aviation security;

(iv) the projected impact on the flow of commerce of eliminating such exemption;

(v) a statement of any plans, and the rationale, for maintaining, changing, or eliminating each exemption.

(2) GAO ASSESSMENT.—Not later than 120 days after the date on which the report required under paragraph (1) is submitted, the Comptroller General shall review the report and provide to Congress an assessment of the methodology used for determinations made by the Secretary for maintaining, changing, or eliminating an exemption.

SEC. 4. BLAST-RESISTANT CARGO CONTAINERS.

Section 44901 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end thereof the following:

“(i) BLAST-RESISTANT CARGO CONTAINERS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Before January 1, 2008, the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration shall—

“(A) evaluate the results of the blast-resistant cargo container pilot program instituted before the date of enactment of the Aviation Security Improvement Act;

“(B) based on that evaluation, begin the acquisition of a sufficient number of blast-resistant cargo containers to meet the requirements of the Transportation Security Administration's cargo security program under paragraph (2); and

“(C) develop a system under which the Administrator—

“(i) will make such containers available for use by passenger aircraft operated by air carriers or foreign air carriers in air transportation or intrastate air transportation on a random or risk-assessment basis as determined by the Administrator, in sufficient number to enable the carriers to meet the requirements of the Administration's cargo security system; and

“(ii) provide for the storage, maintenance, and distribution of such containers.

“(2) DISTRIBUTION TO AIR CARRIERS.—Within 90 days after the date on which the Administrator completes development of the system required by paragraph (1)(C), the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration shall implement that system and begin making blast-resistant cargo containers available to such carriers as necessary.”

SEC. 5. PROTECTION OF AIR CARGO ON PASSENGER PLANES FROM EXPLOSIVES.

(a) TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH AND PILOT PROJECTS.—

(1) RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.—The Secretary of Homeland Security shall expedite research and development for technology that can disrupt or prevent an explosive device from being introduced onto a passenger plane or from damaging a passenger plane while in flight or on the ground. The research shall include blast resistant cargo containers and other promising technology and will be used in concert with implementation of section 4 of this Act.

(2) PILOT PROJECTS.—The Secretary, in conjunction with the Secretary of Transportation, shall establish a grant program to fund pilot projects—

(A) to deploy technologies described in paragraph (1); and

(B) to test technology to expedite the recovery, development, and analysis of information from aircraft accidents to determine the cause of the accident, including deployable flight deck and voice recorders and remote location recording devices.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Homeland Security for fiscal year 2008 such sums as may be necessary to carry out this section, such funds to remain available until expended.

SEC. 6. IN-LINE BAGGAGE SCREENING.

(a) EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION.—Section 44923(i)(1) of title 49, United States Code, is

amended by striking “2007.” and inserting “2007, and \$450,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 and 2009.”

(b) REPORT.—Within 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall submit the report the Secretary was required by section 4019(d) of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (49 U.S.C. 44901 note) to have submitted in conjunction with the submission of the budget for fiscal year 2006.

SEC. 7. ENHANCEMENT OF IN-LINE BAGGAGE SYSTEM DEPLOYMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 44923 of title 49, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking “may” in subsection (a) and inserting “shall”;

(2) by striking “may” in subsection (d)(1) and inserting “shall”;

(3) by striking “2007” in subsection (h)(1) and inserting “2028”;

(4) by striking paragraphs (2) and (3) of subsection (h) and inserting the following:

“(2) ALLOCATION.—Of the amount made available under paragraph (1) for a fiscal year, not less than \$200,000,000 shall be allocated to fulfill letters of intent issued under subsection (d).

“(3) DISCRETIONARY GRANTS.—Of the amount made available under paragraph (1) for a fiscal year, up to \$50,000,000 shall be used to make discretionary grants, with priority given to small hub airports and non-hub airports.”; and

(5) by redesignating subsection (i) as subsection (j) and inserting after subsection (h) the following:

“(i) LEVERAGED FUNDING.—For purposes of this section, a grant under subsection (a) to an airport sponsor to service an obligation issued by or on behalf of that sponsor to fund a project described in subsection (a) shall be considered to be a grant for that project.”

(b) PRIORITIZATION OF PROJECTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall create a prioritization schedule for airport security improvement projects described in section 44923(b) of title 49, United States Code, based on risk and other relevant factors, to be funded under the grant program provided by that section. The schedule shall include both hub airports (as defined in section 41731(a)(3) of title 49, United States Code) and nonhub airports (as defined in section 41731(a)(4) of title 49, United States Code).

(2) AIRPORTS THAT HAVE COMMENCED PROJECTS.—The schedule shall include airports that have incurred eligible costs associated with development of partial in-line baggage systems before the date of enactment of this Act in reasonable anticipation of receiving a grant under section 44923 of title 49, United States Code, in reimbursement of those costs but that have not received such a grant.

(3) REPORT.—Within 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall provide a copy of the prioritization schedule, a corresponding timeline, and a description of the funding allocation under section 44923 of title 49, United States Code, to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security.

SEC. 8. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF AVIATION TRANSPORTATION SECURITY TECHNOLOGY.

Section 137(a) of the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (49 U.S.C. 44912 note) is amended—

(1) by striking “2002 through 2006,” and inserting “2006 through 2009,”;

(2) by striking “aviation” and inserting “transportation”; and

(3) by striking “2002 and 2003” and inserting “2006 through 2009”.

SEC. 9. CERTAIN TSA PERSONNEL LIMITATIONS NOT TO APPLY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, any statutory limitation on the number of employees in the Transportation Security Administration, before or after its transfer to the Department of Homeland Security from the Department of Transportation, does not apply after fiscal year 2007.

(b) AVIATION SECURITY.—Notwithstanding any provision of law imposing a limitation on the recruiting or hiring of personnel into the Transportation Security Administration to a maximum number of permanent positions, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall recruit and hire such personnel into the Administration as may be necessary—

(1) to provide appropriate levels of aviation security; and

(2) to accomplish that goal in such a manner that the average aviation security-related delay experienced by airline passengers is reduced to a level of less than 10 minutes.

SEC. 10. SPECIALIZED TRAINING.

The Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration shall provide advanced training to transportation security officers for the development of specialized security skills, including behavior observation and analysis, explosives detection, and document examination, in order to enhance the effectiveness of layered transportation security measures.

SEC. 11. EXPLOSIVE DETECTION AT PASSENGER SCREENING CHECKPOINTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Within 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall issue the strategic plan the Secretary was required by section 44925(a) of title 49, United States Code, to have issued within 90 days after the date of enactment of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004.

(b) DEPLOYMENT.—Section 44925(b) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end thereof the following:

“(3) FULL DEPLOYMENT.—The Secretary shall fully implement the strategic plan within 1 year after the date of enactment of the Aviation Security Improvement Act.”.

SEC. 12. APPEAL AND REDRESS PROCESS FOR PASSENGERS WRONGFULLY DELAYED OR PROHIBITED FROM BOARDING A FLIGHT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle C of title IV of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 231 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“SEC. 431. APPEAL AND REDRESS PROCESS FOR PASSENGERS WRONGFULLY DELAYED OR PROHIBITED FROM BOARDING A FLIGHT.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a timely and fair process for individuals who believe they have been delayed or prohibited from boarding a commercial aircraft because they were wrongly identified as a threat under the regimes utilized by the Transportation Security Administration, the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, or any other Department entity.

“(b) OFFICE OF APPEALS AND REDRESS.—

“(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish an Office of Appeals and Redress to oversee the process established by the Secretary pursuant to subsection (a).

“(2) RECORDS.—The process established by the Secretary pursuant to subsection (a) shall include the establishment of a method by which the Office of Appeals and Redress, under the direction of the Secretary, will be able to maintain a record of air carrier passengers and other individuals who have been misidentified and have corrected erroneous information.

“(3) INFORMATION.—To prevent repeated delays of an misidentified passenger or other

individual, the Office of Appeals and Redress shall—

“(A) ensure that the records maintained under this subsection contain information determined by the Secretary to authenticate the identity of such a passenger or individual; and

“(B) furnish to the Transportation Security Administration, the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, or any other appropriate Department entity, upon request, such information as may be necessary to allow such agencies to assist air carriers in improving their administration of the advanced passenger prescreening system and reduce the number of false positives.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in section 1(b) of such Act is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 430 the following:

“431. Appeal and redress process for passengers wrongly delayed or prohibited from boarding a flight.”.

SEC. 13. STRATEGIC PLAN TO TEST AND IMPLEMENT ADVANCED PASSENGER PRESCREENING SYSTEM.

Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, shall submit to the Congress a plan that—

(1) describes the system to be utilized by the Department of Homeland Security to assume the performance of comparing passenger information, as defined by the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, to the automatic selectee and no-fly lists, utilizing appropriate records in the consolidated and integrated terrorist watchlist maintained by the Federal government;

(2) provides a projected timeline for each phase of testing and implementation of the system;

(3) explains how the system will be integrated with the prescreening system for passengers on international flights; and

(4) describes how the system complies with section 552a of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 14. REPAIR STATION SECURITY.

(a) CERTIFICATION OF FOREIGN REPAIR STATIONS SUSPENSION.—If the regulations required by section 44924(f) of title 49, United States Code, are not issued within 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration may not certify any foreign repair station under part 145 of title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, after such 90th day unless the station was previously certified by the Administration under that part.

(b) 6-MONTH DEADLINE FOR SECURITY REVIEW AND AUDIT.—Subsections (a) and (d) of section 44924 of title 49, United States Code, are each amended by striking “18 months” and inserting “6 months”.

SEC. 15. GENERAL AVIATION SECURITY.

Section 44901 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end thereof the following:

“(i) GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORT SECURITY PROGRAM.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Within 1 year after the date of enactment of the Aviation Security Improvement Act the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration shall—

“(A) develop a standardized threat and vulnerability assessment program for general aviation airports (as defined in section 47135(m)); and

“(B) implement a program to perform such assessments on a risk-assessment basis at general aviation airports.

“(2) GRANT PROGRAM.—Within 6 months after date of enactment of the Aviation Se-

curity Improvement Act the Administrator shall initiate and complete a study of the feasibility of a program, based on a risk-managed approach, to provide grants to general aviation airport operators for projects to upgrade security at general aviation airports (as defined in section 47135(m)). If the Administrator determines that such a program is feasible, the Administrator shall establish such a program.

“(3) APPLICATION TO FOREIGN-REGISTERED GENERAL AVIATION AIRCRAFT.—Within 180 days after the date of enactment of the Aviation Security Improvement Act, the Administrator shall develop a risk-based system under which—

“(A) foreign-registered general aviation aircraft, as identified by the Administrator, in coordination with the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, are required to submit passenger information to the Transportation Security Administration before entering United States airspace; and

“(B) such information is checked against appropriate databases maintained by the Transportation Security Administration.”.

“(4) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Homeland Security such sums as may be necessary to carry out any program established under paragraph (2).”.

SEC. 16. SECURITY CREDENTIALS FOR AIRLINE CREWS.

Within 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration shall, after consultation with airline, airport, and flight crew representatives, transmit a report to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on the status of its efforts to institute a sterile area access system or method that will enhance security by properly identifying authorized airline flight deck and cabin crew members at screening checkpoints and granting them expedited access through screening checkpoints. The Administrator shall include in the report recommendations on the feasibility of implementing the system for the domestic aviation industry beginning 1 year after the date on which the report is submitted. The Administrator shall begin full implementation of the system or method not later than 1 year after the date on which the Administrator transmits the report.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS**SENATE RESOLUTION 72—ACKNOWLEDGING THE SEVERITY OF THE WETLAND LOSS OCCURRING IN LOUISIANA AND SUPPORTING THE OBSERVANCE OF WORLD WETLANDS DAY IN THE UNITED STATES**

Ms. LANDRIEU submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works:

S. RES. 72

Whereas Louisiana's coastal wetlands are among the Nation's most diverse and productive ecosystems, home to ospreys, egrets, alligators, shellfish, turtles, sea grasses, and bald cypress trees;

Whereas Louisiana's wetlands are eroding at a rate of 25 square miles per year and, as a result of Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, and Hurricane Rita on September 24, 2005, 217 square miles of wetlands were turned into open water, significantly advancing Louisiana's wetlands loss;

Whereas the State has lost 2,100 square miles of coastal wetlands since the 1930s and is expected to lose another 500 square miles over the next 50 years if nothing is done to mitigate wetland loss;

Whereas 2,000,000 residents, more than 50 percent of the State's population, live within Louisiana's coastal zone;

Whereas Louisiana's working wetlands provide protection for coastal communities and for oil and gas pipelines that serve as the major energy artery in the United States, delivering more than 25 percent of the Nation's energy;

Whereas wetland ecosystems throughout the United States are threatened by erosion, invasive species, runoff, and habitat loss; and

Whereas World Wetlands Day is celebrated around the world on February 2 of each year by government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and groups of citizens in the global community: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) acknowledges the severity of the wetland loss occurring in Louisiana;

(2) recognizes and supports the observance of World Wetlands Day in the United States; and

(3) supports efforts to raise awareness about the critical need to sustain and preserve wetlands in Louisiana, the United States, and throughout the world.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I come to the floor today in honor of World Wetlands Day proclaiming February 2 America's Wetlands Day.

February 2, 1971 was the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

Each year since 1971, leaders from all parts of the world have used this day to raise public awareness of the value and benefits of wetlands—not only as ecological gems, but as economic boons, incubators of biodiversity, and a sportsman's paradise.

The signing in 1971 of the Convention on Wetlands provided a framework for national action and international cooperation toward the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. Wetlands can be found in every country and are among the most productive ecosystems in the world.

Those of us from Louisiana have a rather unique perspective on the subject of wetlands. You see, Louisiana's coast is really America's Wetland. It is not a beach, but a vast landscape of estuaries, rivers, freshwater marsh, forested floodplains, and vernal pools.

The landscape that extends along Louisiana's coast is one of the largest and most productive expanses of coastal wetlands in North America. It is the seventh largest delta on earth, where the Mississippi River drains two-thirds of the United States. It is also one of the most productive environments in America—"working wetlands" as they are known to Louisianians—producing more seafood than any other State in the lower 48. It's the nursery ground for the Gulf of Mexico and habitat for one of the greatest flyways in the world for millions of waterfowl and migratory songbirds.

Even more importantly, Louisiana's coastal wetlands provide storm protection for ports that carry nearly 500 mil-

lion tons of waterborne commerce annually—the largest port system in the world by tonnage. That accounts for 21 percent of all waterborne commerce in the United States each year. In fact, four of the top ten largest ports in the United States are located in Louisiana.

These wetlands also offer protection from storm surge for two million people and a unique culture. Louisiana's low-lying coastal communities are home to more than 2 million people—nearly half the State's population. Even as those communities recover from the back-to-back 2005 hurricanes, they remain threatened and compromised as the land they occupy erodes from beneath their feet.

Tragically, Louisiana's wetlands are eroding at a devastating rate: approximately 24 square miles per year disappear—that is the equivalent of approximately one football field lost every 38 minutes. Within the next 50 years—even with current restoration efforts taken into account—those wetlands are expected to recede an additional 500 square miles.

The U.S. Geological Survey recently found that Hurricanes Katrina and Rita alone transformed 217 square miles of marsh to open water. Tragically, these eroding wetlands are Nature's levee system—they diminish a hurricane's destructive power by reducing storm surge and absorbing wave energy.

Scientists have estimated for every 2.4 square miles of wetlands, storm surges are lowered by about one foot. Some studies suggest that only one square mile of wetlands may achieve this. Because these wetlands are nurseries for many species of fish and shellfish, their loss has a profound impact on the \$1 billion dollar per year fishing industry supported by Louisiana's fragile coastal environment.

The costs associated with Louisiana's coastal wetland loss are not only Louisiana's to bear—they are the entire Nation's. For instance: Hurricanes Katrina and Rita impacted more than 26,000 businesses, destroyed 275,000 homes, and caused more than \$44.7 billion in insured losses.

Today, more than 40 percent of the Nation's oil and nearly a quarter of the Nation's natural gas is produced in or transported through Louisiana.

More than 20 percent of the nation's imported oil is delivered to and processed in Louisiana.

Louisiana is second only to Texas in the number of oil refineries on its soil—with 17 refineries, most of which are located in the coastal zone.

The erosion of Louisiana's coastal wetlands—America's Wetlands—endangers the U.S. energy supply and it endangers the Nation's critical infrastructure in the Gulf Coast: Refineries and petrochemical facilities that drive U.S. economic growth are at risk of being flooded, damaged and shut down, as we saw during the 2005 hurricanes.

That is why I am submitting a Sense of the Senate resolution that will ac-

knowledge February 2, as World Wetlands Day and express that it is the sense of the Senate that we must raise awareness of the Nation's imperiled wetlands—in Louisiana and throughout the country. We need to raise awareness of these critical issues and we need to work locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally to confront this problem head on.

The good news is that scientists know how to restore the wetlands and they have been very successful in reinforcing barrier islands that protect these ecological gems. What has heretofore been lacking is not the will, but the resources with which to undertake this critical challenge. The passage of the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act changed that and certified America's commitment to providing long-term, sustainable funding to address this problem. Today, we have the will; we have the way; let's get to work and preserve America's wetlands.

SENATE RESOLUTION 73—DESIGNATING FEBRUARY 6, 2007, AS "RONALD REAGAN DAY"

Mr. ALLARD (for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. STEVENS, Mrs. DOLE, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. VITTER, Mr. HATCH, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. MCCONNELL, and Mr. REID) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 73

Whereas President Ronald Wilson Reagan, a man of humble background, worked throughout his life serving as an entertainer, a corporate spokesman, Governor of California, and President of the United States;

Whereas Ronald Reagan served for 2 terms as the 40th President of the United States;

Whereas Ronald Reagan was elected to his second term by almost three-fifths of the electorate, a percentage surpassed only by the election of President Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1964, and was victorious in 49 of the 50 States in the general election, an electoral college record unsurpassed in the history of Presidential elections in the United States; and

Whereas February 6, 2007, will be the 96th anniversary of Ronald Reagan's birth, and June 5, 2007, will be the third anniversary of his passing: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates February 6, 2007, as "Ronald Reagan Day"; and

(2) encourages the people of the United States to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 9—CELEBRATING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION DURING "NATIONAL ARCHITECTURE WEEK"

Ms. LANDRIEU submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. CON. RES. 9

Whereas the architectural profession has made unique contributions to the history, texture, and quality of life in the United States;