

RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION OF ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY

HON. JOHN LEWIS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, it is an honor for me to help celebrate the Centennial Anniversary of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated. For the past 100 years, the ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha have served as leaders in the United States and throughout the world. Since their founding in 1908, Alpha Kappa Alpha has been one of the most successful historically Black sororities and continues its strong community work today.

In particular, I would like to recognize the South Atlantic Region of Alpha Kappa Alpha, which includes undergraduate and graduate chapters from the states of Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina. This Region's monumental history includes one of the sorority's original founders, Mrs. Marie Woolfolk Taylor, two former International Presidents, Dr. Mary Shy Scott and Dr. Norma Solomon White and the first honorary member, Mrs. Coretta Scott King.

Today through the leadership of Ms. Ella Springs Jones, current regional director, the ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha continue to leave their mark in the community. Through programs such as B.R.A.T.S (Brilliant, Responsible, Alert, and Talented Scholars) Program, high school students are provided academic, health and economic support to make their dreams viable and support the growth of the African American community.

Madam Speaker, I extend my deepest gratitude to the women of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority for their service to our communities, in the United States and across the world, on this historic day.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I was absent on Monday, July 14th due to personal reasons.

If I were present I would have voted, "aye" on rollcall vote 486, "aye" on rollcall vote 487, and "aye" on rollcall vote 488.

HONORING THE BLUE MOUNTAIN LAKE BOAT LIVERY ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JOHN M. MCHUGH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mr. MCHUGH. Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the Blue Mountain Lake Boat Livery. I am proud to represent the Boat Livery and the people of Blue Mountain Lake,

which is located in the heart of New York State's majestic Adirondack Park. Likewise, I am pleased to associate myself with the remarks the gentlewoman from New York, Mrs. MALONEY, made to honor the Boat Livery.

Widely regarded as the cleanest lake east of the Mississippi River, Blue Mountain Lake has for over a century been a popular destination for tourists, including urban dwellers wishing to escape the city. In addition, thousands of visitors come through Blue Mountain Lake each year as they travel to other areas of the Adirondack Park.

The Boat Livery of Blue Mountain Lake began operating on August 2, 1908. It has since provided visitors with access to the breathtaking beauty of the Adirondack Mountains and Blue Mountain Lake through the use of an assortment of recreational watercraft. In fact, the Blue Mountain Lake Boat Livery offers visitors the opportunity to enjoy a scenic boat tour on one of three authentic 1916 wooden launches. Other activities guests can enjoy include canoeing, fishing, kayaking, paddle boating, tubing, wakeboarding, and water-skiing.

The Boat Livery's development on Blue Mountain Lake over the last 100 years has been integral to the area's culture and economy, which is largely based on tourism. Accordingly, I now extend my deepest congratulations to the Blue Mountain Lake Boat Livery upon its centennial anniversary.

IN RECOGNITION OF AVIATION SAFETY EXPERT EDWARD K. MILLER

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the distinguished career in aviation and aviation safety of Captain Edward K. Miller of Fairfax County in northern Virginia.

Captain Miller served for 6 years as a U.S. Air Force fighter interceptor pilot during the Korean War era and followed that service as a pilot for United Airlines, retiring in 1990. During his career with United, he became concerned with earthquake and volcanic ash hazards following the eruption of the Mt. St. Helens volcano in Washington State and served as a flight safety volunteer with the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA).

After his retirement with United, he continued his air safety consulting activities with ALPA, focusing on volcanic ash and aviation safety. He became a recognized worldwide leader in this specialized talent and served on the Natural Hazards Committee chaired by the Office of the Federal Coordinator for Meteorology, which works with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Weather Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Federal Aviation Administration and other related agencies. In cooperation with ALPA, United Airlines, NOAA, NWS, FAA and USGS, earlier this year he was involved in the effort to produce a free volcanic ash aircrew training video for the aviation community.

We salute Captain Miller, who in June retired "again" from the aviation community, for his devotion to flight safety in a career that spanned almost six decades, and wish him the best in the future.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ROBERT E. ANDREWS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mr. ANDREWS. Madam Speaker, I was unavoidably detained from voting on July 14, 2008. Had I been present I would have voted "yea" on the following rollcall votes: Nos. 486, 487 and 488.

INTRODUCTION OF THE "TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING CHOICES FOR GAS PRICE RELIEF ACT"

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, the rapid rise in the price of oil is threatening American families, our economy, and our national security. Gas prices have more than tripled since 2001, taking an ever-larger bite out of the family budget. On average, transportation costs are now Americans' second largest expense after housing. Most economists as well as most American citizens believe that this is a long-term trend, rather than a temporary situation. We've seen the last of the cheap oil on which we've built our economy and our daily lives.

There is no single solution to the complex energy situation we are facing, but we can equip every member of the American family to live better with less oil. The Federal Government can help give families and communities more choices, level the playing field for people who want to be less auto-dependent, and encourage the Federal Government to become a better partner and to lead by example in these efforts.

This is why I am introducing the "Transportation and Housing Choices for Gas Price Relief Act," which will provide consumers with, and educate them about, choices in how they get around and where they live that will reduce their dependence on gasoline. The bill will increase commuter choices and support less oil-dependent forms of transportation, help transit agencies cope with rising fuel prices and improve service to deal with increased demand, assist communities in providing transportation options for their residents, increase the availability of affordable housing near public transportation, and ensure that the Federal Government leads by example on these issues.

At \$4.00 a gallon gasoline, most Americans are already changing their daily behaviors to decrease fuel costs: taking fewer trips, keeping their cars tuned, even trading in their gas guzzlers for more fuel-efficient models. More needs to be done to ensure that consumers have transportation and housing options that reduce their reliance on single-occupancy vehicle trips. These transportation options can include public transit, carpooling, biking, walking, and other alternatives. For example, at \$4 a gallon gasoline, American families can save \$5.6 billion each year on gasoline costs by using transit. Bicycle commuters annually save an average of \$1,825 in auto-related costs,

conserve 145 gallons of gasoline, and avoid 50 hours of gridlock traffic. Congress should be a better partner by supporting community efforts to provide these alternatives.

While our options to lower gas prices are limited, this bill recognizes that we can provide immediate relief from high gas prices by providing them choices.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, due to a travel complication beyond my control, I regretfully was unable to vote on three items of legislation before the House on July 14, 2008. My flight from San Diego, California was cancelled. I did not arrive to Washington, DC, until past the legislative hour.

I would have voted "yea" on each of the three bills before the House Monday. They are as follows:

(1) H. Res. 1067—Recognizing the 50th anniversary of the crossing of the North Pole by the USS *Nautilus* (SSN 571) and its significance in the history of both our Nation and the world.

(2) H. Res. 1080—Honoring the extraordinary service and exceptional sacrifice of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), known as the Screaming Eagles.

(3) H. Con. Res. 297—Recognizing the 60th anniversary of the integration of the United States Armed Forces.

A BILL TO ENHANCE THE SAFETY OF THE U.S. PASSENGER AIR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, the bill which Congressman MICA, Congressman COSTELLO, Congressman PETRI and I are introducing today is a first legislative step in reversing the complacency over safety regulation that has set in at the highest levels of the Federal Aviation Administration, FAA.

This legislation is not a silver bullet that will produce a comprehensive solution to problems that have been developing for years. Rather, the legislation deals with several issues that are ripe for action, following an investigation by the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Transportation, DOT IG, and a rejection of some of the DOT IG's recommendations by FAA.

I expect that we will have additional legislation after completion of the comprehensive investigations now underway by the DOT IG, FAA's own special committee, and Congress.

We must also bear in mind that legislation can only go so far in solving the problem. What is most needed is a change in attitude by FAA. Without that change, there will only be grudging, limited compliance with the best designed legislation reforms. If, on the other hand, there is a change in attitude, FAA can use its existing authority to make most of the improvements that are needed.

Madam Speaker, on April 3, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure held a hearing that detailed major shortcomings in the FAA's safety oversight of the aviation industry. Our investigation found that one air carrier, with FAA complicity, had allowed at least 117 of its aircraft to fly with passengers in violation of Federal Aviation Regulations, amounting to the most serious lapse in safety I have been aware of at the FAA in the past 23 years. Our investigations led to the discovery of other instances in which inspections were not properly conducted or repairs were not properly made. To ensure safety, it was necessary to ground several hundred airplanes for inspections, resulting in thousands of cancelled flights, and raising serious questions about whether high-ranking officials in the FAA are carrying out their safety responsibilities for the entire industry. Since that April 3 hearing, our investigative staff has been contacted by many other individuals alleging serious breakdowns in FAA's regulatory oversight.

As a result of our hearing, it was clear to me and many of my colleagues that FAA needed to rethink its relationship with the airlines and the other aviation entities that it regulates and be more active in enforcing regulations. There has been a pendulum swing at FAA, away from vigorous enforcement of safety regulations towards a carrier-favorable cozy relationship. That opinion is shared by the DOT IG, as well.

On June 30, 2008, the DOT IG issued a report, Review of FAA's Safety Oversight of Airlines and Use of Regulatory Partnership Programs, noting that it had made several recommendations to the FAA to strengthen its national oversight of air carrier safety. Importantly, the DOT IG recommended that the FAA periodically rotate its flight standards safety inspectors and establish an independent investigative organization to examine safety issues identified by FAA employees. In its response to the DOT IG recommendations, the FAA stated that it did not concur with the recommendation to rotate inspectors and only partially agreed to implement the recommendation to establish an independent organization to investigate FAA employee complaints.

On employee complaints, the FAA's response has been to implement a Safety Issues Report System, SIRS. This process largely duplicates existing hot-lines and does not provide for an independent review outside of FAA's Aviation Safety Organization, which has a long record of not responding adequately to complaints. I find the FAA's response to this very important recommendation to be wholly inadequate.

As the DOT IG aptly stated in its safety report:

FAA's response is unacceptable. Although FAA stated that it partially agreed with our recommendation, the actions taken do not demonstrate a commitment on FAA's part to address the root causes of the issues we identified. Our work at SWA and NWA identified serious weaknesses in FAA's process for conducting internal reviews, ensuring corrective actions, and protecting employees who report safety concerns. In our view, SIRS merely adds one more process to an already existing internal reporting process within the Aviation Safety Organization that is unequivocally ineffective and possibly even biased against resolving root causes of serious safety lapses.

The FAA's refusal to embrace the DOT IG's recommendation in this regard demonstrates a "business as usual" approach to safety. In addition, many FAA aviation safety inspectors have subsequently contacted our Committee and provided evidence of retaliation against them by their local FAA management when they attempt to elevate safety concerns to higher levels of management. FAA is reluctant to investigate whistleblower concerns. The FAA management responsible for safety appears to face an inherent conflict-of-interest when faced with charges of failure in regulatory oversight.

That is why this bill creates an independent Aviation Safety Whistleblower Investigation Office within the FAA, but independent of the Aviation Safety Organization. The Director of the new Office would be charged with receiving safety complaints and information submitted by both FAA employees and employees of certificated entities, investigating them, and then recommending appropriate corrective actions to the FAA. The FAA is directed to respond to the Director's recommendations in writing, including details of any corrective actions taken. Importantly, the bill ensures the Director's independence and protects the identities of employees providing safety information.

In addition, the bill addresses the DOT IG's recommendation to periodically rotate supervisory inspectors to ensure objective FAA air carrier oversight. FAA has not been willing to implement this recommendation. This bill would require that the FAA rotate principal maintenance inspectors between airline oversight offices every 5 years. This will serve as at least a partial countermeasure to ensure that a "cozy relationship" does not develop between the regulators and the regulated. In addition, the bill would establish a 2-year "post-service" cooling off period for FAA inspectors and supervisors before they are allowed to go to work for the airlines they have been overseeing.

During our April 3 hearing, I was shocked to learn that in its mission statement for aviation safety, FAA has a "vision" of "being responsive to our customers and accountable to the public." This suggests that FAA regards the airlines and other companies it regulates as its "customers." This approach is seriously misguided. The "customers" of FAA safety programs are the persons who fly on the airplanes FAA regulates. FAA's bedrock responsibility is to ensure that these "customers" travel safely. To ensure that passengers remain FAA's number one "customer," the bill directs the FAA to modify its customer service initiative, mission and vision statements to remove references to air carriers or other entities regulated by the Agency as "customers" and to clearly state that in regulating safety the only "customer" of the Agency is the American traveling public.

Madam Speaker, there is overwhelming evidence in the recommendations, findings and statements of the DOT IG, the Office of Special Counsel, and the very brave FAA whistleblowers that brought these critical safety lapses to our attention that change is sorely needed at the FAA to improve safety. This bill provides a critical first step. We must prod the FAA to again make safety the number one priority and to keep the American public safely flying.

Madam Speaker, this bill is just a start. It will not address all of the issues, because to