

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

do so will require substantial leadership and cultural change within the FAA. However, it is meant to serve notice upon FAA that we will not continue to tolerate the lax environment that has been allowed to develop over the last few years. I urge my colleagues to join me in working to pass this important legislation.

### HONORING THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS

#### HON. PETER T. KING

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 15, 2008*

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge the Special Olympics, an outstanding organization which provides 2.5 million children and adults with intellectual disabilities an opportunity to participate in year-round, Olympic-style, athletic competitions.

July 20, 2008, will mark the Special Olympics' 40th anniversary. Thanks to hard work from thousands of dedicated volunteers, families and athletes, the Special Olympics has grown from its humble beginnings in Eunice Kennedy Shriver's Maryland home to over 200 programs located throughout 180 countries. The Special Olympics provides its athletes with 30 Olympic-style games—varying from alpine skiing to bocce—and includes children as young as 8.

In my home State of New York, the Special Olympics has a great tradition as one of the leading charitable organizations for the intellectually disabled. For this, the New York Special Olympics plays an irreplaceable role in the National Special Olympics Program. Today, New York is home to an astounding 43,000 athletes who participate in over 400 Olympic-style competitions.

The benefits of the Special Olympics go far beyond gold medals. The skills and relationships built during the athletes' participation give them the courage, self-confidence and ability to excel on and off the field. Not only does the Special Olympics serve the athletes, but also families, volunteers and communities who gain respect, tolerance, and understanding for persons with disabilities.

I would like to thank the millions of volunteers, the organization of the Special Olympics and, most importantly, the athletes, for providing the world with an invaluable service.

IN HONOR OF SEAN D. TUCKER

#### HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 15, 2008*

Mr. FARR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Sean D. Tucker, an aerobatic pilot from Salinas, California, who this month joins the Wright Brothers, Neil Armstrong, and Charles Lindbergh in the National Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton, Ohio.

Tucker started out as a crop duster in the Salinas Valley before transitioning into air show routines, where—despite an early fear of flying—he has over 1,000 performances at more than 400 airshows under his belt. Performing his stunts in his Oracle, a one-seat bi-

plane designed for him by his team, he is regarded as one of the world's top civilian aerobatic pilots, as well as a highly respected ambassador for the sport. In the 20,000 hours of flight time he has logged, Sean has created maneuvers with his plane that have never been replicated by another aerobatic pilot. His innovation and technique have led to numerous titles, including the Championship Air Show Pilots Association Challenge 4 years in a row. Even with his accomplishments, though, his election to the Hall of Fame still took him completely by surprise. Said Tucker, "I was so stunned I didn't even tell anybody. I'm just this guy who likes flying upside down."

In addition to performing in front of millions of fans, Tucker founded the Tutima Academy of Aviation Safety, an institution committed to improving the standards of aviation safety in aerobatics as well as aviation in general by teaching seasoned and aspiring pilots the tricks behind completely controlling an aircraft. For his dedication to safety and unique flying style, Tucker has received all of the airshow industry's highest honors, including the privilege of being named one of the Living Legends in Aviation. He is also the only civilian performer ever to be allowed to fly in close formation with the Blue Angels and the Thunderbirds.

Sean wants to continue his craft and be a role model to the community and aviation industry for as long as his body and plane allow; the day after the ceremony he will perform at the Dayton Airshow. Said executive director of the Hall of Fame Ron Kaplan, "He's a real asset to the aviation community. Overall, he's just a fantastic role model and ambassador for aviation, having performed for years and years for millions of people." One of those he has inspired is his son, Eric, who works alongside him on Team Oracle.

Sean, who was selected out of 200 nominees, will be introduced by his close friend, Joe Kittinger, a Vietnam prisoner of war who set a world record for parachuting in 1960.

Madam Speaker, Sean Tucker is being honored by the aviation industry for an esteemed career and unwavering passion to test the boundaries of aerobatics. I wish to join the aviation community and the city of Salinas in honoring his dedication and accomplishments and wish him continued prosperity and safety in the future.

### RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE ACTIONS OF CHINESE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE BROUGHT RELIEF TO VICTIMS OF THE SICHUAN EARTHQUAKE

#### HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 15, 2008*

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise to introduce a resolution that recognizes the actions of Chinese individuals and non-governmental organizations that have brought relief to victims of the Sichuan earthquake. The resolution also recognizes and encourages a potential new era of openness by the Chinese Government.

Following the tragic earthquake in Sichuan Province on May 20, we have heard and read accounts describing the generous response of

thousands of individuals and hundreds of NGOs who have raised money, delivered food and tents, and provided direct hands-on assistance to the survivors. Foreign journalists and China's new generation of media have been granted unprecedented access into the earthquake stricken areas and reported on the quake with an intensity and professionalism once thought impossible.

Contrast what has happened in China today with what happened following the Great Tangshan earthquake of 1976. The Chinese Government blocked foreign access and even tried to hide from its own citizens the tragedy that took the loss of more than 250,000 lives.

There are many human rights concerns in China I share with my colleagues. Notwithstanding these concerns, we need to recognize and encourage actions that bring about positive change and plant the seeds of a better civil society. I encourage my colleagues to support this resolution.

### MEDGAR EVERS COLLEGE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES UNITE

#### HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 15, 2008*

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to enter into the RECORD a July 8, 2008 New York Carib News editorial entitled: "The Path to Success in Education: University of the West Indies and Medgar Evers College Join Hands." The partnership came about as a result of the CARICOM Conference in New York that brought together Caribbean heads of government as well as the titans of the New York City financial community.

Medgar Evers and UWI have existing ties because of the similarity of the populations they serve. "UWI is a regional university serving the English-speaking Caribbean population and MEC is the college most closely associated with the Caribbean-American community within the CUNY system and the New York City metropolitan area." The strong connection between the two universities will be mutually beneficial and it will give UWI, the most prestigious institution of higher learning in the Caribbean, tangible ties to an American university that can give greater opportunities for exchange in both university communities.

### TRIBUTE TO ROCHESTER LADY ROCKETS SOCCER TEAM

#### HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 15, 2008*

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor the Rochester Lady Rockets soccer team on their success in winning the championship game of the Illinois High School Association Class A State tournament.

Kelly Werthwien, Kelcie Kolis, Sarah Wright, Grace Capranica, Marissa Burge, Beth Fitzsimmons, Kellse Sandercock, Amy Shackelford, Jessica Heaton, Jillian Sulcer, Mollie Edgecomb, Kassie McIntyre, Taylor Heissinger, Kelcee Walsh, Amy Cassidy,