

H.R. 29 was introduced by our colleague, Representative DARRELL ISSA, and would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to construct facilities to provide water for irrigation, municipal, domestic, military, and other uses from the Santa Margarita River in California and for other purposes. Similar legislation introduced by Congressman ISSA passed the House in the two previous Congresses.

Mr. Speaker, we have no objection to this noncontroversial bill, and I ask my colleagues to support H.R. 29.

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 29 was introduced by our colleague, DARRELL ISSA, and authorizes the construction of the groundwater recharge and pumping project in the lower Santa Margarita River basin in Southern California.

If constructed, the project would provide much-needed water to the local water utility district as well as to Camp Pendleton, the Marine Corps base, for its military training needs. This project would augment the local water district supply, would relieve future additional demands for constantly limited imported water supplies, and would set aside and preserve valuable environmental habitat.

This project is an excellent example of local and Federal agencies working together to secure safe, dependable water supplies for future generations. This bill is good for water consumers, and it is good for our soldiers. I urge my colleagues to support this important bill, which has been considered by the House twice already. Perhaps the third time will be the charm.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I submit for the RECORD an exchange of letters on this particular piece of legislation.

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, January 4, 2008.

Hon. NICK J. RAHALL II,
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources,
Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR NICK: On October 10, 2007, the Committee on Natural Resources ordered H.R. 29 to be reported. As you know, this measure contains certain provisions that are within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Armed Services, and thus, was sequentially referred to the Committee on Armed Services by the Parliamentarian for the House.

Our Committee recognizes the importance of H.R. 29 and the need for the legislation to move expeditiously. Therefore, while we have a valid claim to jurisdiction over this legislation, the Committee on Armed Services will waive further consideration of H.R. 29. I do so with the understanding that by waiving further consideration of the bill, the Committee does not waive any future jurisdictional claims over similar measures. In the event of a conference with the Senate on this bill, the Committee on Armed Services reserves the right to seek the appointment of conferees.

I would appreciate the inclusion of this letter and a copy of the response in your Com-

mittee's report on H.R. 29 and the Congressional Record during consideration of the measure on the House floor.

Very truly yours,

IKE SKELTON,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC, January 22, 2008.

Hon. IKE SKELTON,
Chairman Committee on Armed Services,
Rayburn H.O.B., Washington, DC.

DEAR IKE: Thank you for your willingness to expedite floor consideration of H.R. 29, which authorizes the construction of facilities to provide water for irrigation, municipal, domestic, military, and other uses from the Santa Margarita River in California.

I appreciate your willingness to waive rights to further consideration of H.R. 29, even though your Committee has a jurisdictional interest in the matter and has received an additional referral. Of course, this waiver does not prejudice any further jurisdictional claims by your Committee over this legislation or similar language. Furthermore, I agree to support your request for appointment of conferees from the Committee on Armed Services if a conference is held on this matter.

Although the Committee's report on H.R. 29 has already been filed, this exchange of letters will be inserted in the Congressional Record as part of the consideration of the bill on the House floor. Thank you for the cooperative spirit in which you have worked regarding this matter and others between our respective committees.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

NICK J. RAHALL II,
Chairman,
Committee on Natural Resources.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GRIJALVA. 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 Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 29.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AIRPORT AND AIRWAY EXTENSION ACT OF 2008

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5270) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the funding and expenditure authority of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5270

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 "Airport and Airway Extension Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF TAXES FUNDING AIRPORT AND AIRWAY TRUST FUND.

(a) FUEL TAXES.—Subparagraph (B) of section 4081(d)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code

of 1986 is amended by striking "February 29, 2008" and inserting "June 30, 2008".

(b) TICKET TAXES.—

(1) PERSONS.—Clause (ii) of section 4261(j)(1)(A) of such Code is amended by striking "February 29, 2008" and inserting "June 30, 2008".

(2) PROPERTY.—Clause (ii) of section 4271(d)(1)(A) of such Code is amended by striking "February 29, 2008" and inserting "June 30, 2008".

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on March 1, 2008.

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF AIRPORT AND AIRWAY TRUST FUND EXPENDITURE AUTHORITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (1) of section 9502(d) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended—

(1) by striking "March 1, 2008" and inserting "July 1, 2008", and

(2) by inserting "or the Airport and Airway Extension Act of 2008" before the semicolon at the end of subparagraph (A).

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Paragraph (2) of section 9502(f) of such Code is amended by striking "March 1, 2008" and inserting "July 1, 2008".

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on March 1, 2008.

SEC. 4. EXTENSION OF AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AND OTHER AUTHORITIES.

(a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 48103 of title 49, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by striking "and" at the end of paragraph (3);

(B) by striking the period at the end of paragraph (4) and inserting "and"; and

(C) by inserting after paragraph (4) the following:

"(5) \$2,756,250,000 for the 9-month period beginning October 1, 2007."

(2) OBLIGATION OF AMOUNTS.—Sums made available pursuant to the amendment made by paragraph (1) may be obligated at any time through September 30, 2008, and shall remain available until expended.

(3) PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION.—For purposes of calculating funding apportionments and meeting other requirements under sections 47114, 47115, 47116, and 47117 of title 49, United States Code, for the 9-month period beginning October 1, 2007, the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall—

(A) first calculate such funding apportionments on an annualized basis as if the total amount available under section 48103 of such title for fiscal year 2008 were \$3,675,000,000; and

(B) then reduce by 25 percent—

(i) all funding apportionments calculated under subparagraph (A); and

(ii) amounts available pursuant to sections 47117(b) and 47117(f)(2) of such title.

(b) PROJECT GRANT AUTHORITY.—Section 47104(c) of such title is amended by striking "September 30, 2007," and inserting "June 30, 2008,".

(c) GOVERNMENT SHARE OF CERTAIN AIP COSTS.—Section 161 of the Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act (49 U.S.C. 47109 note) is amended by striking "in each of fiscal years 2004 through 2007" and inserting "in fiscal year 2008 before July 1, 2008,".

(d) ADJUSTMENT AUTHORITY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 409(d) of such Act (49 U.S.C. 40101 note) is amended by striking "2007" and inserting "2008,".

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on September 29, 2007, and shall apply with respect to any final order issued under section

409(c) of such Act that was in effect on such date.

(e) AIRPORT ELIGIBILITY.—The first sentence of section 186(d) of such Act (117 Stat. 2518) is amended by inserting “and for the portion of fiscal year 2008 ending before July 1, 2008,” after “2007.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 5270.

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

There was no objection.

□ 1515

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5270 extends the financing and spending authority for the Airport and Airway Trust Fund. The trust fund taxes and spending authority are scheduled to expire on March 1, 2008. H.R. 5270 extends these taxes at current rates through June 30 of 2008.

On January 29, 2008, the acting administrator of the FAA sent a letter to the Committee on Ways and Means indicating the ability of the FAA to provide services in 2008 will be impeded if this extension is not enacted. I will include this letter from the FAA for the RECORD.

The Committee on Ways and Means reported out a previous extension bill with bipartisan support. This bill will keep the Airport and Airway Trust Fund taxes and operations in place until the long-term FAA reauthorization act is signed into law. I urge the full support of my colleagues for this measure.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION,

Washington, DC, January 29, 2008.

Hon. CHARLES B. RANGEL,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN RANGEL: Thank you for your continued support to the mission of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). As you know, we have a pending reauthorization proposal to establish a cost-based financing system, help address congestion, and make the system more accountable to aviation stakeholders. In the absence of an enacted reauthorization bill, I am writing to you to bring to your attention some serious issues that will impede our ability to provide our services to the country during 2008 if not addressed immediately.

AIRPORT AND AIRWAY TRUST FUND

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008 (P.L. 110-161) extended the authority to make expenditures from the Airport and Airway Trust Fund only until March 1, 2008. Without an extension of the Trust Fund expenditure authorities, FAA will be unable to obligate funds after March 1 from the Trust Fund. Most notably, our airports, facilities

and equipment and research personnel would be immediately sent home, and our remaining personnel funded by the Operations account would follow after funding provided by the General Fund has been fully obligated—most likely in early June. For this reason, we plan to notify employees impacted by the March 1st deadline within the next two weeks.

AVIATION EXCISE TAXES

The Consolidated Appropriations Act only provided a temporary extension of authority for the collection of most of the aviation related excise taxes until February 29, 2008. The authority to collect such taxes should not be allowed to lapse. The uncommitted balance in the Trust Fund is insufficient to sustain FAA operations beyond a few months and a lapse in the authority to collect excise taxes could quickly begin to impact FAA's operations.

AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GRANTS

Contract authority for the FAA's AIP program expired on September 30, 2007, however Congress, in a series of continuing resolutions, provided temporary and limited AIP contract authority through December 31, 2007. Without contract authority, we are not able to make any new AIP grants. For the airport grant program, we typically view February 1st as a date when airport sponsors need to have some confidence that grant funds will be forthcoming so they can go out with their bids for construction projects to take full advantage of the construction season. Unfortunately, with the gap in AIP contract authority for fiscal year 2008, we are near the point of losing a portion of this construction season and airport sponsors will have to defer critical safety and capacity projects.

We are confident that Congress will address these short-term issues, but time is of the essence in moving toward a resolution of these matters. We are ready to work with you and other members to enact a reauthorization proposal that is consistent with the goals of the Administration.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection, from the standpoint of the Administration's program, to the submission of this letter to Congress.

Sincerely,

ROBERT A. STURGELL,
Acting Administrator.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today I also rise in support of this legislation. Congress must not stand by while the financing of our Nation's airways are to lapse. The cost to our Nation's economy of doing so would be devastating.

As you know, authorizing legislation permitting the collection of aviation taxes and fees sadly expired at the end of the last fiscal year. Congress since then has extended that authorization through the end of this month in the consolidated appropriations act. It is unfortunate, in my view, that Congress was not able to reach an agreement with the other body on a longer term solution before resorting to temporary extensions.

I feel that the Ways and Means Committee and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee worked well together to put together a workable bill that would continue financing our system with modest changes for a period of 4 years. Four years would have

given us enough time to allow this body to devote the necessary time to make a close examination of the financing of the system and consider the long-term changes that technology and the demands of that system are imposing on us, something that I believe the Committee on Ways and Means and the Select Revenue Subcommittee did not have time to accomplish, despite multiple hearings on this issue.

While today's bill will only extend current law authority through the end of June, this is a necessary step in the process. It certainly does not speak well of this Congress that we are not able to do these things promptly with discipline and do so in a timely fashion, but I believe that our committee, Ways and Means, together with the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, have provided value added, and I would like to believe that given some additional time, that we would have had an opportunity to put forward a permanent solution.

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

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that it is my understanding the delay has been in the Senate, not in the House of Representatives, not between the two committees, and not because of disagreement from either side of the aisle here, but in the other body. It is also my understanding the gentleman is going to be supporting the bill in the end. If I am wrong, please indicate for the RECORD.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Ways and Means Committee for the good work they have done with the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on coming forward today and providing us with an opportunity to do the smart thing, and that is to provide this extension for this trust fund.

Yesterday, in my capacity on the Transportation Security Committee, I hosted the Transportation Security Administrator in my district at one of my large airports. Obviously, the infrastructure of airports, the safety of airports, travels parallel to the security of airports. This is a vital fund for cities like Houston, Texas, which happens to have one of the top 10 airports in the Nation.

Airports are sites used by millions and millions of Americans every single day, and therefore it is important that the delay of the actual completion of a final bill not be used to prevent the flow of dollars to protect our airports and provide safe and secure passage for our travelers.

I understand, as my good friend from New York has indicated, that the delay is in the Senate. This is the right direction to go. I applaud the Ways and Means Committee and Chairman CHARLIE RANGEL, and I rise enthusiastically to support this legislation.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to a senior member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI).

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mr. ENGLISH from Pennsylvania, for yielding, and I appreciate the hard work that he and members of his committee have done in this area.

I had the privilege of appearing before his subcommittee as we were considering the financing of this legislation. In fact, in September of last year, the House considered and passed a bill that resulted from that hearing, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2007, which was H.R. 2881. It reauthorized the FAA for the next 4 years. On several occasions after that, the House passed bills to extend the FAA programs.

Unfortunately, the other body has taken no action on any of these measures; therefore, the authority of the FAA's essential programs and taxes were extended through the end of this month as part of the omnibus appropriations act. Regrettably, those FAA programs and authorities not extended in the omnibus expired on September 30.

Additionally, although the omnibus appropriation bill provided money, it did not extend the FAA's contract authority, and therefore as of December 31, the FAA no longer has the authority to make new obligations, including sorely needed Airport Improvement Program grants to allow airports to complete vital infrastructure improvement projects. The omnibus also included a provision that would prevent the FAA from spending any money of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund after March 1 of this year.

Without some congressional action to extend the FAA's authority on March 1st, the FAA will be facing a partial shutdown. It is unlikely that Congress will be able to send a long-term FAA reauthorization bill to the President for consideration before the February 29 deadline.

We have before us H.R. 5270. This bill would extend the funding and expenditure authority of the FAA through June 30 of this year, 2008. The bill also extends the taxes funding the Airport and Airway Trust Funds through June 30, provides Airport Improvement Program funding through September 30, and extends eligibility for essential air service subsidies and airport grant funding.

Ideally, we should be considering the FAA reauthorization conference report at this time. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Instead, we are considering the third short-term extension of the FAA's authority by the House. However, this bill will ensure that our national aviation system continues to operate until a full FAA reauthorization can be enacted.

There is much work yet to be done on the FAA reauthorization bill. We need

to work in a bipartisan and bicameral fashion to pass legislation that the President can sign.

I support this extension in order to allow us time to accomplish this important goal.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to my good friend, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), the Chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding and for bringing this bill to the floor and for the support of the Republican side. Mr. ENGLISH, it is good to have you participating, and our colleague on the committee, Mr. PETRI, thank you for your diligent work on behalf of aviation issues.

The House has done its job on aviation. We passed, on September 20, the reauthorization act to extend aviation programs through 2011. Shortly thereafter, we passed another bill to provide a short-term extension of FAA programs. Then in November, we passed another attempt to extend aviation programs in the short term.

Regrettably, our colleagues across the way in the other body have not acted on any of these. If we don't act, frankly, the FAA just simply runs out of money. It will run out of authority to spend money. It will run out of authority to collect the revenues. So the House again, thank goodness the Ways and Means Committee is doing its job of carrying the load, has brought to the floor with our participation and vigorous support an extension of the revenue authority for the FAA programs.

First of all, we extend with this legislation the aviation taxes. Now, that covers 80 percent of FAA's budget. And with an uncommitted cash balance of only \$1.5 billion, any lapse in the aviation taxes could put solvency of the trust fund at serious risk.

Don't think it can't happen, because that did happen in 1995 when Congress allowed the aviation taxes to lapse and the Aviation Trust Fund ran out of money. Curiously, ticket prices didn't go down. The airlines just kept charging the same price. They didn't give the consumer during that period of lapse a break. They just kept on collecting taxes, revenues, at the higher level, without giving any kind of a rebate on taxes. We don't want to let that happen again.

The second thing that we do in this legislation is extend authority for the FAA to make expenditures from the Aviation Trust Fund. Without that, on March 1, FAA will face a partial shutdown. They will not be able to pay some 4,000 employees, and a good many of those will be air traffic controllers.

The third provision critical in this legislation is the \$2.76 billion in contract authority for the Aviation Improvement Program, that is the construction program for runways and taxiways, the hard side, the air side of the airport. Because the previous au-

thorization expired on September 30, there is no contract authority in place now for the AIP program in fiscal year 2008. No new airport grants can be made.

So without this legislation, not only is FAA going to have to lay off 4,000 employees, they are not going to be able to make grants to airport authorities, we will lose tens of thousands of construction jobs in building airport capacity, and we will lose the ability to meet the needs of aviation capacity out into the balance of this fiscal year.

So the several provisions I have already described, plus many other provisions of the previous law, Vision 100, are continued in this legislation. We extend that authority through to June 30 in order to keep the pressure on the other body to take up our aviation authorization bill, which passed our committee with overwhelming bipartisan support, passed the House with an overwhelming vote, and yet the other body sits over there in splendid isolation as though nothing else in the world matters. And I find that very, very disturbing.

We need to pass this legislation that the House has already acted on and let the Senate pass it and get in to conference with us. We will get this resolved, we can get it passed and get it to the President in very short order. But, meanwhile, we have to take the action embodied in the pending legislation, and I urge its support by an overwhelming bipartisan vote.

This legislation would extend the authorization for aviation programs and taxes through June 30, 2008. Such an extension is urgently needed to address significant budget problems facing the Federal Aviation Administration, FAA, due to the current lapse in Airport Improvement Program, AIP, funding, and the upcoming expiration of both the aviation excise taxes and the authority to make expenditures from the Aviation Trust Fund.

These current and upcoming lapses in FAA's authorities have occurred despite repeated efforts by the House to pass legislation to extend them. The House has acted on three separate occasions to extend the authorization for FAA programs. On September 20, 2007, the House passed H.R. 2881, the "FAA Reauthorization Act of 2007," to reauthorize FAA programs for fiscal years 2008–2011. On September 24, 2007, the House passed H.R. 3540, the "Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act of 2007" to provide a short-term extension of FAA programs. On November 6, 2007, the House amended and passed S. 2265, in a subsequent attempt to provide a short-term extension of FAA programs. The Senate has yet to act on any of these bills, or on any other FAA reauthorization legislation.

As I supported each of these prior attempts to extend FAA's programs and financing, I again support the legislation before us today.

I strongly support the extension of the aviation excise taxes, as proposed in H.R. 5270. These taxes are necessary to support the Aviation Trust Fund, which in recent years has provided about 80 percent of the FAA's budget. With an uncommitted cash balance of approximately \$1.5 billion, any lapse in the aviation taxes could put the solvency of the Trust Fund at risk.

In addition to extending the aviation taxes, a second key provision of H.R. 5270 is the extension of the FAA's authority to make expenditures from the Trust Fund. Without this authority, the FAA will face a partial shut-down beginning March 1st, as it will be unable to pay approximately 4,000 of its employees.

The third key provision of H.R. 5270 is that it provides \$2.76 billion in contract authority for the AIP. Because the previous FAA authorization act, Vision 100, expired on September 30, 2007, there is currently no contract authority in place for the AIP in FY 2008, and no new airport grants can be made. It is our intent that the full \$2.76 billion provided by H.R. 5270 be made available, without regard to any previously enacted rescission.

It is imperative that we reinstate the AIP program immediately. Unless we do so, we will lose the Spring construction season, and will not be able to do much construction this year, even if the program is reauthorized at a later date.

According to the FAA, a continued lapse in AIP funding will affect important safety and capacity projects, including runway safety area projects, letter of intent disbursements, runway safety action team projects, enhanced taxiway and centerline marking projects, and aircraft rescue, firefighting and snow removal equipment. We must act now to extend this important program.

H.R. 5270 also extends several other provisions of Vision 100 so that, until a long-term FAA reauthorization bill is enacted, aviation programs may be continued under the same terms and conditions as were in effect during the previous authorization period.

But this is only the first step. We need to enact a long-term FAA reauthorization bill, which will permit us to go forward on modernization of the air traffic control system, and improvement of our airports, to combat the ever-increasing inadequacies of the current system. Last year, our aviation system had the worst delay record in its history. With the number of air travelers predicted to surpass 1 billion per year by the year 2015, the system is rapidly approaching gridlock. I strongly urge the other body to bring their reauthorization bill to the floor, so we can go to conference and pass a long-term reauthorization of aviation programs.

I thank Chairman RANGEL and Ranking Member MCCRERY of the Committee on Ways and Means for working with the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to include the aviation authorization provisions in H.R. 5270. I also thank my Committee colleagues, Ranking Member MICA, Subcommittee Chairman COSTELLO, and Subcommittee Ranking Member PETRI, for working with me on this critical legislation.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5270.

□ 1530

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I think we have made the case here, Mr. Speaker, that it is important that this legislation go forward to cure an inability of Congress to bring closure on this very, very important issue. This is stop-gap legislation that is necessary to allow America's aviation system to remain airborne, and at a critical time. It is essential that we pass

this bill in order to ensure that thousands of FAA employees are not furloughed through congressional inaction. It is also vitally important for communities engaged in an airport construction project, communities like my hometown of Erie, Pennsylvania, that the bill before us reinstates the contract authority for the FAA to issue money under the Airport Improvement Program.

I believe that this is an opportunity for us to get this right in the coming months. It is essential that the House Ways and Means Committee, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and the bipartisan leadership of this body engage the Senate in order to pass a permanent solution that provides long-term funding for the FAA in a manner that is consistent with the fundamental changes in that system in order to provide the necessary investment in this essential piece of our national transportation infrastructure. I urge my colleagues to vote for the bill.

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

Mr. CROWLEY. I thank my colleague from Pennsylvania for his words of support for this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, let me just point out as well, piggybacking on what he just said about the airport improvement programs grants, that time is of the essence. A failure to move now will further condense the season in which we can actually improve the safety and the aesthetics of our airports. So I thank him for his support, for recognizing the problems not here in this body but with the other body. I thank my friend, as well, Mr. OBERSTAR for pointing that out to us.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5270, the Airport and Airway Extension Act. I want to thank Chairman RANGEL for bringing this to the floor today, as well as Chairman OBERSTAR and Ranking Members MICA and PETRI.

On September 20, 2007, the House passed H.R. 2881, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2007, a long-term authorization of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) programs. However, until H.R. 2881 is signed into law, it is important that we extend FAA's programs on a short-term basis.

If Congress does not act before February 29, 2008, the FAA is potentially facing significant FY 2008 budget problems due to the lapse in funding for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP), and the upcoming expiration of both the aviation excise taxes and the authority to make expenditures from the Aviation Trust Fund.

To address these problems, H.R. 5270 would extend not only the aviation taxes and expenditure authority, but also AIP contract authority, until June 30, 2008.

This is not the first time we have passed short-term extensions to ensure FAA has the contract authority it needs to make AIP grants. In 1999 and 2000, as Congress was debating what eventually became the Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century, or AIR 21, we passed 4 extensions of FAA's contract authority. Moreover,

the House acted on three separate occasions last year in an attempt to extend FAA's authorities, including passage of H.R. 2881, the 4-year FAA reauthorization legislation. The Senate has yet to act on any of these measures.

We must ensure that this extension passes without further delay to not only improve safety and combat delays and congestion but to also stimulate the economy.

H.R. 5270 creates \$2.76 billion in AIP contract authority to fund the program until June 30, 2008. When annualized, this \$2.76 billion equates to \$3.675 billion for the full fiscal year 2008. H.R. 5270 will allow the FAA to make AIP grants, so that airports can take advantage of the full 2008 construction season. This, in turn, will put people to work and improve the safety and efficiency of our aviation system.

Aviation is too important to our nation's economy—contributing to \$1.2 trillion in output and approximately 11.4 million U.S. jobs—to allow the taxes or funding for critical aviation programs to expire. Until H.R. 2881 is signed into law, we must ensure that FAA has the funds it needs to continue its vital programs.

H.R. 5270 provides a short, 4-month extension to ensure FAA's programs remain fully funded, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. CROWLEY. 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 New York (Mr. CROWLEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5270.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COMMEMORATING THE COURAGE OF THE HAITIAN SOLDIERS THAT FOUGHT FOR AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE IN THE "SIEGE OF SAVANNAH"

Mr. FALEOMAVEGA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 909) commemorating the courage of the Haitian soldiers that fought for American independence in the "Siege of Savannah" and for Haiti's independence and renunciation of slavery, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 909

Whereas in the fall of 1779, Haitian soldiers of the Chasseurs-Volontaires de Saint Domingue volunteered to join in the fight for American independence;

Whereas the unit was comprised of over 500 men of color from the island of Haiti;

Whereas on October 9, 1779, the soldiers of Chasseurs-Volontaires de Saint Domingue served as the largest unit of soldiers of African descent to fight in the "Siege of Savannah";

Whereas records show that over 500 men sailed treacherous waters to join the effort against the British;

Whereas over 300 of them lost their lives attempting to drive the British from Savannah;