

huge problem for securing our ports. We cannot begin to come up with an effective solution without first knowing the extent of the actual problem.

The economic importance of our Nation's ports, combined with the existing port security loopholes, is why I introduced the GAPS Act. This bill will require the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to conduct a classified study of the potential gaps in port security and ensure that the Department develops a comprehensive plan for addressing these vulnerabilities. By focusing on the specific dangers that threaten our port security, we can begin, I believe, to develop effective solutions to ensure that our Nation is prepared.

Again, I want to thank Chairman KING and Ranking Member THOMPSON for their leadership on this issue, my Congressional PORTS Caucus co-founder, TED POE, for recognizing the importance of our ports.

I would like to point out that this bill went through regular order and is supported by both Democrats and Republicans on an issue that I know we all care about. I urge my colleagues to support this important bipartisan legislation.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I have no more speakers. If the gentleman from New York has no more speakers, then I am prepared to close.

Mr. KING of New York. This bipartisan bill is a good bill. I urge my colleagues to support it. It builds very strongly on the initial port security bill of 2006 that was sponsored by Mr. LUNGREN, who is here today, and Jane Harman, who was also in Congress at that time. It was a very good bill. This adds to it, improves on it, and it keeps up with the changes in the times.

I urge its adoption, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, our Nation's ports are as diverse as the people they serve. The importance of this infrastructure to the global supply chain cannot be overstated.

Enactment of H.R. 4005 will help ensure that our limited security resources can be targeted to those threats that put our ports at the greatest risk.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I urge the passage of H.R. 4005, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H.R. 4005, the "Gauging American Port Security" or GAPS Act. This act will direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to conduct a study and report to Congress on gaps in port security in the United States as well as provide plans to address them.

As a senior Member of the Homeland Security Committee, I know that the threats against the nation are constantly changing and ever present. Ensuring the safety and security of our ports is a measure that will directly address some of these threats and maintain the economic well-being of our port system.

Over 11 million cargo containers arrive in our ports each year, bringing in imports from across the world. By placing these additional measures on the Department of Homeland Security, we are enabling ports to conduct business without fear that these daily imports are a threat to national security. As a representative from the 18th Congressional District of Houston, I represent one of the world's busiest ports. Houston is linked to 1,053 ports in 203 countries through about 100 steamship lines. The ship channel is a part of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, which is a very busy barge traffic lane. Houston is also one of only eight U.S. cities to have a regional office of the U.S. Export-Import Bank.

The Port of Houston is essential to regional economic stability. A 2012 study by Martin Associates reports the port helps provide 1,026,820 jobs throughout Texas, which is an increase of 785,000 jobs in its 2007 study. The port brings in more than \$178.5 billion a year, including over \$4.5 billion in state and local tax revenues.

In addition, the Port of Houston also boasts the nation's largest petrochemical complex. Houston is known as a gateway for cargo traveling to the West and Midwest regions of our nation.

Although the Port is integral to Houston's development, as well as to the nation's economic development, its financial strength is not possible without strong security measures in place.

The heavy traffic flow of imports and exports that come through the port each day can leave room for drug trafficking and terrorists activities to take place. Although the Port of Houston, and ports across the U.S. boasts that they are secure and in line with nationally mandated security measures, it is my hope that the GAPS act will address any and all individual security shortcoming that each port may face that make them vulnerable to attacks against the Homeland.

The Port of Houston and the majority of ports across the nation have a remarkable track record of accomplishments that I hope to see continue. But their economic success and efficiency will only be hindered without additional security measures in place. This is why I urge my colleagues to support the provisions of H.R. 4005.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4005, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

□ 1650

AVIATION SECURITY STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION ACT OF 2012

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1447) to amend title 49, United States Code, to direct the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Transportation Security Administration) to establish an Aviation Security Advisory Committee, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1447

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 "Aviation Security Stakeholder Participation Act of 2012".

SEC. 2. AVIATION SECURITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 449 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"§ 44946. Aviation Security Advisory Committee"

"(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Assistant Secretary shall establish within the Transportation Security Administration an advisory committee to be known as the Aviation Security Advisory Committee.

"(b) DUTIES.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The Advisory Committee shall be consulted by and advise the Assistant Secretary on aviation security matters, including the development and implementation of policies, programs, rulemaking, and security directives pertaining to aviation security.

"(2) RECOMMENDATIONS.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—The Advisory Committee shall develop, at the request of the Assistant Secretary, recommendations for improvements to aviation security.

"(B) RECOMMENDATIONS OF WORKING GROUPS.—Recommendations agreed upon by the working groups established under this section shall be approved by the Advisory Committee for transmission to the Assistant Secretary.

"(3) PERIODIC REPORTS.—The Advisory Committee shall periodically submit to the Assistant Secretary—

"(A) reports on matters identified by the Assistant Secretary; and

"(B) reports on other matters identified by a majority of the members of the Advisory Committee.

"(4) ANNUAL REPORT.—The Advisory Committee shall submit to the Assistant Secretary an annual report providing information on the activities, findings, and recommendations of the Advisory Committee, including its working groups, for the preceding year.

"(c) MEMBERSHIP.—

"(1) APPOINTMENT.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this section, the Assistant Secretary shall appoint the members of the Advisory Committee.

"(B) COMPOSITION.—The membership shall consist of individuals representing not more than 27 member organizations. Each organization shall be represented by one individual (or the individual's designee).

"(C) REPRESENTATION.—The membership shall include representatives of air carriers, all cargo air transportation, indirect air carriers, labor organizations representing air

carrier employees, aircraft manufacturers, airport operators, general aviation, privacy, the travel industry, and the aviation technology security industry, including biometrics.

“(2) REMOVAL.—The Assistant Secretary may review the participation of a member of the Advisory Committee and remove the member for cause at any time.

“(3) PROHIBITION ON COMPENSATION.—The members of the Advisory Committee shall not receive pay, allowances, or benefits from the Government by reason of their service on the Advisory Committee.

“(4) MEETINGS.—The Assistant Secretary shall require the Advisory Committee to meet at least semiannually and may convene additional meetings as necessary.

“(d) AIR CARGO SECURITY WORKING GROUP.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Secretary shall establish within the Advisory Committee an air cargo security working group to provide recommendations on air cargo security issues, including the implementation of the air cargo security programs established by the Transportation Security Administration to screen air cargo on passenger aircraft and all-cargo aircraft in accordance with established cargo screening mandates.

“(2) MEETINGS AND REPORTING.—The working group shall meet at least quarterly and submit information, including recommendations, regarding air cargo security to the Advisory Committee for inclusion in the annual report. The submissions shall include recommendations to improve the Administration’s cargo security initiatives established to meet the requirements of section 44901(g).

“(3) MEMBERSHIP.—The working group shall—

“(A) include members of the Advisory Committee with expertise in air cargo operations; and

“(B) be cochaired by a Government and industry official.

“(e) GENERAL AVIATION SECURITY WORKING GROUP.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Secretary shall establish within the Advisory Committee a general aviation working group to provide recommendations on transportation security issues for general aviation facilities, general aviation aircraft, and helicopter operations at general aviation and commercial service airports.

“(2) MEETINGS AND REPORTING.—The working group shall meet at least quarterly and submit information, including recommendations, regarding aviation security at general aviation airports to the Advisory Committee for inclusion in the annual report.

“(3) MEMBERSHIP.—The working group shall—

“(A) include members of the Advisory Committee with expertise in general aviation; and

“(B) be cochaired by a Government and industry official.

“(f) PERIMETER SECURITY WORKING GROUP.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Secretary shall establish within the Advisory Committee an airport perimeter security working group to provide recommendations on airport perimeter security and access control issues.

“(2) MEETINGS AND REPORTING.—The working group shall meet at least quarterly and submit information, including recommendations, regarding improving perimeter security and access control procedures at commercial service and general aviation airports to the Advisory Committee for inclusion in the annual report.

“(3) MEMBERSHIP.—The working group shall—

“(A) include members of the Advisory Committee with expertise in airport perimeter security and access control issues; and

“(B) be cochaired by a Government and industry official.

“(g) NONAPPLICABILITY OF FACAA.—The Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall not apply to the Advisory Committee or its working groups.

“(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the following definitions apply:

“(1) ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—The term ‘Advisory Committee’ means the Aviation Security Advisory Committee to be established under subsection (a).

“(2) ANNUAL REPORT.—The term ‘annual report’ means the annual report required under subsection (a).

“(3) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—The term ‘Assistant Secretary’ means the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Transportation Security Administration).

“(4) PERIMETER SECURITY.—The term ‘perimeter security’—

“(A) means procedures or systems to monitor, secure, and prevent unauthorized access to an airport, including its airfield and terminal; and

“(B) includes the fence area surrounding an airport, access gates, and access controls.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The analysis for such subchapter is amended by adding at the end the following:

“44946. Aviation Security Advisory Committee.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 1447, the Aviation Security Stakeholder Participation Act of 2012. I commend Ranking Member THOMPSON for his dedicated work in this area.

The FAA established the Aviation Security Advisory Committee in 1989 following the bombing of Pan American World Airways Flight 103. When TSA was created, the sponsorship of ASAC transferred to TSA, and it continued to provide a mechanism for industry and other outside stakeholders to inform the Federal Government’s decisionmaking on aviation security matters.

Despite its important contributions to security, TSA allowed the ASAC’s charter to expire. Last year, TSA revived the ASAC with the strong support of industry. Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano subsequently appointed 24 new ASAC members.

H.R. 1447 simply codifies the ASAC, which exists today, and ensures that it

remains intact, providing necessary stakeholder guidance to TSA. It establishes important working groups focused on air cargo, general aviation, and airport perimeter security, all of which have unique challenges that require a collaborative effort to solve.

In these difficult economic times, it is essential for TSA to get the input of stakeholders on security procedures and technology to ensure that it is spending its limited resources on initiatives that will enhance security for the traveling public without compromising the freedom of people and goods to move freely.

I urge the adoption of this bipartisan bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of H.R. 1447, the Aviation Security Stakeholder Participation Act. Mr. Speaker, effective coordination between stakeholders and their regulators is critical to the implementation of policies that work. To that end, we have the responsibility to ensure that policy is informed by the realities on the ground. Arguably, nowhere is the need for policy coordination more important than at our Nation’s airports.

Given that the aviation sector remains an attractive target for terrorists, the difference between a security policy that works and one that does not can be all that stands between life and death.

That is why I introduced H.R. 1447, the Aviation Security Stakeholder Participation Act. This legislation will ensure that the voices of those subject to policies and protocols put in place by TSA are heard and their recommendations are considered. It does so by directing the TSA to establish an Aviation Security Advisory Committee.

For years, such an advisory committee existed and worked effectively with TSA on matters such as aviation security methods, equipment, and procedures. For instance, in 2003, the ASAC’s cargo working group, which included the Cargo Airline Association, made recommendations that formed the basis of TSA’s program for 100 percent screening of air cargo. Unfortunately, during the last administration, the charter for this advisory committee was allowed to lapse, and the committee ceased operations.

While I am pleased that in response to my bill, the Obama administration reestablished this committee on its own authority, I strongly believe that it is critical that the Aviation Security Advisory Committee be codified in law to ensure that TSA’s aviation security policy continues to be informed by the private sector. That is why my bill would, for the first time, establish the Aviation Security Advisory Committee in statute and require representatives from up to 27 member organizations participate.

I introduced H.R. 1447 in April of 2011, with the ranking member of the Transportation Security Subcommittee of the Committee on Homeland Security, Representative JACKSON LEE. It was favorably reported on a bipartisan basis in November 2011.

TSA has the responsibility to secure the American public from threats posed to our transportation sector. However, it cannot do so in a vacuum. TSA must leverage technical and operational expertise from our Nation's airports to deliver a collaborative and robust security system across our aviation sector. Strong partnerships with aviation stakeholders are critical to informing aviation security policy.

Just last month, the committee received testimony from the Airport Minority Advisory Council about arbitrary limitations set forth by TSA on the issuance of airport worker badges to airport-based small businesses, like newsstands, coffee, and souvenir shops. Since then, TSA has committed to re-evaluate the policy and work with the private sector to address the concerns raised.

This is just one example of how a TSA policy—developed without input from the advisory committee—was not informed by economic realities. Now TSA is in the position of having to revisit this and other ill-informed policies to ensure that they enhance security in a manner that does not unduly burden the private sector.

My bill also directs the administrator of TSA to establish three targeted working groups to address the unique homeland security challenges related to air cargo security, general aviation security, and perimeter security.

Mr. Speaker, all of us have a stake in ensuring the security of our Nation. Let us pass this bill so that stakeholders who are expected to comply with the policies and procedures developed by TSA have a seat at the table. That way, we can be confident that TSA's policies are both effective from the security standpoint and address the economic and commercial realities of our Nation's airports.

Before reserving the balance of my time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to engage in a brief colloquy with the gentleman from New York, the chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, Mr. KING.

Mr. Speaker, as this bill has made its way to the House floor, the chairman and I have been engaged in ongoing dialogue over how to strike the right balance on who should be represented on the Aviation Security Advisory Committee. I am dedicated to ensuring that the voices of passengers and small and minority-owned businesses impacted by TSA's policies, procedures, and regulations are heard. It is important persons representing those groups have a seat at the table when TSA makes decisions that affect both passengers' rights and businesses' bottom line.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York for his assurance that as this bill continues its movement through the legislative process, he will work with me to ensure these important populations are included in this Aviation Security Advisory Committee legislation.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for yielding.

I agree to work with him moving forward to ensure that this issue is addressed in a manner to ensure this participation.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. I thank the gentleman from New York for his commitment.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. If the gentleman from Mississippi has, no further requests for time, I am prepared to close, once the gentleman does.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. Since the gentleman from New York is prepared to close, I also am prepared to close.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the members of the Committee on Homeland Security for their unanimous support of this legislation when it was considered by the committee last September.

□ 1700

While the Committee on Homeland Security has not been as active on the legislative front as I had hoped it would be this Congress, I am pleased that several discrete bills introduced by both Democrats and Republicans have received bipartisan support on the House floor during the last month.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to vote "aye" on the Aviation Security Stakeholder Participation Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION,

June 25, 2012.

Hon. PETER KING,
Chairman, House Committee on Homeland Security, Washington, DC.

Hon. BENNIE G. THOMPSON,
Ranking Member, House Committee on Homeland Security, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN KING AND RANKING MEMBER THOMPSON: On behalf of the U.S. Travel Association, I write in strong support of H.R. 1447, the "Aviation Security Stakeholder Participation Act of 2011", which is on the House of Representatives suspension calendar for tomorrow, June 26.

As you know, H.R. 1447 reconstitutes and codifies the Aviation Security Advisory Committee (ASAC), provides the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) with an updated vision for engaging aviation security stakeholders and, importantly, updates the categories of organizations considered for ASAC membership. The bill will help to strengthen aviation security, assist in the development of a more efficient passenger screening process, and enhance the existing relationship between TSA and the travel industry.

Restarting the ASAC was a key recommendation of our report on aviation security, titled "A Better Way", which sets out a

clear path for improving the TSA passenger screening process.

Thank you for your support of this legislation, and we look forward to working with you on the many aviation security issues facing our nation's commercial aviation passengers.

Sincerely,

ROGER J. DOW,
President and CEO.

JUNE 25, 2012.

Hon. BENNIE THOMPSON,
Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR RANKING MEMBER THOMPSON: On behalf of the members of the Cargo Airline Association, I am writing to thank you for the introduction of H.R. 1447, the Aviation Stakeholder Participation Act. This Bill would require the re-establishment of an Aviation Security Advisory Committee (ASAC) to facilitate communications between the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the aviation industry.

Historically, the ASAC formed the basis of major initiatives, with industry members working closely with Government Agencies to address a variety of security-related issues. These issues have been traditionally discussed in various Working Groups established under the ASAC umbrella. A prime example of the utility of this structure was the establishment of three air cargo Working Groups formed to develop proposed new regulations to address air cargo security threats after the September 11, 2001, attacks. The recommendations of these Working Groups eventually formed the basis of an entirely new TSA air cargo regulatory scheme. Unfortunately, the ASAC charter expired several years ago and today no government-industry advisory committee exists.

H.R. 1447 would correct this problem and contains a mandate, not only for ASAC itself, but also for various Working Groups that would address the key issues of the day. This re-establishment of ASAC is long overdue and we support your efforts. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,

STEPHEN A. ALTERMAN,
President.

AIRPORTS COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL,
June 25, 2012.

Hon. BENNIE G. THOMPSON,
Ranking Member, House Committee on Homeland Security, Washington, DC.

DEAR RANKING MEMBER THOMPSON: On behalf of the Airports Council International—North America (ACI-NA), which represents 334 local, regional, and state governing bodies that own and operate commercial airports throughout the United States, I am pleased to offer our endorsement of H.R. 1447, the Aviation Security Stakeholder Participation Act of 2011.

Airport operators have long advocated for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to re-establish the Aviation Security Advisory Committee (ASAC). The ASAC allowed aviation stakeholders, including airport operators to advise TSA on aviation security policies, programs, rulemakings and security directives pertaining to aviation security. H.R. 1447 would allow the ASAC once again to provide valuable input into TSA's proposed rules, security directives and aviation security programs which help protect airports, airlines and their passengers.

Again, thank you for your continued support of airport operators and on recognizing the value of having stakeholder input into

aviation security programs and TSA regulations. We look forward to working with you on the passage of H.R. 1447.

Sincerely,

GREG PRINCIPATO,
President, Airports Council
International—
North America.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, the private sector is a vital partner in transportation security, and the ASAC ensures that industry has a seat at the table as the government works to make our homeland more secure.

I urge the adoption of this bipartisan bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1447, "Aviation Security Stakeholder Participation Act of 2011." Currently the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA's) Aviation Security Advisory Committee advises the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security on issues related to aviation security. This bill:

(1) authorizes the existence of the Aviation Security Advisory Committee,

(2) ensures key stakeholders with first knowledge of the security challenges our aviation system faces have a voice when TSA is considering implementing security policies and

(3) establishes specific working groups to address cargo, perimeter and general aviation.

I firmly believe that more can be done to protect and improve upon the security of our Nation's airways which is why I have consistently introduced legislation to improve our Nation's defense against security threats. The District I represent in Houston, Texas is home to two of the world's busiest airports, and the Johnson Space Center. Air transportation in the Houston metro area is about 30% above the national average and in Texas, the aviation industry employs nearly 200,000 people. We need to ensure that all cargo flight operations are secure, protect aircraft from laser attacks, and implement a threat-based security system.

Because of the necessity of H.R. 1447's implications, it already has the support of the U.S. Travel Association, Cargo Airline Association and the Airports Council International—North America. In addition it has received the unanimous support of the Committee on Homeland Security.

Mr. Speaker, these entities and the Homeland Security Committee recognize it is imperative to continue to ensure to strengthen the aviation industry's effort to make sure all travelers and cargo are safe traveling within and through the United States.

Enhanced security protects our economic interests: air cargo is over a \$60 billion industry, and according to the International Air Transport Association, transports 35% of the value of goods traded globally. More importantly, implementing this bill will protect our citizens. Well trained employees and representatives are essential in recognizing suspicious activity and people that want to endanger our travelers.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1447, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

USE OF GRANT FUNDS FOR PROJECTS CONDUCTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH A NATIONAL LABORATORY OR RESEARCH FACILITY

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5843) to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to permit use of certain grant funds for training conducted in conjunction with a national laboratory or research facility.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5843

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

SECTION 1. USE OF GRANT FUNDS FOR PROJECTS CONDUCTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH A NATIONAL LABORATORY OR RESEARCH FACILITY.

Section 208(a)(2) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 609(a)(2)) is amended by inserting "training conducted in conjunction with a national laboratory or research facility and" after "including".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this bill, introduced by Mr. LUNGREN, is a simple statutory clarification that allows State and local governments and emergency management officials to use existing FEMA State Homeland Security Grant Program and Urban Area Security Initiative funds to work with national labs where appropriate.

H.R. 5843 amends the Homeland Security Act of 2002 by inserting a clarification into the "allowable use" section of the Homeland Security Grant Program section. Clarifying this "allowable use"

under the grants program will allow these State and local first responders to leverage the expertise at national labs for research and training purposes.

This is a simple, solid, good government measure that will help maximize the use of limited Federal grant dollars. This bill will allow State and local officials to cut through FEMA red tape, which makes it harder for first responders to work with the Federal national labs and make the best decisions for their homeland security needs. This bill will eliminate hoops that State and locals have to go through to gain access to this expertise and training.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. LUNGREN) for his work on this issue and so many others on the committee.

I urge passage of the bill. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I'm perplexed that the House is considering H.R. 5843 today. I cannot understand why this bill is on the schedule. It was introduced just over a month ago and has not been vetted by the committee. Why are we giving expedited attention to a bill that has just two cosponsors, both of whom are Republican? Whatever the problem it purports to solve has not been the subject of so much as a Member-level briefing, let alone a hearing or a markup.

Section 208(a)(13) of the Homeland Security Act already allows the Department to approve the spending of grant funds on training by national labs. Without so much as a hearing where the committee can take testimony on this matter, it is hard to justify taking up precious House floor time on this bill, especially in a week where we must take urgent action on Pell Grants and highway funding. So instead, I choose to use this time to discuss the dwindling Federal support for homeland security activities, a far more timely concern for State, local, and tribal authorities than H.R. 5843.

In the wake of the September 11 attack, as a government, we committed to safeguarding our homeland by building and preserving preparedness capabilities. Yet since the beginning of the 112th Congress, that commitment seems to have dangerously wavered.

In just 2 short years, vital Homeland Security Grant Programs have been significantly cut, and, as a result, the level of preparedness fostered by the programs, such as the Urban Areas Security Initiative, Port Security Grant Program, Transit Security Grant Program, and the Metropolitan Medical Response System, have been undermined. Given that the authorizations for many of these targeted programs are expiring, a far better use of our time would be to reauthorize the Transit Security Grant Program or the Metropolitan Medical Response program.