It is a life issue important to seniors throughout our Nation. I urge Members to support the House Republican prescription drug plan.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

KEEP AMTRAK RUNNING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I have the honor of representing the North Shore of Massachusetts; and, like many of my colleagues, I am deeply concerned about a possible Amtrak shutdown and the effect on my constituents. I am doubly troubled by the fact that this situation was avoidable and totally unnecessary. Congress is now being asked to step in and help after the administration failed to take action.

Mr. Speaker, 23,000 workers across the country fear job losses. A shutdown will mean lost jobs for thousands of employees already demoralized by years of wage deferrals and wage freezes that have left Amtrak workers among the lowest paid in the industry. A thousand jobs have been lost already in the past months, as Amtrak has cut corners in the absence of government support. We cannot allow additional jobs and benefits to be lost.

Local commuter rail riders have voiced their fears about being left stranded by a possible Amtrak shutdown. Failure to act now will mean suspension of Amtrak service in the busy Northeast Corridor, and this will jeopardize commuter rail services for Massachusetts' communities such as Lynn and Salem in my district, not to mention the likely permanent loss of the system's long-distance trains.

Amtrak's current financial difficulty is a result of unwise and unattainable congressional goals established in 1997 that forced unfortunate managerial choices and undermined Amtrak's financial viability and access to capital. Congress realized it made a mistake and has since repealed the 1997 requirement that Amtrak file a plan for its own liquidation if it not achieve operating self-sufficiency by the end of 2002.

Unfortunately, the damage has been done, and it is imperative that Congress correct its public policy misadventure. We are at the point where Congress has to step in and offer some assistance.

As today's Boston Globe reports, ''Rail shutdown would be a slap to the region. Amtrak ridership is on the increase.'' The article notes that ridership in the Northeast Corridor was up 23 percent in May, with a 44 percent growth in revenue over the last year. Over the years, and particularly since the terrorist attacks of September 11, Amtrak ridership in the Northeast Corridor has decreased traffic at the airports, providing another option for people to travel for business and pleasure.

We should reward, not punish, this good service with increased Amtrak investment. Indeed, every G–8 country knows the value of investing in mass ground transportation. All of them support their national passenger rail system. Amtrak is held to a double standard as no other segment of America's transportation system is forced to meet the capital and operating needs without substantial government financial assistance. Amtrak has responded to the growing expectations placed on the passenger rail carrier since September 11; and Congress should, too.

America needs better energy and environmental policies. Rail service conserves energy as compared to other forms of intercity transportation. A 1999 Congressional Research Service report determined that general aviation uses more than three times the energy used by Amtrak. Passenger rail service generates less air pollution and less energy than the airplane and the automobile. This is even more significant in high-density areas.

Mr. Speaker, let us compare Amtrak with investments in airports and highways. Overall, our highways, aviation and mass transit programs receive almost $57 billion in annual government investments, but Amtrak only receives 1 percent of that. $571 million is slated for fiscal year 2003.

□ 1845

Amtrak has only received $25 billion in Federal funding over the past 30 years in comparison with $750 billion spent on highways and aviation during that same period. We can and we should do better.

While administration critics propose to shut down Amtrak because not every route is self-sufficient, we should note that the airlines received $150 million this year alone in Federal funding to provide air service to 80 cities where passenger revenues were insufficient to support the provision of service. Amtrak is a bargain by comparison to that.

That is why I join my colleagues and asked appropriators to provide sufficient supplemental funding to keep the trains running. The administration seeks to privatize, their solution for government programs they just do not like, from Social Security to prescription drugs, all the way to mass transportation. The fact is, privatization is not the answer. We only have to look at the tragic accidents, delays and system failures in Great Britain to know that privatization does not work. For the security of our commuters, our workers, our environment and our economy, we must keep the trains running. Shutting down Amtrak is clearly not in the public interest. I urge the administration to listen to the American people and respond with a thoughtful, sensible plan to keep Amtrak going.

AMTRAK

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KERNS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to continue the discussion this evening on the future of Amtrak. There is a rumor going around the Capitol that Senator BYRD has put together a rescue that ties together the supplemental, the debt ceiling vote with resources that will keep Amtrak going. If that rumor is true, I say good for Senator BYRD for making it happen, but I say shame on Congress and the administration for making it necessary for yet another extraordinary step to keep America's passenger rail system going.

This is sadly part of the 30-year history where Congress and numerous administrations have done their best to dismantle and slowly bleed Amtrak to death. What is perhaps most remarkable, Mr. Speaker, is not that we may be able to rescue Amtrak from being shut down this week, but that despite the system that has been inflicted upon them, they continue to exist and ridership continues to increase.

It was a rather bizarre deal we saw in 1997, an exercise in denial on the part of the then-majority parties in Congress where they mandated in the last reauthorization a program under which for the next 5 years Amtrak would become self-sufficient. Part of that deal was that Congress, the Federal Government, would supply adequate resources to deal with the capital requirements for Amtrak, not unlike what happens in other industries where the United States, for instance, provides the infrastructure for aviation. There are now some in the administration and sadly some in Congress who are arguing, Shut it down. It is not self-supporting. They did not keep the deal.

Well, Congress provided less than half of the money that was authorized. In no year did we provide the full capital allocation. Yet despite that, despite that, we have seen ridership increases that is not just passengers with train nostalgia. In the Pacific Northwest, we have seen almost three-quarters of a million people ride the Cascades rail corridor last year. Ridership has increased sixfold over the last 8 years. We have heard about the situation that is taking place with ridership increases here in the eastern corridor. And all of us in Congress are well aware that if it were not for Amtrak, that sad week of September 11, without Amtrak, if people were relying on their SUVs and waiting for the grounded planes to travel, that there would have

been one traffic jam from the Alexandria suburbs to New Haven, Connecticut. But we had Amtrak, and we did not have that desperate situation.

We have also had people take to the floor and talk about what is happening in the Midwest and with the Texas Eagle down through the South. Mr. Speaker, we find that every administration since President Nixon was in office have underestimated Amtrak's customers who continue to ride, often not just the underfunded system and often-uncertain service, but in some cases the equipment has been deplorable. These same passengers deserve better treatment from us. They include people who ride in rural communities. They are people increasingly in the tourism and resort activities where people are traveling the rails for pleasure. There are thousands of businesspeople who are involved with these critical corridors. In fact, we are finding that each and every day in the New York City area, Amtrak controls the flow of 1,100 trains and more than 300,000 passengers in and out of that city.

Despite a lack of clarity, the administration, and we have called them time and again when they have appeared before us on rail-related activities, our rail subcommittee in the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has asked the administration repeatedly, they have been in office now a year and a half, what is their position? What is their plan? How can we work together? We have received no response.

Mr. Speaker, we have developed a bipartisan alternative under the leadership of the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN), the Chair, and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. CLEMENT), the ranking member. It has been supported by over 162 Members in this body, a broad bipartisan coalition. It has a majority of the Senate ready to move forward with ongoing programs that will get us through this year, not with a Band-Aid but in a way that actually enhances operation and security and puts us in a good position for the next Congress for full reauthorization.

We should not be held ransom for a $205 million loan guarantee conditioned upon meeting some vague principles that, to the extent to which you can determine them, would be destructive. I strongly urge, Mr. Speaker, that we move forward, that we deal with the funding this year and be in a situation in the next Congress when we can reauthorize surface, reauthorize aviation, reauthorize rail. Give it the package that the American public deserves.

VIOLENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to speak to the very disturbing trend that we have seen in the growing violence in the Middle East of Palestinian terrorists deliberately targeting Israeli children.

As we all know, there has been a tremendous increase over the last 20 months in the number of deaths, fatalities and woundings from these suicide bombers, homicide bombers. But what is particularly disturbing is what I see as an emerging trend in all of this to specifically try to target children.

I want to show to my colleagues here a picture and talk about these two young people. The first one I want to talk about is this baby over here, Shalhevet Pass. Shalhevet was literally in her stroller being pushed by her parents when a Palestinian sniper opened fire on the family. What is very, very disturbing about this particular incident is that, and this was based on the investigation after the event, it appeared as though the Palestinian sniper who was shooting at them from a hill specifically targeted the baby and targeted the baby first. This baby was shot by a gunshot wound to the head while in a stroller.

The next one I want to talk about is this little girl right here, Danielle Shefi. A Palestinian gunman broke into the family home. The mother had retreated into the children's bedroom. She was with two brothers, and the Palestinian gunman first shot Danielle and killed Danielle, then proceeded to shoot the mother and the two brothers. The mother and two brothers managed to survive. If you look at some of the other trends in these Palestinian attacks, there was a suicide or homicide bomber who attacked a discotheque filled with young people. Over and over again it appears as though the Palestinians are specifically attacking children.

The Palestinians tried to claim in their defense that the Israeli Defense Forces are just as bad, that they shoot Palestinian children and they made quite a big deal about a particular case. It involved the death of a 12-year-old Mohammed A-Dura during an exchange of gunfire between the Israeli Defense Forces and Palestinians. This little boy was killed. He got in the crossfire somehow. The Palestinians claim that the Israeli Defense Forces specifically targeted Mohammed. The IDF did a review. This is not part of Israeli policy, obviously, to attack children. They claimed, based on their review, that it was impossible for the Israeli Defense Forces to have killed this young boy. The Palestinians, of course, dismiss this as propaganda, but what was very interesting is German public television decided to do an independent review, and they based this on the ballistics, the angle of entry of the bullet into the boy, that it was impossible for the Israeli soldiers to have killed that boy, but that he was actually killed by the Palestinians.

Some people may say this is hard to believe, that the Palestinians would shoot a Palestinian boy, but let us keep in mind that they sent a 10-year-old boy as a suicide bomber to try to blow up a bunch of buildings that ultimately collapsed and killed, I think, 13 Israeli Defense Forces. They have sent other teenage suicide bombers. It is very, very clear, at least in my opinion and based on my review of this issue, that they not only are targeting children, Israeli children, but they will even kill their own children for the purpose of furthering their political agenda.

It is my opinion, Mr. Speaker, that this is reprehensible. This is horrible. This is beyond the pale. Some people will try to justify this, claiming that they have no choice, that they have to resort to this. We should never allow this sort of thing to go on. I think it is perfectly justifiable for the Israeli Government to reoccupy the Palestinian territories. Land for peace has not worked. It has actually led to even more violence. The Palestinians have to do what the President said. They need to abandon violence. They need to abandon these suicide attacks. They need to establish democracy before we will ever have lasting peace in the Middle East.

AMTRAK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on a very real national crisis we will face if we fail to fully and properly fund Amtrak. Contrary to the administration's rhetoric, this is not a case of the boy who cried wolf or Chicken Little claiming the sky is falling. Make no mistake, an Amtrak shutdown for any length of time, however temporary, will be disastrous for this country, not only for interstate business/leisure travel but for daily commuter travel as well.

In my home State of Massachusetts, Amtrak is under contract with the Metropolitan Boston Transit Authority to provide commuter rail service to thousands upon thousands of working people who depend on Amtrak to get to and from their jobs each and every day. An Amtrak shutdown will paralyze our mobility and the economy right along with it. These commuters will be forced on to already overcongested highways, exacerbating public safety problems and adding to environmental pollution.

The worst part of the situation, Mr. Speaker, that we find ourselves facing is that the solution has been known to the administration for months. Amtrak's management has clearly and consistently said that Amtrak will have to shut down if the administration does not take swift, deliberate action to provide the $200 million it needs to operate in the short term.

The administration's response to this imminent crisis has been to do nothing, absolutely nothing, nothing but