than half of what Amtrak says it needs to meet its long-term and short-term financial needs. Sadly, this amount would only maintain the current level of funding and represents less than half of what Amtrak needs.

The fact is that the Federal Government dedicates resources for highways, airlines, airports, runways for capital improvements. Despite the popular myth, Amtrak has no such luxury. Amtrak is expected to pay for capital and track improvements, new cars, repairs and maintenance. With only a fraction of the Federal subsidies for airlines and highways, Amtrak is expected to do a lot more with a lot less.

Recently, I sent a letter, along with 161 of my colleagues, asking Congress to fully fund Amtrak at $1.9 billion. This funding includes $1.2 billion in Federal funding for capital and operating expenses, as well as $375 million for much-needed rail security projects across the system, and $400 million for life-safety improvements in Amtrak tunnels along the northeast corridor.

We are asking for $200 million to be made available immediately. If we can move heaven and Earth in order to provide the airlines with $15 billion with very few strings attached, as we did last fall, surely we can find $200 million to keep Amtrak running when so many people rely on it.

Failure to provide the necessary funds will not only mean the suspension of Amtrak service in the busy northeast corridor and the likely permanent loss of long-distance trains; it will mean that thousands of commuters around the Nation will be stranded; loss of production, loss of $1 million for communities and companies in areas where these areas need the services. It is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, Amtrak is too important to our communities to let die. It needs reforms. Let us do it in a realistic timetable that does not ignore the needs of millions of Americans. Congress and the administration must send a clear signal that they will not allow Amtrak to go bankrupt. Let us give them the $200 million that it needs.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Missouri (Ms. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCCARTHY of Missouri addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SUPPORT FULL FUNDING FOR AMTRAK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to join my colleagues in urging quick support for Amtrak to avert its collapse. The United States is not unlike any industrialized Nation in the world that has a need for quality rail passenger service, and America is not unlike any other industrialized Nation that is required to undergird financially its passenger rail service.

The President and lawmakers, the United States Congress, must come together quickly to prevent the economic and human hardship that would result from an Amtrak shutdown. That hardship would be suffered by Amtrak workers and their families. It would be most harsh, and the damage to our economy would be a calamity.

We have heard over and over and over, Mr. Speaker, in these Chambers during this Congress how imperative it is to provide an economic stimulus for corporate America to ensure the continuation of jobs and to provide employment for unemployed workers across this country. Yet we are here tonight begging and pleading with the powers that be to support Amtrak, which indeed needs economic stimulus for the benefit of the continuation of employment of America's citizens, the citizens who have worked long and hard over the years to do a good job and have done a good job, and they have taken care of their families and they have been taxpayers across this country.

Recently, Amtrak CEO David Gunn said if Amtrak did not receive a $200 million loan immediately that it would have to begin shutting down operations.

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that we build a world-class passenger rail system in the United States. We cannot wait for highways and airports to become so overwhelmed that they too can no longer operate, and we cannot continue to hold the millions of Americans who rely on passenger service in limbo while we refuse to provide Amtrak with adequate funding. We must also engage in long-term planning to address future passenger transportation growth and show some forethought in crafting transportation solutions, not wait for this impending crisis to turn into an outright disaster.

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the aftermath which followed, we found that we were vulnerable in our society and in our economy when our transportation choices were limited and our mobility severely diminished. After the Federal Aviation Administration grounded all flights following the terrorist attacks, travelers turned to Amtrak. The ridership of Amtrak has skyrocketed. Revenues have risen up to 20 percent, and the ridership has increased over 8.2 percent. This shows that Amtrak does work and that it will continue to work if the United States Congress and the President is about the business of quickly responding to the needs of Amtrak, not unlike the way that it did for our airline industry when we provided a $5 billion grant to that industry and $10 billion additional resources in the event that our airline services decided that additional resources were needed to be guaranteed by this country.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage Members of Congress and the administration as well to act quickly, not politically, but quickly, for the benefit of the families who rely on us as Members of Congress and who rely on the support that we have already shown that we provide for other entities in our Nation so that we can go forward. We cannot afford the luxury of being a superpower in our mind and not allowing America to, in reality, be one by having a first-class passenger rail system. It is up to us, Mr. Speaker, to sustain Amtrak.

□ 1915

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KERNS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, not surprisingly, in this election year the Republicans are attempting to portray themselves as the protectors of Social Security; and many of our women colleagues tonight, led by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD) and the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) will be discussing this more.

During my 5 minutes, what I would like to do is put some history on the record.

First, the Republicans have advocated mailing out fancy but meaningless guarantee certificates to Social Security beneficiaries this year at a cost of $16 million to the taxpayers, and each million that would be needed to produce and mail these certificates would pay for the processing of maybe 1,400 disability claims.

When it started to come out how they wanted to waste the money on those kinds of phony certificates, and that proposal literally flopped, Republicans have sought other forms of political cover but to no avail. So now they have moved into the avoidance mode and are simply dodging Social Security, blocking key legislation from coming to this floor.

The American people deserve to hear the details of the Republicans' privatization plans for Social Security before the election. That is why I signed the Democratic discharge petition to bring this vital debate to the floor. It requires 218 Members of the House to sign that discharge petition to bring up the bill.

Now, realistically, will the Republicans allow these bills to come forward? Well, let us see. Probably not, because the Republican leadership of this House knows that Democrats will stand against privatization and expose their risky and flawed plans for what they are.

Truly, Republicans have always had trouble believing in Social Security