RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 25 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1333

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON) at 1 o'clock and 33 minutes p.m.

EXTENSION OF NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the Senate bill (S. 2136) to extend the final report date and termination date of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, to provide additional funding for the Commission, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

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

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the Senate bill, as follows:

S. 2136

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

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES.

(a) FINAL REPORT DATE.—Subsection (b) of section 610 of the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107–306; 6 U.S.C. 101 note; 116 Stat. 2413) is amended by striking ''18 months'' and inserting ''20 months''.

(b) TERMINATION DATE.—Subsection (c) of that section is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking ''60 days'' and inserting ''30 days''; and

(2) in paragraph (2), by striking ''60-day period'' and inserting ''30-day period''.

(c) ADDITIONAL FUNDING.—Section 611 of that Act (6 U.S.C. 101 note; 116 Stat. 2413) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (b) as subsection (c);

(2) by inserting after subsection (a) the following new subsection (b):

''(b) ADDITIONAL FUNDING.—In addition to the amounts made available to the Commission under subsection (a) and under chapter 2 of title II of the Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2003 (Public Law 108–11; 117 Stat. 591), of the amounts appropriated for the programs and activities of the Federal Government for fiscal year 2004 that remain available for obligation, not more than $1,000,000 shall be available for transfer to the Commission for purposes of the activities of the Commission under this title.''; and

(3) in subsection (c), as so redesignated, by striking ''subsection (a)'' and inserting ''this section''.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I fully support this extension for the 9/11 commission. In fact, I would support giving it any and all time and cooperation it needs to get to the bottom of 9/11.

Sixty days is but a bare minimum—but it is absolutely necessary. This extension is nice, White House cooperation would be better. A thorough final report would bolster our national security and bring a measure of understanding and closure to Americans, New Yorkers, and, most importantly, the victims' loved ones. Unfortunately, that effort has been hampered by an uncooperative White House.

The latest manifestation, as reported in today's New York Times, is severe restrictions on interviews with key 9/11 players.

I ask unanimous consent to put this in the RECORD.

Mr. Speaker we need White House cooperation now. And if they continue to refuse to give it, we should demand to know why.

Mr. Speaker, it's too important for this country, for my city and its people not to get this report done right. This is too important an issue for the White House to play hid and seek with. I hope this extension will trigger full cooperation.

[From the New York Times, Mar. 3, 2004]

9/11 PANEL REJECTS WHITE HOUSE LIMITS ON INTERVIEWS

(By Philip Shenon)

WASHINGTON, Mar. 2.—The independent commission investigating the Sept. 11 attacks is refusing to accept strict conditions from the White House for interviews with President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney and is renewing its request that Mr. Bush's national security adviser testify in public, commission members said Tuesday.

The panel members, interviewed after a private meeting on Tuesday, said the commission had decided for now to reject a White House request that the interview with Mr. Bush be limited to one hour and that the questioners be only the panel's chairman and vice chairman.

The members said the commission had also decided to continue to press the national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, to reconsider her refusal to testify at a public hearing. Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney are expected to be asked about how they had reacted to intelligence reports before Sept. 11, 2001, suggesting that Al Qaeda might be planning a large attack. Panel members want to ask Ms. Rice the same questions in public.

''We have held firm in saying that the conditions set by the president and vice president and Dr. Rice are nog good enough,'' said Timothy J. Roemer, a former Indiana congressman who is one of five Democrats on the 10-member commission.

Mr. Roemer said that former President Bill Clinton and former Vice President Al Gore had agreed to meet privately with the full bipartisan commission, and that Samuel R. Berger, Ms. Rice's predecessor, would testify in public.

''It's very important that we treat both the Bush and the Clinton administration the same,'' he said.

The White House has declined to discuss details of the limitations it has sought on the interviews with Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney but has said the administration wants to cooperate fully with the commission, known formally as the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States.

A spokesman for the National Security Council, Sean McCormack, said Tuesday that the White House believed it would be inappropriate for Ms. Rice to appear at a public hearing as a matter of legal precedent. ''White House staff have not testified before legislative bodies,'' Mr. McCormack said. ''This is not a matter of Dr. Rice's preferences.''

Even as panel members warned of a possible confrontation with the White House, there was fresh evidence that the commission had averted a showdown on Capitol Hill. Speaker J. Dennis Hastert, Republican of Illinois, said Tuesday that he planned to shepherd a bill granting the panel a 60-day extension for its final report. Mr. Hastert had vowed to block the extension.

Mr. Hastert met Tuesday with the commission's chairman, Thomas H. Kean, a Republican and a former governor of New Jersey, and the vice chairman, Lee H. Hamilton, another former Democratic congressman from Indiana, and said at a news conference later that he would try to secure House approval of the extension, a proposal already accepted in the Senate.

With the extension, the commission would have until July 26 for its final report. The panel had warned that if it was held to its original deadline of May 27, as mandated by Congress, it would be unable to complete a full investigation and would have to curtail public hearings.

Mr. Hastert denied suggestions from Congressional Democrats that he had tried to block the extension as a favor to the White House, given Republican fears that the report might embarrass President Bush during his re-election campaign. Mr. Hastert said he had no direction from the White House.

''I didn't want it to become a political football,'' Mr. Hastert said of his initial opposition to the extension, adding that he had been chagrined when the White House said in February that it would back the extension.

Referring to the commission, Mr. Hastert said he had changed his mind last week ''after it became apparent that they couldn't get their work done.''

Commission officials said that if the White House continued to insist on limitations on the interviews with Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney, there might be little that the panel could do to force the issue and that the commission might have to accept the White House's terms.

And they said that despite internal conversation about the possibility of issuing a subpoena for Ms. Rice's public testimony, that move was unlikely. Ms. Rice provided several hours of private testimony last month and has suggested that she is willing to answer additional questions behind closed doors.

The Senate bill was ordered to be read a third time, was read the third time, and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3752, COMMERCIAL SPACE LAUNCH AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2004

Mr. REYNOLDS. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 546 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 546

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3752) to promote the development of the emerging commercial human space flight industry, to extend the liability indemnification regime for