

word magnificent citizens and role models. They have given much and asked little in return.

They hear all the platitudes and promises. They are celebrated in speech and in books and in the movies. But it is hard, hard to go home and look them in the eye and say there is no prescription drug relief, to say we are exhausting the Social Security surplus not only to fight Osama bin Laden but to provide corporate tax cuts. It is hard to look them in the eye as they travel to Canada for prescription drugs while Congress rolls back the alternative minimum tax.

Even amidst what must be hurtful to them, they never waiver. They stand by their Nation, their flag, their beliefs, prepared to sacrifice yet again for the Nation they love. Living out their lives in dignity is all they ask. Platitudes and promises do not heat their homes, put food on their table, or pay for the prescriptions needed to sustain their lives. Their generation believes you should be known by your deeds, not by the words that translate into empty promises.

There will be numerous speeches given on Veterans Day exalting the brave men and women of our Nation. Wreaths will be placed at memorials and people will gather in solemn remembrance and in firm resolve. When Members are back in their districts for parades and speeches and memorials, they should take a long look in the eyes of those veterans. We stand on their shoulders, the benefactors of their sacrifice and accomplishments.

They are prepared to see this second day of infamy through until justice is served. If only Congress would respond with the same resolve for them, the resolve to see their twilight years lived out in dignity, the resolve to provide them with affordable prescriptions here at home. If only Congress would show the willingness to sacrifice a corporate tax cut to preserve a life, to heat a home, to have a nutritious meal. If only Congress had the resolve to preserve Social Security and Medicare, the programs that have kept our elderly barely above the poverty line.

This is an unprecedented opportunity. The Nation stands united behind the President and Congress to root out terrorism.

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

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AIRLINE SECURITY BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Madam Speaker, tonight we are gathered to discuss a serious issue, and that is the issue of airline security. One of my colleagues from the great State of Texas is here and is on a limited time schedule, so I will begin this hour together by turning the time over at this point to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ).

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. First of all, let me congratulate the gentleman on taking this opportunity for us to come and say a few words on this very important issue. It is an issue that we recognize that we have not come to grips with since September 11, and I just wanted to share with my colleagues a couple of statistics.

Prior to September 11, we had over 9 million passengers. After that date, we have had only 5 million. So we have had a drastic decrease.

There is no doubt that people have some serious concerns about flying. A lot of people that are flying now are those that have business and those that have to, but a lot of people are choosing not to fly. And for good reasons they feel insecure in terms of the situation that they find themselves in.

The actions of the House leadership have delayed the passage of strong airline security legislation. Politics must give way to action. This is not the time to be partisan. This is not the time to be playing games at the expense of our national security. It is a time to deal with it. It has been 7 weeks. So we have to come to grips with it.

We must provide the best security we can at our airports. Not just adequate security, not just sufficient security; no, we need to provide the best security, and we will not get the best security if we continue to auction it off to the lowest bidder. We have to come to learn the hard way that airline security is a national security. So we need to recognize that national security should be in the hands of highly trained, highly motivated Federal law enforcement personnel.

The current work force, brought to us by private contractors, are underpaid and undertrained, and we recognize that. We all understand that, and we all realize that we have a serious problem. This weekend someone managed to slip through at the O'Hare Airport at Chicago. He did not just have one knife but seven folding knives with blades up to 4 inches. He also had a stun gun and a small container labeled teargas pepper spray.

This is unacceptable. The American people expect our airport security personnel to be able to handle the job and be able to do the right thing. We cannot take chances. We cannot accept what we have before us, and we have to make sure that when it comes to tourism, when it comes to trade, when it comes to security in the air that we make it as secure as possible.

What disturbs me is that the company at O'Hare is the same company that has already been cited by the FAA

and has been placed on probation. Here we have a company that we continue to allow to be there, continue to allow them to do the things they have been doing.

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It is obvious that the private companies do not provide the type of security that we need. The private companies, no matter what, are going to cut corners. When it comes to our national security, we should not live with those types of situations where they are going to cut corners.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Madam Speaker, the gentleman talks about the private security company that is responsible for the situation in Chicago. That same company is responsible for the security at the Columbus, Ohio, airport which I flew out of this morning. While I was standing in line waiting to get on the airplane, there was a lady who started talking about her frustration. She knew I was a Member of Congress, and she said we need to federalize these workers. Who can I write to and express my opinion. I shared with her some names that she could contact.

Then she told me this story. She said when I came to the Columbus, Ohio, airport, and I am a quilter, I went through security and after I went through security, I realized I had a large pair of scissors and what she described as a rotary blade cutter. She got through security and realized she had these scissors and blade. She said they were valuable to me, and I knew if I was caught with them, they probably would take them away, so she went back through security and took them to her car and left them in her car and then came back to the airport. She said I am furious I was able to get through security this morning with those scissors on me.

Madam Speaker, it is happening over and over and over. This one particular company, the Argenbright company, seems to be very, very lax in the expectations they have for their employees, apparently for the training they provide; and certainly they are very lax with the supervision. Otherwise, these multiple incidents would not happen.

It is a dangerous situation. Some of my colleagues have expressed that they think I ought not to say that flying is not safe. So I will say it this way: flying still has a risk attached to it. Is that risk less than it was before September 11? Perhaps. In some cases it may be much, much less. But the fact is that people have a right to accurate information. The American traveling public has a right to know what kind of security exists before they choose to get on an airplane and fly, especially if they are going to put their family members at risk. We are trying to inform the public, and the public is the one that will ultimately force this Congress to do the right thing and force the airlines to do the right thing. Until they feel safe, they will not return to the airlines as they have in the past.