The GAO report specifically examined the Corps' economic justification for the Delaware River channel deepening project. It found ''miscalculations, invalid assumptions and outdated information'' led the Corps to overestimate the project benefits by over 300 percent. It found that the Corps had violated basic economic principles in its economic feasibility studies, projecting benefits of over $40 million a year, when, in fact, the GAO found the benefits would be approximately one-third of that amount.

According to the GAO, the Corps had ''misapplied commodity growth rate projections, miscalculated trade route distances, and continued to include benefits for some import and export traffic that has declined dramatically over the last decade.''

One of the most egregious examples of bad economics in the report found that the Corps assumed the same one-way distance for each of several trade routes, including the distance from Pennsylvania to Australia, to South America, Europe and the Mediterranean.

The Corps is supposed to have a system of controls in place to catch these errors. Unfortunately, the GAO report concluded that the Corps' quality control system was ''ineffective in identifying significant errors and analytical problems.''

In order to restore the public confidence in the Corps, we need to ensure that other Corps projects around the country do not suffer from the same economic errors. It is clear that the system currently in place is not functioning correctly if it failed to catch such errors as the Delaware project's. That is why I am working with my colleagues in the Corps Reform Caucus to propose a system of independent peer review for Corps projects. Many of the mistakes identified by the GAO report could have been identified and remedied by independent peer review.

This process that my colleagues in the House and the Senate and I are proposing would not lengthen the Corps' investigation and construction process. Indeed, contrary to the claims of some critics, a streamlined review process could be applied to Corps projects around the country that meet certain criteria, actually speeding up the study and construction progress.

Take the Delaware River project, for example. It has been studied for 10 years, since 1992. Now the GAO is recommending after a decade that the Corps prepare a new and comprehensive economic analysis of the project's costs and benefits, address uncertainties, engage an external independent party to review the economic analysis, and then resubmit that to Congress. This extra review could take years to complete and could have been avoided entirely with independent peer review.

The Army Corps of Engineers has made enormous contributions to our Nation's history, to its infrastructure development, and continues to play an essential role in water resources management. However, as the GAO report pointed out, this is one of several incidents that have eroded the public's trust in this planning process.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to make sure that all the Corps projects are economically justified and based on sound environmental science. Currently our Subcommittee on Water Resources of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure is working on the reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act, which directs these Corps operations. This is a timely opportunity to develop legislative language to achieve these reforms.

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

ISSUES CONCERNING HOMELAND SECURITY DEPARTMENT

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

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the President's homeland security bill was delivered today. I am on two committees that have been considering homeland security, so I particularly welcome the President's work. Some of us have been there for over a year now, even a year before September 11.

All or parts of some agencies are, of course, to go together in a new department. When I say ''all or parts,'' I am indicating simply one of the details to be decided. The devil may be in the details, but so are the angels.

I would like to tease out three issues that I think can be dealt with if we look them squarely in the face and understand they should not be barriers.

First, there is the unfortunate issue of silence or delay on Civil Service protection for the thousands of workers that would be coming. We could begin by, it seems to me, conceding that wholesale denial of Civil Service status would create an unnecessary issue and would be very unfortunate.

We are talking about people who do many different kinds of things, most of them not related to anything that could remotely be considered the Nation's security. The mantra will be, ''Hey, let's decide all of that later.'' That creates needless uncertainty and opposition to this bill. Most of these employees will be doing what they have always been doing. The few who will be handling truly confidential information should be treated accordingly.

We must not let homeland security become like the use of other overbroad terms, like ''executive privilege'' or ''national security.'' There ought to be a presumption in favor of Civil Service status for these employees. If you can overcome it, that is one thing. Let us not begin by saying let us strip these workers of their Civil Service status.

Let me raise two other concerns, District of Columbia concerns. Wisely, the District and the President have understood the District of Columbia is the first responder for the entire Federal presence, the White House, the Congress, many Federal employees, 200,000 of them, all of those facilities.

In one of the bills I was able to place the District at the table so that the District can coordinate all that is necessary in order to be a first responder. In fact, the Justice Department Terrorism Task Force has been working just that closely with the District.

In the President's bill I will seek to insert such an understanding. The President, I think, already understands this. The President has asked our own Mayor, Tony Williams, to be a part of his Homeland Commission that he just formed this week, so I think he understands that the first responder has to be in on the details from the beginning.

Finally, there is the issue of where to locate the Department. The troubling word in the Washington Post today is about the possible location outside the District of Columbia. It was said this was only in the discussion phase. Let it stop there. I bring to the floor not only my own parochial concerns, that this is the Nation's Capital, and this is where important Cabinet agencies should be. There have executive orders for decades now indicating that. But I have a more important reason to offer.

The United States Government owns and controls 180 acres 3 miles from the Capitol with all the possibility for the setbacks. We probably only need 20 or 30 of those acres. It is the old Saint Elizabeth's Hospital campus, with some of the best views in Washington. FEMA is already looking at this land for its new headquarters. It is close in. It would not cost us any money. If you try to go somewhere outside of Washington, you will get wholesale opposition from those communities because they do not want their land off the tax rolls. Ours is already off. The Federal Government already owns it. The District is making use of the east campus for a new public safety communications facility. It makes sense for us to look very closely at the Saint Elizabeth's campus, this huge campus, if we are talking about placing another huge agency under the aegis of our own government.

These are matters that should not become issues. They will require study. They will mean that we have to take our time to get at the details, put them on the table and consider all the options, instead of jumping to conclusions about where to locate the agency or who to strip of his job protection.

Let us not put unnecessary issues on the table. There will be many hard