

to live in a country that honors its citizens for their spirit, their ideas, their individuality, and their courage.

I am so proud of Staff Sergeant Brian Ivers. Along with a grateful district, state, and nation, I applaud Brian Ivers for his courage and selfless dedication to duty. He has helped protect our democracy and kept our homeland safe by placing his life on the line.

TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY,
AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

SPEECH OF

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2989) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation and Treasury, and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes:

Mr. KIND. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the Flake/McGovern amendment to lift the United States travel ban to Cuba.

Over the past 40 years, our policy of isolation toward Cuba has been an arguable failure. The removal of the totalitarian regime in Cuba has not occurred—even a decade after the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba's primary financial sponsor. Positive movements toward political change have not occurred in Cuba over the past 40 years—even as an overwhelming number of former communist regimes have collapsed and embraced democratic principles. These factors beg the question of whether our current policy toward Cuba is the best course of action for the people of the United States and the people of Cuba. At the very least, these factors demand that we reexamine our current policy.

With the free exchange of ideas and words profoundly important in American culture, it seems contradictory that our government would deny its people the opportunity to peaceably spread this concept without unnecessary restrictions. If the central mission of American Foreign policy is to protect Americans and our interests abroad, how does restricting the ability of Americans to travel to Cuba, a nation deemed by the U.S. Department of Defense as not posing a "military threat to the U.S. or to any other countries in the region," justifiable?

I am concerned that Cuban civilians suffer under government oppression, and it is time to confront the fact that denying direct American tourism to Cuba has resulted in no beneficial change. The island of Cuba is only 90 miles away from the United States and is surrounded by nations that embrace democracy. Positive steps to bring American ideas and words to Cuba are the right course of action, and I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY,
AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2989) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation and Treasury, and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes:

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Chairman, today, as we consider the FY04 appropriations bill for the Departments of Transportation and Treasury, I find myself facing a familiar dilemma. So often during consideration of appropriations bills, I, as I'm sure many of my colleagues do as well, face difficult choices when voting on final passage. Because appropriations bills often include so many provisions, there are always positives and negatives. It is the nature of appropriations bills that we are forced to determine whether or not the good outweighs the bad.

As we prepare to vote on final passage of this bill, a similar assessment has to be made. I am deeply disappointed in many parts of this bill, most notably the less than minimal funding for Amtrak. However, because the bill also has very important funding for New Mexico and the Nation, I will be voting in favor of passage. I cannot let the perfect—which this bill clearly is not—be the enemy of the good—which this bill is.

Before I do cast my vote, I would like to voice my displeasure with both the funding provided for Amtrak, and also for the flawed process. Not surprisingly, the Rules Committee has once again stifled debate by not allowing Mr. OLVER to offer his amendment to increase Amtrak funding by \$500 million. The \$900 million included in the bill is insufficient to ensure the solvency of an essential element of our national transportation network. Should Amtrak be unable to continue its important service, not only would our transportation system be severely weakened, but many communities that heavily rely on Amtrak and its passengers for economic sustainability would be devastated. Many communities in New Mexico are heavily reliant on Amtrak for their economic well-being, and they would badly struggle without it.

However, as I said earlier, there are often many positives along with the negatives in an appropriations bill, and this bill is no exception. Overall, the FY04 Appropriations bill before us provides a 3 percent increase over last years bill, and provides 4 percent more funding than the administration proposed. In addition, the bill provides \$34.6 billion in total highway funding, 7 percent more than current funding and 14 percent more than requested. The bill also provides \$7.2 billion for mass transit programs and \$500 million for election reform activities authorized by the 2002 Federal election standards overhaul law.

I strongly support these provisions and recognize how important the funding provided in this bill is for investment in the Nation's highway, transit and aviation programs, which are all so critical to our safety and homeland secu-

ity efforts, as well as to economic development. Therefore, I support this legislation. However, I will vote in support of this bill with the strong hope that the insufficient Amtrak funding will be addressed in conference.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TAMMY BALDWIN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 10, 2003

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall 456, final passage of H.R. 2861, the FY04 VA—HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations bill, I was recorded as voting "yea." I oppose this bill and intended to vote "nay." This bill significantly underfunds veterans' health care. Our veterans' health care system is in crisis with an average of 200,000 veterans waiting six months or more for an appointment at Veterans Administration hospitals. The funding in this bill is clearly inadequate to meet the needs of our veterans. We must deliver the quality health care that was promised to those who have served to protect American security around the world.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOE KNOLLENBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 10, 2003

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, on September 9, 2003, I was unavoidably absent and missed rollcall vote Nos. 481–488. For the record, had I been present, I would have voted: No. 481, "no"; No. 482, "no"; No. 483, "no"; No. 484, "no"; No. 485, "no"; No. 486, "no"; No. 487, "no"; and No. 488, "no".

CONGRATULATING 137TH SPACE
WARNING SQUADRON

HON. MARILYN N. MUSGRAVE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 10, 2003

Mrs. MUSGRAVE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a truly outstanding part of this nation's defense—the 137th Space Warning Squadron based in Greeley, Colorado. For the second time in three years (an unequaled achievement), that unit has won the Distinguished Mission Support Plaque given by the National Guard Association of the United States.

This national award is given to only five outstanding units throughout all the Guard both Army and Air.

In addition to Colonel William Hudson, I would like to recognize the leadership at the 137th of Major Daniel Salgado and Major David Simmons for their outstanding work, as well as Brigadier General Mike Edwards (at the 140th Wing, Buckley AFB) and Major General Mason Whitney (the Colorado Adjutant General). The award shows the outstanding ability, competence, and potential of our Colorado Guardsmen at the Greeley location.

Additionally, the 137th in 2002 received many accolades for inspections, conversions,