Mr. Speaker, I was absent for votes on Monday, October 20, 2003, due to a scheduling conflict in my district. Had I been present, I would have cast my votes as follows:


Mr. HOFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I was absent for votes on Monday, October 20, 2003, due to a scheduling conflict in my district. Had I been present, I would have cast my votes as follows:


Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, public safety agencies all across our nation are charged with ensuring the security of our critical infrastructures and the safety of our citizens and their communities. September 11 served to highlight how critical it is that our public safety agencies have the funding, spectrum, and equipment that they need to communicate with each other if they are to fulfill their mission.

The Federal Government has called upon our states and localities to be ever more vigilant and prepared against possible acts of terrorism.

Yet, as hearings in Congress and numerous reports have shown, our public safety agencies continue to lack the ability to communicate with each other and interjurisdictionally. Firefighters cannot talk to police, local police cannot talk to state police, and so on and so on.

We expect our public safety agencies to act with haste and urgency to meet all of our needs and homeland security goals. Therefore, we must provide them with the tools they need to assist us. It is critical to fund radio equipment and technology so that they can talk to each other and be effective responders.

It is for this reason, that along with my colleagues VITO FOSSIELLA and EDWARD ENGEL, I am introducing today the Public Safety Interoperability Implementation Act to address this urgent need.

Our bill looks at both the short term and long term funding needs that face our public safety agencies. We set up a Public Safety Communications Trust Fund in the U.S. Treasury, to be administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). While the program will be administered with collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security, we believe NTIA should take the lead.

The Department of Homeland Security has shown itself to be still sluggish in responding to the needs of our nation. We cannot afford to waste more time, money, or red tape. NTIA, an agency well familiar with telecommunications and information technology issues, will be better able to address the communications problems that exist and expeditiously move our nation’s public safety agencies into state-of-the-art communications.

In the short term, the Public Safety Communications Trust Fund it will be funded by a 3-year grant program funded through the traditional appropriations cycle, authorizing up to $500 million a year, so that grants may be provided to implement interoperability.

In the long run, the funding for the trust fund will come from the sales of spectra conducted by the Federal Communications Commission. Our bill dedicates 50 percent of net revenue from future spectrum auctions to the trust fund.

Grants will be allocated to eligible entities to achieve interoperability, with multyear grants to develop long term plans without having to worry about funding from one year to the next. Preference will be given to those applicants that present