

manner and moved people along in a very rapid manner. So in the event that we do have a catastrophe, many lives would be saved; and we greatly appreciate that.

I also want to say as a side note, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of times we treat these Capitol Police as furniture. Because they are so good at their job, we often do not notice them. I would hope that Members of the House and employees of the House would congratulate each and every officer that they may come across over the next few days and thank them for the good job that they have done. They deserve it. We appreciate their protection, and we appreciate their professionalism.

Mr. Speaker, I feel much safer in the hands of the Capitol Police today than I did yesterday, and I greatly appreciate them.

I also have to point out that there are Capitol Police that are stationed in this building even in the event of a catastrophe, and they showed great courage to stand their posts, knowing that something bad may happen to this building or the office buildings. They do not leave the building. That is incredible courage that we should honor, and we appreciate that courage and that honor. You have to extend that to their families, because their families also know that they are standing in this building with an eventual catastrophe coming and standing their posts like the courageous men and women that they are.

So we greatly appreciate what they have done, the way they have protected the buildings and, most importantly, the people that work in these buildings. You just cannot say enough for how the House appreciates their service.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAY. I yield to the gentleman from California, the distinguished minority leader.

□ 1400

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to sing the praises of our Capitol Police and the Sergeant at Arms Mr. Livingood for the expeditious manner in which the Capitol was evacuated earlier today. Thank heavens it was not necessary; better safe than sorry.

But I think that the evacuation took place with dignity in record time and with respect for all in the Capitol, not only the Members of Congress but, very importantly, the tourists who are here, our visitors, the press who covers us, our employees who work here in the Capitol and the office buildings and, of course, the Capitol Police.

Thank you to the Capitol Police. Because of you, Americans or people visiting from overseas can come to this Capitol because of your courage with the confidence that they will be safe. Because of you, this evacuation was conducted in a manner of full cooperation from all who participated. Because of their confidence in you, when you

gave the signal, everyone moved exactly the way you wanted them to.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to add my appreciation to our national security apparatus and all that that involves, for having those airplanes in the air immediately to escort that Cessna to another place. We do not know the full story about it, or I do not anyway, yet, but I do think that they are to be commended for the speed with which they made us safe.

This Capitol is a symbol of freedom throughout the world. And today, I think that the balance between freedom and security was well-demonstrated, and certainly that was because, again, of the professionalism, as our colleague said, and the courage of the Capitol Police, Mr. Livingood and our national security apparatus.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I know that the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT) shares our views; I do not know if he can even speak from the chair, but I have heard the gentleman express his appreciation individually and personally to them, too, and I want to add my voice to that.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I appreciate the words of the Minority Leader, and she is absolutely right on. I just would finish by saying, people need to realize, because there are already critics on television, it is amazing; but people need to realize that very serious decisions have to be made in times like these: A decision to scramble the jets, a decision to shoot the flares, a decision to shoot the plane down or not and a decision to evacuate the building when that plane is only 3 to 4 minutes away from this building. Those are very critical decisions that have to be made, and we appreciate the people that have made those decisions and made them properly and protected the lives and property of the Capitol.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1279 to be considered shortly.

The SPEAKER. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

GANG DETERRENCE AND COMMUNITY PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to House Resolution 268 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1279.

□ 1403

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the

consideration of the bill (H.R. 1279) to amend title 18, United States Code, to reduce violent gang crime and protect law-abiding citizens and communities from violent criminals, and for other purposes, with Mrs. MILLER of Michigan in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER).

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 1279, the Gang Deterrence and Community Protection Act of 2005. This bill is a forward-looking and comprehensive approach to a growing national threat: violent and vicious criminal gangs in our communities.

According to the last National Youth Gang Survey, there are now between 750,000 and 850,000 gang members in our country. Every city in the country with a population of 250,000 or more has reported gang activity. There are over 25,000 gangs in more than 3,000 jurisdictions in the United States.

Criminal gangs are no longer just a local problem. In recent years, gangs have become nationally-organized criminal syndicates. They are disciplined criminal enterprises with leaders, managers and employees, with training and structured associations, many of which are now international in scope. They are dedicated to enriching themselves through criminal activity and terrorizing our communities. The law-abiding public and State and local law enforcement have sent us a strong message: Act now and stop the scourge of violence in our communities.

This legislation has four broad and significant purposes. First, the bill authorizes the creation of anti-gang task forces that will bring together Federal, State and local law enforcement to conduct complex and significant gang prosecutions and provide a national infrastructure for the sharing of gang information nationwide. Second, the bill creates a new gang crime statute, akin to the RICO statute, that addresses specific techniques and criminal strategies used by the gangs. Third, the bill increases penalties and clarifies several existing statutes for crimes typically committed by gangs. Fourth, the bill adopts a limited measure to permit Federal prosecutors to charge 16- and 17-year-olds in Federal court without going through a lengthy and outdated transfer procedure. Current law has hindered law enforcement efforts to incapacitate violent 16- and 17-year-old gang members in aggravated crimes of violence.

I would like to underscore one important aspect of this bill. It adopts new