of these measures is necessary to stem the decline in recruiting and retention among our Armed Forces.

This legislation also makes good on our obligations to provide for the families of those who make the ultimate sacrifice for their country. It increases the death gratuity to $100,000, allows dependents of deceased servicemembers to continue receiving housing benfits for one year, and expands travel authorizations for families of hospitalized servicemembers. This is the right thing to do, and I strongly support these provisions.

The bill also contains an important provision requested by myself and several of my colleagues regarding the Marine One helicopter program. It ensures that the Navy will not procure the helicopter until it can certify that its design is essentially complete. In doing so, this provision ensures this program does not waste taxpayer dollars in the rush to field the President's helicopter.

Unfortunately, there are other provisions in this bill that I believe are not in the best interests of the American people or our national security.

First, over the objections of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it restricts the role of women in combat. Congress ought to charge the military with the responsibility to move people into jobs and positions based on merit. But excluding women from combat effectively creates two classes of servicemember, which is both bad for morale and may ultimately limit the ability of women to receive promotions in the future. Regrettably, the military already suffers from a case of not having enough women in senior positions, and this bill threatens to make that problem worse, not better.

And this bill misses two real opportunities to make a tangible difference in the lives of the men and women of our Armed Services and their families. Firstly, it does nothing to expand the availability of health care to members of the Reserves and their families, even though there are more than 100,000 Reservists and National Guardsmen currently on the front lines of Iraq, Afghanistan and around the world.

And incredibly, this bill does nothing about the military families tax and the disabled veterans tax. At a time when Congress has repealed the tax on inherited wealth—the estate tax—it is unconscionable that we would continue to tax those who have become disabled in service to their country and the survivors benefits of those killed in combat. To my mind, that is the real ''death tax,'' Mr. Speaker—taxing the families of those whose loved ones gave their lives and their livelihoods to this great country of ours. They deserve better.

Of course, the alternative to the bill is delay. And we cannot afford to put off the much-deserved pay raise for our troops in this bill or the purchase of new equipment that they so desperately need. Because we have an obligation to act now, I support the bill. But it is my hope that Congress will address these important issues—and soon.

RECOGNIZING 57TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE OF STATE OF ISRAEL

SPEECH OF

HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 23, 2005

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 57th Anniversary of Israel's Independence Day.

Having long been the victims of discrimination and persecution, and fresh from the unimaginable horror of the Holocaust, the Jewish people of the world were successful in establishing an independent state in May of 1948. Thanks to their heroic efforts, Israel was born as a pluralistic democracy that promotes the values of liberty for all of its citizens. Fifty-seven years later, Israel continues to shine as a beacon of hope in a region too often blighted by oppressive and dictatorial regimes.

Despite Israel's desire for a peaceable existence, its citizens have been the target of violence since the state's inception. These attacks have come from neighboring states, resulting in multiple wars, and from the coordinated efforts of terrorists. Innocent Israeli's have been targeted while going about their daily lives, often during activities as routine as boarding a bus or sitting in an outdoor café.

Yet, despite the recurring waves of terror, the Israeli people have managed not just to maintain their independence, but also to thrive as a society. Israelis find themselves at the leading edge of innovation in the scientific and academic fields. The industrious Israeli people transformed an arid landscape into a model green space dotted with cities rich in diversity and culture. This resilience and vibrancy is a credit to Israel's open system of government, a system that respects and promotes civil rights, free expression, and genuine democratic elections.

I am hopeful that a lasting peace in this troubled region can be reached. However, this cannot come at the expense of Israel's security. I will continue to demand that the Palestinian Authority renounce, immediately and completely, all forms of terrorism.

On this day of independence, Yom Ha'Atzmaut, the United States stands proudly with Israel and remembers the sacrifices made by her founders. In addition, we honor the soldiers and ordinary citizens who have died in defense of freedom. The U.S. takes great pride in our alliance with Israel, and we find great strength in our moral and philosophical ties, as well as our economic and military partnerships. We will continue to act jointly with Israel to preserve her status as a secure Jewish state and a model of democracy for the whole of the Middle East.

I urge my colleagues to support this concurrent resolution.

PROVIDING FOR THE CONVEYANCE OF CERTAIN PUBLIC LAND IN CLARK COUNTY, NEVADA, FOR USE AS A HELIPORT

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN L. MICA

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 23, 2005

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 849 would transfer certain land, currently within the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, to Clark County, Nevada. The land is to be used as a heliport for commercial helicopter air tours.

The transfer would only take place if certain conditions on the use of the heliport are met by Clark County.

The first condition is that the County must impose and collect a per passenger ''conservation fee'' of $3.00 for each passenger of a helicopter tour that passes over any portion of the Conservation Area.

The second condition requires the County to ensure that any helicopter tour originating or concluding at the heliport traveling over the Conservation Area fly on a certain flight path and at a specified altitude except for safety reasons.

For purposes of clarity, the conditions set forth in H.R. 849 are on the transfer of the land and should the County fail to fulfill the conditions; the land would either not be transferred or if already transferred would revert back to the United States.

Let us look at each of the conditions on the transfer of the land to Clark County.

The first condition, that the County impose and collect a per passenger fee, is problematic. Elsewhere in law, States or political subdivisions of States are prohibited from levying or collecting a ''tax, fee, or charge . . . exclusively upon any business located a commercial service airport [which includes heliports] . . . other than a tax, fee, or charge wholly utilized for airport or aeronautical purposes.''

Therefore, it seems that the County would be unable to fulfill the first condition of the land transfer as the fee would be imposed upon and collected from helicopter tour passengers for the management of cultural, wildlife and wilderness resources on public land in Nevada.

The second condition is also problematic. Again, this condition would require the County to ensure that certain flight paths and minimum flight altitudes are utilized by the helicopter tours.

It should be emphasized that this bill does not direct Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) action with regard to airspace management and control.

In fact, should the FAA determine that the flight path and minimum altitude requirements set forth in the bill are unsafe or otherwise operationally unwise, the County would have failed to meet a condition of the land transfer and the land would revert back to the United States.

To make this perfectly clear, only the FAA has the authority to manage and control the National Airspace. State, regional, county and other local government entities, not to mention other Federal departments and agencies, have no authority in this regard.

Thus, the second condition on the transfer of land to Clark County is clearly outside of the County's authority and control.