

We have some strong allies in that battle as evidenced above. There is more than abundant evidence here that despite all odds against it, the human spirit is a difficult, if not impossible, flame to snuff out. Hope is but a small thing on show this day when compared to the many triumphs and remarkable victories we celebrate. The courage shown every day by those with disabilities is contagious and their successes empower all of us to be better individuals, better community members, and better Americans.

Please join with me in celebrating all of the organizations who work to raise awareness about the dedicated and hard-working Americans who are blind or have other significant disabilities who provide quality products and services at fair market prices to the Federal government every day.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL
TRANSPORTATION SAFETY
BOARD INTERIM SAFETY REC-
COMMENDATIONS ACT OF 2009

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, October 29, 2009

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, today I rise to introduce the National Transportation Safety Board Interim Safety Recommendations Act of 2009, joined by regional Members, including House Majority Leader STENY HOYER, D-MD, FRANK WOLF, R-VA, JIM MORAN, D-VA, CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, D-MD, DONNA EDWARDS, D-MD, and GERALD CONNOLLY, D-VA, as original co-sponsors. Our bill will clarify that the National Transportation Safety Board, NTSB, may, and should, offer interim safety recommendations to state and local transportation authorities.

On June 22, 2009, two Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, WMATA, trains collided near the Fort Totten station here in the Nation's capital. This collision was devastating for this region and for the Nation's transit systems, as nine regional residents died, seven from the Nation's capital. On Metro everyday, in the national capital region, Members of Congress and their staff and millions of other Federal employees of every rank form the majority of Metro's week day riders. Millions of tourists, people who work in every sector and school children are regular riders. The collision has had nation-wide consequences. On September 22, even before its Metro study was complete, the NTSB issued nine nation-wide safety recommendations to address concerns about the safety of train control systems that use audio frequency track circuits, like those that may have contributed to the June 22 train collision here. We believe that, in turn, low-cost, recommendations were in order that might save lives.

The NTSB has been particularly vigilant in quickly reporting defects and operational problems, to encourage remediation even before its final reports. Long before the June 22 collision, in 1996, NTSB had recommended to WMATA that it replace or retrofit its older 1970's 1000 series train cars after a train overran a station platform, striking a standing, unoccupied train, and killing the driver of the striking train. The NTSB renewed this recommendation to replace or refurbish the older cars following the roll back accident of a train

car in the Woodley Park Metro station in 2004, as it should have. The NTSB is not prohibited by statute from making interim recommendations for corrective actions, but low cost recommendations of the kind made thereafter were not made after any of the Metro accidents. This bill clarifies that the NTSB does have such authority.

While the reason for the June 22 crash has not yet been determined, it was evident that the striking car, which was an older 1000 series train car, was significantly more damaged than the struck car, which was a newer 6000 series car. In fact, all of the fatalities were from the 1000 series car. Following the collision, the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689 suggested that WMATA put the 1000 series cars between the newer, more crash-worthy 6000 series cars.

Unfortunately, without the regulatory authority established by this bill we have introduced, there have been no tests of crash worthiness either of the newer 6000 series cars or of the older 1000 series. However, the evidence from the crash suggests that 40 year old cars may be more dangerous as lead and rear cars. The NTSB did not disagree with this interim step at a Congressional hearing in July, but it never recommended this, or any other action, except action that is so costly that it will not occur.

It is a well known and frustrating fact that, for years, Metro has tried to convince Congress and the local jurisdictions to fund replacements for the old 1000 series cars and only this year, after the tragic collision, has Congress appropriated the first \$150 million of the \$1.5 billion authorized first time in 2007. The 1000 series cars were only 300 of Metro's 1,100-car fleet, but replacing those cars will cost \$600 million and take at least five years of combined federal and local area payments. Moreover, the cost of gas at the pump has so driven up Metro ridership, that it cannot simply cut its fleet by 300 cars. Congress and members of our regional delegation had been working long before the collision to get from Congress the \$1.5 billion that has now been authorized for WMATA's urgent capital and preventive maintenance needs, including new cars. While we have finally been successful in getting the first \$150 million, it will take years to fund these replacements, not to mention other problems such as the circuit signals that NTSB has already found may be implicated. Recommendations short of multimillion dollar upgrades and replacements can save lives. This bill requires the NTSB to specifically consider recommending interim recommendations where appropriate, especially when a transit agency has not secured funds to meet the costly permanent recommendations.

Madam Speaker, I ask that the House pass this bill.

HONORING BENJAMIN P. LATHROP
UPON HIS RETIREMENT AS THE
MAYOR OF NORWICH, CT

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, October 29, 2009

Mr. COURTNEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mayor Benjamin P. Lathrop who is retiring after years of service to the City

of Norwich, Connecticut. I rise to recognize him on his retirement after 4 years of service as Mayor, and over a decade of service to the community as a whole.

Ben has dedicated his life to public service, and is a veteran of the Air Force who served our nation during the Vietnam War. He has served as Mayor of Norwich since 2005 and previously on the Norwich City Council from 1997, the final two terms as President Pro-Tem. A perpetually enthusiastic booster for the city, Ben's good cheer, kindness, and dedication have helped him unite the people of Norwich and set the stage for further progress in the years to come.

Ben founded both the Mayor's Cup Challenge and the Norwich Ambassador Program. He has volunteered in community groups such as the American Cancer Society and the March of Dimes, and as a mentor at the Norwich Public Schools and the Greeneville School. Ben has served on many of Norwich's boards and commissions, notably as a member of both the Greater Norwich Area and Eastern Connecticut Chambers of Commerce.

We will honor his service on November 19 with a dinner, the proceeds of which will benefit Hospice of Southeastern Connecticut and Thames Valley Council for Community Action Inc.

Ben's dedication as a citizen of Norwich, and his passion as the city's Mayor will be remembered for years to come. He truly believes in the importance of community, and wears his love for his city on his sleeve. I ask all of my colleagues to join with me and my constituents in thanking Mayor Lathrop for his service and wishing him the best in his new endeavors.

SIGNING OF THE TURKEY/ARME-
NIA PROTOCOLS ON OCTOBER 10,
2009

HON. MICHAEL E. McMAHON

OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, October 29, 2009

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I rise with optimism about the latest progress towards normalization of relations between the Republics of Turkey and Armenia.

On October 10, Foreign Ministers Ahmet Davutoglu of Turkey and Edward Nalbandian of Armenia signed a notable agreement, taking both countries a step closer to establishing full diplomatic relations, opening borders and greatly enhancing economic, political and cultural cooperation.

These historic protocols are a critical measure that will bring about regional stability. There have been confidential talks for approximately a decade between the two nations, and this agreement is a testament to the willingness of Armenia and Turkey to look forward towards the common goal of open borders and normalization of relations. As a Member of NATO, and a frontline country bordering Iraq, Turkey is a critical ally of the United States. As we re-deploy our forces in Iraq, Turkey plays a key role. Turkey has been a major support of the new Iraqi government and plays a positive role of investment in Iraq and developing a civil society in Iraq. Closer relations between Turkey and Armenia will hopefully move Armenia into a more westward