SENATE PLAN NOT GOOD FOR PHYSICIANS, PATIENTS, OR AMERICA

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of doctors around the country.

As a physician, and now a legislator, I am personally devastated at the way our government continues to treat those who care for America's patients, particularly those who care for America's seniors.

Physicians have staff to pay, electricity bills, building leases, and numerous other costs associated with running a practice. The 2-month patch that the Senate sent back to us as part of the payroll tax package does not provide doctors and their practices with the stability that they need to do their job—caring for America's seniors.

At a time when American businesses need certainty, Congress gives them a brief, unpredictable, and unreliable timeline. Two months of tax payment relief is just another short-term fix, and it's simply not good enough. Physicians deserve better. Patients deserve better. The American people deserve better.

I will vote ''no'' on the Senate bill and urge my colleagues to do the same. Then let's come back with a policy that will, for heaven's sakes, at least take us through the year ahead.

SENATE PLAN IS IRRESPONSIBLE

(Mr. GIBBS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, the President has said it would be inexcusable not to extend the payroll tax cut for a year. However, the Senate's plan merely extends the plan for just 60 days, instead of a full year extension, creating uncertainty for our job creators at a time when millions of Americans are out of work. It also creates more uncertainty about implementing the plans, as we just learned today from the National Payroll Reporting Consortium.

American families deserve better than tax policy in 2-month increments. Last week, the House passed bipartisan legislation that extends the payroll tax cut for a full year, which would save American households an average of $1,000 a year. It also extends unemployment benefits and ensures senior citizens have access to their doctor by preventing a cut in Medicare reimbursement rates.

The worst part of the Senate plan is it puts new permanent fees on home mortgages to pay for 60 days of spending. This is an irresponsible and outrageous plan.

Our bill is offset by reasonable spending cuts, not new taxes on hardworking middle class home borrowers. A full-year plan with no new taxes is better than a 2-month spending spree which is nothing more than a political sideshow.

I guess the Senators were anxious to leave town and not finish their work. So I think we ought to call the Senate plan ''I'll be home for Christmas.''

PULSE OF TEXAS: HUMBLE RESIDENT

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, each week my neighbors take the time to make their opinions known through emails, phone calls, and letters. Today's Pulse of Texas is from a Federal employee in Humble, Texas, who recently wrote me with these wise observations:

''I am an 11-year Federal Government employee who works hard, and yet I'm on a 2–3 year pay freeze while unemployment benefits are extended over and over again. I live in a house that I purchased because I could afford it, yet my tax dollars go to bail out bad lenders and borrowers. My children go to colleges that they can afford. They all held jobs during college, and the oldest graduated with zero in student loan debt, yet now there is a plan to bail out those who went to schools above their means. Enough is enough.

''Please help break the cycle of entitlement and lack of personal responsibility that the government is fostering in this country.''

Mr. Speaker, America should be the land of freedom and opportunity, not more free stuff and entitlement.

And that's just the way it is.

□ 1610

WE NEED A 1-YEAR EXTENSION

(Mr. HECK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HECK. Mr. Speaker, Nevadans tell me time and time again that they want some certainty in their lives. They want their elected leaders to move beyond patchwork agreements every single month.

We passed a 1-year package, fully paid for, that extends unemployment benefits while providing a pathway back to work, keeps an extra $1,000 in the pockets of Nevada's struggling families, while protecting Social Security, and maintains access to health care for seniors and veterans by keeping doctors in Medicare.

Throughout the entire negotiation process, the American people were assured that they would receive an entire year of certainty. Then the Senate pulled the rug out from underneath them. Passing a 2-month extension now will put us right back here in February, when we should be using that time to debate job-creating ideas.

The House will stay here and work on this critical issue until it is resolved. The House agrees with the President and the American people: we need a 1-year extension. Anything else will be judged as a failure to do our job.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 4 of rule I, the following enrolled joint resolution was signed by the Speaker on Friday, December 16, 2011:

H.J. Res. 94, making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes,

and Saturday, December 17, 2011:

H.J. Res. 95, making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

IMPACT OF INSURED DEPOSITORY INSTITUTION FAILURES

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendments to the bill (H.R. 2056) to instruct the Inspector General of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation to study the impact of insured depository institution failures, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the Senate amendments is as follows:

Senate amendments:

On page 2, line 10, insert ''and'' after the semicolon.

On page 2, line 14, strike the semicolon and all that follows through line 19 and insert a period.

On page 4, strike line 14 and all that follows through page 5, line 5, and insert the following:

(2) LOSSES.—The significance of losses, including—

(A) the number of insured depository institutions that have been placed into receivership or conservatorship due to significant losses arising from loans for which all payments of principal, interest, and fees were current, according to the contractual terms of the loans;

(B) the impact of significant losses arising from loans for which all payments of principal, interest, and fees were current, according to the contractual terms of the loans, on the ability of insured depository institutions to raise additional capital;

(C) the effect of changes in the application of fair value accounting rules and other accounting standards, including the allowance for loan and lease loss methodology, on insured depository institutions, specifically the degree to which fair value accounting rules and other accounting standards have led to regulatory action against banks, including consent orders and closure of the institution; and

(D) whether field examiners are using appropriate appraisal procedures with respect to losses arising from loans for which all payments of principal, interest, and fees were current, according to the contractual terms of the loans, and whether the application of appraisals leads to immediate write downs on the value of the underlying asset.

On page 9, strike lines 15 through 19, and insert the following:

SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY.

The Inspector General of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the Comptroller General of the United States shall appear before the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives, not later than 150 days after the date of publication of the study required under this Act to discuss the outcomes and impact of Federal regulations on bank examinations and failures.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to add extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The bill before the House today is one that will provide much needed transparency to the FDIC, the Federal Reserve, and the OCC bank examination and resolution procedures.

First, I'd like to thank Chairman BACHUS and Subcommittee Chairwoman CAPITO, Ranking Member FRANK, and Subcommittee Ranking Member MALONEY for their support of H.R. 2056.

I'd also like to thank Senator CHAMBLISS and his staff for working to pass this bill on the Senate side. We are pleased to have an agreement with the other Chamber, which is highly unusual, and look forward to the outcome of this study.

As I have said many times before, there is no greater threat to our communities than bank failures, especially in my State of Georgia. Since the House last debated this bill in July, more banks in Georgia have been closed by the regulators. Now 73 banks are no longer serving their communities, and 22 banks alone have failed in 2011. Sadly, there are some communities in my district that are no longer served by a community bank.

I have often referenced the so-called ''ten over ten.'' These are the 10 States that have had more than 10 bank failures since 2008. These 10 unlucky States are Georgia, Florida, Illinois, California, Minnesota, Washington, Michigan, Nevada, Missouri and Arizona. In fact, six of the 10 States have had more than 10 percent of their banks fail in the last 3 years.

Mr. Speaker, the deeper I dig into the actions of the FDIC, the Fed and the OCC, the more concerned I am that our community banks are being regulated like public utilities rather than the job creators they are. H.R. 2056 is designed to cut through all the information to analyze the underlying fundamentals that continue to cause bank failures across this country.

The bill directs the FDIC Inspector General, in consultation with Treasury and the Federal Reserve IGs, to study the bank regulators' policies and practices with regard to loss share agreements, the fair application of regulatory capital standards, appraisals, the FDIC procedures for loan modifications, and the FDIC's handling of consent orders in cease and desist orders.

Further, the GAO also has a study in the bill to pursue those questions that the FDIC IG is unable to fully explore, such as the causes of the high number of bank failures. The impact of fair market value accounting has been a tremendous impact on our banks. Analysis of this impact of the failures on the community banks is especially needed. The overall effectiveness of loss share agreements for resolving banks is another thing that should be looked at very carefully.

The changes made by the Senate now ensure that the House Financial Services Committee and the Senate Banking Committee will have a hearing on this important study once it is issued.

I know this bill can never bring back the banks that have been lost in this crisis, but this bill and the study will provide Congress and the communities in my district and in other districts the information they need to ensure these failures never happen again.

I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This was a matter brought to me by the gentleman from Georgia who just spoke, and his Georgia colleague, the gentleman, Mr. SCOTT, who's a member of the Financial Services Committee, because of their understandable concern that the impact bank failures could have in the State they represent. I am very supportive.

I do want to make clear that nothing in the passage of this should be taken as a criticism of the FDIC. I have been very impressed with the leadership that was given to the FDIC by the recently retired chair, Sheila Bair, an appointee of President Bush, who was not only, I think, a first-rate chair at the FDIC, but gave us a great deal of her useful advice as we dealt with financial reform.

Bank failures are an unfortunate fact of life. We don't want them to be done unnecessarily, but neither can they be avoided. And, obviously, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the problem is in the business community. The right to fail, as we must remind ourselves, is part of the right to do business.

Having said that, I agree that what the FDIC does should be very transparent. And there is one aspect of what the FDIC does, not directly affected in this bill, but it's one that I think you have bipartisan agreement on in the committee, namely, and I will mention this because of its impact on our economy.

Understandably, bank examiners felt very sensitive to criticism that during the first part of this century they did not say no to enough loans. Loans were made in the mortgage field that shouldn't have been made, but you cannot retroactively go back and undo that by now being too tough and denying loans that should be made. And we have had a frustration on the part of members of our committee because we hear reports from people in the field in the community banks that bank examiners are being too tough.

No one wants to encourage imprudent lending, and the bank regulators tell us they agree with that; but I want to take every opportunity I can to remind the bank examiners that if they run into a situation in which no bank loan ever defaults, then they have been too tough because perfection is unattainable; and what we want to do is minimize the number of failures, but not move them out all together with a regime that will keep good loans from being made.

Having said that, to go back to this, it is appropriate that we get a full study of what happens when a bank fails; and we would ask the FDIC, when they are dealing with a failed bank, to take into account the needs of that particular community so that the disposition is one that has some sensitivity, and that is what I think is here.

I would just say, with regard to community banks, there was a continued recognition they're important. And I would just note in the financial reform bill signed last year, there were several provisions that were in there at the specific request of the community banks to help them. For example, one of the disadvantages community banks have felt is that people with large amounts to deposit would go to larger institutions because the limitation on deposit insurance would make them a little worried about going to a community bank.

□ 1620

We increase that number from $100,000 to $250,000, which is a significant advantage for community banks over the prior situation.

We also, for the first time in our history, change the way in which assessments are levied on banks for deposit insurance by introducing a risk factor. Before the bill was signed, every deposit was levied the same amount of insurance cost. Now there is a risk factor, which means that, dollar for dollar, the larger institutions which engage in riskier activities will be paying more than the smaller institutions.

We also extended, for a period—I would have liked to make it permanent; we didn't have the votes to do that—the transactional accounts.

So, yes, we are aware of the importance of community banks. And I would just repeat what I said at the first, because I have found, surprisingly, that not everybody listens to everything I say the first time I say it. This is not meant as a criticism of the FDIC. It is a recognition of the importance of this process being open and that people understand it.

So I say to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND), the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DAVID SCOTT), they were serving their constituents well by bringing this forward, and I hope the bill passes.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the chairwoman of the Financial Institutions Subcommittee of Financial Services, the gentlelady from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO).

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) for his leadership on this topic. He has been very dedicated to finding a solution here. He's worked with both sides of the aisle to find a way to get to the transparency and accountability that we need to have in terms of the examination process with our community banks, and I know he has been a tireless advocate for the communities in his district.

We actually went to Mr. WESTMORELAND's district, to Newnan, Georgia, and had a legislative hearing, and we learned about the bank closures and the financial examination procedures. Regulators were all there. Financial institutions were there. But I think the one thing that struck me more than anything in the course of the conversation was, when a bank fails—and a lot of times a community bank is the only community bank, local bank, local ownership, know the people down the street. When that bank fails, it really guts the community in a way that's hard to describe.

The larger banks are there; branches are there. But, still, losing that community anchor in a community bank can be a devastating thing, not just for individuals and families but also for the shop owner, the car dealer, the individual farmer, the folks that rely on the relationship banking that you get so spectacularly through a community bank. You lose that and, unfortunately, never to come back again in a lot of cases. I think that he's very concerned about that, and the people of Newnan, Georgia, in that district, are very concerned.

This study I think will help us to see what's really going on here, pull the curtain back, look at the practices and the examination procedures. I know that Senator LEVIN made some technical changes in this, and I would like to thank Mr. WESTMORELAND for working with the Senator.

Now, maybe that should be a life lesson for us here in terms of what's going on today, but I think we've reached a good consensus and a good agreement. We will hear the results of this study in our subcommittee and in our full committee to find out if we need to work with the regulators to change the regulations, make it so that what the banking institutions are hearing on the ground from their regulators is actually what is moving forward in their written reports that are sent to Washington, et cetera, et cetera.

One of the things that we are challenged with here in Congress certainly is creating jobs and creating a climate where banks are going to lend and creating a regulatory climate where banks are going to lend and want to lend to small businesses. This issue that Mr. WESTMORELAND has highlighted I think will help us with that and, hopefully, will undo some of the needless shackles that some of our examiners are placing on our smaller institutions or on our community banks to be able to get back lending, and then our small businesses and job creators can then get back to the business of creating jobs so we can grow our economy.

I would like to again thank everybody for their efforts, and I look forward to the passage of this bill.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage all of the Members to vote for this. As the chairlady mentioned, we had a field hearing in my district with my colleague Mr. SCOTT from Georgia, also. I think it was a very good field hearing. We had testimony from bankers and from borrowers about the different regulations that had interfered with their ability to actually do business and the difference in the capital requirements that the FDIC is putting on some of these banks.

We understand that the FDIC has to enforce the rules, but we do think there are some cases, as the ranking member mentioned, that there has been some overbearing on some loans that have been performing and are quality loans. So we think that this study will at least open some people's eyes to this and give us a better idea on maybe some of the things that we need to do to make sure that our community banks stay open.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. POSEY. Mr. Speaker, as an elected Representative from one of the states hardest hit by the financial crisis, I strongly support H.R. 2056, introduced by my colleague, Representative LYNN WESTMORELAND, which takes a closer look at how our Nation's small community banks are failing at the hands of overzealous regulators.

H.R. 2056 directs the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and the Government Accountability Office to study whether certain practices and procedures employed by federal regulators while examining financial institutions has played a role in a record number of community banks failing in recent years. Among these are important issues relating to loss-sharing agreements and examiners' policies relating to appraisals.

Among other things, the FDIC must determine whether financial institutions are being placed into receivership or conservatorship due to significant losses arising from loans for which all payments were made on time and the contractual terms of the loans have been met. With Congressman WESTMORELAND, I believe that a performing loan is exactly that—one that is performing according to the terms of the contract. A regulator should not be able to step in and interject an opinion on why the loan may not perform at some point in the future, and thus penalize a community bank.

The introduction and passage of this bill indicates that there is a real world problem here, one that deserves swift diagnosis and treatment. I have heard from bankers time and again that regulators have shifted away from considering objective evaluations of loan performance, such as borrower payment history, and looked instead to subjective opinions on whether a loan may experience difficulties in the future. No business can thrive in that kind of volatile environment. Community banks are struggling in Florida. To make matters worse, surviving banks are operating in fear of overzealous regulators and as a result, small businesses are finding it almost impossible to obtain the capital they need to expand and hire more workers. Community banks are the lifeblood of our local communities and are best positioned to help our economy recover if they are able to make loans, using reasonable underwriting standards, without being penalized by their examiners.

It has been shown that states with the highest number of bank failures also have the highest unemployment and foreclosure rates in the country. That being said, it will be difficult to realize a full national economic recovery without addressing the issue of why so many small banks are closing their doors and why so many of them are unable to make loans in their community. As Congress continues to work to see that our economy recovers, it is essential that we press regulators for answers to the issues raised in Representative WESTMORELAND's study.

No one wants to see a repeat of what transpired in 2008 and the effects that still linger on today. However, we must remember that small banks did not cause the financial crisis. Their business practices are by nature thorough and cautious. I urge my colleagues to take a serious look at the issues raised by Representative WESTMORELAND and join me in pressing financial regulators for answers.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendments to the bill, H.R. 2056.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

RISK-BASED SECURITY SCREENING FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES ACT

Mr. CRAVAACK. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 1801) to amend title 49, United States Code, to provide for expedited security screenings for members of the Armed Forces.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the Senate amendment is as follows:

Senate amendment:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Risk-Based Security Screening for Members of the Armed Forces Act''.

SEC. 2. SECURITY SCREENING FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 44903 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(m) SECURITY SCREENING FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Transportation Security Administration), in consultation with the Department of Defense, shall develop and implement a plan to provide expedited security screening services for a member of the armed forces, and, to the extent possible, any accompanying family member, if the member of the armed forces, while in uniform, presents documentation indicating official orders for air transportation departing from a primary airport (as defined in section 47102).

''(2) PROTOCOLS.—In developing the plan, the Assistant Secretary shall consider—

''(A) leveraging existing security screening models used to reduce passenger wait times;

''(B) establishing standard guidelines for the screening of military uniform items, including combat boots; and

''(C) incorporating any new screening protocols into an existing trusted passenger program, as established pursuant to section 109(a)(3) of the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (49 U.S.C. 114 note), or into the development of any new credential or system that incorporates biometric technology and other applicable technologies to verify the identity of individuals traveling in air transportation.

''(3) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this subsection shall affect the authority of the Assistant Secretary to require additional screening of a member of the armed forces if intelligence or law enforcement information indicates that additional screening is necessary.

''(4) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Assistant Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the implementation of the plan.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary shall implement the plan required by this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. CRAVAACK) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. RICHARDSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CRAVAACK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

Mr. CRAVAACK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today I rise in support of the Senate amendment to H.R. 1801.

H.R. 1801 represents a bipartisan, bicameral effort in honor of the members of our Armed Forces by transitioning to an expedited, intelligence-driven screening process for all U.S. soldiers at our Nation's airports.

Shortly after the House passed H.R. 1801 by a vote of 404–0, the Senate, with the support and leadership of Ranking Member KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON and Chairman JAY ROCKEFELLER, amended and passed H.R. 1801 by voice vote.

I have had time to review the Senate amendment, and, quite frankly, I think it improves the underlying bill. It requires coordination between TSA and the Department of Defense in establishing the expedited screening process and clarifies that the TSA Administrator retains the authority to require additional screening for a member of the Armed Forces should intelligence or law enforcement information raise any concerns.

In addition, the Senate amendment allows TSA to include accompanying military family members in the expedited screening process ''to the extent possible.''

Overall, the Senate amendment to H.R. 1801 improves the bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

In closing, I'd like to thank Transportation Security Committee Chairman MIKE ROGERS and Ranking Member SHEILA JACKSON LEE and Homeland Security Committee Chairman PETER KING and Ranking Member BENNIE THOMPSON for moving this legislation.

Additionally, I would like to recognize and thank Senators KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON and JAY ROCKEFELLER for their leadership in having this measure pass in the Senate.

I would also like to take some time to recognize some of the great staff on the House and Senate Homeland Security Committees, especially Mandy Bowers, Jennifer Arangio, Amanda Parikh, Steven Giaier, Nicole Smith, Jake Vreeburg, and Minnesota's Eighth Congressional District Legislative Director Paul Blocher and his staff for all they have done in this process.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Senate amendment to H.R. 1801, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

As a member of the Committee of Homeland Security and as an ardent supporter of the men and women of the armed services, I am pleased to return today as we're on the floor to consider the Senate amendment to H.R. 1801, the Risk-Based Security Screening for Members of the Armed Forces Act.

□ 1630

This legislation requires the Transportation Security Administration to develop a plan for providing expedited screening to our military personnel at airport security checkpoints.

As the gentleman from Minnesota just alluded to, the Senate amendment took a good bill and made it even better by expressly including new safeguards. Last Congress, on a bipartisan basis, an earlier version of this legislation was accepted as an amendment during the consideration of the Transportation Security Administration Authorization Act, which passed this House by 397–25, which was not acted upon by the Senate.

H.R. 1801 properly recognizes the preciousness of time—nothing more important than time—to the patriotic men and women serving in our armed services, but it does not compromise aviation security. Our troops help keep our country safe. While first ensuring safety, the least we can do is devise methods to help speed up the screening process for our troops who are in uniform and who are traveling on airplanes while on official duty.

Since 2001, there have been more than 2 million troops deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. As our military presence in Iraq winds down, more servicemembers will, thankfully, be coming home. We owe it to them and to all of our servicemembers to do all we can to smooth their travels so that they can get home and into the arms of their loving families. This legislation establishes adequate parameters that will ensure that our troops and their families, including the 236,963 military personnel in my home State of California, will be given the opportunity to board an aircraft in a security-approved expedited manner. If approved today, this legislation will go directly to the President for his signature.

With the enactment of H.R. 1801, we have the opportunity to show the country, despite all the acrimony that has been punctuated in this 112th Congress, we can accomplish good things for the American people when we focus on areas of common ground and when compromise is embraced. So I urge my colleagues to support this legislation with the Senate amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I am compelled to build upon this current debate of H.R. 1801 and use this opportunity to urge the Republican leadership to bring to the floor additional bipartisan, commonsense homeland security legislation. This is the only bill reported by the Committee on Homeland Security to be considered before the full House. There are a number of other Homeland Security bills on the Union Calendar that warrant consideration by the full House as well.

Among them is H.R. 1447, introduced by Ranking Member BENNIE THOMPSON.