

safety, security, and efficiency of civil aviation, and for overseeing the development of a national airports system.

One critical activity being performed by the FAA is modernization of the air traffic control (ATC) system. This process has been ongoing for 15 years, and will continue for many years into the future. During my tenure as Chairman of the Aviation Subcommittee, I have learned that the modernization program is at a critical juncture. We can no longer allow the program to continue the "stops and starts" of the past. Improvements must get on track, or the growing demand for air services combined with outdated equipment will soon bring gridlock and serious concerns about safety.

I am encouraged that the FAA is working with industry to put the ATC modernization program on track and develop a plan to deliver equipment, on time and on budget, that will ensure increased safety and efficiency for all Americans. This bill will help ensure that these very important efforts continue. The FAA must spare no effort over the next few years to modernize the ATC system, as airlines will also be spending a great deal of money to purchase and install the components needed in their aircraft to use these new systems. All of this needs to be done right, and done now, to ensure continued safety and efficiency in the aviation industry.

Another matter requiring immediate attention is the FAA's progress in dealing with the Year 2000 problem. This issue has far reaching safety and economic implications, and has already been the subject of many hearings in Congress. It is imperative that the FAA makes the most out of limited time and resources, and Congress must ensure that this is a top priority. The public is aware of the Year 2000 problem and must be reassured beyond any doubt that it will be possible to fly and, most importantly, to fly in complete safety, on January 1, 2000.

As I already mentioned, this bill contains numerous provisions designed to improve competition and service in the airline industry. The inclusion of these measures in the bill does not in any way mean that airline deregulation has been unsuccessful. The overall benefits of airline deregulation are clear: fares are down significantly and service options have increased.

Many of the benefits of deregulation can be attributed to the entry of new airlines into the marketplace. The low fare carriers have increased competition, and have enabled more people to fly than ever before. Air traffic has grown as a result, and all predictions are that it will continue to grow steadily over the next several years.

In spite of the success of deregulation, many believe that competition can be improved. The competition provisions in the Air Transportation Im-

provement Act would ease some of the federally-imposed barriers that remain in the deregulated environment. These barriers include the slot controls at four major airports and the perimeter rule at Reagan National Airport.

Although this legislation is a positive step forward for our national aviation system, one of my main priorities, which is not included in the Air Transportation Improvement Act, will be to push for an increase in the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) cap. We must address the widening infrastructure gap that threatens to hamstring our national aviation system. The independent National Civil Aviation Review Commission and the GAO also estimate that there is a backlog in airport improvements of approximately \$3 billion per year. To ensure that our infrastructure deficit can be met, we must look for innovative solutions such as a PFC increase which allow local control and responsibly for improving our national aviation system.

I look forward to working with Senators MCCAIN, HOLLINGS, and ROCKEFELLER to ensure that our common goals of providing a safe and secure aviation system for both commercial airlines and the general aviation community as well as providing adequate resources for the FAA to carry out this task are met.●

RECOGNITION OF BERNICE BARLOW

● Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable person from Saginaw, Michigan, Mrs. Bernice Barlow. Mrs. Barlow is leaving her position as president of the Saginaw branch of the NAACP after thirty years.

As president of the Saginaw NAACP, Bernice Barlow has been a powerful advocate for equality and civil rights. Although her tireless efforts on behalf of the NAACP are admirable in their own right, Mrs. Barlow has not confined her community service to the NAACP. She has also served with distinction in leadership roles with organizations like the Saginaw Education Association, the Tri-County Fair Housing Association and the Saginaw County Mental Health Board.

Despite her retirement from the presidency of the Saginaw NAACP, Bernice Barlow will continue her service to the people of Saginaw. Her husband, Charles, and her four children will surely be pleased to have more of her time, but I have no doubt that they will support her continuing efforts to ensure that equality and justice are recognized as the birthrights of every citizen.

Mr. President, I am confident that my colleagues will join me in congratulating Bernice Barlow as she steps down from her position as president of the Saginaw NAACP, and in

thanking her for her longstanding commitment to the people of the city of Saginaw.●

FOREIGN TRAVEL OF SENATOR ARLEN SPECTER

● Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, during the winter recess, I had the opportunity to travel from Dec. 12 through Dec. 31, 1998, to 13 countries in Europe, the Mideast and the Gulf. I flew over with President Clinton on Air Force One, spent the first several days in Israel essentially working with the President's schedule, and then pursued my own agenda when he returned to Washington. I believe it is worthwhile to share with my colleagues some of my impressions from that trip, which I am placing in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Jan. 19, 1999, the first day for statements in the 106th Congress.

ISRAEL

From December 12 through December 15, I traveled with President Clinton to the Middle East to encourage the advancement of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in the wake of the accords reached in October at Wye Plantation. Although somewhat overshadowed by the pending impeachment process, the President's trip was useful, I believe, in applying pressure to both sides to abide by their commitments toward further progress.

SYRIA

When President Clinton returned to Washington, I proceeded to Damascus, Syria, where I met with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, to examine the possibility of progress on the Israeli-Syrian track of the Mideast peace process. While I believe that progress between Israel and the Palestinians could be made with the resumption of a dialogue between Israel and Syria, the pending Israeli elections have rendered the prospect for that dialogue unlikely in the short run.

The big news while I talked with President Assad was the increasing tension between the United States and Iraq over the U.N. inspection of Iraq's weapons program. Because Syria shares a long border and cultural heritage—though certainly no great friendship—with Iraq, even the threat of military conflict between the U.S. and Baghdad produces immediate and tangible emotions among many Syrians.

That afternoon in December, the situation in Iraq seemed grave: the U.N. team had evacuated the country, and chief inspector Richard Butler was preparing to address the U.N. Security Council in an emergency session. I did not know that a strike was imminent, but President Assad and I speculated during our meeting on news reports concerning what the immediate future might hold.

Past midnight in Damascus, CNN carried live footage of anti-aircraft fire