ORDER FOR PRINTING OF S. 1344

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that S. 1344, the Patients' Bill of Rights Plus Act, as amended and passed by the Senate on July 15, 1999, be printed as a document of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXTENSION OF FUNDING LEVELS FOR AVIATION PROGRAMS

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 1467 introduced earlier today by Senator MCCAIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1467) to extend the funding levels for aviation programs for 60 days.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I rise in support of S. 1467. This bill will extend the Federal Aviation Administration's, FAA, Airport Improvement Program, AIP, for sixty days. It is critical that Congress complete the authorization for this program for this fiscal year. Otherwise, the FAA will be prohibited from issuing much-needed grants to airports in every state, regardless of whether or not funds have been appropriated. In fact, there are still nearly $300 million in unspent funds for the current fiscal year that cannot be spent because AIP authority expires on August 6.

If we do not act to reauthorize this program for at least the remainder of this fiscal year, we will cause harm to the transportation infrastructure of our country. AIP grants play a critical part in airport development. Without these grants, important safety, security, and capacity projects will be hampered throughout the country. Therefore, we must act swiftly.

The safety of the traveling public depends upon the continued flow of AIP monies. For example, airports use these funds to install instrument landing systems, which help guide airplanes to safe landings when visibility is impaired. AIP funds are also used for airport safety projects related to runway approach lighting; aircraft deicing equipment; snow removal equipment; repair of damaged runways; rescue and firefighting equipment; and for additional runway safety areas for aircraft that have trouble stopping after a landing. It is my understanding that AIP funds were used to construct an innovative “arrestor bed” at the end of a runway at New York's JFK Airport. A few months ago, that arrestor bed prevented a commuter plane from plunging into a day. It was credited with saving lives on that flight.

This bill will also extend the Aviation Insurance Program, which is commonly known as the War Risk Insurance Program. It provides insurance for commercial aircraft that are operating in high-risk areas, such as countries at war or on the verge of war. Commercial insurers will not usually provide coverage for such operations, which are often required to further U.S. foreign policy or national security objectives. For example, commercial airlines were needed to ferry troops and equipment to the Middle East for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. If War Risk Insurance had not been available, our troops may not have been adequately supported.

This extension will also give us more time to work on a more comprehensive aviation bill that is still desperately needed. We have been working hard to accommodate the concerns that many Senators have with respect to provisions in S. 82, the Air Transportation Improvement Act. I believe we can bring a bill to the floor that will require very little of the Senate’s time.

Mr. President, I urge all of my colleagues to support swift passage of this short-term extension of the AIP. If we fail to act, the FAA will not be able to address vital security and safety needs in every State in the Nation. We must reaffirm our commitment to providing the public with a safe and efficient air transportation system. This bill will help us meet that goal.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to this bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 1467) was read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 1467

Be in enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, ETC.

(a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

Section 48103 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by striking "$2,050,000,000 for the period beginning October 1, 1998 and ending August 6, 1999.‘‘ and inserting "$2,410,000,000 for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and $34,000,000 for the period beginning October 1, 1999, and ending October 5, 1999.‘‘

(b) OBLIGATIONAL AUTHORITY.—Section 47104(c) of such title is amended by striking "August 6, 1999,‘‘ and inserting "October 5, 1999.‘‘

(c) EXTENSION OF AVIATION INSURANCE PROGRAM.—Section 48110 of such title is amended by striking "August 6, 1999,‘‘ and inserting "October 5, 1999.‘‘

(d) AIRWAY FACILITIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.—Section 48101(a) of such title is amended by striking "August 6, 1999,‘‘ and inserting "October 5, 1999.‘‘