way to meet them. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting against this legislation.

AIR TRANSPORTATION SAFETY AND SYSTEM STABILIZATION ACT

SPREAD OF
HON. WILLIAM J. COYNE
OF PENNSYLVANIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, September 21, 2001

Mr. COYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2926, the Air Transportation Safety and System Stabilization Act when it was considered by the House of Representatives on September 21, 2001.

This bill would provide $5 billion in direct aid to the airlines for losses incurred as a result of the government-ordered shut-down of the nation's air travel industry, as well as $10 billion in loan guarantees. I oppose this legislation because I believe that it is incomplete. It fails to address several important and time-sensitive issues.

I oppose H.R. 2926 because this bill does nothing to help the tens of thousands of hard-working Americans who were laid off by the airlines and airline manufacturers in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. 78,000 airline employees and 30,000 employees of aircraft manufacturers have been or are going to be laid off. The workers who lost their jobs as a result of these terrorist attacks are also victims of the terrorists. While they were fortunate enough not to have lost their lives, they have lost their livelihoods through no fault of their own.

The airline workers who have lost their jobs will need continued health insurance coverage and job search and possibly retraining assistance. Unemployment benefits don't last very long, so time is of the essence. And while these employees can continue their existing health insurance coverage under COBRA, they will be responsible for the full cost of the premiums, which a family with the chief breadwinner out of work can find it difficult if not impossible to afford. Consequently, I believe that the federal government should provide premium assistance to the affected families.

This bill should contain provisions to help these unemployed individuals and their families. I think that it is unacceptable that Congress will act swiftly to help the airline companies while ignoring the injured employees of those companies. It is even more unacceptable in light of the fact that multi-million dollar severance packages are available to the Presidents and CEOs of the major airlines.

In addition, I oppose this legislation because it does nothing more than express the Congress's commitment to act expeditiously to strengthen airport security. It did absolutely nothing to actually improve airport security. I believe that improving security in airports and on airplanes should be our first and highest priority.

I am convinced that airport security can no longer be left to the airlines. Now that terrorist attacks on airliners have become a major national security threat, I support the assumption of responsibility for airport security.

Finally, I am concerned that the bill does not adequately address the liability issue. I believe that a little more time should be taken up through the liability issue and come up with a more equitable, comprehensive solution.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that these shortcomings should be addressed before the House passes H.R. 2926. Consequently, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the motion to recommit and in opposing this legislation in its current form. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.