over 100 acts of harassment or violence against Sikhs. A Sikh man was murdered in Mesa, Arizona on September 11, 2001, by a brick thrown from an airplane. The gunman left George and some of his employees bedridden. We demand that the man who killed it be prosecuted and punished until the fullest extent of the law.

As we speak, a Sikh man was shot in San Gabriel, California. A Pakistani Muslim who owned a grocery store was shot in Dallas. Another local Sikh, Sher Singh, was arrested by police in Rhode Island after the attack, but was released the next day. A couple of young Sikhs were attacked in Brooklyn, New York. Sikh businesses have been stoned and cars have been burned. An Egyptian Christian man was shot in San Gabriel, California. A Pakistani Muslim who owned a grocery store was shot in Dallas.

What a group of terrorists did Tuesday was a terrible crime and an act of war against America, but it was done by a group of individuals who are no more typical of their religion than Timothy McVeigh is typical of Christianity. Religions and religious communities are being targeted for violence, and this is unacceptable, especially in America.

Sikhs are not Muslims. We are not Hindus. Like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and any other religion, we are an independent, monotheistic religion with our own symbols. Among those are a turban and beard. That does not make us followers or associates of Osama bin Laden, yet we are being targeted for violence in the wake of the atrocities on Tuesday.

We appreciate the support of Congressmen Dan Burton, Edolphus Towns, and all our other friends in the Congress who condemned the acts of violence against the Sikhs and other minorities. Their statements in the Congressional Record are available here.

I call on Attorney General John Ashcroft to look into this nationwide pattern of violence and I urge the victims of these attacks to call their police departments and their local public officials. This is the best way to ensure that those who perpetrate this violence are appropriately punished. Let’s not let America descend to the level of those who attacked it.

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN
ALCEE L. HASTINGS
OF FLORIDA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, September 24, 2001

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, earlier today I received a call from George Mador. Mr. Mador is the President of L & M Aircraft Services and he called my office looking for help. L & M is a small aircraft maintenance company that operates a charter airlines transportation services and he called my office looking for help. L & M is now facing imminent bankruptcy and its seven employees, therefore, are facing certain unemployment. George told me that he did not want to get out of bed this morning because of the reality that he will have to lay off at least half of his staff by the end of the week as a result of zero income in the past two weeks. Last week’s paycheck left George and his three employees without a paycheck and L & M $500 in the hole. With no apparent income coming in this week, the future of L & M Airport Services and its seven employees are undoubtedly in jeopardy.

At the three international airports serving my district, Ft. Lauderdale/Hollywood, Palm Beach, and Miami, there are more than 300 small businesses just like L & M that are now on the verge of bankruptcy as a result of loss of income. In Miami-Dade County, the airline and aviation industry is the County’s primary economic engine, representing more than nine percent of the County’s total workforce. Thousands of employees have already or will lose their jobs, and hundreds of business will go under nationwide if Congress does not act today.

To help remedy some of the future hardships sure to be faced by hundreds of thousands of people in the coming days, weeks, and months, I am proud to introduce the Displaced Workers Relief Act of 2001. My bill serves as the companion bill to S. 1454, which was introduced in the Senate by Senator JEAN CARNahan of Missouri. It provides those who have lost their jobs in the wake of the attacks of September 11 with the ability to pay rent, put food on their table, buy school books for their children, while trying to live their lives even in these difficult times.

My bill extends unemployment benefits from 26 to 78 weeks, provides 26 weeks of unemployment insurance benefits for workers who would not otherwise qualify, extends Job Training Benefits from 52 to 78 weeks, and provides up to 78 weeks of federally subsidized COBRA premiums; and provides optional temporary Medicaid coverage for up to eighteen months to those workers without COBRA coverage. Under the Displaced Workers Relief Act of 2001, all airline and airport workers, including transit workers, as well as employees who work for airline suppliers, such as service employees and plane manufacturers, will be eligible to receive these needed benefits.

In the past two weeks, more than 100,000 airline employees have been laid off, and airline analysts suggest that as many as 250,000 additional layoffs in airline-related industries may shortly follow. Everywhere I look in this country, industries and business are hurting. Hotels are reporting record lows in occupancy levels; travel agencies are losing customers by the dozen; the cruise industry has come to a virtual standstill; and service industries dependent upon airlines are closing their doors as we speak. As these businesses suffer, Mr. Speaker, so do their employees, many of whom have become unemployed.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, last Friday evening, Congress missed a golden opportunity to assist American workers affected by this tragedy. Now, it is time for this body to recognize the responsibility it has to these hard working Americans and provide them with relief. The Displaced Workers Relief Act of 2001 is the vehicle which Congress can use to help these workers at a time that they need it most.