

And if that happens, it will be because this House has been negligent and derelict in its duty.

We owe this to the American people. They want it, and the only thing that is keeping it from happening is the leadership on that side of the aisle that refuses to allow this legislation to come to the floor for a vote.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. STRICKLAND. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I think the gentleman raises a very important point. You know, we have had to have a little bump in the road because of this anthrax issue to prevent us from working. But it is not anthrax that is keeping us from working, it is the poisonous special interests which have got the Republican leadership to refuse to allow the House to vote.

I will tell you, we are going to get over this anthrax thing. We are going to find a way to open our mail, a way to vote. If we do not get the Republican leadership to put this on the agenda, the House is not going to be working.

So I have confidence, we are going to get over the scare, but we have to get over the leadership decision to prevent us from voting.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time. My friend from Washington, and I took an amendment to the Committee on Rules this evening asking that this be made a part of the stimulus package. That request has been denied. This is just unconscionable.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman raised a very important point. We are not voting on airline security, yet we are voting on a stimulus package, yet the two industries that are most hurt, the airlines and tourism, is there anything in this so-called stimulus package that does anything to get our airlines flying better, any deductions, any support? Is there anything in that stimulus package for the airlines?

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, Not to my knowledge.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from characterizing actions of the Senate.

MUNICIPAL PREPARATIONS STRATEGIC RESPONSE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House on

the Municipal Preparations Strategic Response Act of 2001, H.R. 3161.

Mr. Speaker, I think it has become clear to a number of Members that September 11 has clearly changed the lives of all American citizens. And, as we reflect on the events of September 11, I do not think it is lost on the Members here about the tremendous heroic effort that was put forward on behalf of the victims of the World Trade Center, of the Pentagon, and those valiant people of Flight 93. But also not lost on the Members of this body and the other body was that it was not the FBI or the CIA or the FAA or the Armed Services that was first to respond to these tragic events of September 11.

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They are local firefighters, police, emergency medical teams, allied health professionals, hospitals. They are, in fact, our first line of defense.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the President for his appointment of Tom Ridge and the emphasis on homeland defense. What the Municipal Preparations Strategic Response Act of 2001 recognizes is that homeland defense begins at home, and it begins with those who are in the front lines, those that respond first.

The genesis for this bill comes from a series of meetings that a number of Members on both sides of the aisle have been conducting back in their home districts. In the process, what we have heard is that when it comes to the Federal budget with respect to dealing with terrorism, that of approximately \$8.9 billion that is appropriated, only a scant \$300 million makes it back out to our municipalities. The rest remains here in the beltway with Federal agencies.

The concern, of course, is that in our ability to deal with terrorist attacks, we must make sure that all of our frontline responders are well equipped, are well trained, and are well prepared. As important, as many municipalities and many States, as has the great State of California, have prepared for many natural disasters, there is much that we can learn from our local county and State government, and that should all be part of the bottom-up strategic planning that goes forward as Mr. Ridge takes over his most important office of Homeland Defense. But without appropriate funding, without making sure that the first-line responders have the kind of financial aid that they are going to need, this simply will not take place.

Mr. Speaker, I am joined this evening by several of my colleagues who have both conducted hearings and are co-authors of this legislation. Let me prevail first upon the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER), the ranking member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, who most recently this past week had one of these such meetings.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Connecticut for yielding, and I thank him very much for being the prime mover in this effort to make sure that our local community first-responders are fully engaged as this Nation prepares to deal with the threat of terrorism at the local level, and for coming up with legislation that recognizes the difficulty of doing this, but also provides the resources so that it can be done properly; so that, in fact, assessments can be made at the local level of exactly what those kinds of threats might be to our communities; so that there can be regional cooperation; so that the HAZMAT teams can work together, they can learn to share their resources and their knowledge and their training of their personnel and of their response plans; so that there can be a working together, both up and down the infrastructure of our local communities between police and fire, HAZMAT, public health, private health hospitals, people who are going to be called upon to respond to possibly decontaminate a significant number of citizens, or to help a local agency next to them respond with an attack that could take place there. This is not about getting overly dramatic, but it is recognizing that this is something the local communities have done for many years.

In California we have earthquake plans; we have flood plans; we have fire plans in some of our rural communities, trying to determine what the threat would be to these communities, how we can respond and whether or not the resources and the training and the personnel will be there. When we now overlay the threat of terrorism on many of these plans, we recognize that we have to go back to the drawing board.

I represent an area that has many, many petrochemical facilities in my congressional district, and we have many plans to deal with the communities for the releases or the explosions or the accidents that take place at these facilities from time to time to try and warn a community, to have a shelter in place, or to go to the hospitals or to have a warning system so that they can get immediate information. As many times as we have been through it, it does not always work the way it should.

In my meeting yesterday with the county sheriff, with the members of the board of supervisors, with the chiefs of police from the city of Richmond, the city of Martinez, from the Consolidated Fire District, from the HAZMAT personnel, from the people from Kaiser Permanente, the largest health care deliverer in my area, what became very clear was that they need additional resources to do the planning so that the resources will be in place if our communities need these kinds of responses.