

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, today is a glorious day for us. It is a glorious day for the American people because today we have reached a historic compromise and have finally addressed aviation security, a full 8 weeks after the tragic events of September 11.

We now have a victory for the American people, the flying public, and the flight crews that will be traveling during this upcoming holiday season. We will be scrapping a system that is broken.

Today, public safety is threatened by an unprecedented event: War has been declared on the American people by Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network. The Federal Government must protect our country during these times of peril.

Security at the Nation's airports is no longer a private-sector matter; it is in fact part of the front line of our Nation's defense. Congress needs to treat this as a question of national security by putting in place an effective Federal law enforcement system.

Mr. Speaker, America is experiencing a crisis of confidence in its aviation system. The status quo of private security firms in no way will provide the aviation security necessary to protect the traveling public. Simply put, the private contractors who currently have the responsibility for screening passengers and baggage failed on September 11, and for that matter, they have failed for the past three decades.

The private contractors entrusted with overseeing security for our aviation system are the same companies who pay very low wages, have a turnover of over 400 percent, and have failed to detect dangerous objects that were recently revealed by the GAO and the Department of Transportation during their testing.

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In fact, 68 percent of the teams sent by the DOT Inspector General repeatedly found a breach of security.

Argenbright, one of the companies currently entrusted with security at our Nation's airports, was fined a million dollars and placed on 36 months probation. This company failed to conduct required background checks, hired convicted felons, and improperly trained workers which provided security at U.S. airports. Their probation was extended on October 23 for failure to comply with a previous court order. This is the same company that was responsible for the recent security breach at Chicago O'Hare.

This issue does not revolve just around Argenbright. In the last 5 years, FAA successfully prosecuted over 1,776 cases for screening violations which amounts to more than a violation a day. These cases resulted in \$8.1 million in civil penalties against air carriers for screening violations by screening companies.

Are these the kind of companies, Mr. Speaker, that we want to ensure our aviation security when millions of our fellow Americans and even us, who travel twice a week and will be traveling during this upcoming holiday day season, need? Absolutely not.

Thankfully, under the compromise reached by the conferees and the administration, all airports will have federalized screeners. In addition, this compromise will allow for a significant increase in the air marshal program. It will require screening for all checked baggage within 2 years, and it will require background checks for all airport personnel and aircraft crews.

The Congress owes a duty to the American public to ensure the strongest level of security possible at our Nation's airports. As the senior member serving on aviation from California, I am very pleased to be able to come today to let the American people know that Congress has responded to their requests.

Removing the profit motive from airport security and establishing a Federal law enforcement work force will provide the necessary security and restore the traveling public's confidence.

Mr. Speaker, we are all the better off.

TRAVEL STIMULUS ACT OF 2001

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GRUCCI). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, on November 13, 2001, I introduced H.R. 3281, the Travel Stimulus Act of 2001. This bill will allow individuals to claim a temporary tax deduction for travel expenses for cost of travel after September 11, 2001, and before September 12, 2001.

Mr. Speaker, people are not traveling. In my home State of Hawaii, our beaches and hotels are empty, our economy is floundering, and our workers are being laid-off at staggering rates. The total unemployed as of this date is 27,000.

I have introduced the Travel Stimulus Act of 2001, to allow individuals to deduct personal travel expenses for all personal travel to a destination of 500 miles or more from home. These deductions cover the taxpayer's spouse and any dependents and must be used on commercial travel (air, bus, train, boat). The taxpayer may also use these deductions for hotels, meals and other travel costs.

Hotels are lowering their prices to try to entice tourists to come and stay. The federal government must do our part to give the public incentives to travel again in order to revive the depressed economies of all states and communities that rely on tourism for their living. The President and my fellow colleagues have repeatedly stated that we must keep America rolling and we must return to some sense of normalcy. Giving these incentives will actually accomplish these feats.

I urge my colleagues to support the Travel Stimulus Act of 2001.

EXTENDING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Committee on Education and the Workforce held a hearing at the request of the Democratic Caucus to listen to those individuals who have been impacted by the downturn in the economy, workers, Mr. John Sweeney, the president of the AFL/CIO, who represents many, many workers who have been caught in this downturn in the economy.

As we listened to two of the witnesses, Mr. Michael Hannah, who is a member of the Steel Workers in Birmingham, Alabama, who has worked for 29 years in that industry and recently, working for Butler Manufacturing, has just been told that he will be laid off indefinitely as of November 30. Mr. Hannah had been laid off earlier this year for 4 months. And, of course, what Mr. Hannah is now confronting is, his unemployment benefits of \$190 a week are running out.

We also heard from Linda Woods. Linda Woods has been employed in the commercial printing and advertising industry for the last 18 years and for one company the last 8 years, making \$19.11 an hour, but she too has been laid off and she is down to her last unemployment check. Her son, who is also working and helping her obviously while he is holding down two jobs for a hotel and an auto parts factory, has lost both of those jobs. First went the hotel job and then the auto parts factory job. So that income has been lost to her household.

Mr. Hannah told us also of the problems of his wife who just suffered a back injury and is unable to work and needs a lot of expensive medicines, as he said. He has also told us he would not be able to continue his health insurance under the COBRA program which allows unemployed people to continue to have their health insurance they had when they were working, but they must pay for, would cost him \$529 a month. And, of course, his unemployment provides him \$760 a month, and he is unable to pay for that. So it is not a luxury, but it is something he must let go if he is going to try to meet his mortgage payment and the rest of the obligations to his family.

Ms. Woods was in the same situation. On her unemployment, she would have had to pay \$200 a month for her COBRA and she can not afford to do that, nor can her son.

These are two individuals that, between them, have worked almost 50 years, 50 years; and now they find themselves having to need unemployment for 26 weeks and that has run out. And yet this Congress has failed to respond to provide for an extension of unemployment benefits. We provided a